

**The Impact of the Japanese Occupation on
Ethnic Relations between Chinese and
Indigenous People in Malaya and Indonesia in
the 1940s**

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There have been numerous studies on the impact of the Japanese occupation on the Indonesian indigenous population (henceforth *pribumi*).¹ Many pay special attention to the impact on Indonesian nationalist sentiment, while some emphasize the impact on social structure.² But few focus on the impact on the Chinese community in Indonesia, and there is no mention of the ethnic relationship between Chinese and *pribumi*. Twang Peck Yang's work on the Chinese business elite in Indonesia is an exception, and his main concern was business activities of ethnic Chinese rather than identity or ethnic relationships.³ More studies on Malaya tend to focus on the impact of the Japanese occupation on ethnic relationships or on the Malay population.⁴ Few scholars who work on the Japanese occupation of Malaya consider that this period contributed to shifts in Chinese identity from China-oriented to local-oriented except Hara Fujio's work on Chinese communities in Malaya during the occupation period.⁵

In his well-researched article, "The Japanese Occupation of Malaya and the Chinese Community", Hara Fujio examined the Chinese leaders of different groups by listing their background, their behavior during the Japanese occupation and the quality of their leadership in the postwar era. He confirmed that the occupation period did contribute to the transformation of Chinese identity in Malaya, but only considered this transformation in a limited way. He presented the following statements in his conclusion: '...this situation played a part in reorienting the identity of Chinese settlers from China to Malaya. In this

¹ For example, Benedict R. Anderson, *Some Aspects of Indonesian Politics Under the Japanese Occupation: 1944-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1961) and Harry Jindrich Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (The Hague: Gravenhage, 1958). Also Goto Ken'ichi, *Nihon senryoki idonesia kenkyu (Studies on Indonesia Under Japanese Occupation)* (Tokyo: Ryukeishosha, 1989).

² Kurasawa Aiko, 'Jawa no sonraku ni okeru shakai henyō no ichikōsatsu: nihon gunseika no momi kyōshutsu seido to sono eikyo' ('Social changes in Javanese villages, 1942-1945: the forced delivery system and its impact') *Tōnan ajia kenkyū*, 19:1 (1981), pp. 77-105. Kurasawa Aiko, *Mobilisasi dan Kontrol: Studi Tentang Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Jawa, 1942-1945* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1993). Sato Shigeru, *War, Nationalism and Peasants: Java Under the Japanese Occupation, 1942 - 1945* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

³ Twang Peck Yang, *The Chinese Business Elite in Indonesia and the Transition to Independence 1940-1950* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press., 1998).

⁴ Regarding ethnic relationships, see Wan Hashim Wan The, *Race Relations in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Heineman, 1983) and Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After The Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983). Regarding the impact on Malay people, see Halinah Bamadhaj, *The Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya Society and Politics 1941-1945* (Auckland: University of Auckland, 1975) and Abu Talib Ahmad, 'The Impact of the Japanese Occupation on the Malay-Muslim Population', in Paul H. Kratoska ed. *Malaya and Singapore During the Japanese Occupation* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1995).

⁵ Hara Fujio ed., *Tōnan Ajia kakyō to chugoku-chugoku kizoku ishiki kara kajin ishiki e (Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and China: Conversion of the Object of Their Identity from China to the Residing Countries)* (Tokyo: The Institute of Developing Economies, 1993), and Hara Fujio, 'The Japanese Occupation of Malaya and the Chinese Community', in Paul H. Kratoska ed. *Malaya and Singapore During the Japanese Occupation* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1995).

sense, Japan contributed to affirming the Malayan identity of the Chinese.’⁶

The “situation” here refers to the resettlement schemes which were promoted by the Japanese Military Administration in Malaya during the Japanese occupation. The influence of the experiences during the Japanese occupation on Chinese identity in Malaya and Indonesia is not limited to the resettlement of Chinese residents. The main question here is in what sense we can count something as an impact of the Japanese occupation. In this study, an impact will be judged by its consequences rather than be judged by what happened during the occupation. For example, in Hara Fujio’s study, the resettlement schemes of the Japanese occupation were seen to contribute to reorientation of Chinese identity because these schemes led to the formation of the locally-oriented political party, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1949, four years after the end of the Japanese occupation. If some changes during the occupation led to further changes in postwar years, we can regard these later changes as part of the impact of the Japanese occupation.

This is one of the chapters in my Ph. D. research at the ANU. In previous chapters I discuss the Japanese perception of and policy toward Southeast Asian ‘natives’ and Chinese. In this chapter, the impact of the Japanese occupation on the direction of later changes will be considered if the changes can be linked with the process of reorientation of Chinese identities in postwar years in Malaya and Indonesia. The terminology in Malay/Indonesian will apply in both cases of Malaya and Indonesia if not specified. For example, *pribumi* will include the Malay term *bumiputra*, which means indigenous people. In the same way, *peranakan* will include the Malay term *baba*. The impact of the Japanese occupation will be discussed in the following areas: political dimension; changes among Chinese communities; the relationship between Chinese and *pribumi*.

Changes in the political agenda

The most important impact of the Japanese occupation on the relationship between ethnic Chinese and the natives in Malaya and Indonesia was change in the political agenda. On one hand, the Japanese occupation not only accelerated the nationalist movements in Southeast Asia as many studies have pointed out, but also pushed the later power holders to consider whether ethnic Chinese could be accepted as part of a new nation and how to integrate them if they were accepted. The following discussion will focus on how representatives of ethnic Chinese were assigned by the Japanese to join the Indonesian nationalist struggle and how the politics of Chinese participation would become important in postwar Malaya. On the other hand, the discourse of pan-Asianism, promoted by Japanese propaganda, spread anti-European colonialism sentiment and stimulated ideological competition among Chinese residents. Since the Japanese pan-Asianism offered a pro-*pribumi* and pro-independent ideology, Chinese leaders could not keep their indifferent attitude toward the *pribumi* issue. This situation shaped the central issue in the dispute between ethnic Chinese and *pribumi* leaders in the postwar era.

⁶ Hara in Paul H. Kratoska ed. (1995), p. 58.

In Indonesia before the Japanese occupation, the nationalist movement did not require Chinese residents to join the nationalist struggle and to be part of the Indonesian nation. On the eve of the Japanese occupation, the Sino-Japanese War drove more Chinese people to pay attention to China's affairs. Although there were some *peranakan* Chinese who were keen to join the Indonesian nationalist movement, as Leo Suryadinata pointed out in his study,⁷ their efforts did not convince the mainstream of either the Chinese side or the *pribumi* side to accept their view.

The announcement of the Youth Oath in 1928 can be seen as the most significant event in the modern Indonesian nationalist movement on the matter of adapting the name of "Indonesia" and consenting the boundary of the new nation among different ethnic groups. It proposed unification of various ethnic groups in the archipelago to form one independent Indonesian nation. After pledging this solemn political oath, ethnic consciousness grew into a political awareness of new nationhood. The nationalist leaders encouraged the melding of all ethnic groups into one entity - people of mainly common descent, language, and history who inhabit the territory of the Dutch East Indies. These nationalists did not consider Chinese ethnic communities as part of their proposed Indonesian nation.⁸

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Japanese policy toward ethnic Chinese during the Japanese occupation underwent a series of changes from beginning to end. In the beginning of the Japanese occupation, ethnic Chinese were treated as a separate group from *pribumi* by order of the Japanese Military Administration. Later, ethnic Chinese were encouraged to join the construction of "the Great East-Asian Co-prosperity Sphere". In the final year of the Japanese occupation, ethnic Chinese were encouraged to join the nationalist movement.

In the final year of the Japanese occupation, the Preparation Committee for Indonesian Independence decided to accept Chinese people as part of the nation. The Committee was under Japanese advisement and the members were Japanese-appointed. This move followed Japanese self-dependent policy, or *genchi shugi* in Japanese. The Japanese suggested nationalist leaders integrate those "immigrant ethnic groups" like Chinese or Arabs. Four Chinese representatives were appointed to attend the Committee as

⁷ Leo Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java, 1917-1942* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981), pp. 78-90. He defined three categories for the political streams in the *peranakan* community in Indonesia: pro-China, pro-Dutch and pro-Indonesia. The pro-Indonesian group formed a political party, Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI), led by Lim Koen Hian and Ong Liang Kok in 1932. This group wanted the 'Indies Chinese' to remain Chinese but be politically assimilated into indigenous Indonesian society. The author admitted that PTI was a fairly small party in numbers. And their influence was mainly limited to East Java, particularly in Soerabaja. The importance of this group was in their ideas rather than in their popularity.

⁸ Go Gien Tjwan, 'Indonesian Nation Building With Reference to The Chinese Problem', in *The Postwar Transformation of Overseas Chinese: Collected Papers of An International Symposium* (1992), p. 333.

members. Those representatives fully supported the struggle for the new nation and requested that ethnic Chinese should become citizens of the new nation automatically during the Japanese occupation.⁹

This move, to admit Chinese as part of the new nation, was somewhat too soon for both sides, both *pribumi* and Chinese. In 1946, the nationality law allowed Chinese to obtain Indonesian citizenship in a 'passive' way, without doing anything but be resident in the country. In 1948, China's government asked Indonesia to change this practice to a 'positive' way because China's government proclaimed that this was a more democratic way. In 1951, all Chinese born in Indonesia had to rechoose their nationalities if they wished to gain Indonesian citizenship. On the *pribumi* side, the Asatad movement requested the Indonesian government not grant equal economic rights to ethnic Chinese of Indonesian citizenship because their mentality and behavior were no different to Chinese foreigners who remained as Chinese nationals. This indicated that the decision to accept Chinese as a part of the nation in 1945 was a sudden move without full consensus among *pribumi*.

In Malaya, there was a similar situation in terms of bringing the Chinese issue into the Malayan political agenda. Prior to the Second World War, British Malaya was not a single unit. In a political sense it was a "mosaic" of governments with different systems, with various concepts of kingdom. In terms of participating in local politics, only strait Chinese had these privileges in the Strait Settlements. The Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States consistently rejected any proposal for peninsular union and rights of Chinese migrants. The majority of Chinese migrants in Malaya paid attention only to China's affairs. But the period of the Japanese occupation changed through this situation.

Japan was the first regime to integrate government into one united administration for the whole of Malaya, with a headquarters based in Singapore.¹⁰ The Japanese occupation made a significant impact also on Malay communities.¹¹ As William Roff pointed out, the origins of Malay nationalism can be traced back to as early as the beginning of this century.¹² But the idea of Malaya as a single political entity and the object of political loyalty was still not very strong at grass-roots level before the Japanese occupation.¹³ The Malay

⁹ Anderson (1961), p:18. The four representatives were Oei Tjong Hauw, Oey Tiang Tjoei and Tan Eng Hoa. They served in the Committee for the Investigation of Indonesian Independence during the Japanese Occupation.

¹⁰ Cheah (1983), p. 53.

¹¹ Firdaus bin Haji-Abdullah, *The Origins and Early Development of the Radical Malay Opposition Movement in Malaysian Politics*, Ph. D. thesis of Columbia University (1981), p. 132. '...such examples of contradictions can be prolonged with many others. The main implication is that in a relatively short span of three and a half years (February 1941 - August 1945), the Malays underwent a series of shocking experiences and were forced to face a series of delicate situations, all of which had profound impact on their world view and self-perception.'

¹² William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

¹³ Ariffin Bin S. M. Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Concepts of Democracy and Community Among the Malays*

nationalist movement, which kept struggling to define a proper boundary for the Malayan territory even in the 1940s, was based on the Muslim movement from which the ethnic Chinese were excluded.¹⁴

Prior to the Japanese occupation, Malay leaders did not accept that ethnic Chinese could become a part of “our nation”, whether they defined the nation as either a small kingdom or as a bigger political entity. During the Japanese occupation, Japanese mainly supported the radical Malay nationalists within the framework of Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya, the Great Malay or the Great Indonesia, which proposed a nation combining Malaya and Indonesia.¹⁵ This project was unsuccessful. It came too late, only in the final year of Japanese occupation and too suddenly for Malay people whose loyalties were traditionally toward their kingdoms. After the Japanese administration collapsed, the Malay nationalist movement leader Ibrahim Yaacob even left Singapore for Jakarta rather than stay and fight for Malaya. The impact of Japanese policy on nationalist sentiment in Malaya might not be as obvious as it was in Indonesia. But the politics of Chinese participation in Malaya had been changed by the Japanese occupation either directly or indirectly.

During their occupation of Malaya, the Japanese did not promise Malaya would be an independent entity but urged the Malay radical nationalists to join the Indonesian nationalist movement based on the concept of Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia). With Japanese blessings, the Malay leader Ibrahim Yaacob formed a new political organization known as KRIS for preparing to unite with Indonesia. This organization was led only by Malays, with no delegates from ethnic Chinese or other ethnic groups. The Japanese policy in terms of ethnic participation in Malaya was somewhat confusing. The Chinese in Malaya were encouraged to join the low and middle levels of government administration but were not directed to any nationalist sentiment similar to the Japanese policy toward Malay or Indian people in the same country. But political awareness was widespread in Malaya after the Japanese occupation, not only for Malays but also for ethnic Chinese and other ethnic groups.

The politics of Chinese participation were introduced into Malaya through British plans for a Malayan Union. This project was very important in reshaping Malayan politics which originally excluded ethnic Chinese. The Japanese did not require ethnic Chinese to join the Malay nationalist movement during the Japanese occupation directly. This plan, which

1945-1950 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1989).

¹⁴ Roff (1967), p. 56. The expression of the sense of ‘oneness’ between the Indonesians and the Malays could be traced back to at least the year 1906 when the celebrated Islamic reformist journal, *Al-Islam*, published in Singapore, addressed its readers in the then British Malays and Dutch East Indies in term of ‘our religion’ and ‘our community’. This concept continued to be adapted up to the 1940s.

¹⁵ Firdaus bin Haji-Abdullah (1981), p.7. The radical nationalism was mainly from the Islamic educated teachers and writers and vernacular Malay educated teachers and journalists. ‘The radical nationalists,...during the Japanese occupation they received favorable treatment from the Japanese Military Authority.’

granted ethnic Chinese Malayan citizenship with certain conditions for China-born Chinese, was announced in April 1946 and was abolished in 1948. The Malayan Union was the first plan to grant rights to the majority of Chinese residents in Malaya. Although it failed eventually, it created a direction for Malayan politics on the Chinese citizenship issue and initiated ethnic politics in the Malay Peninsula. This plan was mainly established during 1942-1945 in order to respond to the war experience in Malaya. If not for the Japanese Occupation, the Malayan Union project may not have been introduced.¹⁶ A. J. Stockwell commented on this matter. “Although the origins of the Malayan Union lay in long-simmering vexation over the administrative hotchpotch of British territories, the Japanese occupation introduced considerations which had not existed to sway previous planners. War created its own demands.”¹⁷

There was another way to turn the direction of the relationship between Chinese and *pribumi*: competition in political ideology which was mainly caused by Japanese wartime propaganda on pan-Asianism. The Japanese pan-Asianism propaganda was Japanese ethnocentric, shown in the ‘Triple A champion’ in Java in the first year of the Japanese occupation. However, the direction of pan-Asianism propaganda turned to show Japanese support of Indonesian nationalism. After Japan formally announced it would conduct preparations for Indonesian independence, there were many public meetings where Chinese, *pribumi* and other ethnic groups joined together. The Chinese had to learn to voice their support in public. Some Chinese leaders showed stronger sentiments toward Indonesian nationalism than did the Japanese. During the Indonesian Revolution, which followed the Japanese surrender, *pribumi* nationalists continued to request Chinese support for their struggle.

In Malaya, the same kind of competition of political ideology took place between Japanese and Chinese. Since the Japanese offered a pro-Malay ideology during the occupation, the Chinese guerillas who remained in Malay-dominated jungle areas needed to also provide a new political correctness in order to gain political legitimacy. The Chinese-dominated MPAJA, Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army, used *tiga bintang*, three stars, to represent the three major races to fight for Malaya in competition with Japanese propaganda for Asian liberation. Even the MCP, Malayan Communist Party, the political organization which led the armed resistance of MPAJA, had advocated secretly the strategic slogan of “establish the Malayan Democratic Republic” from 1936.¹⁸ This idea did not appear in local Chinese newspapers since it was far from being accepted among Chinese communities in Malaya before the Japanese occupation. By using anti-Japanese sentiment, the MCP attracted numbers of Chinese youths to join their battle and turned to the local-oriented political struggle.

¹⁶ A. J. Stockwell, *British Policy and Malay Politics During the Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1979), pp. 17-38.

¹⁷ Stockwell (1979), p. 17.

¹⁸ Cheah (1983), pp. 56-100.

Changes among Chinese

The period of Japanese occupation for many ethnic Chinese in Malaya and Indonesia was a traumatic disaster. This perspective has been expressed by several people.¹⁹ But few studies discussed the impact of the Japanese occupation on Chinese communities. There were two directions of major change among Chinese communities in Malaya and Indonesia which led to further changes in the postwar period. The first was the shift of leadership and the second was internal integration among the Chinese. Without understanding these changes, we cannot understand the direction of change in political and cultural identity in the postwar era.

During the Japanese occupation, the treatment given former leaders in Chinese communities in Malaya and Indonesia was different, although both were based on detailed information from Japanese prewar surveys in Southeast Asia. In the Japanese surveys on Southeast Asia before the Pacific War, leadership among Chinese communities was a major focus. There were detailed lists of Chinese leaders in every major city in Southeast Asia. The records contained details of the Chinese leaders, including names, addresses, association, position, business details, property value, and even their political attitude. For instance, in a record based on the survey in Medan, the owner of a pro-KMT Chinese newspaper, Su Yuan Chang, was indicated as pro-Japanese. The former chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, On Kin Hoat, was indicated as being sympathetic to the Japanese.²⁰ Before the Japanese moved south, they had full information on the leadership of Chinese communities in every city in Southeast Asia.

In Indonesia, leadership among Chinese communities underwent a significant change between prewar and postwar eras. The most prominent leaders before the war in every major city were imprisoned by the Japanese. There were five hundred Chinese leaders incarcerated in prison during the whole period of the Japanese occupation. The former leaders who were not in prison were forced to cooperate with the Japanese. Many young *peranakan* were appointed by the Japanese as leaders of Chinese organizations or representatives of Chinese communities to fill the vacuum of Chinese leadership. Those *peranakan* figures who were only active among *peranakan* Chinese communities were then promoted as the leaders for the whole Chinese community, including *peranakan* and *totok*. The shift in Chinese leadership in Indonesia was dramatic because it would have been impossible for those

¹⁹ Chin Kee Onn, *Malaya Upside Down* (Singapore: Federal Publications, 1946), Li Tie Min ed. *Da zhan yu nan qiao (World War II and Nanyang Chinese)* (Singapore: Xin nanyang chu ban she, 1947).

²⁰ Investigation Section, Hwa Nan Bank, *Ran'in shokai no kakyō (The Chinese Merchants in Netherlands Indies During the 1930s)* (Taipei: Huanan Bank, 1941), p. 169.

young *peranakan* leaders to achieve such status without Japanese intervention.

Since the former Chinese leaders were in prison, the young *peranakan* with a pro-Indonesian attitude were appointed as new leaders of Chinese communities. For example, Yap Tjwan Bing became the chairman of Bandung Chinese Association.²¹ Liem Koen Hian, Oei Tjong Hauw and Oei Tiang Tjoei were appointed by the Japanese as representatives of the Chinese community. These *peranakan* leaders were categorized as part of the prewar pro-Indonesian group in Leo Suryadinata's study on the prewar *peranakan* Chinese politics in Java.²² They were moved to top-ranking positions among Chinese in the Japanese military administration during the Japanese occupation and therefore those pro-Indonesian *peranakan* Chinese became new leaders of the entire Chinese communities.

In Malaya, most former leaders who did not flee the country were forced to cooperate with the Japanese military administration. It made them unpopular among the young generation in Chinese communities after the war. MPAJA became the most powerful political organization and its leaders were highly regarded by the Chinese community for their armed resistance against the Japanese.²³ The young leaders for right-wing armed resistance, like Zhuang Hui Quan, also became active and outspoken in the Chinese communities. Without wartime experience, those young figures would never have gained leadership, which was dominated by gentry-style businessmen in the prewar years.

Because Japanese records contained detailed information on Chinese leaders, it was easy for the Japanese to identify former Chinese leaders in order to give them special treatment. In Singapore, many former prominent Chinese leaders survived the massacre of "anti-Japanese elements" in the first month of the Japanese occupation. Those leaders were required to form a united Chinese association for helping the Japanese in administration. Former Chinese leaders survived in Indonesia too, but remained in prison for the entire Japanese occupation. The Japanese promoted people they trusted. After Japan controlled Singapore and the Malay Peninsula, the military authorities established one Chinese Association and abolished all others. All former leaders among Chinese communities were asked to join this organization. The urban middle class were calm and obedient to the Japanese military authority during the Japanese occupation.

As Fujio Hara pointed out in his study, a great many of the Chinese leaders remained prominent community leaders during the post-war years. Most of the top leaders of

²¹ Yap Tjwan Bing, *Meretas Jalan Kemerdekaan: Otobiografi Seorang Pejuang Kemerdekaan* (Jakarta: Percetakan PT Gramedia, 1988).

²² Suryadinata (1981).

²³ Hara in Kratoska ed. (1995), p. 45.

pro-Japanese bodies resumed their activities soon after the war in such mainstream organizations as the assembly halls and chambers of commerce. MPAJA took its revenge only on lower-level collaborators and other people who betrayed them rather than those top leaders.²⁴ However, those former leaders no longer played the same role to lead the Chinese in political affairs as they had in prewar times. The new groups of young Chinese emerged because of the lack in leadership after the war. The leaders of MPAJA and other anti-Japanese guerrillas soon became influential figures after Japan surrendered. This shift in Chinese leadership in Malaya later led to further changes in Chinese identity which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another obvious change among Chinese communities in Malaya and Indonesia which may have been influenced by the Japanese occupation was internal integration. Some of this was integration between *totok* and *peranakan* Chinese and some was integration among Chinese people who came from different regional origins in China. Here only the former will be discussed. *Totok* referred to China-born, Chinese-speaking, and full Chinese-blood Chinese while *peranakan* refers to Chinese who had received more local influence, such as local-born, adapted local customs, non-Chinese speaking and sometimes mixed-blood Chinese. *Totok* and *peranakan* were relative concepts, and the boundary between them was changeable. The direction of internal integration among Chinese communities in Malaya and Indonesia was from many divided groups to a united one. It was partly because of the Japanese policy to allow only one organization for ethnic Chinese in one place.

Since ethnic Chinese had been migrating to Malaya and Indonesia for centuries, and the early migrants were mostly single males, they quite often married indigenous females. Their children were called *peranakan*. The original meaning in Malay/Indonesian was people of mix-blooded. Later, the population of *peranakan* was large enough to form a distinct ethnic group. Native-*peranakan* intermarriage declined as the *peranakan* community provided its own wives. They could easily find their spouses within the group and did not need to intermarry with other groups. The early Chinese settlers easily absorbed local culture and customs, and they soon mixed with the local population. Distinctions between early Chinese migrants and the indigenous people were relatively few.²⁵ Chinese *peranakan* were still able to be identified by their patrilineal surnames during the Japanese occupation. In prewar era, local-born Chinese could obtain local citizenship according to the principle of determining citizenship by place of birth, or *Jus Soli*. Before the war local-born Chinese *peranakan* had a separate identity since they had their own organizations and newspapers which used the Malay language, as shown in Leo Suryadinata's study.²⁶

²⁴ Hara in Kratoska ed. (1995), p. 51.

²⁵ H. Usman Effendy, *AMOI: Aku Menjadi Orang Indonesia (Amoy: I become an Indonesian)* (Jakarta: Yayasan Ridho Permata Rejeki, 1992).

²⁶ Suryadinata (1981), Leo Suryadinata, 'A Brief Historical Survey of the Peranakan Chinese Press in Java, 1900-1942', *Journal of Southeast Asian Research* 3 (1967), p. 160.

Totok and *peranakan* might disdain each other for their cultural practices. The new Chinese immigrants who tried to ensure that their children supported Chinese culture might look down on the bastardized *peranakan* culture, which was mixed with Dutch, Chinese and Indonesian *pribumi*. The Chung Hwa Hui, which was organized by Dutch-educated *peranakan* professionals and businessmen in 1928, advocated the acceptance of Dutch nationality and participation in local politics. Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (P. T. I.) was favourable to Indonesian nationalism and encouraged the 'Indies Chinese' to identify themselves with Indonesians, while they still favored Dutch as a medium of education. The most influential pro-China group among *peranakan* was the so-called Sin Pao group, which supported China politically, but were not willing to maintain *totok* culture or identity from their parents or previous generations.²⁷

The Japanese military administration ignored the difference between *totok* and *peranakan*. The Japanese treated the two groups in the same category. They took the view "once Chinese always Chinese" and put Chinese people born in China and people of Chinese descent in the same category, *kakyo*, the Japanese pronunciation of the characters for *huaqiao*. The Japanese also criticized *peranakan* Chinese for not being able to read or write the Chinese language. They asked the *peranakan* to send their children to Chinese schools. This was actually a re-sinicization of the *peranakan*.²⁸ When the Japanese military administration required all Chinese people, both *totok* and *peranakan*, to register in the same category many *peranakan* could not give their names in Mandarin. The Japanese administrators then asked them to write their names down. But many *peranakan* could not write Chinese characters. Usually the Japanese administrators kicked them or struck them several blows and criticized them, saying "You are Chinese, how can you not speak Chinese?" or "You are Chinese, how can you not write Chinese?"²⁹ Many *peranakan* were affected by this humiliation and then tried to learn the Chinese language. Many even sent their children to Chinese schools after the end of the war. The same situation happened not only in Singapore but also in other places in Malaya and Indonesia.³⁰

Under Japanese influence, the fates of Chinese *peranakan* and new immigrants became more closely tied together. The distance between them which was created by the European colonial system became meaningless under the Japanese anti-Western policy. The two groups had more chance to meet together and learn from each other during and after the Japanese occupation. They realized that in outsiders' eyes they would always be

²⁷ Leo Suryadinata, *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), p. 15.

²⁸ Leo Suryadinata, *Pribuni Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann, 1978), pp. 85-87.

²⁹ Qiu Xinmen, *Zhao nan shi dai shi hua (The History of Shonan Era)* (Singapore: Qingnian Press, 1993).

³⁰ Wang Xiunan (Wang Shiow Nan), *Dong nan ya jiao yu shi da gang (Educational History in Southeast Asia)* (Singapore: Southeast Asia Educational Research Centre, 1988), pp. 89-90.

put into the same category. The distance between *peranakan* (or *baba*) and Chinese was lessened by the Japanese policy of grouping Chinese people as a whole.

After the Japanese occupation, more *peranakan* Chinese sent their children to Chinese schools. The relationship between local-born and China-born Chinese communities became more integrated. A report in 1948 estimated that 85 % of all Chinese children in elementary schools in Dutch-controlled areas of Indonesia were in Chinese-language schools.³¹ A survey done in 1931 found that only 36.4 % of Chinese migrants in Indonesia were first generation, the rest were *peranakan*.³² It meant that many *peranakan* children whose parents spoke only Dutch and/or Indonesian were being "re-sinified" by an education emphasizing Chinese language, culture, and politics.³³ This trend in the 1950s for Chinese *peranakan* to undergo a process of becoming more Chinese can be considered to have started during the Japanese occupation.³⁴

Following the Second World War, the fates of *totok* and *peranakan* were linked together. Among the different parties which were organized by *peranakan*, like Persatuan Tionghoa (P. T.) formed in 1948, Partai Demokrat Tionghoa Indonesia (P. D. T. I.) formed in 1950, and Baperki (Indonesian Citizenship Consultative Body) formed in 1954, some insisted on maintaining a separate Chinese identity within the Indonesian nation, while some wished to drop the term "Chinese" in order to merge with Indonesian society. But in either case their claims included all Chinese in Indonesia, both *totok* and *peranakan*.³⁵

The Relationship between Chinese and pribumi

Apart from the changes in political agenda discussed previously, the new patterns of daily contact between Chinese and *pribumi* also illustrate an important impact of the Japanese occupation on the relationship between them. These new patterns fall into two types: conflicts, and sudden encounters between Chinese and *pribumi*.

After a series of looting and riots targeted at ethnic Chinese continued in 1998, many reports point out that a similar pattern of looting and riots can be seen in modern Indonesian history. When did this pattern of looting and riots begin in Indonesia? Most reports only counted the same pattern of events after the Indonesian Declaration of Independence of August,

³¹ Mary F. Somers, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1965), p. 19.

³² Charles Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 67.

³³ Somers (1965), pp. 19-23.

³⁴ Wu Wen Hua, *Shi lun yin du ni xi ya hua ren she hui di bian qian* (*Discussions on the Change of Indonesian Chinese Society*) Zhan hou hai wai hua ren bian hua guo ji xue shu tao lun hui. (Changes of Post-War Overseas Chinese), 1989, p. 171.

³⁵ Suryadinata (1979), pp. 14-17.

1945. Among them, the riot in Tangerang in 1946 was repeatedly mentioned as the most notorious case in the period of the Indonesian Revolution. Some reports even see this event as the beginning of the pattern of riots. Actually, the same pattern of riots occurred during the Japanese landing on Java and Sumatra in 1942, and they are the earliest riots of the same pattern.

Some studies suggest that some riots happened far earlier than 1942. For example, Leo Suryadinata reported the anti-Chinese riots in Solo and Surabaya in 1912 and Kahin reported riots in Koedoes in 1918.³⁶ Those events, however, were conflict between particular groups in a particular location. They can not be seen as contagious riots which can suddenly spread through an area like the riots of 1942. For example, the Koedoes Incident in 1918, which resulted in 11 Chinese businessmen killed and many houses burnt, was the conflict between local Chinese and Muslim merchants in Koedoes Toea. It did not escalate further, as happened as in 1942, 1946-1948, 1965-1967 and 1998.

All riots of this pattern happened in the fragile period of shifting political power. Ethnic Chinese were seen to be in a disadvantageous position for the new power holders of each period. When Japanese soldiers landed on Java and Sumatra island in March 1942, the mass riots toward ethnic Chinese were introduced to modern Indonesian history. The riots were widespread in Sumatra and Java when the islands simply lost law and order. Chinese shops and factories were looted by Indonesian *pribumi*. In some cases lootings were initiated by evacuating Dutch soldiers. In some other cases the doors of warehouses and factories were opened by the Japanese soldiers. Chinese property became the target of widespread looting and robbing. The Japanese army later set up law and order only when they controlled the whole island of Java. The total loss was estimated at least 100 million East Indies dollars while the total casualty list was unknown.

A story has been related in Tan Kha Kee's memoir. In Batavia (now Jakarta), a *peranakan* family with seven family members were robbed by hundreds of *pribumi*. As a result of the landlord having two guns, looters surrounded them but dared not get too close. The servant stood aside and offered to help. The landlord passed his guns to this servant, but servant then turned the gun toward the landlord. The landlord was surprised and said "You have worked for me for more than twenty-two years. Why do you want to betray me?" The servant answered "today is a good opportunity for me." He killed the landlord. Five family members were killed and all their goods were looted.³⁷

The Chinese leaders pointed out that Japanese soldiers encouraged Indonesian *pribumi* to loot the Chinese shops. The Chinese leaders kept saying that the violence toward Chinese was unprecedented. There was no sign of anti-Chinese sentiment among *pribumi* in Java

³⁶ See Suryadinata (1981), p. 24. and George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press., 1961(1952)), p. 67.

³⁷ Chen Jia Gen (Tan Kah Kee), *Nan qiao hui yi ru (Memoir of an Overseas Chinese in the South)* (Singapore: Nanyang Yishuashe, 1946), p. 425.

before the Japanese arrived.³⁸ Baren discussed this situation with some Indonesian youths in 1942 and those youth confirmed that the Japanese did encourage them to rob Chinese shops at the beginning when Japanese landed on the islands.³⁹ H. Frederick William confirmed in his study that some looting of Chinese property was encouraged directly by the Japanese.⁴⁰ Some looting might have been only inspired by rumors that the Chinese were hostile of the new rulers since China was at war with Japan.⁴¹

The Japanese changed their policy later after they controlled the situation and soon set rules with severe punishments for intrigenments. The Chinese residents welcomed the end of chaos for they could not live in such conditions of anarchy. There were some other aspects of the nature of the riots. As a Japanese survey suggested a religious factor was involved in the ethnic relationship between them. After the riots in which poor *pribumi* robbed Chinese shops and burned Chinese houses, a Japanese scholar examined the reason why the rioters did not attack the Arab people in Java. In terms of the feeling of superiority, both ethnic Chinese and ethnic Arabs had similar attitudes toward *pribumi*. In terms of the economic relationship, both ethnic Chinese and ethnic Arabs were seen as exploiters of *pribumi*. But there were no such riots toward the Arabs at that time. The conclusion of this survey suggested that religion played an important role. Arabs were seen as Muslim brothers by *pribumi*.⁴² Some cases even indicated that Arabs encouraged them to rob Chinese shops as part of the economic competition between Arabs and Chinese.

The Japanese occupation in Malaya also induced a change in the relationship between Chinese and Malay people from indifference to hatred. It can be counted as the origin of the Sino-Malay conflict right after the war, which has been explored by Cheah Boon Kheng in his work, *Red Star Over Malaya*.⁴³ When Japanese soldiers conquered the Malay Peninsula, Malays were in the top positions in most levels of government. During the time of the Japanese occupation, most Malay people did not see the Japanese authority as their enemy. Both Japanese policy and the Malay response were unacceptable for Chinese, and this tension between Chinese and *pribumi* in the postwar period.⁴⁴

There was also another kind of relationship between Chinese and *pribumi* at this time during

³⁸ *Kung Yung Pao*, 1, April 1942.

³⁹ Baren, *Yinni Sangi (Notes on Indonesia)* (1948), p. 77.

⁴⁰ H. Frederick William, *Indonesian Urban Society in Transition: Surabaya, 1926-1946*, Ph. D. thesis, University of Hawaii (1978), p. 351.

⁴¹ *Kung Yung Pao*, 17 March 1942.

⁴² Osamu Shudan Shireibu, *Zen Jawa Kaikyo Jokyo Chosasho (Survey on the Situation of Islam in Java)* (1943), p. 355.

⁴³ Cheah (1983).

⁴⁴ Cai Shijun ed., *Xin ma hua ren kang ri shi liao (Historical Material on the Anti-Japanese Activities of the Singapore and Malaysian Chinese)* (Singapore: Wen shi chu bang ong si, 1987).

the Japanese occupation. The Chinese people had more opportunities to contact Malay and Indonesian *pribumi* during the Japanese occupation, and some were inspired by this kind of experience and became enthusiastic about Malay or Indonesian affairs.⁴⁵ The reason Chinese people had opportunity to be in contact with indigenous populations was because of their resettlement to rural areas. During the occupation, many moved into villages or Malay *kampung* and dressed themselves as Malays, because the Japanese were more cautious in their treatment of the Malays. If Chinese people had continued to live in urban areas and live together, they may not have had much contact with indigenous culture.

Such sudden contact between urban Chinese intellectuals and rural Malay residents inspired those intellectuals who changed their attitudes toward Malays. For example, Sa Ping, the pen name of Hu Yu Chi, spent his time during the Japanese occupation writing a modern Indonesian grammar book in Chinese, which he claimed to be the first one of its kind. He said that he became enthusiastic about learning the Indonesian language when he hid in Pematang Siantar, Sumatra, in order to avoid being caught by the Japanese. He stated that previously very few Chinese people wanted to learn the Malay language because overseas Chinese held the indigenous populations in disdain. In particular, educated Chinese did not acknowledge that the indigenous populations had "culture". Chinese merchants learnt some Malay words, but only for business. When Sa Ping and his friends, mainly writers and editors from Singapore, came to find asylum in Sumatra and had more contact with *pribumi*, they realized that this kind of attitude was inappropriate and not good for the relationship between Chinese and *pribumi*. They started to be interested in studying Indonesian and then attempted to make friendships with the indigenous population. They thought it was the only way to learn this language because there were no Chinese materials available. Sa Ping even changed his name to an Indonesian name, Sabin. After the Japanese surrender, he continued to use his pen name in Singapore and started to encourage Chinese to learn *pribumi* language and culture. His story and other similar examples, like Yu Da Fu and Bahren (Wang Ren Su), will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chinese who fought against the Japanese in the jungle found that it was necessary to try hard to understand Malay language and customs because Malays were the main residents in rural areas. The propaganda groups of MPAJA started to create several plays in which Malay and Indian people took some roles, because the Malay and Indian people were the main audiences when plays were performed *kampong*.⁴⁶ The chief playwright and director, Du Bian, expressed in his memoirs that he got a vague feeling that the mentality of *huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) should be changed to *huachu* (ethnic Chinese) for part of Malayan people when he wrote and edited those plays during the Japanese occupation. And he was certain that his inspiration came from his experience living in Malay *kompong* rather than any theory or doctrine.⁴⁷ After the war, Du Bian went back to Singapore and continued to

⁴⁵ Cui Hong, *Lun xian shiqi zai zhao wa* (Java under Japanese Occupation) (Singapore: Xingqiliu Zhoukan, 1952) pp. 138-140.

⁴⁶ Chen Liang ed., *Du bian yu ma hua xin ma ju yun* (Du Bian and the Theatrical Movement in Malaya) (Hong Kong: Jin cheng gong si, 1994), p. 26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 11.

create some plays which had strong elements of Malay and Indian images. The story of Du Bian and his group will be discussed later.

Sudden encounters did not only happen in less formal daily situations but also in the workplace. Under European colonial rule, Chinese and *pribumi* did not have much chance to work together in official meetings. The Japanese changed their policy from “divide and rule” to “work together” after mid-1943. Eddy Hermawan reported that the mixed language which was adopted by ethnic Chinese, Baba Malay or Bahasa Thonghua Melayu, was turned to standard Bahasa because there were many formal meetings with *pribumi*.⁴⁸ Xiao Yu Can (Siau Giok Tjhan) in his memoir confirmed that ethnic Chinese stopped using Bahasa Thonghua Melayu and turned to standard Bahasa Indonesia after that time.⁴⁹

To sum up, their experience during the Japanese occupation drew ethnic Chinese and *pribumi* together. In Indonesia, ethnic Chinese were invited to join the nationalist struggle. In Malaya, armed resistance against the Japanese directly involved the young generation of Chinese in Malayan affairs. In the political domain, ethnic Chinese played a substantial role in local administration under Japanese rule. The intensive contact between Chinese and *pribumi* during the Japanese occupation generated a new relationship. The conflicts between Chinese and *pribumi* brought troubles into the postwar period which also drew Chinese attention to local politics. The shift of leadership and internal integration among the Chinese made Chinese residents face the new situation in the postwar period as a coherent group.

⁴⁸ Eddy Hermawan, *Gunseiki Bandoun no kakyō gakkō; Indonēshia sono bunkashakai to nihon (The Chinese school in Budung under Japanese military administration. Indonesia: the Social Culture and Japan)* (Tokyo: Waseda University, 1979).

⁴⁹ Xiao Yu Can (Siau Giok Tjhan), Huang Shu Hai trans., *Shu tu tong gui (Different Roads to the Same Destination)* (Hong Kong: Di Ping Xian, 1981), p. 47.