

## Look-To-The-East Idea In Fajar Asia Magazine

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

**Keywords** – Language, Culture and Arts, *Fajar Asia*, Japan, Look-To-The-East idea, Malaya

### I. INTRODUCTION

Touching on Japan as a guide to the Malay community during the Japanese occupation era, there were thirty eight studies that cited this issue briefly, among the important one are Muhammad Sa'id bin Haji Sulaiman in his book *Semangat Nippon Yang Sebenarnya Diuraikan*, Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim in an article entitled *Pensejarahan Melayu dalam Zaman Pendudukan Jepun (1942-1945)*, Ishak Saat in an article entitled *Peranan Politik Akhbar Suara Rakyat 1945-48*, Mahani Musa in an article entitled *Sumbangan Wanita Melayu Dalam Kegiatan Persuratkhabaran dan Majalah di Malaysia, Tahun 1920-an 1960-an*, Noraini binti Muhammad in her thesis *Majalah Semangat Asia*

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

The first edition of *Fajar Asia* contained an article about the purpose of its publication. In 'Permulaan Kata,' article, Zainal Abidin Ahmad states that *Fajar Asia* was published to meet the expectations of the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia so that a new vibrant magazine with new spirit is materialised, that will guide their nation towards nobility and progress. The victory of Japanese military in Malaya and Indonesia appeared to have opened a new era in Asian population. This is because Asian people had been viewed as living in darkness for centuries. The wealth of Asian people, either explicit or implicit had all been subdued due to colonization by British, the Netherlands and United States. Consequently Asians became impoverished people, living in poverty, and their culture and arts which had been their implicit wealth were all tarnished due to the colonization of the Western powers.

Zainal Abidin Ahmad praised Japan which he viewed as a mighty race that was able to drive off Western forces from Asia. The Japanese was not only seen as having the ability to release Asians from the clutches of Western powers, in fact they were also able to lead the Asian races, especially the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia in pursuit of nobility and advancement. The Japanese were seen to be leading the Asian races so that they can be independent with youthful enthusiasm and new energy to achieve their 'East Asian Greater Prosperity' ambitions. The objective of *Fajar Asia* is advancing the field of arts and culture of the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia, by inspiring youthful spirit and new energy in the Malays. Each *Fajar Asia* published

will guide the life of the Malays through the important questions aroused in political, social, economic, language, religion, education, culture and arts, youth, and family segments. Malay scholars in each field will share their expertise for the community to follow.

Zainal Abidin Ahmad also discloses the joy of *Fajar Asia* publisher on the mass response and assistance provided by all parties in the production of this magazine. He also urged the reader to witness the names of people who gave speech or wishes. Among them were Japanese dignitaries, the Malay Sultans, the leaders of all races, Malay intellectuals, youth leaders and many more. He urged the young Malays in Malaya and Indonesia to be very proud of this extraordinary response.

The publication of *Fajar Asia* coincides with new years for some religions and races. The beginning of its publication coincided with the New year for Christians (January), and also the New Year for the people of Japan which was usually celebrated with a great deal of enthusiasm. It also coincided with the beginning of a new year for Muslims (Muharram 1303) which is celebrated by Muslims all over the world with a great sense of renewal spirit. It also coincided with the beginning of the second year for the struggles which have taken place throughout Japan and East Asia in eroding British, the Netherlands and the United States sovereignty. The publication of *Fajar Asia* which coincided with all these good times was expected to be a great blessing in the course of developing the nation.

### **Lessons learned from the Look-To-The-East idea in the Language Segment**

Dr. Ibrahim in his article entitled '*Seruan Dari Ahli-ahli Ilmu: Bangunlah Bangsa Melayu!*' states that Singapore is a country populated by a variety of races, religions and customs with cultural differences. They had prosperous life for more than 100 years under British protection. For all those years, English language was made the official language in all government office's affairs. It can be seen that within a few months after the Japanese occupation, the Japanese government had immediately fixed all the damages on the island. The people were instructed to farm, so that in the future they would no longer need to depend on imports. The Japanese also provided employment in every possible level. All parties seemed ready to work with Japan for the purpose of bonding with each other. Dr. Ibrahim advised the Malays to grab the opportunity and compete with other races. Else, the Malays might be left behind. The objective of the Japanese since the past and for the future has been to unite the Asian races under the

Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Under Japanese rule, the Japanese language will be the language used by the all races so that they will be closely bonded to the Japanese people.

A. Nizam in his article '*Perhubungan Malai with Nippon*' stated that after Malaya made friend with the Japanese, the time for cultural and knowledge exchange would be perfect. Japanese race which had been rising as a great race, had been investigating the progress and civilization of all the races all over the world, as well as the Malay and Indonesian language. Visits from parties from Malaya to Japan at this time can be divided into two groups. The first group visited Japan to teach the Malay language. Contrasting from the norm, the first visit of the Malays to Japan is not as students, but as teachers. They traveled to Japan to introduce their language to the Japanese, and with the introduction of the language, they also expanded their race's spirit and ambitions. The move was started from 1908, where the year was viewed as the turning point for the advancement of Malaya and Indonesia as a whole.

It started with a visit by Abdul Hamid bin Husein who went to Japan in 1908 to become the first Malay language scholar in foreign languages school in Tokyo. Later, due to his declining health, he had to return to Malaya to work with the government of Kelantan. Ibrahim bin Ahmad from Singapore took over the post of Malay language scholar. He headed the department on August 28, 1909. In the late 1910 he returned briefly to Malaya and then went back again to bring his wife, Rukiah binti Abdullah. His wife was the first woman from Malaya to reach Japan after Her Royal Highness Sultanah of Johor in 1883. Ibrahim bin Ahmad died on May 28, 1912 and was buried in a cemetery located in Zoshigaya, Tokyo.

Then, Ahmad bin Ambak took over the the Malay Language department in the middle of 1912 until 1914. But then he died on his return to Singapore. Bachik bin Wanchik became a Malay language scholar in Japan starting from April 1914. He was the longest serving Malay language scholar that ever lived in Japan, from 1914 until 1938. At first he taught in foreign languages school in Tokyo, but after his return from Malaya in 1922, he moved on to teach at foreign languages school of in Osaka. On March 14, 1938 he (at this particular period, he was known as Prof. Bachik) returned to his homeland in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Since that time until the later days he still assisted Japan's efforts in his country, even though he was already too old. Ibrahim bin Bachik who was Prof. Bachik's son replaced his

father as the Malay language scholar in Tokyo in 1922, when his father moved to Osaka.

Abdul Rani bin Haji Abdullah from Perak became the Malay language scholar in 1925, replacing Ibrahim bin Bachik until 1932. During this period, the Malay Language department in Tokyo was held by two Indonesian men who came from Java, namely Purwadarminta and Sudjono H.M. Idrees who became a Malay language scholar in Kumamoto at the end of December 1942. He and his wife became lecturers of the Malay language in Japan. His wife, Bahriah Idress also received the title of professor together with her husband. She was the first professor of Malay women. Their relentless efforts finally paid off when many Japanese individuals who came to Malaya during the Second World War already understood and were able to speak Malay.

For the second group, it comprised of the Malays who traveled to Japan to learn and expand knowledge. Some even visited Japan just to broaden their views, rather than entering school. For example in 1934 Daud bin Muhammad Shah and Hamzah bin Abdullah visited Japan with the aim of broadening their views. This was followed by Dato' Setia Raja, Undang Rembau and Tengku Ahmad, the son of the Sultan of Selangor who visited Japan in different times. On December 8, 1939, Dato' Onn bin Jaafar with his wife, Yahya bin Jaafar and Muhammad visited Japan in their return trip from San Francisco, United States. The first Japanese-born Malay Indonesian is Abdur Rahim, who was the son of Tuan Ibrahim bin Ahmad. This was similar to what happened to Prof. Bachik's marriage with his wife, a Japanese woman who later was named Zainab, where they were bestowed with children of Malay descent named Abdul Manaf, Hafsa, Kasim and Muhammad. The first expedition to Japan with the intention of learning by leaving the country on December 15, 1942, consisted of four men and two women. They were Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Hamid, Ungku Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Majid, Wan Abdul Hamid bin M. Saleh, Ungku Muhsin bin Muhammad, Salehah binti H. Bakri and Rosna Mahyudin.

A. Manan Noordin in his article '*Kemajuan Bangsa Kita Dibawah Pimpinan Nippon*' said that the Malays should learn Japanese characters and their language as soon as possible so that they will be able to grab the knowledge contained in Japanese books. All Japanese knowledge which was previously denied for the Malays by the colonial administration has now been widely opened by the Japanese government for the Malays. Prof Bachik bin Wanchik in his article '*Nippon-Go Lidah Asia Raya*' had called for Malay youth to learn

the Japanese language diligently. This was because he had envisioned that the Japanese language is going to be the tongue for the people who live in Asia in the future. Malay youth should learn Japanese so that they can live in a new society in Asia. All levels of knowledge from the highest to the lowest, the secret life of and even everyday conversations among the Asian peoples would eventually be in Japanese language. Malay youth who do not learn the Japanese language, will be left behind for decades and will have an empty life.

In an article entitled '*Belajarliah Bahasa Nippon*' printed in *Fajar Asia* stated that Japan was the main leader and the most important player in Asian development. For this reason, it is compulsory for the Malays either the elderly or the youth, men or women to learn Japanese language. There is no other way for the Malays to know the culture and arts of the Japanese, except by establishing close bond with the Japanese and reading all their books. In it one would encounter their sacred secrets and pure customs which can be copied and practiced by the Malays. The Malays had long been renowned for its customs. By studying Japanese language which is full of Japanese culture and arts, the Malays will be more advanced and noble. If observed, the Japanese language has many similarities with the Malay language, both in pronunciation, sounds, or words. It is not wrong to say that these two languages are "the language of brothers and sisters". The sounds and words of Malay language can be found in the Japanese language, and vice versa. The only difference would be in terms of meaning and interpretation only. Due to this fact, the Malays must not wait anymore to learn Japanese without, mastering it, and using it. Thus, leisure times should be filled with learning Japanese language.

### **Lessons learned from the Look-To-The-East idea in Culture and Arts Segment**

In an article published in *Fajar Asia* entitled '*Kigensetsu, 11 Haribulan 2: Hari lahirnya Kerajaan Diraja Nippon pada 2602 tahun dahulu*' stated that the Kigensetsu Day (Japanese Empire Day) which falls on 11 Nigatsu (February) is the day the Royal Government of Japan was born. Similar to Tencho-setsu and Meiji-setsu, this big day is one of four big days celebrated in Japan. On this day Jinmu Tenno (Emperor Jinmu) as the first Emperor of Japan Royal had ascended the throne 2603 years ago. Tenno was considered to be the descendants of the noblest sons of God and heirs of the high spirit of a God. With the intention to rule in peace and security, he has completed a very great job, which is to develop a Royal Government.

Jinmu Tenno had initially set Huiga, a district in Kyushu province as the capital of his kingdom. Although at that time Japan was in peace and security, places located on the outskirts of the country is yet to be included under the administration of the Emperor. Criminal activities such as robbery and theft are still rampant in those places. After consulting with his brothers and the other parties, Tenno led his troops from Huiga to eliminate the rampant crime to establish peace and prosperity for the nation. Therefore, it enabled all the people to form a family that lived together in peace and security. Efforts to eliminate robbers took a very long time. During this period, he went through numerous hardships. Some of them were having a hard time negotiating storms at sea, passing through steep places, being lost, and so on. His own brother was killed in a battle.

Notwithstanding the terrible difficulties, Jimmu Tenno never retreated even one step, yet it strengthened his stance, and he would then send his troops to secure places that were full of robbery and banditry activities. As a result, peace and prosperity were achieved in various places in Japan. Tenno always looked at his people as his own sons, who were very loved and cared for, and all the people believed that their main duty was the loyalty to Tenno. Across the country, people lived as a united family which always lived in peace and their enterprises continued to progress thus increasing their prosperity. In this case, the Japanese became one of the greatest and mightiest nation in the world. To honor Jimmu Tenno's holy charities, and to celebrate the founding of a government that was regarded as unparalleled in the world, which also had a glorious and exceptional history, then there was very big plans in place for the celebration of this national Big Day all over Japan.

Jaafar bin A. Ghani in his article '*Taman Kanak2: Asal Usulnya Banzai*' discussed the historical origins of the word Banzai. Banzai cheers will be heard at every major festival in Japan and also when Japanese dignitaries pass through a crowd. The word Banzai was even heard through the air of the Malay homeland when Japanese military entered the country. Banzai as a word is derived from two words namely '*Ban*' which means 10,000 and '*Zai*' which means years. So, altogether it means 10,000 years. The word is written as "Wan Sui" in Chinese characters. The fact is, the word Banzai has now been used for more than 21 centuries (2100 years), calculated from the year 207 BC, when the word was first used.

During the reign of Emperor Chou, there was an extravagantly expensive jewel named "Ho Shih-Pi" or

Ho Shih Gems belonging to King Hui. The gem was thought to be equivalent to several provinces in the kingdom. Since King Hui was worried about the expansion carried out by Emperor Chou, he sent a messenger named Lin Hsiang-Ju to present the gem to Emperor Chou. As the messenger who brought the gem entered the palace, all ministers, officials and eunuchs present in the hall had stood up and shouted "Wan Sui" or "Banzai!". Later in the year 488 during the reign of Kammu Tenno (the 50<sup>th</sup> Tenno), there was a very long dry season. All streams, wells and ponds were drying up. During that time people had a very terrible living. One morning after he had finished all his duties, he went for a walk in the garden and saw dried trees. There, he prayed for a heavy rain to water the earth. Soon, the sky became dark and cloudy followed by a heavy rain. Because of the heavy rain, all the plants became green and the dry soil started to be wet and watery. As a symbol of gratitude, all of his escorts jumped in joy and they shouted "Banzai ! Banzai !! Banzai !!!".

Since that day, shouts of Banzai had become a sign of joy for all the people of Japan. The word was first seen as a national shout in 1889. From that year, the Japanese government has announced that the word Banzai can be shouted and cheered at all places by anybody. On 11 Nigatsu (February) 1889, Emperor Meiji was inspecting the troops in front of the Nijubashi bridge at the Royal Palace. During the ceremony, students from the Royal High School of Tokyo were cheering the word Banzai in mass. That was some history of Banzai word which was regarded as bringing good luck for the Japanese. Even in their homes, we can hear them singing and cheering the Banzai word to repel demons and as a prayer for for the whole house to be blessed.

Huseini Latif in his article '*Samurai dan Bushido!*' stated that the history of Japanese government dignity had never been found in any other government in the history of the world. Descendants of the king have been holding the throne until now, which spans for over 2603 years. Japanese people felt very proud and noble because the history of Jinmu ruling had never broken since the reign of Jinmu Tenno until now. It has become nobility for the Japanese that their country is a country that has never been conquered and colonized since the beginning of time. The reason for this is none other than their strong spirit and their undivided loyalty towards the Emperor of Japan. They have the conviction that all the descendants of Jinmu Tenno comes from the gods of the heavens, in which the gods had stated that, "Japan is one district, where my descendants ruled."

In addition to their holy beliefs, the spirit and soul of Japanese people are also trained with the spirit of Samurai and Bushido since ancient times. With these spirits sowed in the hearts of the people of Japan, they are known as a mighty race, a race that is not afraid to die facing their enemy as long as their sacrifice is to the Emperor of Japan, their race and homeland. Samurai spirit is the spirit that they inherited from the Samurai who had been the Emperor's powerful and obedient army, mighty men of valor who safeguarded the Royal Palace. Samurai had a high and noble position due to their spirit, courage, bravery and obedience to the Japanese Emperor. They never retreat when they encounter their enemies. They have two swords, one on their right and on their left which they used to fight their enemy in battle. Samurai sword had been inherited and believed to possess special power, in which when it was drawn, it will not be withdrawn before the enemy is beaten.

The Japanese forces are very renowned for their samurai spirit until now. They are known for their valiant warrior spirit and their bravery in eliminating enemies. It was with this samurai spirit that they became strong and could defend Japan from Kublai Khan attacks in the past. The combination of Kublai Khan's army along with China's armed forces had been evicted by Samurai forces under the command of Yorimoto. This defeat had caused massive destruction to Kublai Khan's armed forces to the extent that he no longer dared to attack Japan again. Accompanying the Samurai spirit is Bushido spirit which stood solidly in Japanese people, that is the spirit of the warriors and heroes of their ancestors in ancient times, the spirit which amplifies their bravery in the battle. Bushido is one of the customs of the Japanese honor inherited from one generation to another until today.

It is the Bushido spirit that guided the life of the Japanese people to fight and sacrifice for the sake of their homeland and race. It is the Bushido spirit that ordered everyone to forget about himself, but put the needs and happiness of the masses. It is also Bushido spirit which guides the people of Japan on the true path, patience and work sincerely for the Emperor of Japan. When one sees that he has been guilty and felt ashamed, he must punish himself with ancient Bushido customs that is executing the death penalty upon the people which is called Harakiri (belly-cutting). Performing this Harakiri custom upon one's desire is a great honor, showing that the person is honest and has admitted the offense. Japanese military policy as directed by Meiji Tenno obligates every warrior to strive and be completely loyal to Meiji Tenno, each warrior must be

polite, must uphold the truth and trust and must be prudent and moderate.

It is evident and can be observed during the Second World War, how the strong spirit of the Japanese army was able to tear down enemy strongholds and defenses deemed strong in all lines of war. There were so many young Japanese men who were willing to sacrifice themselves in this war, fighting for the safety of hundreds of Asian souls, to release their Asian brothers from the tyranny of the Western powers. The whole world was amazed and astonished upon hearing the news of the fall of Singapore, one of the strongest British fortifications in the South, accompanied by the sinking of two British giant ships named the Prince of Wales and Repulse. That was the strength of the spirit of Samurai and Bushido, the spirit of warrior and holy sacrifice that has been embedded in the inner soul of the young Japanese men, who were willing to give his life for a shared prosperity. The young men of Malaya can also showcase the same sacrifice. They may have inherited the spirit of the Malay warriors, such as the holy sacrifice made by Admiral Hang Tuah from Malaya, Diponegoro of Java, Imam Bonjol of Minangkabau and Tengku Omar Johan, a warrior from Aceh. These are some examples of a balanced spirit for the purpose of holy intention in a war in order to restore Asia for Asians.

Jaafar bin A. Ghani in his article '*Taman Kanak2: Budi Akhlaq Bangsa Nippon*' stated that there are two words in Japanese that shows the height of their moral sense than the other races. Those two words uttered every time they receive or accept gifts from others are *Mottainai* and *Arigato*. If a Japanese person receives a gift from another person, the goods will be welcomed by bowing his head downwards as he uttered the words "mottainai". The word shows the noble spirit and high moral character of the Japanese people. "I accept such a noble and beautiful gift from you, with great deal of *mottainai*, it seems more than appropriate for me to accept." "I've got a very good care, *mottainai*, more than what I deserved". The same goes on every time a Japanese person expressing their thanks for all the gifts they received. They would welcome it with a heart full of humility and piety, with high regard to the kindness of people who have been kind enough to grant them that.

Similarly, when a Japanese person is receiving gratitude and good deeds done to him, he bowed his head to say the word "*arigato gozaimasu*". This word originates from the word "*arigatai*" which deeper meaning is "this very-very inconvenient for sir" or "it's so very rare that I accept this kind of goodness." That

speech reflects the height of deeds and courtesy of the person that have been kind to them, and how great the courtesy the person is receiving. A child who received a grant from their parents, would bow his head down while saying "Mottainai". A wife who accepted money or gifts or such kindness from her husband would bow her head reverently while saying "Mottainai" or "arigato gozaimasu". A student who has passed a test and received a letter of certification, will visit the teacher and stand in front of his teacher, lowering his head to say "arigato gozaimasu". A friend who is grateful for the grant or good deeds from a friend, would like to humbly utter the word "Mottainai" and "arigato gozaimasu". In brief, that word will be uttered by every Japanese, every time they express their thanks for all grants and kindness they received.

Those words show their incredible joy, imagining the magnitude of gratitude that they will not forget until the end of their life. "It's very generous and kind of you, it's of great courtesy of you to go through difficulties because of me", that is the sort of feeling embedded in the hearts of the Japanese individuals each time they say those words. It is as if they have no right towards themselves and as if they are of no value, apart from what they imagined in their heart was the courtesy and gifts received from kind hearted human to them. They did not look at the size of the grants, not evaluating the magnitude of good deeds the received, but they only think about the integrity and sincerity of the person who have done good things to them.

This is the height of the Japanese morale values that are rarely found in other races. They no longer think about themselves, no pride or whatsoever which impedes them from being thankful, and they also live in a friendly and loving spirit, being fond to each other and appreciating one another. In Islam there is a saying by the Prophet, "Whoever who does not being thankful for small grants, he will not be thankful for large grants". "Whoever who does not thank a man, he is not grateful to God". The Malay youths are urged to emulate the quality of good characters, and the noble attitudes of Japanese people. There is a Malay proverb which says, "Gold debt is payable with gold, debt of gratitude brought to the afterlife".

### Conclusion

Putting Japan as an example and a role model can be viewed as a form of Look-To-The-East idea that has been initiated since the beginning of the 20th century. It was the Kaum Muda who initiated it through the publication of *al-Imam* magazine in July 1906 and subsequently, this idea was expanded by other

newspapers and magazines during the British colonial era. After Japan had successfully driven the British out of Malaya, the Look-To-The-East idea was still continued by the Japanese government during World War Two through the publication of *Fajar Asia* magazine. *Fajar Asia* was also published for the reading of the Malays in Indonesia, making use of the standardized Malay language in the paper for the Malays in Malaya and Indonesia.

Although there are various segments can be found in *Fajar Asia* magazine, this paper only deals with language, culture and arts segment. Look-To-The-East idea adopted in the Malay community life at this time comprised of various aspects. For example, learning Japanese language to know more about the aspects of Japanese culture and arts, culture and knowledge exchange that took place between Malaya and Japan, narration of historical events that occurred behind Kigensetsu Day (Empire of Japan Day), the origin of the Banzai word, the Samurai and Bushido spirit and emulating the the way Japanese express their thankfulness when receiving good deeds or grants from others.

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