

Completion Report

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A Historical Research on Health and Sanitation Services During the Japanese Occupation in Malaya 1941-1945

The Japanese administration in Malaya was an important period in the history of Malaysia. Health and municipal hygiene services during the Japanese occupation did not get the attention of researchers in the past. Early studies discovered that the Japanese administration also gave attention to municipal health and cleanliness issues. Therefore, this research aims to give light to health and sanitation issues that are being handled by the Sanitary Board in the towns of Alor Setar and Kuala Lumpur. The objectives of this research are to (1) identify administrative issues in managing of the Sanitary Board

(2) to discuss the health and sanitation issues in the towns managed by those Sanitary Board and (3) to analyze the steps taken by Sanitary Board in overcoming the health and sanitation issues in their jurisdiction. This research was conducted at the National Archives of Malaysia in Alor Setar, Kedah and in Kuala Lumpur. In-depth studies have been conducted into the records on the health administration in both towns throughout the Japanese occupation.

This study finds that the Health and Sanitation Board were plagued by several issues during the Japanese Occupation. The main issue was drug/medicine and equipment shortage in town hospitals and dispensaries. The shortage happened because the Penang administration had imposed strict regulations on the export of medicines making it impossible for the Kedah government to legally purchase medicines from Penang. The prices of medicines and health equipment have also increased and are difficult to find. The Kedah government also instructed its officer to go to Syonan-To (Singapore) to buy medicines and health equipment. The Health and Sanitation Board also faced the issue of lack of income due to residents not paying the Door and Latrine Revenue tax. There are also landlords and shopkeepers who refuse to pay the Door and Latrine Tax because their houses are occupied by Japanese people or Japanese soldiers, and they do not get any rent from the Japanese. Apart from private buildings that have arrears of Door and Latrine Revenue, buildings owned by the government, Chinese schools, Malayan Railways, and company titles also have debts to the Sanitary Board. The issue of the low salary of the Sanitary Board staff was also raised during the Japanese occupation of Malaya. This situation led to another issue, which was the issue of the lack of staff on the Health and Sanitary Board. This situation is quite critical because staff such as health inspectors are important to carry out anti-malaria inspection work and need to visit houses in the Sanitary Board area. The situation deteriorated with the increase in transmission of diseases such as malaria. The State Surgeon expressed concern about many more cases of Malaria in villages that did not receive hospital treatment due to transportation and manpower problems. It was difficult to keep the labor force working with the Sanitary Board because they could get better wages elsewhere. However, this salary increase for Sanitary Board workers is expected to cause workers from other departments to demand a salary increase. The Kedah government must consider this matter before deciding to raise the wages of Sanitary Board workers.

This study further concludes that amid the hardship faced by the populations during the Japanese Occupation, the local administration tried their best to provide and maintain services as before the occupation. The issues emerged during the Japanese Occupation were related to the economic hardship during those times. This is especially related to high inflation, lack or reduced food supplies, damages brought by the war. The records provided have shown that the local authorities were trying very hard to overcome and improve the situation in their area of jurisdiction and the Japanese administration gave full cooperation to the local administration.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

14 June 2024, Oral Presentation in conjunction with Academic Visit Program at Walailak University Thailand,
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Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

- Soon to be published (with feedback from the presentation)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)