

COMPLETION REPORT

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【Subject of Research Project】

A Historical Study of The Influence of Japanese Sake and Textile Trade on Cultural Diversity in Colonial Malaya

This research project explores the trade relations between Japan and Malaya during the British colonial era. Particular attention is given to the influence of Japanese products, such as sake and textiles—especially cotton and silk—on the cultural diversity of Malayan society. The development of Malaya's export economy under British rule sustained the process of globalisation, fostering not only economic exchanges but also cultural interactions across continents. Japan's commercial interests in Malaya extended beyond raw materials such as iron ore to include the Malayan market itself, which showed strong potential for absorbing imports from Japan, particularly alcoholic beverages and luxury textiles that were more affordable than their Western counterparts. The growth of Japanese commercial activities in Malaya subsequently led to the establishment of Japanese communities in urban areas, where they acquired land to conduct economic ventures, notably rubber plantations. At the same time, some members of the Japanese community engaged in fishing activities. Based on these developments, the study finds that interactions between the Japanese community and the local population fostered cultural diversity. In addition, the socio-economic advancement of the local population, particularly the Malays, was often associated with the constructive nature of Japanese enterprise in Malaya, in contrast to the protectionist practices of European enterprises. According to British administrative records in Malaya, there were instances of Japanese individuals adopting Malay traditions, as well as Malays who admired aspects of Japanese culture. This cultural exchange also contributed to strengthening patriotic sentiments among the local population and further ignited a sense of pride in Asian civilisation, particularly Malay heritage, within the community. The study also finds that cultural diversity expanded rapidly, as illustrated in local magazines such as *Semangat Asia* and *Fajar Asia*. Both magazines were published around the 1940s. The magazine promoted Asian cultural diversity based on Japanese values, aiming to strengthen Asian identity, which was perceived to have diminished under European colonial rule. Among the features highlighted were the achievements of Malays who pursued higher education in Japan without relying on Western institutions. Additionally, traditional Japanese-style games such as *Heitai Gokko* were promoted within the magazine. At the same time, it encouraged literacy in both Malay and Japanese among its readership, including advertisements for entertainment such as Japanese songs and films. Overall, both magazines sought to inspire readers to rebuild Asian culture and shape an Asian society founded on the concept of *Hakko Ichiu* and shared prosperity. Finally, this grant provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Japan-Malaya relations and to explore new perspectives through visits to institutions such as Soka University and Kyoto University. Popular reading materials and business records related to Japan in Malaysia should be further explored by future researchers.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)
Mohd Shazwan Mokhtar. 2024. A Preliminary Review of the Reconstruction of Malayan Culture in the Discourse of 'Fajar Asia' and 'Semangat Asia'. Prosiding Simposium Kebudayaan Malaysia-Indonesia. Bangi Resort Hotel, Selangor, Malaysia, 23-24 October.
Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)
Mohd Shazwan Mokhtar. (Decision pending). Colonial capitalization and business investment in the Federated Malay States in the interwar years. <i>Business History</i> [Submitted on 03 October 2024]
Mohd Shazwan Mokhtar. (Final review before submission). Japanese Commercial Interest in Malaya, 1920-1941. <i>Jebat</i> [Expected submission July 2025]
Mohd Shazwan Mokhtar. (Writing process) Reconstruction of Malayan Culture in the Discourse of 'Fajar Asia' and 'Semangat Asia'. <i>Akademika</i> [Expected submission September 2025]
Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)