
【Summary】

Memory that could bridge social cleavage and reunite separated family: Production and screening of *Absent Without Leave*

Lau Kek-Huat

(translated by the JAMS editorial board)

This essay was edited from oral presentations by Lau Kek-Huat, a Malaysia-born filmmaker based in Taiwan. The presentations took place at the Documentary session on 21 October 2017, which screened his autobiographical documentary film *Absent Without Leave*, followed by a discussion, and at the symposium *Unforgettable Memory: Looking back on 60 Years of Independence of Malaya* held on 22 October 2017, during the Japan Association for Malaysian Studies (JAMS) 2017 Annual Conference (the Documentary session was co-organised with Cine Adobo).

Absent Without Leave, which features Lau's grandfather who was a member of Malayan Communist Party (MCP), including the sale of its DVDs, was banned from screening in Malaysia. The Malaysian government still recognises that the MCP was a subversive threat to public order in the process of nation building in Malaya/Malaysia. Due to this fact, it has been a taboo for Lau's family to talk about his grandfather. In filming the interviews conducted by Lau with his family and ex-MCP members in Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, and Thailand, who experienced separation of family, *Absent Without Leave* reveals the forgotten or untold histories of modern Asia.

The essay discusses filmic media and its relationship with individual and collective memory as well as history. With the contestation of memory in contemporary Malaysia, as in most of the other parts of the world, the essay points out that it is a huge, but meaningful, challenge for filmic media to access various motivations and stories that existed during the general course of history.

【Summary】

Intertwining National Anthem and Reversed Song for Nostalgia:
 Historical Memory and Identity of Chinese Malaysian in
 a documentary film, *Absent Without Leave*

MURAI Hiroshi
 (Kanagawa University)

Malayan Communist Party (MCP) began its armed struggle in 1948 in Malaya under British rule and continued it until 1989. They have been a terrorist group in the official history of Malaysia, and to investigate it has been a taboo. But after 2000s, some Malaysian and Singaporean documentary films on that subject appeared. *Absent Without Leave*, a Lau Kek-Huat (廖克尧)'s film, also deals with it. It doesn't merely objectively investigate the historical truth, but also reflects a travel by a Chinese Malaysian film director living in Taiwan to search for his family's roots / routes.

In the interview with the ex-MCP members, the film seems to focus on their identity and emotion, and there are many scenes where they sing a song of those days. Each of these songs has its own historical background, and it plays a role of mediating personal emotions and respective times. In this article, we will elaborate the background of those songs, and explore the transition of identity of them and how the director Lau is re-positioning it within a narrative of Malaysian Chinese history.

Anti-Japanese songs sung by two female ex-members of anti-Japanese force of the MCP represent feelings of when some of Malayan Chinese awoke to "patriotism" to China by witnessing the Japanese invasion of China and unfairness of the British colonial rule. On the contrary, "Terang Boelan" used as a background music, which is known as another version of "Negaraku", Malaysian national anthem, is acting as a guide for recalling "alternative" historical narrative deleted in the official history. And songs sung by ex-Malayan Chinese women who "returned" to China show that some anti-Japanese songs which have close relation to Chinese nationalism could be sung with nostalgic sentiments to their hometown in Malaysia.

In this film, the Chinese (quasi) national anthem sung by the ex-MCP members are intertwining with (another version of) Malaysian "national anthem", and anti-Japanese song which was originally sung with emotion of nostalgia for lost homeland in Northeast China reversed to the one for their homeland in Malay(si)a. Here, the voices of the ex-MCP members have an interactive dialogue with the voice of the director of the film. Only such interaction may lead the historical memory of the MCP to the re-construction of identity of Chinese Malaysian.

【Summary】

Do Not Fix the Roof: The Malayan Communist Party
and its Holes in the Work of Ng Kim Chew

OIKAWA Akane

(Kanda University of International Studies)

In the work of Ng Kim Chew (1967-), a Malaysian Chinese writer based in Taiwan, the Republican Malayan Communist Party is repeatedly taken up as a theme to uncover the collective fate of the Chinese. Moreover, the scheme of his work is itself the construction of Malaysian Chinese literature. In that sense, to write about the Malayan Communist Party is to construct Malaysian-Chinese literature. The “historical tragedy” embodied by the Malayan Communist Party can be described as a work of “Mahua literature,” whose configuration is different from that of historical research. It depicts not only the collective memories of those surrounding the Malayan Communist Party but also depicts its traces, its remnants, or what might be called the holes that the Party left behind.

In the construction of Mahua literature, “Mahua” (regional distinction) is affirmed, yet the dominance of “Mahua” over “literature” (literary independence) is denied. The literature with this aim is clearly differentiated from the Mahua literary realism of the past and repeatedly takes up the theme of the absent father. This theme can also be read as a metaphor for the absence of a Mahua literary canon.

Having thus set the stage, in this article, I will describe those works that recount the lack or absence of memory of the Malayan Communist Party, in particular “Important Documents” (1989), “The Year My Father Died” (2013), “Message from the Forest” (2013), and “Returning Home” (2014). I have attempted to analyze the ways in which the void or absence surrounding the memory of the Malayan Communist Party is described in these works.

One story tracks a missing person, the absent father, and in the course of the story, without knowing it, the tracker receives a task entrusted to him by the ghost of history, and himself becomes the missing person. In another work, the information given does not add up but instead proves contradictory, so that the whole picture never becomes clear. The ambiguity of the character is, at the same time, the recreation of collective memory with its multiple possibilities. Collective memory sneaks in like a roof leak and is manifested as a double attached to the character. Or it is presented as multiple possibilities through substitution or replacement, not as an other but as the “he” that dwells within the first-person “I.” Through the quest for the “fourth person,” it rises to the surface of the water for the first time.

【Summary】

Evicted from Homeland:
Chinese Indonesians, Whose Lives were Wrecked
by the Sep 30th Incident and Cultural Revolution

KURASAWA Aiko

(Professor Emeritus, Keio Gijuku University)

During the upheaval of post Sep. 30 Movement in 1965 various types of harassment was made on ethnic Chinese in all over Indonesia. In many cases it was politically motivated: Ethnic Chinese were considered pro-Peking and leftist. Although death toll was relatively low, they were physically threatened and their properties were robbed. As a result of those harassment many ethnic Chinese actually decided to “return” to China. In some cases they were actually leftist facing the danger of arrest, but there were also students whose schools were closed down and who tried to continue education in China. They escaped to China individually by their own risk and expense. However, in the case of Aceh, North Sumatra, all ethnic Chinese were ordered to leave and there was mass exodus by ship sent by Chinese government. The ship transported total 4181 persons in 4 trips between Sep. 1966 and May 1967. Many of the returnees were accommodated in overseas Chinese farms prepared by Chinese government. They were at least given place to live and fixed income enough to survive. However, they had to suffer from psychological hardships because of political situation of China. In the middle of such efforts to receive overseas Chinese as political refugees, big political upheaval took place in China herself; Culture Revolution. The high ranking officials in charge of Overseas Chinese Affairs also had to face attack and criticism by Red Guards and the policies toward overseas Chinese underwent serious change. Returnees from Indonesia, who first were accepted as political refugees, gradually became the target of criticism as feudal bourgeoisie, and many of them were sent to remote villages for political education. Thus those who escaped to China to evade harassment in Indonesia had to face another harassment in China. Many of the returnees regretted the decision they had made. In 1971 special decree was issued by Chinese government and returnee were allowed to leave China if they wanted. Many left for Hongkong in search for possibility of going back to Indonesia. However Indonesian government did not allow them to come back, and they are stuck in Hongkong until now. After recovery of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and China they were allowed to visit Indonesia but never were allowed to come back and settle there again, even though many of them consider Indonesia as “tanah air (homeland)”

【Summary】

Malay Muslim Revisions of the History of
Malaya's Decolonisation

TSUBOI Yuji
(Meio University)

This paper examines recent revisions of the history of Malayan decolonisation from the Malay Muslim perspective.

Revisions of history always include not only the discovery of new historical facts but also changes in perception toward a more contemporary standpoint. In research on the modern history of Malaysia, the current political situation, wherein a multi-ethnic party block has won support in opposition to an ethnicity-based National Front, has stimulated the revision of existing perspectives on national history, which traditionally has described the independence of Malaya as an achievement by an alliance of ethnicity-based (i.e. Malay, Chinese and Indian) political parties. In contemporary Malay studies, on the contrary, the thoughts and activities of the 'Malay left', which opposed the UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) and offered an alternative vision for the new nation, have recently attracted attention.

Such revisions of history may also be contributing to an ongoing revision of the political framework of Malaya/Malaysia, as this framework was itself formed in the process of decolonisation. The transnational nature of the Malay Muslim perspective has not yet been fully revealed but has been hinted at in *Qalam*, a Malay monthly magazine published in Singapore. The magazine, which appeals to Muslim solidarity across political borders and criticises nationalists in both Malaysia and Indonesia, shows the need to reconsider Malayan politics in the wider context of the Malay Muslim world. The history of Malaysia as a maritime Southeast Asian nation, where state and ethnic frameworks have been flexible at all times, needs constant reconsideration from a multi-layered perspective.

【Summary】

Memories of Postwar Reconstruction in Singapore:
The ‘Legacies of War’ as They Appear in History Textbooks
and a War Museum

MATSUOKA Masakazu
(Hitotsubashi University)

The exhibition ‘Surviving the Japanese Occupation: War and Its Legacies’ opened at the Former Ford Factory in Singapore on 15th February 2017, the date when the city-state fell to the Japanese Army 75 years earlier. This exposition is located at the very place where British troops surrendered to the Japanese Army in 1942 and consists of four parts: Introduction, the Fall of Singapore, Becoming Syonan and the Legacies of War. This paper describes the display and reports the narrative recounted in the last zone which focuses on the postwar reconstruction of Singaporean society. The Singaporean Government has presented a single official narrative of the ‘Singapore Story’ as the history of the nation: the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew and the People’s Action Party, the city-state’s struggle against colonialism and communism, its successful economic policies, and its apt handling of diplomacy with its bigger and powerful neighbours. The government has used this story to integrate its people. In contrast, a new historical narrative has emerged which differs from the ‘success story’ projected by the People’s Action Party. This version highly values the role of the left wing parties. This study refers to the secondary history textbook and also considers the images of postwar Singapore that are presented in the abovementioned newly inaugurated museum in the context of the trend of historiography.

Both the history textbook and the museum exhibition emphasise the suffering from war and Japanese occupation and recount the country’s recovery from this period of difficulty. In addition, both employ the approach of social history and focus on the experiences of ordinary people through documents, photographs, films and oral testimonies rather than on the achievements of political and economic leaders. By contrast, both carefully remove historical sources that may cause ethnic division and may detract from the legitimacy of the ‘Singapore Story’. One such example would be documents attesting to the role played by the Malayan Communist Party in Singapore’s independence movement. The historical narrative portrayed by the textbook and the exhibition seems to embrace various accounts of Singaporean history but both eliminate stories that may affect national integration or lead to a questioning of the official narrative.

【Summary】

Contested War Memories on the Malay Peninsula:
Focusing on History Education and War Commemoration

WATANABE Yosuke

(Osaka University of Economics and Law)

This paper is a policy proposal regarding how to bridge ethnic divides arising from contested war memories, particularly between the Malays and the Chinese, based on analysis of history education and war commemoration in Malaysia and Singapore. It is generally argued that the seeds of ethnic divide were sown during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya (1941-1945). During the occupation, Japan ruled Malaya in collaboration with the Malays and the Indians and harshly oppressed enemy nationals, such as the Chinese, British, and Dutch. Under Japanese rule, those collaborators, including the Malays, also persecuted the Chinese and other enemy nationals. After the war, some Chinese citizens who suffered at the hands of the Malays took revenge on them. This is generally seen as a remote cause of race riots that occurred between the Malays and the Chinese in 1964 and 1969.

As suggested above, war memories transmitted to younger generations differ depending on the ethnic group. For the Chinese, the Japanese Occupation was a period of massacres and suffering. For the Malays, the occupation period was seen as a time of national awakening during which many people were awakened to Malay nationalism. Due to these contested war memories, each ethnic group has conducted war commemorative events separately. This is seen as one factor that makes ethnic divides persist until today.

What are ways to bridge ethnic divides arising from different war experiences and memories? This essay argues that when teaching history of war, one needs to educate younger generations under the following three principles. First, one should view the violent past not only from the perspective of one's own ethnic group but also from other ethnic groups' perspectives. Second, do not inculcate ways of thinking in the minds of students that killing enemies is a must during war-time, or that using violence is inevitable when solving problems with people who do not share the same values. Third, it is essential to help students understand that friend and foe alike are the same: human beings. In conclusion, a sense of humanism inculcated in students will probably help bridge ethnic divides in the future.

【Summary】Development of Land Tenure System and Ethnicity in
Peninsular Malaysia: The Case of the Lebir Valley, KelantanKAWAI Aya
(Chiba University)

Current literature addresses the two *bumiputera* (indigenous) ethnic groups of the Peninsular Malaysia differently in the context of land issue. The main subjects of the land development projects in the FELDA schemes were “Malay,” whereas the “Orang Asli” living any development sites have claimed the titles to these lands. “Malay” and “Orang Asli” are the only legally defined populations of the peninsular region, and both have their respective reservations. While several studies have discussed the relevance of the development of the land tenure system for the establishment of legal “Malay” in the colonial state, only few have examined the two categories together.

This paper aims to investigate the roles of the land tenure system and the two ethnic-racial categories in state-building by analyzing relevant literature, maps, and field work data. Based on the perspective that the land administration policies with official ethnic-racial categories act as a mean to regulate the indigenous inhabitants and their land use, the paper examines the background of the establishments of the legal ethnic categories and the administration of the categorized people with reference to land governance as well as describes the process that these policies have shaped for land use of the inhabitants in the Lebir valley, Kelantan.

Our findings indicate that the development of land law and legal ethnic-racial categories has enabled the authority to grasp inhabitants and their land use as ethnically/racially divided subjects for governing. With the establishments of reservations, “Malay” and “Orang Asli” were legally defined at different epochs in the history: the first definition of “Malay” was established in 1913 prior to that of “Aborigine (Orang Asli)” in 1954. Those events placed indigenous inhabitants and their land use under the government control. The implementations of policies with these categories had spatially divided “Malay” inhabitants and “Orang Asli” inhabitants of the Lebir valley and created a territorialized landscape of the ethnic-racial areas. During the Emergency (1948-1960), “Malay” people at the upriver were forced to relocate as part of the “anti-communist guerrilla plan,” while the “Orang Asli” inhabitants remained. The land became *terra nullius* since the “Orang Asli” inhabitants were not legal land owners, rather customary land users. After the independence, FELDA villages for the “Malay” citizens and reservations for the “Orang Asli” citizens were created at these “empty” spaces.

The land tenure system and the law-defined ethnic categories are part of the cultural and social constructs for administration, which is not always in accordance with the peoples’ land use. This study offers a new perspective to the indigenous land issue under the current land system with specific ethnic categories.