

Sample 1: HSI Write-up (2022)

Identify and Explain the Historical Significance of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore: The Eurasian Community and Bahau Experiment

Introduction

The Japanese Occupation (JO), the darkest chapter in Singapore's history, remains a historically significant event as seen from its impact on the Eurasian community, an important minority group in Singapore. The voices and experiences of the Eurasian community who experienced the war are still relatively unheard till this day and are often relegated to a footnote in Singapore's national war memory.

Findings

After the fall of Singapore, the Eurasians were screened and many were interned at Changi prison due to their close association to the Europeans. Later during the JO, the Eurasians were offered an opportunity to relocate to Bahau (refer to Source 6). Between December 1943 and April 1944, 2,000 Eurasians left their homes for Bahau in the Malayan state of Negeri Sembilan.

Food scarcity and starvation

The Eurasians who relocated to Bahau experienced major upheaval to their lives as they suffered from food scarcity and starvation (refer to Source 2). Bahau was established as an agricultural settlement to ease the food shortage problem in Singapore and the Eurasians were encouraged to grow their own crops. However, many settlers had little to no knowledge of farming (refer to Source 7) and the land was also unsuitable for agriculture. Only certain crops were discovered to be able to thrive in these conditions. Life was terrible for the Eurasians due to food scarcity as well as an unbalanced diet, which led to malnutrition (refer to Source 1, supported by Source 4).

Disease and illness

Furthermore, malaria was rampant and plagued the Eurasians in Bahau due to the mosquitoes infestation brought about by poor drainage. The chronic food shortages and poor diet mentioned earlier made the Eurasians even more susceptible to malaria and other tropical diseases (refer to Sources 5 and 9). Coupled with poor hospital facilities and lack of medication, an estimated 500 out of 3000 Eurasian settlers lost their lives in Bahau (refer to source 10), which highlights the terrible living conditions in Bahau. After the war, many Eurasians became disillusioned with life in Singapore and subsequently left Singapore.

In summary, the JO is a historically significant event as it left indelible scars on the Eurasian community. On a personal level, the Eurasians of the Bahau settlement suffered tremendous hardship and many lost their lives. On a community level, the relocation to Bahau made the Eurasians lose their status as one of the privileged classes in Singapore (refer to source 3). On a national level, the losses and the subsequent mass exodus of Eurasians after the war led to the displacement of a small but important community in Singapore. Amidst the suffering

and losses, there were also stories of love, courage and resilience displayed by the Eurasians in Bahau.

The JO, which is a seminal event in the social history of Singapore, must never be forgotten and we must continue to acknowledge and hear the unheard voices and stories of Singaporeans who experienced the JO.

Reflection:

One challenge we faced was trying to find primary sources. To overcome this obstacle, we used websites such as 'National Archives Online' and 'NewspaperSG' for interview transcripts and newspaper articles which were very useful.

One improvement in the future would be to access more research platforms, an example being visiting the libraries to use the multimedia stations.

501 words

Annex: Foregrounded Sources

Source 1: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/5/538e75a0-115f-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC000421_012/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=3

Actually as far as food was concerned, those of us who were able to grow our vegetables - I say able to because those who are healthy enough to, and who had the spirit to do it - were... I mean, you know, we could feel ourselves... we ate a lot of vegetables. After all, people can live as vegetarians, do very well as vegetarians. And our fruit did very well. Our bananas were... (I don't know why it was, I said the soil wasn't very good) but our bananas were enormous. I'd never ever seen bananas which grew so well. The sad part about this was that we had so many bananas we couldn't finish it.

Source 2: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/1/167ad512-1161-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC003037_004/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=15

CY Didn't have enough to eat at Bahau?

BS We never had enough to eat. We never ever had anything to eat in Bahau. That is why they said they sent us to Bahau because they wanted the Eurasian people to build their own homes. But we didn't have anything to eat. I remember once there was this big thing about we had fish and my mother went and looked at the fish and she wouldn't even give us the fish because she said that there were maggots coming out of the fish. And the people that went and ate the fish got so sick, they died a couple of days later. So what did we have? Nothing. Picked the grass and cooked. Watch and see what the birds were eating and then picked that and cooked and eat because we didn't have any food anymore.

CY This was for the entire stay at Bahau?

BS For the entire time that we were there. We didn't have anything. Except when we were in the hospital when I was very, very sick. My mother took me to

Source 3: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/1/167ad512-1161-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC003037_004/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=17



good but after some time – after some time, people were ill and they couldn't do all these things anymore. When people are sick, you don't expect them to get up because Eurasians were not brought up that way. Eurasians had actually had a very good life in Singapore and then all of a sudden, they changed their life. That was hard. That was very hard. There were Eurasians that still lived in Singapore and it was not bad for them but it was still pretty hard. My grandmother didn't go. She didn't have to go to Bahau and she kept

Source 4: From the book *Syonan to Fuji-Go, The story of the Catholic Settlement of Bahau in WWII Malaya*, 2014 Page: 109

Nonetheless, interviews show that those who were willing to work the land were rewarded with crops such as sweet potato, tapioca, chilli and kangkong. These families did not go hungry, though their diet might have been monotonous and lacking in protein. Sometimes, the efforts of farmers were thwarted by their own children though. Robert Mitchell's father brought peanut plants but these never succeeded as the children used to pull out a peanut plant, eat the peanut seeds, and then put the plant back into the ground without their father knowing.³⁰

Source 5: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/5/538e75a0-115f-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC000421_012/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=7

Now, the illnesses that occurred among the settlers in Fuji Go were varied, but largely many of them stemmed from malnutrition. You could see that they were suffering from beri-beri, from pellagra; they were developing tropical sores which would not heal and in which maggots grew. There was diarrhoea, dysentery - amoebic dysentery or bacillary dysentery. Of course most serious of all was malaria and its complications, including cerebral malaria, blackwater fever. A complete rundown of body resistance was responsible for many, many of the deaths, if not all.



Source 6: From: The Syonan Shimbun, 15 January 1944, Page 1

<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/syonantimes19440115-1.2.7>

THE SYONAN SHIMBUN – January 15 1944

THE SYONAN SHIMBUN

Published By Syonan Shimbun Kai.
Toshio One, Chairman.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15, KOKI 2604, SYOWA 19.

Eurasians—Bahau Calling!

THE BAHAU SETTLEMENT scheme particularly in regard to its application to members of the Eurasian community in Syonan is something which all Eurasians who are fit and strong enough to go on the land should avail themselves of enthusiastically. Quite a number of suitable pioneers have already left for the site and others are awaiting their turn, but there is unlimited room at Bahau and those who have not yet registered their names are urged to do so in order that the authorities who are anxious to render this community every assistance in "getting on its feet" in healthy surroundings, may be convinced that Eurasians are worthy of the interest being taken in their welfare.

Never has any community in any country been made such an offer—free land, free house, free provisions to tide over the initial period, and food with pay during the collective work period, getting the sites ready for their families who will provide in all cases, during the time they are settling.

Eurasians – Bahau calling!

Sources 7: From Archives Online

<https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/5/538e75a0-115f-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad->

[0HC000421_012/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=3](https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/5/538e75a0-115f-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-0HC000421_012/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLogo.png&pn=3)

Yes, it's true that we didn't have any formal instruction on farming. We just used commonsense and methods that we had adopted in our own plots of land at home throughout the years. Just digging holes, making beds, putting the seeds; like for sweet potatoes we'll take certain shoots and put them in the beds. We knew that they had to be watered. I mean, you know, basic common sense methods.

Source 8: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/e/e1fc10ee-115d-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC000183_008/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingL_ogo.png&pn=1

Interviewee: Philip Carlyle Marcus, Source: National Archives Online, Oral History Centre

PCM When the instance of malaria was at its height in 1944, when we had at least one death a day, sometimes more, then we started clearing up the streams, allowing the water to flow. That did help, but it didn't eradicate malaria.

CSK Do you recall the first death?

PCM Oh yes. First death was a great affair. A young Chinese girl died. Everybody was very sad. Everybody turned out for the funeral and we buried her. It was quite early in '44. We didn't know then the ravages of malaria. When it got to a stage where it was common, where you had one or more deaths a day and no one bothered, I personally had to carry some of the coffins from the church to the grave. And once or twice I had to physically bury them. Because the men who dug the graves said, "Not our job to put the earth back. We've dug

Source 9: From Archives Online

https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/Flipviewer/publish/3/39321444-1160-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad-OHC000183_007/web/html5/index.html?launchlogo=tablet/OralHistoryInterviews_brandingLgo.png&pn=11

CSK Did you suffer from any diseases?

PCM Oh, malaria? The greatest instance of diseases was malaria. It was the biggest. Then we had dysentery, amoebic dysentery. Malaria was B.T. - Benign Tertian and Sub-Tertian. Sub-Tertian attacks your spine. And we didn't have... It caused the paralysis of your body. Some of them went temporarily insane. They used to run around, throw their clothes off, run naked on the road. Until they had a quinine injection to the spine, and then they came to [their senses]. Benign Tertian (B.T.) - it is low fever. It's called Benign because there is no apparent after-effects after the fever

Source 10: From the book *Syonan to Fuji-Go, The story of the Catholic Settlement of Bahau in WWII Malaya*, 2014 Page: 127

DEATH

In spite of the dedicated settlers who staffed it, the hospital was unable to cope with most of what came its way. Deaths mounted up and whilst there are no official figures, it is estimated that around 500 or more of the 3,000-plus settlers died during their stay in Bahau.

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Source 4, 10: Hodgkins, Fiona: *From Syonan to Fuji-Go, The story of the Catholic settlement of Bahau in WWII Malaya*, Select Books Pte Ltd, 2014

Source 6: Newspaper SG, 15 January 1944, *Syonan Shimbun*, Page 1

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