



MALAY NATIONALISM BEFORE UMNO

The Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain



MALAY NATIONALISM BEFORE UMNO

The Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain

Translated by Insun Sony Mustapha
Edited by Jomo K. S.



PUSTAKA PERDANA



1012192



UTUSAN PUBLICATIONS & DISTRIBUTORS SDN BHD

0001489



Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd
No. 1 & 3, Jalan 3/91A
Taman Shamelin Perkasa, Cheras
56100 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 03-92856577
Fax: 03-92846554/92875763
e-mail: enquiry@upnd.com.my
website: www.upnd.com.my

© Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn Bhd
First Published 2005

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Mustapha Hussain, 1910-1987

Malay Nationalism before UMNO: The memoirs of Mustapha Hussain /
Mustapha Hussain.

Includes index

ISBN 967 - 61 - 1698-X

1. Mustapha Hussain, 1910-1987. 2. Nationalists—Malaysia—Biography.
3. Malaysia—Politics and government—History. 4. Autobiography.

I. Title.

923.2595

*Distributed outside Malaysia by
Singapore University Press Pte. Ltd.
AS-01-02, 3 Arts Link
National University Singapore
Singapore 117569
<http://www.nus.edu.sg/sup/>*

Printed by
MAZIZA SDN. BHD.
No. 9, Jalan 111, Kepong Baru,
52100 Kuala Lumpur.

Contents

Testament

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Glossary

1. My Family: At the Dawn of the Twentieth Century	1
2. Matang in the Folds of History	6
3. The Tiger Catcher and Crocodile Slayer	11
4. <i>Kampung</i> Boy: Blind Shamans and ‘Feeding’ the Ghosts	20
5. Remaking Matang: Bound Feet and Rubber Tappers	26
6. The Malays of Matang: Steeped in Tradition	35
7. Malay School Education (1916-20)	41
8. Circumcision Ceremony (1921)	49
9. King Edward VII School, Taiping (1921-28)	55
10. Outside School: Sheikh Hassan, Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Feudalism	62
11. Leaving the Nest (1928-31)	72
12. Agricultural Assistant: Malay Poverty, <i>Ganja</i> and Speed	83
13. Marital Bliss (1934): Mariah, My Teen Bride	96
14. Teaching at Serdang (1933-41)	99
15. Stoking the Nationalist Fire	112
16. Early Politics: Nationalists of My Land, Unite	118
17. Political Conversations, Clandestine Meetings	125
18. KMM: The Young Malay Union (1938)	135
19. The First Malay Nationalists	145
20. Japanese Invasion: Ibrahim Yaakub’s Secret Deal	164
21. The Japanese Reject Independence for Malaya	182
22. Saving Three Malay Police Officers	198
23. Singapore, February 1942: Saving Malay Soldiers and Freeing KMM Members from Prison	208
24. Saving More Lives: Courageous Fighting Malay Men	226
25. At KMM House: Allegations and Arrests	244
26. Japanese ‘Volunteer’ Army (1943): Picked Up Again	251
27. Farming to Feed Hundreds (1943-45)	259

28. KRIS (July-August 1945): Drafting a Constitution for an Independent Malaya	268
29. The Japanese Surrender (15 August 1945): Independence Cheated by 48 Hours	287
30. Arrest and Interrogation (1945): The Informer and the Bed Bugs	294
31. Batu Gajah Prison (1945-46)	304
32. Arrested Again (1946)	318
33. Touring with Dr Burhanuddin (Late 1946): The Malay Nationalist Party	329
34. PUTERA-AMCJA Conference (1947)	341
35. Kuala Lumpur (1947-52): Continuing the Political Struggle	349
36. Hawking Food (1947-52): Ibrahim's Secret Note	362
37. Contesting the Post of UMNO President (1951)	371
38. Back to Taiping (1952)	378
39. UMNO Again (Taiping, June 1954): Independence in the Air	387
40. Rakyat Press (1957): Print Capitalism	393
41. Postscript: Why I Penned These Memoirs	399
<i>Appendix 1: Signed Statement by Haji Ahmad bin Haji Mohammad Amin</i>	403
<i>Appendix 2: English Translation of Signed Letter by Raja Dato' Sri Ahmed Hisham bin Raja Abdul Malik</i>	404
<i>Appendix 3: English Translation of Signed Statement by Jalaluddin Abu Bakar; Former CID Officer, Malaya</i>	405
<i>Afterword – Cries of a Tormented Soul by Cheah Boon Kheng</i>	406
<i>Afterword by William R. Roff</i>	410
<i>Index</i>	412

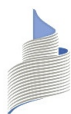
Testament

I am not ashamed to declare that my supposed collaboration with the forces of the New Order, as a result of Ibrahim Yaakub's (President of KMM, the Young Malay Union, of which I was Vice President) collusion with Japanese Intelligence before World War II, did not increase the speed of the Japanese juggernaut by one iota, nor the speed of the British retreat from the various fronts, from the mainland of Malaya to Singapore, by one-thousandth of a second.

However, I am proud to claim that I was instrumental in reducing the sufferings of the people by getting them out of the way of the Japanese army, feeding some stranded people, helping the Volunteer Officers and men I met on the way, and saving from certain death at the hands of the Japanese the lives of some ten Intelligence Officers working for the British and the Dutch Governments.

While in Singapore, I concentrated on helping the ex-soldiers and ex-volunteers in every way possible, thus alleviating their sufferings and also preventing them from being detained as Prisoners of War for the duration.

Signed by Mustapha Hussain
Former Vice President of KMM
Matang, Taiping
1976



Acknowledgements

This abridged and edited English translation of Mustapha Hussain's memoirs will appear two decades after his passing. This would not have been possible without the initial translation and other efforts of his devoted daughter, Insun Sony.

Mustapha Hussain's memoirs in Malay entitled *The Memoirs of Mustapha Hussain - The Rise of Malay Nationalism Before UMNO* was posthumously published, thanks to Insun's compilation and the editorial effort of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka editor, Yussop Ishak. It received the nation's highest literary award, Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia (Malaysia's Premier Literary Award) for 1998/1999 in the biography/autobiography category – the first time a book in the category had won the prestigious award in over twenty years.

I have edited this translation very heavily, partly to reduce redundancies, and also to make clearer some historical and cultural references that may not be immediately obvious to many English language readers. Clarissa Koh, Jo-ed Tirol and Insun kindly checked this edited translation. If not for Insun's and Clarissa's voluntary efforts, this translation would not have been prepared for publication. Jo-ed helped us keep in mind the perspective of an uninitiated reader besides adding his editorial hand. I am also grateful for the assistance secured for the preparation of the Index.

Cheah Boon Kheng was also supportive of this project, while Bill Roff kindly agreed to provide an Afterword at short notice.

This is only the latest of several recent and ongoing efforts to highlight the contributions of radical nationalists who gave so much of themselves for the independence of this nation.

Finally, it must be mentioned that Mustapha Hussain dedicated these memoirs to his beloved father, Haji Hussain bin Haji Aminuddin,¹ who died at the ripe old age of 90.

Jomo K. S.
University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur
1 August 2004

Note

1. *Translator's note:* Although my grandfather went through more than his fair share of trials and tribulations, he spent his later years reading, writing and performing his religious obligations with great commitment. But unlike Malay elders then, he only prayed in the mosque on Friday afternoons. Otherwise, he preferred to stay home and spend his time reading and writing between the five daily prayers.

Introduction

Insun Sony Mustapha

This book was translated from a manuscript written in 1976 by my late father, Mustapha Hussain (1910-87). He was the founding Vice President of Malaya's first Malay political party, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM, or Young Malay Union), that was set up in 1938. A true nationalist, he played a colourful role in the political history of Malaya before and after World War II. At the time of writing, 31 years after World War II ended, Mustapha was already 66 years old. Despite his feeble health and long years of silence, these episodes of his life remained vivid in his mind, resulting in these interesting memoirs.

The story begins with Mustapha's upbringing, a description of Malay society of the time, the arrival of Chinese and Indian immigrants into his hometown Matang, Perak, followed by his Malay and English education (1916-28) in colonial Malaya. He also mentions his early interest in Malay patriotism after listening to stories about the Malay patriots, Datuk Sagor and Datuk Maharajalela, who were hanged by the British just a few hundred metres from his ancestral home in Matang.

Mustapha writes about what Malay poverty was like then, when he was working as an Agricultural Assistant in Tapah (1931-33). He speaks of his anti-colonial feelings, which stemmed from British disregard for the educational, economic and social advancement of Malays, and his frustration with elite Malay indifference to the fate of the masses.

These memoirs describe Mustapha's early introduction to politics, his heightened political awareness from reading books and dailies, and his secret political meetings with radical young Malays to discuss the fate of the Malays. The story continues with the 1938 formation of the first Malay political organisation, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) or Young Malay Union, and his election as its Vice President. As the British disapproved of Malays getting involved in political activities, to these young radical nationalists KMM also meant Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka, or Independent Malaya Union.

Just before World War II broke out on 8 December 1941, KMM President Ibrahim Yaakub and 150 KMM members from all over Malaya

were arrested because the British suspected they would assist the invading Japanese forces. Mustapha was able to escape the British dragnet as he was then under treatment in the Malay Hospital of Kuala Lumpur. Unaware that there was a warrant of arrest for him, he left the hospital on long medical leave, returned to his work place, the School of Agriculture, collected his family and headed for his hometown Matang to recuperate.

However, a few weeks later, when he was in Matang, a Japanese Intelligence Unit (Fujiwara Kikan) under Major Fujiwara Iwaichi came looking for him as he was the most senior KMM member not in prison. Unknown to Mustapha, Ibrahim Yaakub had promised KMM's cooperation to the Japanese invaders. Many other KMM members, like Ishak Haji Muhammad (Pak Sako), Ahmad Boestamam, Idris Hakim and M.N. Othman, were also unaware of the secret pact.

Without his family's knowledge, Mustapha was taken away by the Japanese with just the clothes on his back. From Matang, he was taken to Taiping, then Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, and finally, Singapore, where he and some KMM members witnessed the 'fall of Singapore' on 15 February 1942. Accompanying the Japanese forces changed the course of his life. He and many Malay youths (both KMM and non-KMM members) 'moved' down the peninsula with the Japanese. His vivid first-hand accounts provide the first detailed narrative of the so-called Malay fifth columnist involvement in the war.

While the war raged in January 1942, Mustapha led a KMM delegation in Kuala Lumpur to ask Japanese commanders to declare Malaya's independence. Thus, he was the first Malay to ask for independence for his homeland, as confirmed on page 103 of Dr Cheah Boon Kheng's book *Red Star over Malaya*.

In fact, in January 1942, after the Japanese forces had entered Kuala Lumpur, a conflict of aims had arisen when Mustapha Hussain asked the Japanese commanders to back a proclamation of Malayan independence, citing Japan's promise to liberate Malaya from British rule. But the request was turned down.

Mustapha quoted the Japanese commander's symbolic answer: 'Let the Japanese be the father. Malay, Chinese and Indian be the children. However, if the Malay child is thin, we will give him more milk'.

Mustapha then used his position as a KMM leader, and his good relations with the Japanese to save, assist and free hundreds of people caught in the pandemonium of war. To begin with, while in Kuala Lumpur, he saved the lives of about ten Malay Intelligence Officers from sure death at the hands of the Japanese. These officers included the late Raja Dato' Sri Ahmed Hisham bin Raja Abdul Malik, then the highest-ranking Malay Police Officer in the colonial police force and later second in line to the

Perak throne. This has been substantiated by letters of appreciation from Raja Ahmed Hisham and his assistant, Jalaluddin Abu Bakar.

Mustapha landed in Singapore with Fujiwara Kikan two days before the fall of Singapore. There, he saved the lives of hundreds of Malay soldiers, again substantiated by many letters of appreciation. One soldier, Sgt Haji Harun Musa, was saved from a heap of dead bodies.

Mustapha helped many more soldiers by sending out word that Malay fighting men should not report to Farrer Park as ordered by the Japanese, as he feared they would become prisoners of war. Despite this effort, however several hundred Malay fighting men still went to the designated location.

He then visited Farrer Park himself, and advised Captain Raja Aman Shah (brother-in-law of Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister) and Lt Ariffin bin Haji Sulaiman on how to handle the new regime. He also sent food (he knew where the Japanese kept supplies) to detained Malay soldiers.

After much negotiation between KMM and the Japanese commanders, hundreds of Malay soldiers escaped death or being detained as POWs, except for six Malay officers who were killed. Although Mustapha managed to save thousands of lives during the war, the biggest regret of his life was not being able to save these six officers, including Captain Raja Aman Shah and Lt Ariffin, whom the Japanese suspected had been left behind by the British to organise resistance to the Japanese.

Mustapha also provided food and money to hundreds of soldiers and their families hiding in Istana Kampung Gelam, Singapore. He later arranged for the issue of Japanese passes to Malay soldiers and their families to enable them to return home safely on the peninsula.

Later, disillusioned with both the Japanese and Ibrahim, Mustapha returned to Matang weeks after the fall of Singapore. In 1943, he was again 'pulled up' by the Japanese, this time to go to Singapore to form a Japanese-sponsored Malay Volunteer Force, Malai Giyu Gun or Pembela Tanah Air (PETA) or Defenders of the Homeland. He soon left the Japanese administration and returned to Malaya to become a farmer in Batu 20, Perak, and provides the reader with an interesting account of village life during the Occupation.

Towards the end of the Occupation, when the Japanese were losing ground, they set up Hodoshō (Help-and-Guide People Office) and KRIS (Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa) or Special Strength of the People. Soon after, Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmi (Malay Officer-in-Charge of Islam and Malay Customs under the Japanese Military Administration) pleaded with Mustapha to help with the Malay efforts to gain Malaya's independence.



Mustapha then worked secretly in a room in Taiping's St George's Institution to draw up a Malaya Merdeka Constitution (Independent Malaya Constitution) to be discussed at the KRIS Congress in Kuala Lumpur in mid-August 1945, after which Malaya would be declared independent on 17 August of that same year. Unfortunately, Malaya could not be declared independent because the Japanese surrendered just forty-eight hours before the proclamation date. Consequently, the British ruled Malaya for another twelve years!

Contrary to Ibrahim's claims, Mustapha, who had worked on the Malaya Merdeka Constitution, maintained that Malayan independence was not to be part of *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia). Malaya was to declare its independence on the same date, but separately. Not unlike Ho Chi Minh's declaration of Vietnamese independence at around the same time, the Malaya Merdeka Constitution that Mustapha drafted was inspired by the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

After the Japanese surrender, Mustapha was hunted by the Bintang Tiga (Three Stars) Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) led 'administration' during the three week interregnum between the Japanese surrender in Tokyo and British colonial military re-occupation, and Force 136, the British-organised anti-Japanese guerrilla force. He then went to see Lt Col Peter G. Dobre, Force 136's commander, to explain his position as KMM leader. Mustapha was immediately arrested and imprisoned. The memoir contains a sad, but interesting account of Mustapha's experience as a political detainee in a British prison and two lock-ups.

He was released almost a year later in 1946, when 400 soldiers whom he had directly or indirectly saved from being killed by the Japanese in Singapore sent a petition with their signatures to the British Field Security Service Officer. This is confirmed on page 274 of Dr Cheah Boon Kheng's *Red Star over Malaya*:

Mustapha Hussain was subsequently taken into custody, but several months later after petitions were made to the British Military Administration from former members of the Malay Regiment whose lives he had saved from the Japanese, he was released.

He was unlawfully dismissed by the British from his pensionable job at the School of Agriculture in Serdang and was forbidden from participation in politics and trade unions for five years. Shortly after, however, he was again involved in the PKMM (Malay Nationalist Party or MNP) as a secret advisor to its leader, Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmi. Together, they toured Malaya's West Coast and then participated in the historic PUTERA-AMCJA Conference involving the Malay Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA or Centre of the People's Forces) and the multi-ethnic

All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA), which declared a People's Constitution for an independent Malaya in 1947, well before UMNO adopted *Merdeka* (Independence) as its slogan in 1951.

Having lost his colonial government job, Mustapha was forced to hawk food and later ran a restaurant in Pasar Minggu (Sunday Market), Kuala Lumpur. In 1951, while running the Tengah Restaurant, he was nominated to replace Datuk Onn, who had resigned as UMNO President.

A month later, Tunku Abdul Rahman's name came up. At UMNO Youth Alliance Third Annual Conference on 28 July 1951, Mustapha lost the nomination for the presidency to Tunku (later Malaysia's first Prime Minister) by one vote. For the deputy president's post, he garnered the same number of votes as his opponent, Tun Abdul Razak (later Malaysia's second Prime Minister), but the chairman, Tan Sri Haji Mohd Noah bin Omar gave his casting vote to Tun Abdul Razak, his prospective son-in-law. Mustapha was nominated the sole vice president, but did not accept.

In 1954, he was nominated by UMNO Perak to take over Tun Dr Ismail's position when the latter was named Malaya's Ambassador to the US. The nomination was blocked, however, when UMNO introduced a rule requiring five years' membership to qualify. Nevertheless, Mustapha continued to be active in UMNO Larut and Matang, campaigning for the Alliance and was elected a Taiping Municipal Councillor.

One obvious theme running through the volume is the pronounced difference in motivation between Mustapha and Ibrahim. Mustapha questions some claims in books written by Ibrahim after fleeing to Indonesia in 1945. His story also involved much personal suffering. His family suffered considerably, especially his wife, Mariah, who stood by him with patience and faith in his nationalist struggle. He also lost two brothers, Alli and Yahaya, to the MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army).

This book not only provides an unusual political account of pre-war and pre-independent Malaya, but also offers social commentary on life and the Malay thinking in colonial Malaya from the 1920s onwards. Mustapha's observations are detailed, colourful, fascinating and sometimes amusing. It also provides interesting personal insights on personalities like Ibrahim, Pak Sako, Ahmad Boestaman, Abdul Kadir Adabi, Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmi and Japanese Occupation Officers. For Mustapha, the truth must be told.

While accompanying F Kikan at the height of war, Mustapha saw enough horror to last a lifetime. He saw blood gush out and flow lazily, heads roll in the dirt and on spikes at road junctions, men shot in the air and in ground attacks as well as bodies bloated with maggots. Until his

passing, he could not erase such gruesome, brutal and bloodcurdling scenes from his memory.

One night three months before he died, in delirium while having a high fever, he struggled as if in a wild frenzy, flapping like a turtle turned upside down, as my mother tried to pin him down. I tried to take over from my exhausted mother, but he was so strong despite his age that he threw me off the bed. It was some minutes before my sister Hendun and my mother could restrain him together.

Mother had seen that happen before. Father's nightmares were always full of gruesome flashbacks of the war in Singapore. That night, he was reliving an episode when he shouted, at the top of his voice, to stop a hysterical Japanese sergeant from executing Malay soldiers already strapped to rubber trees. The full story will follow. Indeed, for my father, the past lived on until he found peace with his last breath.

Glossary

- alir* – floating board with chicken intestines attached to a giant hook for catching crocodiles
- almeira* – large cupboard ((Portuguese)
- AMCJA* – All-Malaya Council of Joint Action
- anchak* – contraption used to ‘feed’ ghosts and spirits
- anghun* – a red-pigmented Chinese tobacco (Chinese)
- ari-ari* – leaves when soaked in water excellent for cleaning slate boards
- arigato* – thank you (Japanese)
- attap* – thatch roofing material from *nipah* palm leaves
- awai* – traditional musical instrument
- ayam hutan* – jungle fowl
- bajang* – evil spirit with long nails which haunts pregnant women and infants
- baju teluk belanga* – traditional Malay tunic for males
- bandot tua makan lalap muda* – an old goat feeding on young shoots
- bangsa* – nation (often now used to refer to ‘race’)
- bangsawan* – Malay opera
- banzai* – cheers of jubilation (Japanese)
- bapa* – father or a respected elder
- batik lepas* – long pieces of *batik* cloth wound around the body
- beduk* – large traditional drum
- belanja hangus* – dowry from bridegroom to bride for wedding expenses
- belanja tubuh* – gift for the bride
- benzin* – petrol (Indonesian)
- berangan* – local chestnut
- berani kerana benar* – righteously bold
- bertam* – type of palm
- blitzkrieg* – lightning attack (German)
- bomoh* – Malay shaman
- boria* – Malay choir
- boshi* – Japanese cap with piece of cloth hanging at the back (Japanese)
- bubur gandum* – wheat porridge
- bubur kacang* – green bean porridge
- bunga melor* – jasmine flower

burung murai – blabber bird
changkul – draw-hoe
chapel – Malay sandals, though the word is Indian in origin
chapati – Punjabi pancake
chempaka – tree/flower *michelia champaca*
cheroot – tightly-rolled cigar made of tobacco leaves
chettiar – Tamil Indian moneylender
chikgu – teacher
chiku – a dark brown fruit
chongkak – Malay game played with two rows of holes and cowries
chuchuk mata anak seluang – spiritually blinded
chupak – volume measure for rice; a quarter of a *gantang*
daching – weighing scales with a graduated rod, a pan and a weight
dhal – Indian lentils
dokak – upright abacus with white, green, yellow, black and red beads
dosai – South Indian rice flour pancake
dhoti – South Indian wrap around male white cloth garment (Tamil)
durian – Southeast Asian fruit with thick thorny skin and pungent pulpy flesh
Enchik – Mister
F Kikan – Fujiwara Kikan, a unit of Japanese military intelligence named after its commanding office, Major Fujiwara Iwaichi (Japanese)
fardu kifayah – Muslim social obligation
gado-gado – vegetable salad in a spicy peanut sauce
gaduh-gaduh – to quarrel
gambier – condiment made with *gambier* tree leaves
gantang – Malay gallon (volume measure for rice); four *chupak* usually weighing six *kati* (eight pounds) of rice;
gendang – double-leaded barrel-drums
haj – Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca during pilgrimage season
haji – a Muslim man who has performed the *haj* pilgrimage
hajah – a Muslim woman who has performed the *haj* pilgrimage
halwa mental – mental delicacies
hartal – general strike (Hindi)
ibu sawan – sores on the scalp
ikhwan – brother, brotherhood (Arabic)
ilmu kancing mulut anjing – chants to lock the jaws of dogs: useful for walking to school
ilmu menawar bisa – chants to reduce the irritation of insect stings
ilmu menolong orang chekik tulang – chants to help someone choking on a bone

ilmu pengasih – chants to seduce a woman
ilmu penunduk – chants to subjugate others
imam – Muslim leader, usually for prayers
Israk Mikraj – ascension of Prophet Mohammed
jeruju – small fruit of a thorny bush growing in tidal areas
jika tiada senapang lebih baik beri jalan lapang – if one has no guns, it is best to give way
jin tanah – earth spirit
jin – spirit
kaki – foot, leg
kaku – village game using tiles
kampung – village
kangkong – watercress, a leafy green vegetable
kapok – cotton-like substance from a tree
kakka – boss or chief (Japanese)
kati – one and one-third pound
kavadi – Hindu sacrificial burden (Tamil)
kayu tiga – literally, three sticks, but implying a trick/fraud
kebaya – loose Kedah-cut tunic or figure-hugging blouse
keduduk – Indian rhododendron
kemenyan – benzoin aromatic resin from a tree
kemuning – tree/flower *merrilia caloxylon*
kepul – unit for rice, slightly more than a condensed milk can
keramat – spiritually protected
keris – wavy Malay dagger
kerja kayu – working in mangrove swamps
kerja laut – working at sea, e.g. fishermen
ketuanan – dominance (root word *tuan*)
ketupat – rice cooked in small woven coconut-leaf basket
kibas – type of sheep found in Arabia
kurrah – come quickly (Japanese)
laksa asam – thick rice-flour noodles in a sour fish gravy
lalang – long coarse grass
lanchang – tiny boat floated down river to feed ‘The Water Ghost’
lekar – woven rattan pot-stand
maghrib – Muslim prayer at dusk
makyong – a performance of romantic drama, dance, operatic singing and broad comedy, usually from the north-eastern state of Kelantan, with a cast of attractive young women and a few men
mandore – overseer
Melayu – Malay

burung murai – blabber bird
changkul – draw-hoe
chapel – Malay sandals, though the word is Indian in origin
chapati – Punjabi pancake
chempaka – tree/flower *michelia champaca*
cheroot – tightly-rolled cigar made of tobacco leaves
chettiar – Tamil Indian moneylender
chikgu – teacher
chiku – a dark brown fruit
chongkak – Malay game played with two rows of holes and cowries
chuchuk mata anak seluang – spiritually blinded
chupak – volume measure for rice; a quarter of a *gantang*
daching – weighing scales with a graduated rod, a pan and a weight
dhal – Indian lentils
dokak – upright abacus with white, green, yellow, black and red beads
dosai – South Indian rice flour pancake
dhoti – South Indian wrap around male white cloth garment (Tamil)
durian – Southeast Asian fruit with thick thorny skin and pungent pulpy flesh
Enchik – Mister
F Kikan – Fujiwara Kikan, a unit of Japanese military intelligence named after its commanding office, Major Fujiwara Iwaichi (Japanese)
fardu kifayah – Muslim social obligation
gado-gado – vegetable salad in a spicy peanut sauce
gadoh-gadoh – to quarrel
gambier – condiment made with *gambier* tree leaves
gantang – Malay gallon (volume measure for rice); four *chupak* usually weighing six *kati* (eight pounds) of rice;
gendang – double-leaded barrel-drums
haj – Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca during pilgrimage season
haji – a Muslim man who has performed the *haj* pilgrimage
hajjah – a Muslim woman who has performed the *haj* pilgrimage
halwa mental – mental delicacies
hartal – general strike (Hindi)
ibu sawan – sores on the scalp
ikhwan – brother, brotherhood (Arabic)
ilmu kancing mulut anjing – chants to lock the jaws of dogs: useful for walking to school
ilmu menawar bisa – chants to reduce the irritation of insect stings
ilmu menolong orang chekik tulang – chants to help someone choking on a bone

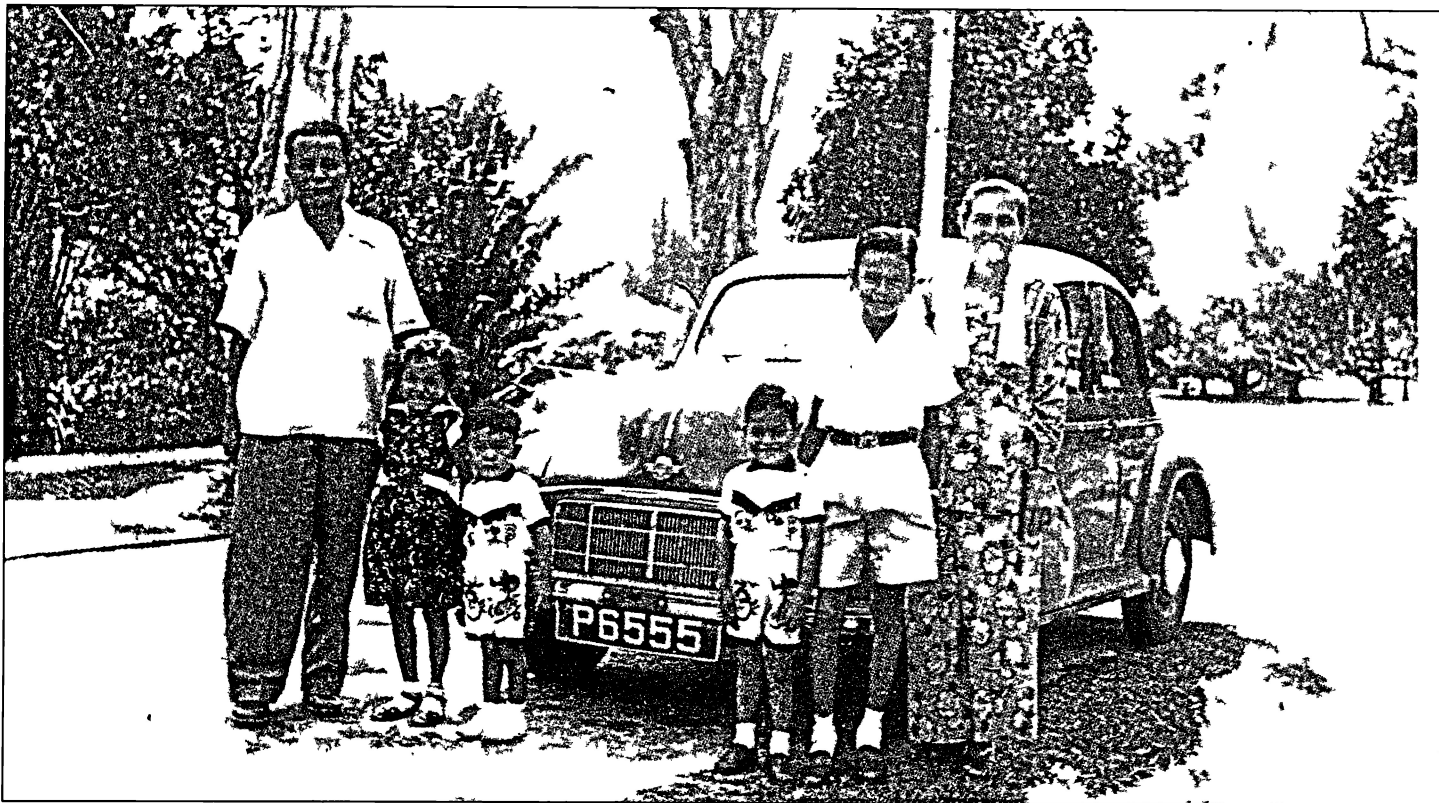
ilmu pengasih – chants to seduce a woman
ilmu penunduk – chants to subjugate others
imam – Muslim leader, usually for prayers
Israk Mikraj – ascension of Prophet Mohammed
jeruju – small fruit of a thorny bush growing in tidal areas
jika tiada senapang lebih baik beri jalan lapang – if one has no guns, it is best to give way
jin tanah – earth spirit
jin – spirit
kaki – foot, leg
kaku – village game using tiles
kampung – village
kangkong – watercress, a leafy green vegetable
kapok – cotton-like substance from a tree
kakka – boss or chief (Japanese)
kati – one and one-third pound
kavadi – Hindu sacrificial burden (Tamil)
kayu tiga – literally, three sticks, but implying a trick/fraud
kebaya – loose Kedah-cut tunic or figure-hugging blouse
keduduk – Indian rhododendron
kemenyan – benzoin aromatic resin from a tree
kemuning – tree/flower *merrilia caloxylon*
kepul – unit for rice, slightly more than a condensed milk can
keramat – spiritually protected
keris – wavy Malay dagger
kerja kayu – working in mangrove swamps
kerja laut – working at sea, e.g. fishermen
ketuanan – dominance (root word *tuan*)
ketupat – rice cooked in small woven coconut-leaf basket
kibas – type of sheep found in Arabia
kurrah – come quickly (Japanese)
laksa asam – thick rice-flour noodles in a sour fish gravy
lalang – long coarse grass
lanchang – tiny boat floated down river to feed ‘The Water Ghost’
lekar – woven rattan pot-stand
maghrib – Muslim prayer at dusk
makyong – a performance of romantic drama, dance, operatic singing and broad comedy, usually from the north-eastern state of Kelantan, with a cast of attractive young women and a few men
mandore – overseer
Melayu – Malay

mengkuang – screw-pine leaves
merbau – ironwood
merdeka – free, independent
minyak atar – perfume usually from Saudi Arabia, popular among Muslims
Mohd – abbreviation for Mohammad, Mohammed, Mohamad or Muhammad
MPAJA – the communist-led Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army
minyak chelak – a coconut oil mixture used to drive away evil spirits
nai – no (Japanese)
nakhoda – seafaring merchant vessel captain
nasi kandar – rice historically sold by vendors carrying food on long shoulder poles
nasi lemak – rice cooked in coconut milk
nipah – type of palm
nusa dan bangsa – country and nation (people)
Orang Asli – aboriginal, indigenous individual, community or ethnic groups
orang bunian – gnome, not necessarily evil, living and playing in the jungle
orang kebun – plantation people
orang putih – white person
padang – field
pandan – pandanus plant with fragrant leaves
pantun – Malay quatrain
pelesit – spirit in the form of a vampire cricket
penghulu – village/county leader
petai – pungent, but delicious green jungle bean
pikul – 130 pounds
pontianak – beautiful long-haired female vampire enticing men
potu – Hindu mark at centre of forehead (Tamil)
pulaikat – checked cotton cloth usually for male sarong wrap-around from waist to ankle originally made in South India and exported from the port with the same name.
pulut kuning – yellow-coloured glutinous rice
PUTERA – Pusat Tenaga Rakyat, or Centre of People’s Power
rambai – a sweet-sour fruit growing in clusters
rambutan – fruit with hairy skin and delicious pearly white flesh
rebab – spike fiddle
rebana – drum with parchment stretched on only one side
rehal – foldable wooden bases usually for holding Qur’an
rendang ayam – seasoned chicken cooked in coconut milk until dry
rimau – tiger

rojak – mixed sliced vegetables and fruits seasoned with a spicy sauce
rokok daun – Malay tobacco cigarette wrapped in dried *nipah* palm shoot
roti kahwin – thick Hailam egg-custard sandwich
rumah hantu – haunted house
samarinda sarong – wrap around ankle-length waist garment from Celebes
sampan – small rowing boat
samping – traditional cloth wrapped around the waist up to knee level, worn by males
sarong – wraparound cloth
satay – grilled skewered meat
s.a.w. – Peace Be Upon Him (salutation reserved for Prophet Mohammed)
sawi – spinach mustard vegetable
selendang – long shawl worn over the shoulders, round the neck or over the head
semota – a kind of headgear worn by Malays living on the East Coast of Malaya
sepak raga – kickball game using a woven rattan ball
sesumpah – small long-tongued chameleon
silat – Malay martial art
sotong bakar – grilled dried squid
songkok – Malay velvet headgear
stengah – originally half whiskey and half soda drink
suap – hand feed
syair – story related in verse form using quatrains of a rhyme
tanah – land
Tanah Melayu – (The) Malay Land
tawak-tawak – deep-rimmed hanging gongs
teh tarik – tea cooled by pouring between two hand-held containers
tepas – split and woven bamboo
towkay – a merchant, businessman or boss (Chinese)
toddy – intoxicating fermented juice from coconut palm
tuan – sir, usually reserved for whites during the colonial period (Malay)
turmeric – a type of rhizome used as a yellow colouring substance or for flavouring
udang kena bakar – grilled prawn
unchui – a Chinese water pipe (Hokkien)
upeh – large dried and curved areca tree flower-sheath which looks like a miniature canoe
ustaz – male religious teacher
yoroshi – good (Japanese)



1940 – Mustapha, his wife Mariah and daughters Ayesha and Hendun, while he was active in the KMM.



Circa 1955 – Standing between Mustapha and his wife Mariah is daughter Insun and sons Roslan Bayu, Adlan and Adelain. Taken at the Penang Botanic Gardens.



Circa 1954 – Founder members of UMNO Larut and Matang with Tunku Abdul Rahman (1, later Malaya's first Prime Minister) and Ghazali Jawi (2, later Chief Minister of Perak). 3 is Mustapha.



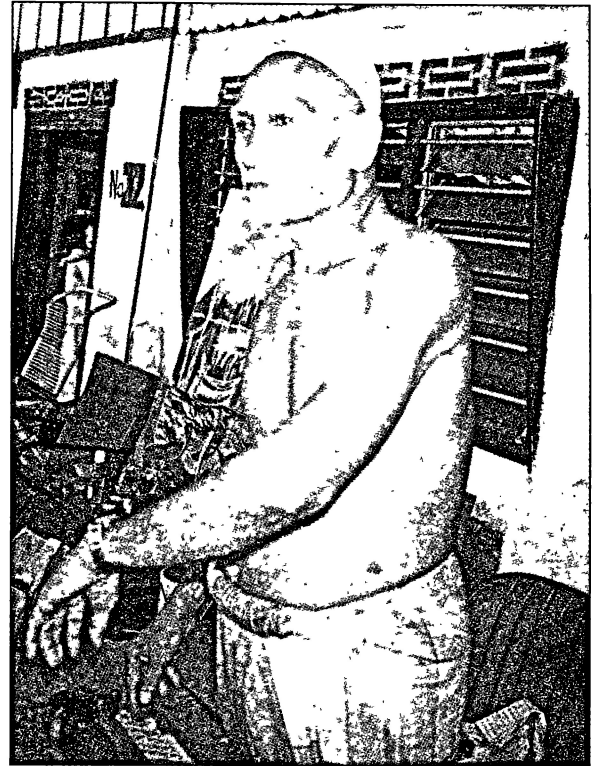
1960s – Mustapha and an insurance agent friend, probably Mohd Mustafa bin Ali, the young Malay who moved with F Kikan from Ipoh to Singapore.



1942 – Mustapha's older brother Alli (left) and younger brother Yahaya in Taiping soon after the latter's release from a Singapore prison. The British had imprisoned him for being a KMM member.



1953 – Mustapha and his father, Haji Hussain bin Haji Aminuddin, taken after Mustapha won in the Taiping Town Council elections.



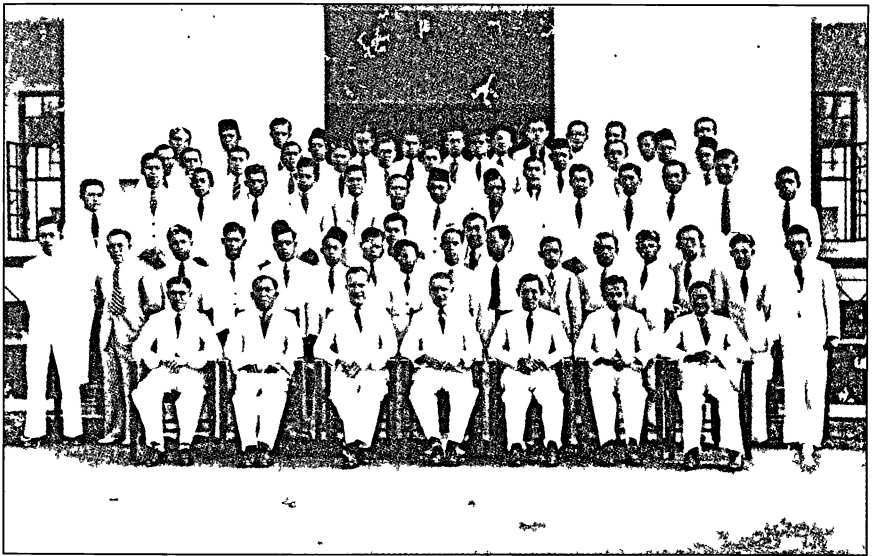
1989 – Sergeant Haji Harun bin Haji Musa, whom Mustapha saved from a heap of dead bodies soon after the fall of Singapore. His battle scars were still clear after 47 years.



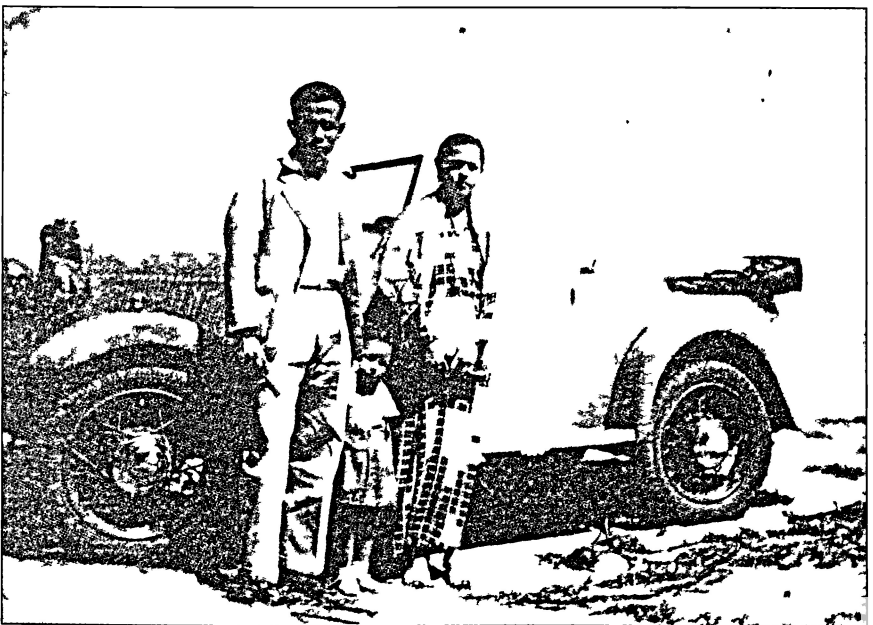
1985 – Mustapha, ever cheerful, clean-shaven and well groomed, always wore a coat with pockets full of asthma medicine and an inhaler, with wife Mariah two years before he died.



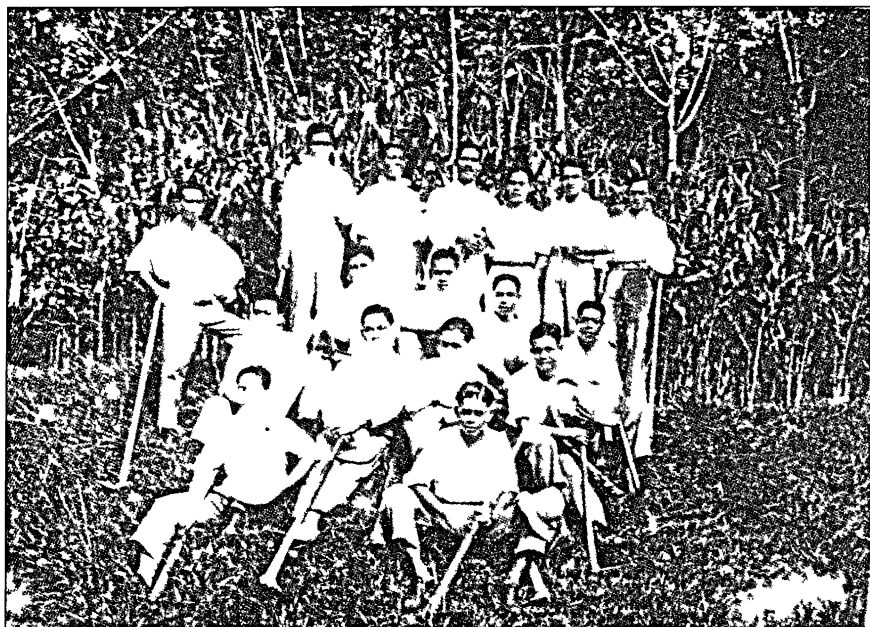
1982 – Forty years after Mustapha Hussain saved the lives of hundreds of soldiers and civilians during the Japanese Occupation, his deeds were recognised. The late Sultan of Perak, Sultan Idris Shah is seen here awarding Mustapha a Perak state honour, the Ahli Mahkota Perak (AMP).



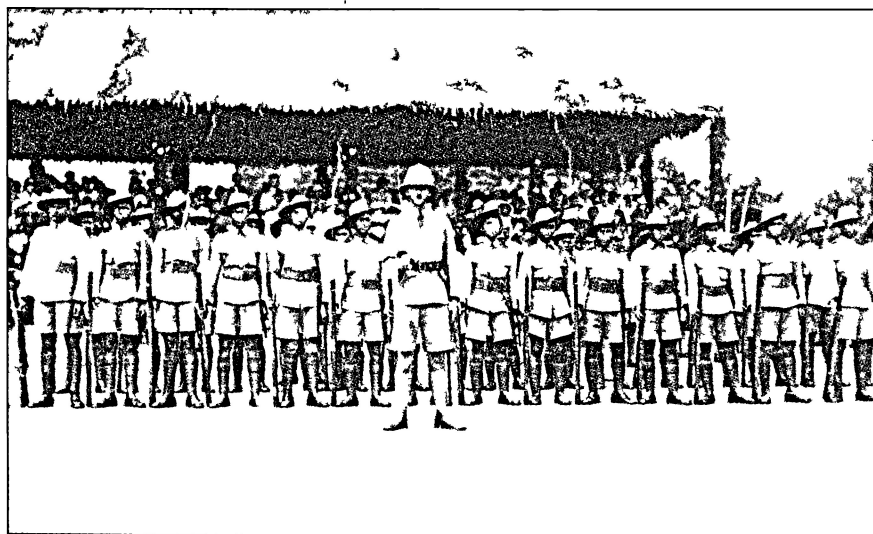
Circa 1939 – Students and teaching staff of the School of Agriculture, then in Serdang. Mustapha is seated second from right.



1938 – Mustapha, his wife Mariah binti Haji Abdul Hamid (formerly Dorothy Ida Fenner) and their first daughter Ayesha taken in Morib, Selangor.



1928 – Mustapha with his Malay Apprentice course mates at the School of Agriculture, then in Kuala Lumpur. He is seated at the extreme right of the second row holding a hat to his chest.



Circa 1930 – Malay Apprentices of the School of Agriculture taking part in a Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) drill led by School Principal, G.E. Mann.



1980s – Mustapha with Malay nationalists and historians at a seminar. He is fifth from left while his wife Mariah is fourth from left. Ishak Haji Muhammad (Pak Sako) is sixth from right.



My Family: At the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful, I begin this memoir in January 1976 at my home at No. 11, Jalan Menteri, Matang, Perak. I am now 66 years old.

I was born in Matang at dusk on 21 August 1910, when Muslims in the nearby mosque were busy celebrating the auspicious *Israk Mikraj* (ascension of Prophet Mohammed *s.a.w.* to heaven). The mosque was actually a British sop to placate the Matang Malays who had been infuriated by the hanging of five Malay and Orang Asli (aboriginal) patriots. These patriots, including Datuk Sagor, Datuk Sri Maharajalela, Si Putum and Datuk Panglima Endut, had been accused of complicity in the murder of Perak's first British Resident, J.W.W. Birch, in Pasir Salak in September 1875.

My late grandfather, Haji Aminuddin bin Haji Abdul Kadir, was a *penghulu* (village or county headman) in Sungai Tinggi, Perak. According to our family tree, we are descended from Sultan Alam Shah of the Pagaruyung Sultanate in West Sumatra, but the family later moved to Batu Bara, North Sumatra. There, they became community leaders and excelled as traders with their own vessels. Most were thus titled Nakhoda or 'trader captain'.

In the 1840s, my great grandfather Haji Abdul Kadir bin Kaul (better known as Nakhoda Sulong or Nakhoda Ulong) migrated to Malaya with his family. I don't know their reasons, but thankfully, my ancestors did away with their high titles after settling down in Matang.

My late father Hussain was the older brother of Aishahtun, mother of the late Tun Yusof Ishak, the first President of Singapore, and his brother, Aziz Ishak, former Minister of Agriculture for Malaya. Both are therefore my cousins.

I am fourth in a family of ten children, three girls and seven boys, many of whom are politically motivated. My older brother Alli was the first Secretary of the Persatuan Melayu Perak (Perak Malay Association), while my brother Yahaya participated actively in the Pahang State Branch

of Malaya's first political party, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), or Young Malay Union. I myself was KMM's first Vice President from 1938 until 1942.

My father, a land demarcator with the British Colonial Government, spent many years learning English on his own until he gained an impressive command of the language. I salute him for being one of the progressive Malays of his time, to have visualised the importance of English, not only as a medium for learning, but as a language of progress. As his children, we benefited immeasurably from his early awareness.

My mother Saadiah binti Mohd Itam, though traditional, was a special woman of her time. She handled all ten of us, mostly boys, exceptionally well every time our father went on his surveying expeditions, which could take weeks. Broad-minded and thrifty, she always urged us, her children, to be 'of one heart'. Although most parents of that time intervened in their sons' lives, including choosing their brides, my mother gave us free rein.

At a time when most *kampung* (village) folks, especially Islamic religious teachers, considered English the 'language of hell', my parents rejected this view. The *kampung's* belief stemmed from the experience of a young man from Jebong, two miles from our home, who, instead of reciting Islamic holy verses on his deathbed, had rambled wildly in English. The villagers assumed he had been affected by Christian holy water when the poor soul was actually delirious with high fever. Following the incident, many Malay pupils were pulled out of English schools by alarmed parents. A teacher friend, Jamil bin Abdul Rahman, never quite forgot that he was a hapless victim of the 'language of hell' campaign.

Several years later, when fear of the campaign had subsided, another religious figure went around the village condemning parents who had children in English schools, cadet corps and athletic teams. "Only education to prepare oneself for the next life is important", he preached. He brought fear to the hearts of many when he campaigned that a Muslim who touched or walked under the shadow of the statue of either the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ would automatically become infidels.

Fortunately, the English school I attended, the King Edward VII School in Taiping, had no such statues. No Malay students attended the neighbouring St George's Institution as it was run by white priests in black robes. The poor victims of his preaching were a handful of Malay girls who attended the Taiping Convent School, where a statue of the Virgin Mary holding a cross stood in its front yard. The girls were pulled out of school en masse. How they suffered! The one girl who remained, Don from Trong, became the first Malay nurse in the Larut and Matang District.

It was not that my father took Islam lightly, but he often asked, "Is

Islam not in pursuit of progress?” He stuck to his beliefs, and we continued to attend English school. However, I must add that not all religious leaders were barriers to progress.

My father liked to experiment, as he cared about bringing knowledge and progress to the Malay community. One such experiment was his sending Malay newspapers from our home to the mosque, encouraging villagers to read them in between prayers, rather than just making small talk. For this action he was branded a ‘Satan’.

Despite his controversial ideas, my father was as devout a Muslim as any. He prayed the requisite five times a day, fasted throughout the month of Ramadan, donated to many religious and charitable causes, and had performed the *haj* three times, even though once was sufficient. Perhaps Malay newspapers had some influence on his thinking. While we were still young, he forced us to read these periodicals so as to follow current events and widen our horizons. I am proud to have had such a father, in contrast to my friends’ parents.

I often heard the Convent School termed an *arpang* school when *arpang* meant nothing in Malay. Much later in life, I found out that *arpang* came from the English word ‘orphan’ as most convents housed orphans.

Years later, when government and private sector jobs were mainly filled by non-Malays, religious teachers suddenly stopped their campaigns. In fact, they openly encouraged their own children to go for higher education. When questioned what had happened to the old ‘language of hell’ sermons, they were quick to reply that past religious teachers were not precise in translating Islamic teachings. After all, Prophet Mohammed *s.a.w.* himself had urged Muslims, “Go in search of knowledge, even to China.” Where was this advice when I was growing up?

My diligent father earned a regular salary, but with the help of a rubber smallholding and my mother’s *kampung*-style economy, we lived very well. The *kampung* folk and the Chinese shopkeepers called us *anak tok kerani* or ‘master clerk’s son’, and gave us special treatment and attention. Despite these blessings, our wise father taught us to be enterprising and resourceful. For a small fee, we were asked to weed our rubber smallholding, to tap rubber and to look for weeds and grass for our chickens, ducks and goats. Sometimes, Father paid us by weight, so we looked for weeds and grass that grew near drains, for they were thicker and heavier when wet.

Before the arrival of cars in Matang, my father bought a buggy, pulled by an enormous horse and steered by an Indian syce. Soon after, another buggy was seen in Matang, belonging to Mr Alexander Keir, the Principal of the Matang Malay Teachers’ College. He was later appointed Inspector of Schools for the state of Perak.



When the price of rubber plummeted and more of his children were attending school, my father's financial situation weakened, but I never once heard him complain. He went to and from work in mended and re-mended clothes. From smoking 'Capstan' or 'White Tin' cigarettes, he switched to the cheaper 'Double Eagle' or 'Bird Cigarette' brands.

When I sought his permission to join a private tuition class, he readily gave me \$10 per month, saying softly, "Yes, do join the class. I will look for the money, don't you worry." The amount then could support a whole family for an entire month. I felt grateful because my friends who could not afford private tuition were often caned for not being 'clever enough'. One pupil bled when a teacher, shouting "Sa Pristi, young rascal", caned him with all the strength he could muster. That was my earliest awareness of an effect of poverty on the Malays.

What did we gain from private tuition? This teacher collected us in his house and then instructed us to copy a picture hanging on the wall, of a drowning boy being saved by a winged Christian angel. Soon after he told us to go home. Two days later, he conducted a sketching test, asking all his pupils to draw the same picture. Naturally, those of us who had attended his private tuition fared well. The others, who could not afford ten dollars a month, were caned.

When the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941, as Vice President of KMM or the Young Malay Union (the first Malay political party in Malaya), I was 'taken' to move with them from Taiping to Singapore, where the British surrendered on 15 February 1942.

Yet, like most families, my family did not escape the war's aftermath and hardships. To avoid undesirable incidents, my wife and three children hid in the jungle across the Larut River behind my father's house. Carrying our three-month-old baby in her arms with two other children tugging on her sarong, she camped in the jungle for many weeks. There, our baby slept in a cradle made by tying an old sarong to a tree branch. When the situation improved, they only hid from dawn to dusk.

As the Japanese had taken me away with just the clothes on my back, I was not able to leave any 'Japanese amulet' (a special Japanese-stamped letter), which could guarantee safety to the bearer and his property.

One day, a team of Japanese soldiers came to commandeer my car from under my father's house. My brother Osman tried to explain that I had been 'taken' to Singapore by Japanese officers, but they refused to listen, pointing a bayonet at Osman instead. My car was towed away on the pretext of being repaired. We never saw it again.

On another occasion, the Japanese came to commandeer my brother Alli's car. Osman told them that Alli had taken the keys, but he was threatened again, this time with a sword. My ailing mother fainted from

the stress. When she regained consciousness, she asked Osman to look for Alli to get the keys. When Alli returned with a 'Japanese amulet' he carried as Deputy State Forest Officer for Perak, the Japanese left his car alone.

Fear and worrying about my family always having to hide in the jungle aggravated my mother's health. She died four months later in April 1942 at 57. Alli and Yahaya, two of my brothers, also lost their lives during the Japanese Occupation.

In 1937, Alli, a Senior Cambridge certificate holder, was the first Secretary to the Perak Malay Association while Wan Mohd Nor bin Wan Nasir was President. The British, who suspected that the association was hostile to them and also anti-feudal, decided to weaken it by transferring Alli to Rompin in Pahang, and Wan Mohd Nor to Tanjung Malim in Perak. Laidin, the Treasurer, was likewise moved to Kuala Lumpur. This was before the association was taken over by Datuk Panglima Bukit Gantang, Abdul Wahab bin Toh Muda Abdul Aziz.

Before the Japanese Invasion, Alli had been an Assistant Forest Officer in Perak, but during the Japanese Occupation, he was appointed Deputy State Forest Officer for Perak. In July 1944, he was abducted by the communist-led Malayan People's Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA) in Tanjung Tualang, Perak, and was believed to have been killed later. His assistant, however, was released after a beating.

My younger brother, Yahaya, a Senior Cambridge certificate holder as well as an Agriculture School Diploma holder, was working as an Agricultural Assistant in Jerantut, Pahang before the Japanese invasion. He was, in fact, the prime mover for KMM's state branch in that part of the country.

In early December 1941, days before the invasion, Yahaya, together with many others, was arrested by the British for being a KMM member. He was first taken from Jerantut to Pudu Prison in Kuala Lumpur before being transferred to Changi Prison in Singapore.

A couple of days before the British surrendered on 15 February 1942, Yahaya was released, together with other prisoners including other jailed KMM members. I stumbled upon him a few days later at the Bukit Chermin Siamese Temple in Singapore, but could hardly recognise him. He had not shaved in over two months and was plastered with mud from Japanese shelling.

During the Occupation, Yahaya was appointed Chief of Derris Tuba Experimental Farm in Som, Jerantut, Pahang. Towards the end of the war, Yahaya was killed by MPAJA guerrillas. His pregnant wife, who had cried out "If you kill him, you might as well kill me", was also killed. *Kampung* folks buried the couple in an unmarked grave in Damak, Pahang.

Mustapha Hussain was an extraordinary man, even for one who lived in extraordinary times. This English language translation of his memoirs traces his coming of age in a village in Perak in the early 20th century. He reminds us of a lost world and his perceptions growing up in a Minangkabau Malay community increasingly exposed to Chinese and Indian immigrants. After successfully making it to an English school in the tin capital of Taiping, he moves on to the Agricultural College at Serdang where he is later selected to become a lecturer.

His English medium education does not prevent him from working with other young Malays to form and lead the Young Malays Union (KMM), evidently inspired by Kemal Ataturk's Young Turks. Somewhat reluctantly, he follows the Japanese to Singapore where he is responsible for saving the lives of hundreds of Malay soldiers in the British colonial armed forces. Instead of collaborating further with the Japanese Occupation, he chooses to return to a difficult existence eking out a living on a Perak farm.

After the war, he rejoins the anti-colonial nationalist movement, but manages to avoid the severe repression against the radical Malay youth of early 1948. Later, in 1951, he loses the nomination for the presidency of UMNO by only one vote to Tunku Abdul Rahman, who went on to lead the country to independence and serve as its first Prime Minister. This extraordinary memoir must be read by anyone interested in Malay life in colonial Malaya, the origins and development of radical Malay nationalism as well as Malay politics in the mid-20th century more generally



UTUSAN PUBLICATIONS & DISTRIBUTORS SDN BHD

PRICE: RM50.00

ISBN 967-61-1698-X



9 789676 116987

www.mybooks.com.my

BERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
YAYASAN
KEPIMPINAN
BERDANA