

## Remembering the Japanese occupation massacres: mass graves in post-war Malaysia

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The violence visited upon British Malaya during the Japanese occupation of December 1941 to August 1945 has prompted several historians to evoke comparisons with the atrocities that befell Nanjing.<sup>1</sup> During this time, numerous civilians were subjected to mass killings, summary executions, rape, forced labour, arbitrary detention, and torture. In particular, the *shukusei* (cleansing) or *daikensho* (big inspection) operation of February to April 1942 – known locally as the *sook ching* (purge through cleansing) massacres – has become symbolic of Japanese brutality. The death toll from these massacres remains contested; estimates range from 5,000 to 50,000.<sup>2</sup> As a result, multiple mass graves scar the territory's landscape. While these serve as physical testament to this dark period in the country's history, many of these sites remain relatively unknown and scarcely remembered.<sup>3</sup> Often, documented cases of exhumations – be it Bergen-Belsen in Germany, Vinnytsia in Ukraine, or Priaranza in Spain, to name but a few sites where mass graves have been excavated – have sparked social and political debates.<sup>4</sup> In marked contrast, the response of the Malaysian general public has been largely muted, except in cases where the reinterment of remains has threatened state-sponsored dominant narratives. The reasons for this seeming ambivalence are manifold. In the first instance, the main ethnic groups in the territory – comprising indigenous Malay and migrant Chinese and Indian minorities – experienced the occupation differently. As such, there is no shared collective memory that

can be harnessed to fashion a mutually cohesive narrative. Rather, 'sectional narratives' predicated upon these varied communal experiences have emerged.<sup>5</sup> This divergence in experience resulted from the occupiers' practice of race-specific policies, where the Chinese community in particular bore the brunt of Japanese aggression.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Japanese occupation policy was relatively supportive of the Malays and encouraging towards the Indians.<sup>7</sup> The lack of an inclusive past is exacerbated by the continued marginalization of minority histories from official historiography of the occupation. This state of affairs emerged from the confluence of socio-political forces and events which shaped the territory's path towards independence and beyond. Very briefly, post-war independent Malaysia was born amidst inter-racial strife; a fragile union forged from the fires of the Malayan Emergency – a decade-long post-war insurrection instigated by a largely ethnic Chinese communist guerrilla force.<sup>8</sup> Intent on preventing the development of 'another Palestine' or 'Balkans of Asia', the reoccupying British colonial administration enshrined the privileged status of the ethnic Malay majority in the fledgling nation's new constitution.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the historiography of the Japanese occupation accords primacy to the Malay ethnic majority's collective memory of the war. This dominant narrative promotes the occupation as a catalyst in the awakening of Malay nationalism, leading to decolonization and self-determination.<sup>10</sup> Experiences that diverge from the national narrative are marginalized, including the suppression of Japanese atrocities during the occupation.

This chapter explores three selected exhumations dating from the immediate post-war context to more recent times. What is revealing about these cases, despite the passage of time and progressive improvements in the field of forensic investigation, is the lack of protocol or application of scientific procedures.<sup>11</sup> As such, these cases contribute little to furthering the science of forensic excavations of mass graves. However, what they do emphasize is that exhumations are not straightforward affairs of search, discovery, and identification. Forensic investigators often tout the nostrum that exhumations can 'give voice to the dead'; though what is revealed usually does not begin nor end with the excavated physical evidence.<sup>12</sup> The evidence selected for interpretation is dependent upon the actors involved and their guiding motivations; while the historical narratives or 'truths' which emerge are influenced by socio-political and cultural contests of the present. In these contests, the symbolism attached to exhumed human remains take on what Katherine Verdery describes as 'social, political and cultural afterlives'.<sup>13</sup> By engaging in a cross-sectional

comparison, we can detect the evolving 'afterlives' of victims of the Japanese occupation, evident through the ever-changing symbolism attached to their remains in response to changing socio-political contexts. The cases examined amplify the processes involved in the manipulation of exhumed remains to serve the needs of the living, rather than reclaim the stories of the dead. Further, in serving the needs of the present, these cases illustrate that exhumations may inadvertently obfuscate the past rather than recover history.

### **Bukit Dunbar, Penang, 1946**

Shortly after the reoccupation of Malaya in September 1945, the British military administration launched investigations to gather evidence to bring war crimes charges, not only against Japanese army personnel but also against civilian collaborators. These took the form of identity parades and public displays of photo line-ups of potential war criminals, the gathering of testimonies and affidavits from survivors and witnesses, as well as several exhumations at known killing sites. The authorities were compelled to proceed with the impending trials quickly, influenced in part by the need to assuage the vengeful mood pervasive among the Chinese community at that time, and in part by the need to address pressing issues, from food shortages and rehabilitation of essential industries to general reconstruction efforts. The sheer scale of the task was challenging amidst the confusion and chaos left by war; some Japanese army personnel had escaped or could not be located from nearby theatres of war, Indian National Army conscripts – who had been recruited by the Japanese ostensibly for an offensive against the British in India – had blended in with other civilian prisoners and PoWs, while potential witnesses or survivors were not always forthcoming. Against this backdrop, investigators appear to have relied heavily upon testimonies, more so than physical evidence, to secure convictions. For example, in a study of selected war crimes trial cases relating to Japanese atrocities in Malaya, it is evident that the opening of mass graves was conducted only sparingly.<sup>14</sup> For example, among the forty-seven cases examined by this researcher, only one trial introduced photographic evidence and supporting testimonies relating to an exhumation.<sup>15</sup>

In this singular case, a mass grave at Bukit Dunbar on Thien Eok Estate near Gelugor town was excavated. The exhumation appears to have been conducted merely to provide supplementary evidence that multiple deaths had indeed taken place in Penang Gaol, and

that bodies had been disposed of in mass graves on the site. The process was rudimentary; no medical officers or forensic scientists were involved. Further, testimony provided by Major Douglas Hayhurst, the second officer-in-charge of the No. 6 War Crimes Investigation Team, indicates that the exhumation was not exhaustive. For example, Major Hayhurst witnessed the opening of one mass grave measuring 50 feet in length and 3 feet wide. Though he estimated that its depth was probably 10 feet or more, the excavation work had stopped at 6 feet deep. When asked by the prosecuting officer how many remains were unearthed, he answered, 'I counted 232 skulls.' When asked if there were other corpses in that mass grave, he answered, 'Yes, you could see them in layers.' When asked if there was evidence of other graves, Major Hayhurst replied, 'there were three or more in the same area, though these were not disturbed.' There was no further investigation into the probable ethnicity, gender, and age of the victims or causes of death. It appears that the authorities merely assumed that since the majority of known victims were indeed Chinese, they were accountable only to the Chinese community. Local Chinese associations were consulted about the discovery, and upon their request, the remains were reinterred *in situ*. Arguably, such actions have compounded the myth of the 'Chinese as victim' to the exclusion of suffering experienced by all other ethnic groups.<sup>16</sup> And as the other graves were not opened, collectively how many were buried there was not determined. Instead, a host of local prison guards, undertakers, drivers, hospital staff, and other witnesses were cross-examined to establish that civilians had indeed been incarcerated, tortured, killed, or died while in custody and that they had been disposed of at Bukit Dunbar.

Why, then, was the mass grave at Bukit Dunbar excavated? In retrospect, it is clear that the exhumation was not so much concerned with the minutiae of the crimes committed, but in the site's value as both a visual and physical testament of Japanese atrocities. It is telling, for example, that during the trial, the presiding court official asked if photos of the exhumations had been released to the press. The response by the prosecuting officer is equally revealing: 'I believe one of the exhibits was released to the Chinese Press.' Why was there concern in ensuring that images of the exhumation were made public? And why in particular were the Chinese media favoured? Perhaps the British were anxious to demonstrate to the Chinese community – the loudest segment of the local populace in demanding retribution – that the wheels of justice were indeed turning.<sup>17</sup> Or perhaps the British were intent on exposing the wanton

cruelty of the Japanese occupiers, so as to contrast the relatively benign nature of British colonialism. And what became of the nameless, unknown mass found at Bukit Dunbar? Some of the remains were collected, along with others in various sites throughout the island by the local China Relief Fund chapter.<sup>18</sup> These were reinterred at Air Itam, beneath an obelisk commemorating ‘Penang Overseas Chinese war victims, compatriots and transport workers.’<sup>19</sup> Omitted were details of how they had met their fate or the contexts in which they had lost their lives. Instead, the Luguo Bridge Incident of 1937 which had sparked the Second Sino-Japanese War was given prominence. Clearly, this was a memorial to commemorate *tongbao* – a Chinese term that can be read alternately as ‘compatriot’ or ‘siblings from the same bloodline.’<sup>20</sup> In this final resting place, the remains were now transmuted into symbolic representations of the Chinese fallen, not in Penang or even Malaya alone, but martyrs in China’s ‘War of Resistance to Japan.’<sup>21</sup>

However, it was only in 1951, in the midst of the Malayan Emergency, that this memorial was ‘officially’ unveiled to the larger public. The date chosen for the occasion was 11 November, to coincide with Remembrance Day, which marks the end of the First World War. Local Chinese community leaders re-dedicated the site as a Chinese anti-war memorial. Was this a deliberate attempt to ‘neutralize’ Chinese nationalism and to downplay historical links with the motherland, especially in light of the recent establishment of the communist People’s Republic of China? Or perhaps it was to emphasize that the Chinese migrant community aspired towards being peaceful, law-abiding citizens of a future Malaya, quite separate from the wayward communist ‘bandits’ who were threatening peace in the territory.<sup>22</sup>

In the decades following independence in 1957, and partially in response to the communist threat of the Malayan Emergency, large numbers of the Chinese migrant population were granted citizenship in an effort to domesticate them. Did the conversion of this minority group to Malayan citizens change how the Chinese viewed their war dead? In the next section, we examine an exhumation conducted in 1982 to explore this question.

### **Parit Tinggi, Negeri Sembilan, 1982**

Xiao Wen Hu was seven years old in 1942 when Japanese soldiers arrived at Parit Tinggi village in Kuala Pilah district. The villagers

were asked to assemble in a clearing, ostensibly to register for 'safe passes'. Unbeknown to the villagers, Captain Iwata Mitsugi had received orders from Seremban Headquarters to conduct a *shukusei* and that 'any Chinese found in [his] area were to be summarily executed'.<sup>23</sup> The assembled men, women and children were segregated into groups of about twenty, marched into the surrounding areas and killed. In total, 675 civilians lost their lives before the village was razed to the ground.

Xiao sustained five bayonet wounds but was among thirty survivors who lived to bear witness to this massacre. Like many other displaced persons, Xiao became a refugee; he eked out a living on the streets and was eventually sold into child labour before being adopted by an Indonesian Chinese family. When he reached adulthood, Xiao made his way back to Malaya. Each Qing Ming, the annual day for honouring ancestors, Xiao returned to the mass grave at Parit Tinggi, where he would make contact with other survivors and their relatives. With each passing year, the wish to honour the family he had lost grew in him. He vowed he would someday build a memorial so that the events of that tragic day would not be forgotten.

In 1981, Xiao's wish came true. The impetus to exhume and reinter the remains was prompted by the revelation that the mass grave was located on government land. It would only be a matter of time until this land would be redeveloped and the grave disturbed. Survivors and relatives, Xiao included, were concerned that they would no longer be able to visit and pay their respects on Qing Ming. With the support of local Chinese community associations, a committee was established in May to raise funds for exhumation works and to erect a memorial. Xiao led the committee as chairman.

The importance of being able to worship at the graves of ancestors at Qing Ming is rooted in tradition. According to Chinese beliefs, those who died 'bad' deaths, for example through suicide or murder, are destined to wander aimlessly as 'hungry ghosts' or 'beggar spirits' if they are forgotten by their descendants.<sup>24</sup> If unappeased, these spirits can wreak havoc upon the prospects of living relatives. To counter this, rituals have to be performed to ease their way in the underworld. In Malaysia, Buddhist rites, Taoist rituals, Confucian teachings, and local pagan customs have melded into a unique Chinese religion of sorts.<sup>25</sup> Despite this, the conduct of funeral and post-funeral rites continue to uphold many of the cultural traditions transmitted by the early generations of migrants.

The exhumation at Parit Tinggi in 1982 bore the hallmarks of a traditional Chinese funeral. A Buddhist priest offered prayers for

the deceased before excavation works began. Again, as at Bukit Dunbar, no forensic scientist was involved. Hired labourers set to work with basic tools – *cangkul* (hoe) and baskets – while some volunteers sifted through the earth with their bare hands. There was no protocol involved in documenting the exhumation nor was there any attempt to reassemble the bones into complete skeletons. The remains gathered – tibia, femur, and rib bones in recycled cardboard boxes, skulls in gunny sacks and plastic pails – were relocated to a temporary tomb at the Kuala Pilah Chinese cemetery, even as construction works on a permanent memorial continued apace on the same site. The use of makeshift containers to hold the remains may seem haphazard, even callous and disrespectful. However, the handling of remains does not represent a significant aspect of the burial process. According to Chinese custom, in the absence of a body, what matters is that the spirit is saved from ‘homelessness’ through a proper burial and the allotment of a physical resting place. In this way, the deceased are restored to their ‘proper position as ancestral ghost’.<sup>26</sup>

In August 1984, the permanent memorial was unveiled. Survivors, relatives, the Chinese media, and representatives of various local Chinese organizations turned out *en masse*. Fruit, a roast pig, ‘hell money’, incense, and other gift offerings were presented to ease the afterlives of the dead, while monks from a local Buddhist association chanted prayers. This was clearly a communal affair and in some respects, also a private one; for survivors like Xiao, they had fulfilled their filial obligation in ensuring their ancestors’ spirits would not be in limbo. The main inscription on the monolith, in Chinese characters, states that this is a memorial for Chinese *tongbao*. In a similar way to the remains reinterred at Air Itam, the loss of these lives was consecrated to the larger Chinese collective memory of sacrifice and martyrdom at the hands of the Japanese invaders. In contrast, a plaque in the Malay language states rather simply: ‘To remember those lost in the events of Parit Tinggi, Kuala Pilah on 16th March 1942’. Above it, in Chinese, there is a similar though more explicit message: that those killed included Chinese men, women, the elderly, and children. A smaller plaque explains that the victims’ remains were reinterred at this memorial so that members of the community can continue to pay their respect. In rescuing these remains from potential future desecration, communal sentiment has been strengthened through a narrative of common victimhood. By erecting a memorial, they have reinserted their collective memory into the historiography of the occupation. It is evident that



Figure 10.1 Workers using rudimentary tools to excavate the mass grave at Parit Tinggi.



Figure 10.2 Excavated remains from the Parit Tinggi mass grave are placed at a temporary tomb awaiting burial at Kuala Pilah Chinese Cemetery.



by omitting any mention of the Second Sino-Japanese War on any of the inscriptions at this site, the survivors and descendants who participated in the exhumation and reinterment of the Parit Tinggi remains have asserted their personal and communal identification with their adopted land. The victims have been recast as part of a larger Malayan collective who were lost in one terrible chapter in the wider catalogue of Japanese aggression on Malayan soil.

In the next section, we examine a more recent exhumation conducted in 2002. Given the passage of time, and with each successive generation, especially among those without firsthand experience of the war and who know no other home than Malaysia, what meaning or resonance can the war dead conjure for the settled Chinese minority?

### **Batu Caves, 2002**

On 11 November 2002, Liew Yew Kiew, eighty-nine, formerly a villager of Sungai Tua, Batu Caves, led a contingent of Chinese press, Chinese association members, and Quek Jin Teck, secretary-general of the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society, to a clearing amidst the thick undergrowth. They arrived bearing eighteen ceramic urns, adorned with lion heads. They were there to retrieve the remains of the '9-1 Martyrs' whose mass grave was threatened by state land redevelopment. Liew had witnessed the events of 1 September 1942, when a clandestine meeting of thirty Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) resistance members had been set upon by a Japanese army battalion. In the ensuing clash, many of the villagers were also massacred. Eighteen of the guerrillas were captured and beheaded; several of their heads were displayed afterwards at a roundabout in Ampang to serve as a public warning.<sup>27</sup>

However, on that day in November, there was not a trace of human remains or material remnants to be found. In a symbolic gesture, handfuls of earth from the site were gathered instead into the urns. These were placed in hearses and ceremoniously driven to Nilai Memorial Park, a Chinese cemetery on the outskirts of the capital. At Nilai, the urns were buried in a ceremony attended by a gathering of about 100 Chinese community leaders and politicians. The reason for the relocation, Deputy Minister Tan Chai Ho explained, was 'to let the younger generation know that the 18 martyrs were heroes. Their sacrifices showed they were patriots who fought for the country. Such nationalistic attitude should be emulated.'<sup>28</sup> To that

end, a permanent memorial, it was envisaged, would also be erected on the site of the reinterred remains.

A year later, in December 2003, the completed 9-1 Memorial was unveiled at an official ceremony attended by press, Chinese political and community leaders, as well as 100 visiting former MPAJA and Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) veterans from China. The message propagated was once again unabashedly political; this was an event to commemorate fallen heroes of the 'Resist Japan-Defend Malaya War of Resistance'.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis was clear: these were Malayan/Malaysian martyrs; their sacrifice was not limited to the Second Sino-Japanese War cause, but they had also acted out of patriotism for Malaya. There was no mention of the post-war communist insurrection, of forced deportations of communists by the British colonial administration to China, or of the connections between the MPAJA and the CPM leadership. Instead, what was clearly a Chinese communal affair was transmuted into a universal anti-war message, reminiscent of that propagated by Chinese leaders in 1951 in front of the Air Itam Memorial in Penang. 'We are a peace-loving nation', Deputy Minister Datuk Donald Lim was quoted as saying, 'and the idea behind this memorial is more of an anti-war stance, which is fitting, considering that at this juncture there are wars going on around the world, like Afghanistan for instance'.<sup>30</sup> In the mainstream press, the event was reported as a nostalgic reunion of former resistance fighters. In the alternative media, the opportunity was taken to remind the public that MPAJA fighters, who had sacrificed for the nation, had once been hunted as communist terrorists and bandits. Readers were also reminded that this same 'Chinese resistance was aided and supported by the British and the Allies'; further, that 'the resistance was actually quite multiethnic'.<sup>31</sup> The latter observation was a pointed reminder that not all wartime resistance fighters were communists or Chinese; there were Malay communists and resistance fighters as well.

Surprisingly, the reinterment and commemoration of the 9-1 Martyrs sparked little public debate. However, when it was revealed that an additional monument would be erected on the same site to remember 'Malayan heroes' of all ethnicities in the 'War of Resistance against Japanese Invasion', there was public outcry. The Information Minister, Zainuddin Madin, of ethnic Malay origin, decried the plans as a 'monument for Communists' and called for its demolition.<sup>32</sup> A retired lieutenant-colonel, also of Malay ethnicity, wrote to the *New Straits Times* broadsheet asking, 'How do you justify building monuments to commemorate those who fought the Japanese when

there is proof that a large number of them actually committed all kinds of atrocities against the people of this country under the communist banner?'<sup>33</sup> The leader of the opposition Democratic Action Party, Lim Kit Siang, released an open letter deriding Zainuddin's claims that all anti-Japanese fighters were communists and mocked the minister's earlier recorded statement that just because he was Information Minister, 'he knows history, he understands history, he is part of history and that he bears witness to history'.<sup>34</sup> Despite the controversy, the new monument was unveiled officially in September 2007. Beneath the obelisk, the message that this is 'a monument for Malayan heroes' is repeated in four languages – English, Malay, Tamil, and Chinese. As before, attendance at the commemoration ceremony comprised primarily Chinese community leaders, politicians, and MPAJA veterans. Curiously, Zhan Gujing, a political attaché of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Malaysia, led the commemoration proceedings. There was no coverage in the mainstream press and if there were any dissenting voices, they were silent.

Today, the two monuments still stand on opposing sides at the Anti-War Memorial site in Nilai Memorial Park. Despite exhortations by Chinese politicians that school trips should be organized so that the young can 'learn about the sacrifices made by those who fought for the country', the site receives few public visitors.<sup>35</sup> It is not included on any tourist map and ambitious plans to build a museum on the grounds appear to have been abandoned. On a recent visit in 2012, this researcher noted that even though it was Qing Ming, and the cemetery was busy with visitors engaged in the annual ritual of remembering the dead, the memorial site was eerily desolate. Despite its professed *raison d'être* to honour martyrs of the Japanese occupation, the memorial appears to hold little resonance for the Malaysian public – Chinese or otherwise – at large. If the intention of the memorial was to be a political manoeuvre to insert Chinese collective war memory into the national historiography of the war, that attempt also appears to have failed.

## Conclusion

Exhumations often resurrect ghosts from the pasts. As Verdery posits, the emotions, narratives, and commemorations they trigger often result in a reassessment of an uncomfortable past within society.<sup>36</sup> In Malaysia, however, exhumations – especially those conducted since

independence – have not resulted in such opportunities. These exhumations have not promoted much empathy or sparked much interest among the general public, largely because the mass graves, the victims contained within, and the events that produced these mass corpses have been perceived (rather mistakenly) to have affected only the Chinese segment of the population. As such, the history of the Japanese occupation of Malaya, as it is propagated in contemporary Malaysia, remains partial and distorted. Thus, sensitive and thorny issues arising from the occupation remain unexplored and neglected – among them, questions of collaboration and complicity with the Japanese occupiers, and the deepening of inter-ethnic divisions between the Malay and Chinese communities in the aftermath of the occupation.

The conduct of exhumations and reinterment in more recent times demonstrates a desire on the part of the Chinese community to insert their collective communal war memory into the national historiography of the occupation. This is evident in the recasting of Chinese victims as Malayan martyrs and patriots; an overt attempt perhaps to minimize the community's migrant origins and to emphasize the community's participation in the liberation and decolonization of the nation. Rejection by the Malay political elite of these overtures indicates that national history and historiography remain in service to the national teleology of Malay supremacy. Under these circumstances, as Blackburn and Hack have observed, minority war histories are 'left to themselves, without the sponsorship of the state, to write their own histories, to nurture their own cultures, and to commemorate their own wartime past'.<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper characterize the Japanese invasion as a 'Rape of Malaya'. See C. Bayly & T. Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 208; Geoffrey C. Gunn argues that the planning and coordination of the *sook ching* massacres summon comparisons; G. Gunn, 'Remembering the Southeast Asian Chinese massacres of 1941–45', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 37:3 (2007), 273–91.
- 2 For various estimates, see M. Shinozaki, *Syonan: My Story* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2006); H. Hirofumi, 'Massacre of Chinese in Singapore and its coverage in postwar Japan', in Y. Akashi & M. Yoshimura (eds), *New Perspectives on the Japanese Occupation in Malaya and Singapore, 1941–1945* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp. 234–49; B. K.

- Cheah, 'Japanese army policy toward the Chinese and Malay-Chinese relations in wartime Malaya', in P. H. Kratoska (ed.), *Southeast Asian Minorities in the Wartime Japanese Empire* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), pp. 97–110; 'War death: plea for payment is being studied', *Straits Times*, 9 March 1962, cited in W. K. Kwok, 'Justice done? Criminal and moral responsibility issues in the Chinese massacres trial Singapore, 1947', Genocide Studies Program, Working Paper 18, Yale University, 2001.
- 3 There is no consensus on how many mass graves exist in Malaysia. In 2009, Professor Nobuyoshi Takashima of Ryukyuu University reportedly claimed that his researchers had located seventy mass graves with an estimated death toll exceeding 100,000; see S. Ahmad, 'One man's fight against Japan's historical amnesia', *New Straits Times*, 18 February 2009, 24.
  - 4 M. Z. Rosensaft, 'The mass-graves of Bergen-Belsen: focus for confrontation', *Jewish Social Studies*, 41:2 (1979), 155–86; I. Paperno, 'Exhuming the bodies of Soviet terror', *Representations*, 75:1 (2001), 89–118; M. Elkin, 'Opening Franco's graves', *Archaeology*, 59:5 (2006), 38–43.
  - 5 The term 'sectional narrative' emphasizes that these narratives are not entirely absent from public discourse but are suppressed as they are incompatible with existing parameters of official memory; T. Ashplant, G. Dawson & R. Michael (eds), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 20.
  - 6 For discussions on why the Chinese were targeted see Y. Akashi, 'Japanese policy towards the Malayan Chinese 1941–1945', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 1:2 (1970), 61–89; and Hirofumi, 'Massacre of Chinese'.
  - 7 This statement is not meant to negate the suffering experienced by other ethnic groups during the occupation. However, as historian Henry Frei points out, 'the Chinese reminisce as the prime victims of Japanese reprisals and revenge; and Malay and Tamil sources reflect fewer problems with the Japanese who sought to woo these peoples'; H. Frei, *Guns of February: Ordinary Japanese Soldiers' Views of the Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore 1941–42* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2004), p. xix.
  - 8 In 1963, Malaya was reformed as Malaysia, incorporating Peninsular Malaya, Singapore, and the Borneo island states of Sabah and Sarawak. It was hoped that this union would stem communist influence in the region. On the impact of the communist insurgency of 1948–60 on Malay–Chinese race relations and how this affected British policy towards Malayan self-determination see F. G. Carnell, 'Communalism and communism in Malaya', *Pacific Affairs*, 26: 2 (1953), 99–117; V. Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1954); G. Means, 'Malaysia: a new federation in Southeast Asia', *Pacific Affairs*, 36:2 (1963), 138–59; F. H. H. King, *The New Malayan Nation: A Study of Communalism and Nationalism* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1957); and A. Lau, 'Malayan union citizenship: constitutional change and controversy in Malaya, 1942–48', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 20:2 (1989), 216–43.
  - 9 I. Morrison, 'Aspects of the racial problem in Malaya', *Pacific Affairs*, 22:3 (1949), p. 251; T. Silcock, 'Policy for Malaya 1952', *International Affairs*, 28:4 (1952), p. 447.

- 10 For an exploration of how state-sponsored national war narratives have shaped Malaysian historiography of the Japanese occupation, see K. Blackburn & K. Hack, *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), pp. 255–91.
- 11 In the last two decades especially, the field of forensic investigation involving mass graves has led to the adoption of specific protocols, much of which has been established through experience by organizations such as the Physicians for Human Rights. In 1991, the United Nations introduced an examination protocol in its ‘Manual on effective prevention and investigation of extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions’. See N. Collins, ‘Giving a voice to the dead’, *Human Rights*, 22:1 (1995), p. 48; and W. Haglund, M. Connor & D. Scott, ‘The archaeology of contemporary mass graves’, *Historical Archaeology*, 35:1 (2001), 57–69.
- 12 Forensic investigators appear to attach much significance to the power of human remains to testify to ‘the truth’, ‘give voice to the victims’, or ‘impart their stories from the grave’; see for example: Collins, ‘Giving a voice to the dead’; Haglund *et al.*, ‘The archaeology of contemporary mass graves’; W. Haglund, ‘Archaeology and forensic death investigations’, *Historical Archaeology*, 35:1 (2001), 26–34. However, Slavistic Irina Paperno argues eloquently that the body as forensic evidence is not infallible; historian Nanci Adler concurs. Both have written about the Soviet terror and how ‘facts’ culled from exhumations have been manipulated depending on how social and political actors ascribe meaning and interpret these evidence; see Paperno, ‘Exhuming the bodies of Soviet terror’; N. Adler, ‘The future of the Soviet past remains unpredictable: the resurrection of Stalinist symbols amidst the exhumation of mass graves’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57:8 (2005), 1093–119.
- 13 Exhumations inevitably lead to fraught contests of meaning-making and memory-building; the latter is intrinsically linked to the present, where the past is mediated through existing political and cultural struggles within contemporary society. See K. Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 7.
- 14 The war crimes trial cases examined by this researcher are from the following collections at the Public Records Office, Kew, London: WO235, Judge Advocate General’s Office: War crimes case files, Second World War, and WO311, Judge Advocate General’s Office: War crimes files – Japanese war crimes – monthly summaries and results of trials.
- 15 WO235/931: ‘Penang Gaol case’: War crimes trial of Major Higashigawa Yoshinobu and thirty-four others, Penang, 30 August–2 September 1946.
- 16 As Kevin Blackburn and Karl Hack have pointed out, apart from memories of everyday victims and war heroes, Chinese memories of the occupation are intrinsically rooted in the *sook ching* (‘purge through cleansing’) massacres of 1942. As the primary victims of these massacres, the Chinese community continue to emphasize victimhood in their commemoration of the occupation; a claim that has not been challenged by other ethnic groups. See Blackburn & Hack, *War Memory*, pp. 135–73.

- 17 There was a palpable mood among the Chinese populace that British justice was not being dispensed quickly or severely enough; for example, Tay Koh Yat, chairman of the Overseas Chinese Appeal Committee, submitted a public demand for more death sentences and public executions, see Kwok, 'Justice done?'
- 18 China Relief Fund chapters were established throughout the territory in response to the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. Ostensibly, their function was to raise funds for humanitarian needs, though remittances also supplemented the war chest of the nationalist government in China. Contributions from Malaya to China were reportedly C\$30.4 million between November 1938 and December 1940. For more details on the role of the China Relief Fund in Malaya and the Second Sino-Japanese War, see S. Leong, 'The Kuomintang-Communist United Front in Malaya during the National Salvation Period, 1937-1941', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 8:1 (1977), 31-47; and S. Leong, 'The Malayan overseas Chinese and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1941', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 10:2 (1979), 297-9.
- 19 The reference to 'transport workers' refers to volunteers who participated in building and maintaining the Burma Road between 1937 and 1938. This was a vital supply route from Burma to southern China used by the Allies to supply the nationalist forces in China during the early years of the Second Sino-Japanese War. For more details, see C. Hendershot, 'Burma's value to the Japanese', *Far Eastern Survey*, 11:16 (1942), 176-8.
- 20 The term *tongbao* consists of two characters, *tong* (同) meaning 'same,' and *bao* (胞) meaning 'womb.'
- 21 The Second Sino-Japanese War is remembered in China as the 'War of Resistance to Japan' or simply 'War of Resistance'; R. Mitter & A. Moore, 'China in World War II, 1937-1945: experience, memory, and legacy', *Modern Asian Studies*, 45:2 (2011), p. 225.
- 22 At the height of the Malayan Emergency, Chinese elites were at pains to illustrate to the British that the migrant Chinese community could become loyal future Malayan citizens. In collaboration with the authorities, 'education for citizenship' programmes were implemented to 'make Malaysians' out of the Chinese by providing a counter-ideology to communism. See Morrison, 'Aspects of the racial problem', pp. 250-1; and E. H. G. Dobby, 'Resettlement transforms Malaya: a case-history of relocating the population of an Asian plural society', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 1:3 (1952), 163-89.
- 23 'Abstract of evidence in war crimes trial of Colonel Watanabe Tsunahiko, Captain Iwata Mitsugi and Second Lieutenant Goba Itsugo, WO311/543', Judge Advocate General's Office: War crimes files - Japanese war crimes - monthly summaries and results of trials.
- 24 For discussions on the consequences of 'bad deaths' or 'bad burials,' and the part played by ancestral worship to mitigate the wrath or displeasure of the dead, see M. L. Cohen, 'Soul and salvation: conflicting themes in Chinese popular religion', in J. L. Watson & E. S. Rawski (eds), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 180-202; see also S. Harrell, 'The concept

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