

KINABALU GUERRILLAS: THE INANAM-MENGGATAL-TELIPOK BASEL CHURCH CONNECTIONS

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This paper is delivered on 14 March 2003 at Kota Kinabalu during the occasion of Pioneers' Memorial Lectures in conjunction with the 90 Anniversary of the arrival of the Hakkas to and the founding of the Inanam-Menggatal-Telipok Towns.

Sabah has always been a peaceful country. Among the turbulent events, the Jesselton Uprising was the crown incident. In relation, the Hakkas of the Inanam-Menggatal-Telipok corridor were the backbone of the Kinabalu Guerrillas. Moreover, the corridor was also the centre of gravity of the uprising. This paper attempts to assign the Hakkas of the three towns their proper place in history and thus represents a fitting salute to their immortal contribution to defending their new found homeland.

This year marks the 90 Anniversary of the establishment of the Hakka-based Basel Church Christian community in the area of Inanam-Menggatal-Telipok. Interestingly, this also coincides with the 60 Year of the Jesselton Uprising that took place on 9 October 1943, of which the Hakka Christians from these three areas were heavily involved.

This paper will attempt to highlight the involvement of the Hakka Christians in the Kinabalu Guerrillas. Arguments on the rationale for their involvement and an assessment on the outcome would be presented.

Existing Literatures

Since the end of World War Two, there have been several attempts in trying to give an account of the formation of the Kinabalu Guerrillas and what had transpired during and after the Jesselton Uprising of 1943. The first attempt was made in 1949 by J. Maxwell Hall who published an elaborate account of the exploits of the Kinabalu Guerrillas.¹ Hall, who was a magistrate in pre-war British North Borneo Chartered Company administration, returned to Sabah in 1945 as a military officer. He had the opportunity to interview survivors from the uprising. This was followed by an article written in 1950 by Pang Tet

¹ J. Maxwell Hall, *Kinabalu Guerrillas*, Kuching: Borneo Literature Bureau, 1962.

Tshung. Pang assisted his father, Pang Vui Chau, when the latter was invited by the guerillas to treat the wounded after the uprising.¹ Another earlier work belonged to Wong Yun Tshin. He penned personal notes before his death in 1951.² Wong was the treasurer of the Kinabalu Guerrillas.

In 1978, Sia Yuk Tet, who founded the Kinabalu Guerrillas together with others in 1942, also published a detailed account of the history of the Kinabalu Guerrillas.³ Unlike Hall, who drew most of his information from shopkeepers and former government servants, Sia was able to give the Chinese dimension of the story, especially those who were directly involved. Another Chinese account was by Liew Chi Nyen, who was involved with the Kinabalu Guerrillas in Tuaran.⁴

Chong Kui Fah, who was arrested by the Japanese together with his father in Menggatal after the failure of the uprising, also contributed to enrich the narrative. Chong's account was serialized in the *Hua Chiao Jit Poh*.⁵ In 1993, a group of journalists in Kota Kinabalu produced a commemorative volume in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary of the Kinabalu Guerrillas Uprising.⁶ The volume consists of oral account from former members of the guerillas as well as reproduction of some written accounts.

There are at least three works by Japanese in relation to the Kinabalu Guerrillas. In 1952, a war memoir entitled, *The Southern Cross Never Deceives* was published in Japan.⁷ Yamazaki Aen, the writer of this memoir, was the Sabah born Sino-Dusun wife of Yamazaki Kenji, the Japanese prefecture governor in Keningau during the Japanese occupation. Even though the memoir was issued in Yamazaki Aen's name, it contains a lot of input from the husband, primarily from his wartime diaries, making it more detailed and accurate in many ways.

¹ Pang Tet Tshung, "Jesselton Uprising in 1943," *The Sarawak Tribune*, 8 April 1950.

² I am grateful to Dr. Wong Tshen Hin of Kota Kinabalu for providing some of his father's personal notes regarding the uprising.

³ Sia Yuk Tet, *Shenshan Youji Dui Kangri Shi [History of the Anti-Japanese Kinabalu Guerrillas]*, Tawau: Tawau Daily Publications, 1978. (In Chinese)

⁴ Liew Chi Nyen, "Yabi Shenshan Kangri Youjidui Beizhuang de Huiyi" [Tragic Memory of the Jesselton Kinabalu Anti-Japanese Guerrillas], in Shu Yun Tsiao (ed.), *Malayan Chinese Resistance to Japan 1937-1945- Selected Source Materials*, Singapore: Culture and Historical Publishing House, 1984, pp. 718-719.

⁵ Chong Kui Fah (Survivor), "Memoir on the Perils of the Double Tenth Incident", *Hua Chiao Jit Poh*, [Overseas Chinese Daily News] (Kota Kinabalu), 9 August 1998 to 7 February 1999. (serialized fortnightly in Chinese)

⁶ Li Rui Qing (ed.), *Shenshan Yinlie Zhi (Annals of Kinabalu Heroes)*, Kota Kinabalu: 1993.

⁷ Yamazaki Aen, *The Southern Cross Never Deceives*, Tokyo: Hokushido, 1952.