



THE SARAWAK PHILATELIST 2023

The Journal of Philatelic Society of
Kuching Sarawak

Volume 15, No. 1, October 2023

30th Anniversary

Special Commemorative Publication

1993 - 2023



Dr Ong's Lens on Sarawak under the Japanese Shadow

By Indraneil Das

Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia
E-mail: idas@unimas.my

Liap-Teck Ong (2021) in his article in the pages of the Sarawak Museum Journal ('A glimpse of civil life in Sarawak under the Empire of the Sun') covers the four tumultuous years of Japanese occupation of what was to become a State under the Malaysian Federation.

Using 'civilian' sources of archival materials, chiefly, documents such as cheques and receipts in private (including the author's) hands, he pieces together perhaps the least well understood period of the State's history.

Notable are the languages used in the official notifications issued by the Japanese Imperial Army, using excellent English text, besides Jawi (to make an appearance of a narrative of liberator against colonists) and Chinese. Also significant was the Japanese encouragement of local business and the invitation of Japanese companies to Sarawak. War being an expensive business, funding was raised through a variety of means, including introduction of taxes from these companies, besides disingenuous offers of lottery prizes to encourage placement of fixed deposits.

To conclude, Ong's take on the Japanese period of Sarawak introduces readers into a poorly-researched era, revealing the carefully choreographed manner in which revenue was extracted for the ongoing war effort, using novel data sources.

Illustrated below is a Japanese propaganda poster from the beginning of the Pacific War (1941–1945), the slogan translated as 'Let's Win the Greater East Asia War'.

