

NAS exhibition to mark 80th anniversary of Fall of Singapore features historical artefacts from Singaporean collectors

Singapore, 15 February 2022




ANNEX B



EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS




Through the following four sections and a conclusion at the exhibition, visitors can immerse themselves in the unfolding of Singapore's history during this pivotal period.

- i. **Between Two World Wars** explores the tension between Britain and Japan, who were once allies under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. The alliance to assist each other in safeguarding their interests against the Russians came to an end in 1923.
- ii. **War On The Horizon** sheds light on the galvanising of defence forces when the reality of a Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore became imminent in 1937.
- iii. **Fall Of The Fortress** traces the fall of Singapore. By 9 December 1941, the Royal Air Force (RAF) had lost nearly all of its front-line aeroplanes after the Japanese attacked RAF fields in Singapore, destroying any hope of aerial support for the army.
- iv. **Masters Of Our Fate** portrays the different facets of life in Singapore during the 44 months under Japanese rule after Britain surrendered.
- v. **Conclusion** marked the change of tides after Japan formally surrendered in September 1945, as momentum gathered among Singaporeans in the fight towards self-governance.

a) Artefacts displayed at “New Light on an Old Tale” exhibition

1		<p>Japanese Sake Cup</p> <p>Japanese sake cup was used to commemorate the Boxer Rebellion Eight Nations Alliance. Japan and Britain were part of the multinational coalition that invaded north of China in August 1900 to relieve foreign legations besieged by the Boxers militia.</p>
2		<p>Military Campaign Sake Cups</p> <p>Japanese military sake cups were commissioned to commemorate enlistment, promotions, retirement, victories, missions and battles. Most of these cups were personalised with the soldier's name at the base of the cup.</p> <p>The earliest known examples of such customs can be traced to sake cups from the late 19th century era. This custom reached its peak in the 1930s when Japan was at the zenith of military power.</p>
3		<p>Porcelain Meissen Medals</p> <p>Germany's Adolf Hitler commemorated Lieutenant-General Tomoyuki Yamashita's "Capture of Singapore" with these porcelain Meissen medals.</p> <p>Yamashita had planned to capture Singapore by 11 February 1942 to celebrate the "<u>kigensetsu</u>" or National Foundation Day – a national holiday to celebrate the enthronement of the legendary first emperor of Japan, Emperor <u>Jimmu</u>.</p> <p>It is no small wonder then that the battle at Bukit <u>Timah</u> (10 to 12 February 1942) had been fought so fiercely by both the aggressors.</p>

<p>4</p>		<p>Military Hardware Requisition Slip</p> <p>This military hardware requisition slip bears the official stamps of two significant historical figures: Lieutenant-General Tomoyuki Yamashita and his superior Lt-Gen <u>Kawagishi Bunzaburo</u>.</p> <p>The fortuitous meeting of these two men in Keijo (present day Seoul, South Korea) in the 1930s greatly influenced Yamashita's life, and consequently Singapore's history. At a time when Yamashita was at the lowest ebb of his career and making serious consideration to resign from the commission, help came from <u>Kawagishi</u>. A former aide-de-camp to Emperor Hirohito, <u>Kawagishi</u> brought a personal note of encouragement and appreciation from the Emperor to Yamashita. This gesture lifted Yamashita's spirit and restored his confidence. Yamashita's military reputation grew after the ban on his promotion was lifted.</p>
		<p>So one could say, without Lt-Gen <u>Kawagishi Bunzaburo</u>, there might not have been a Tiger of Malaya!</p>
<p>5</p>		<p>Original Wooden Plaque of SVRC</p> <p>The wooden plaque of the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps (SVRC) used to deck the wall of the Drill Hall at Beach Road.</p> <p>Forerunner of the Singapore Volunteer Corps under the British Empire, the SVRC was the first volunteer corps to be established in Singapore in 1854. Acting as a supplement to the local</p>

<p>9</p>	 	<p><u>1 sen</u> Japanese circulation coins</p> <p>These <u>1 sen</u> Japanese circulation coins from different eras tell the story of how Japan, impoverished by the protracted war, resorted to making coins out of clay by July 1945. These clay coins remain uncirculated because the war came to an end soon after.</p> <p>The composition of the Japanese <u>1 sen</u> coin began to change in 1938. Previously produced in brass, the copper percentage was reduced to create a bronze coin. Later the same year, Japan released a significantly smaller and lighter <u>1 sen</u> coin struck in aluminium. This composition stuck and was used through 1943, though the size was reduced again in 1941. Between 1938 and 1941, the denomination shrunk from 23mm to 16mm, and from 3.75g to 0.65g.</p> <p>Under the Japanese administration, jinrikisha (also called rickshaw) owners had to pay a tax of \$15.00 per year to the Registrar of Vehicles. Before the fall of Singapore, rickshaw pullers made considerable contributions in aid of China war efforts.</p>
<p>8</p>		<p><u>Syonan</u> Sports Association Badge</p> <p>Formed under the charge of the <u>Syonan Tokubetushi</u>, the <u>Syonan</u> Sports Association promoted sports in the hope of softening the image of the Japanese colonisers. A <u>Syonan</u> football team was sent to Germany to play against the German Naval football team.</p>

b) Oral history interviews and images

Oral History Quotes
<p>"You were waiting when they were going to check the Japanese advance. But it didn't happen. Every day you read that famous phrase they used to use 'withdraw to prepared positions'. That's how they camouflaged their retreat."</p> <p>Lee Kip Lin Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore</p>
<p>"Frankly, after the war, I had a very poor opinion of the British. They let us down very badly. Through their propaganda we were mostly misled. You know, during the war, we can practically predict what is to be... a phrase to be published by The Straits Times 'We retreat according to plan.' We swallowed too much of that. Later on, we found that in fact, the British has got no quality. No quality as far as fighting spirit is concerned. They got nil. Morale completely out."</p> <p>Ng Seng Yong Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore</p>
<p>"Anyone could join, so long as you were born in Singapore. And we could choose what company we wanted to. The 'A' and 'B' Company consisted of European Volunteers. 'D' Company consisted of Eurasians. Then there was the 2nd Battalion of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. They had three companies. 'C' Company was entirely Chinese. 'F' Company was entirely Malays. And 'G' Company was entirely Eurasians (machine-gunners)." "So long as you were found to be physical fit and had no other diseases, you were passed by the Volunteer doctor, you were certified fit to become a member of the Volunteer Force."</p> <p>Cleaver Rowell Eber Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore</p>
<p>"Well, this is something which we Eurasians at that time were enamoured with rifle shooting, very enamoured. And this was the main attraction, really.... Then of course when we got into the spirit of army discipline and so on, then of course, we need to be more conscious of our task, our role, when the time came for us to fight in this place." "And then from then on, we realised that we had volunteered for what would be something which was much more than what we went in for."</p> <p>Carl Francis de Souza Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore</p>

"We have a... they called it a Station Sergeant. You know all these sub-stations roughly, or approximately about a hundred yards, separating all these sub-stations there'll be normally a sergeant in charge. Then there'll be a corporal and two lance corporals. Normally we report there for duty. And we have to stay there in the station until the sun goes down. We have to go round supervise the lightnings of the residents within the area. And if they put on too bright lights, we have to tell them to curtain it or shadow the boxes."

Ng Seng Yong

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"Of course you see in my area because it is situated in the outskirts of the town, you can easily construct shelters. But not in the town area where there is no shelters at all. It depends mainly on the drains and these basements. No shelters. So that's why when there is a raid, a lot of people died from the bombing."

Ismail bin Zain

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"But as I turned round I see the Prince of Wales mind you, and the Express went up to the bows. And she rolled over and stroked the bow into the Express a bit. And they were taking off casualties out of the Prince of Wales. Well, then I see her come astern and she made off. And the Prince of Wales rolled over and she done the same as the Repulse. She went down stern first and the bow after. Just sunk there in the sea."

Arthur William Bartholomew

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"Of course the first reaction was that the British Navy will probably sail out of Singapore, and smash the Japanese invading Kota Bahru. And the Americans would, of course, come and give us a helping hand. And it would be all over soon. Or at least the British could hold back the Japanese far out in the north, well away from us until they brought in more troops from Europe.... But the result was far from what one had hoped."

Lee Kip Lin

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"I would say the British were too confident. They took things easily. They spent too much time on relaxation, dancing, enjoying themselves instead of concentrating on the war. That's how they lost the battle. They were not prepared. So we, being civilians and under the British control at that time, what can we do? Just take their word. They were more or less the overlords or masters."

Robert Chong

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"I think now it is worthwhile for every citizen to fight and die rather than be taken as prisoners and be killed for nothing. That's what we saw the Japanese do. They came here, they massacred the people. It is better to stand and fight to death than to be taken as prisoners."

Lee Tian Soo

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"One of the Japanese (Kempeitai) favourite punishment is to let you lie on the floor, tie you up (your feet and everything) to make your head immobile. They'd push a rubber hose into your mouth (and) open a tap. Someone will be at your head, pressing the hose and closing your mouth at the same time so that the water can go direct into your gullet and into your stomach."

Abu Bakar Ali

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"The first few days you don't go out of the house, you just stayed in. The Japs went on a rampage which we were later given to understand was the standard practice. Apparently, with the Japanese Army, every time after a big battle, when they conquered and overran a place, they gave the soldiers about two weeks to do just what they liked... They got drunk and did anything. But after that, they imposed very severe restrictions on the soldiers."

Lee Kip Lin

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"They recalled the civil servants and continued the same departments, the PWD and so on. Whoever was willing to go back to work and whoever survived went back to work. Of course, for the sake of wages and salaries, the people happily went back to work."

Gay Wan Guay

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"We were so afraid to make any mistakes and then get our heads chopped off. They keep on threatening you, 'if you don't do what we ask you to do, we're going to cut your head off.' They tell you straightaway. Actually, everybody lived in fear during the Japanese time."

Chu Shuen Choo

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"At that time, we did not know why we were asked to go to the police station but we had to go. When I reached there, I saw about 15 young men who were not from my kampong. They were from the neighbouring kampongs. At 10 a.m. the Japanese officer from Jasin came in a car with a flag. Afterwards he began to choose. He did nothing else. If he saw that the person looked sick, he pushed him aside. He asked him to leave. If he saw he looked energetic, he did not push him aside. He gave a letter. He asked me to go to the police station in Jasin, my district about 18 miles away." "When we went through the gate, on it was written Heiho. What this Heiho was we also did not know." "I was forced. If I was not forced, I would not want to be a Japanese soldier... If I did not go they would surely look for me and punish me. If I did not get punished, maybe they would punish my father and my mother."

Alias bin Osman

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"Those who were not employed or who were not in some sort of, shall we say, important occupation, they had to report for duty at certain areas, I think according to their locality. And most of them were asked to do, I think, road work, carrying stones and all that. And then at the end of the day, they were given cigarettes."

Soh Chuan Lam

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"Well, actually... well, my parents thought that children should go to school rather than stay at home. The alternative was to find some sort of work to do. And if you... of course if you are able enough or old enough you can look for some job which is acceptable to the Japanese."

Dr Tan Ban Cheng

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"The response from the public was quite good as there were about 30 students in each class. Many of the students were over 20 to 30 years old. Most of them were businessmen who took up the course so they could trade with the Japanese. He used a textbook that was compiled by him which he called Riyu Huihua Duben (Textbook of Conversational Japanese). Much emphasis was placed on teaching the students how to converse in Japanese. The students were not required to write in Japanese. The textbook was written in Chinese and the Japanese words were romanised. So those who understood both English and Chinese could buy the book and study on their own."

Lan Khong Kon

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"After 12, you know, they had to work. We were afraid that the Japanese would catch hold of them and make them work outside, military work, do roads and then help them with their gun emplacement and help in the army, so that made us give employment to all our children in the hospital... They were exempted from working outside. Of course, everybody is afraid of being incorporated into the Japanese Army."

Dr Benjamin Chew

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"They appointed a headman in each district, like our postal district. And then the headman will give each family a card. And then we have to put down all the names of the people who were staying in that house."



Chu Shuen Choo





Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore






"They want to control every family in Singapore. Even the movement of every family member. ... It's a go between work. We have actually no power or anything, like the police, to arrest. We just carried out the instructions, giving out information and collecting information, things like that. ... Sometimes they want to know what this family is doing, are there bad hats or not? They ask us to investigate."

Tan Wah Meng

Courtesy of the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

S/No.	Photos	Credit Lines
1		<p>Group photograph of the members of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery outside the Drill Hall at Beach Road Camp, c. late 19th C. The SVRC was disbanded in 1887. The Singapore Volunteer Artillery was formed in 1888.</p> <p>Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</p>
2		<p>One of two experimental low cost air raid shelter designs at Tiong Bahru was completed in 1940. Built under the rear staircases, the arched roof structure had the entrance facing inwards. Each shelter accommodated only eight person, and was made to withstand anything - except a direct hit from an air attack.</p> <p>M Masson Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</p>
3		<p>After the war, Song <u>Kok Hoo</u> (right) continued to serve in the police force and became the first Asian Deputy Commissioner of Police.</p> <p>Singapore Police Force Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</p>
4		<p>Japanese inhabitants undergoing baggage checks before leaving Singapore by sea, c.1941.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>

5		<p>Japanese inhabitants leaving Singapore by sea, c.1941.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>
6		<p>Air raid precaution exercise before the Japanese invasion, c.1941.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>
7		<p>Air raid precaution exercise before the Japanese invasion, c.1941.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>
8		<p>The same event seen through the lens of the camera. By the evening of 8 December 1941, Japanese invading forces had achieved a beachhead at Kota Bharu despite losing 15% of their landing forces.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>

9	 <p>A black and white photograph of the HMS Repulse, a British heavy cruiser, sailing on the water. The ship is viewed from a side-on perspective, showing its two main masts and gun turrets. A faint watermark 'National Archives of Singapore' is visible across the center of the image.</p>	<p>HMS Repulse leaving Singapore from Sembawang Naval base on 8 December 1941, for the last time intact. It was sunk just two days later.</p> <p>Courtesy of Imperial War Museums</p>
10	 <p>A black and white photograph of a large group of children, mostly of Asian descent, waving their hands enthusiastically. They are standing in front of a building with a sign that reads '南都ホテル' (Nanto Hotel) in Japanese characters.</p>	<p>Courtesy of Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria</p>
11	 <p>A black and white photograph showing Indian troops in Malaya. One soldier in the foreground is operating a trench mortar, while others are visible in the background in a field setting.</p>	<p>Indian Troops in Malaya operating trench mortars during the Second World War.</p> <p>Courtesy of Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria</p>
12	 <p>A black and white photograph of an air raid drill in Singapore. A person is using a long-handled tool to extinguish a fire or incendiary on the ground. Other people are visible in the background.</p>	<p>Air raid drill, Singapore. Air raid warden extinguishing an incendiary during air raid precaution practice at Singapore, 1939.</p> <p>Courtesy of Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria</p>
13	 <p>A black and white photograph of a group of men in various uniforms, including military and police, standing in a line in front of a building.</p>	<p>(Hero image used in all marketing collaterals)</p> <p>Mainichi Newspapers Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore</p>