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The silent history of Melaka Martyrs Monument at Bukit China



Many residents of Melaka are not aware of the story behind the Melaka Martyrs monument at Bukit China. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily

With the annual public memorial service for the anti-Japanese heroes in Melaka during the Ching Ming festival gradually turning into a formalised ceremony nowadays, how many among the representatives from each community group attending the ceremony still have any idea at all about the history behind the annual service?

The public memorial service held on the 4th of April this year during the Ching Ming festival was organised by the management committee of the Melaka Chinese anti-Japanese Monument.

At the end of the ceremony, deputy chief of Gangzhou Clan Association, Tan Bao Tong stayed back to get a better understanding of the history and significance of the public memorial service by browsing through the inscriptions on the monument.

[Tan: History must be preserved](#)

The monument is located at the foot of Bukit China in Melaka, at the buffer zone of the heritage site.

Tan told *Sin Chew Daily* he hoped the younger generations could understand and preserve the history and significance of the monument so that it could be handed down to the future generations. He believed this could further enrich the culture of Melaka as a UNESCO world heritage city.

He added, the monument was a popular scenic spot at Bukit China and the facilities there were still in good conditions. He hoped the Chinese community could compile the heroic history in the future and keep it at the National Archives so that it could become a part of the national history with records on the contributions from early Chinese immigrants.

[Preserving the KMT emblem](#)

When the monument was erected, the Chinese people in Southeast Asia engraved an emblem of Kuomintang (KMT), or the Nationalist Party of China, the ruling party in China at that time.

Following the changes in the political situations in China and the takeover by the Communist Party of China, the Chinese community in Melaka thought of changing the emblem in the 1960s. However Datuk Sim Mow Yu and other people strongly opposed the idea and after heated debates, the KMT emblem was successfully preserved until this day in a bid to preserve the original appearance of the monument.

[Sim: Thousands killed by Japanese](#)

To check the formalisation of the public memorial ceremony, the management committee invited 70-year-old senior journalist Sim Mo Yi to give a speech to the committee members after the ceremony.

According to him, his father Datuk Sim Mow Yu and uncle Sim Mow Zhou were arrested by the soldiers when he was only two years old. His father was later released but his uncle was killed several weeks later.

During those years, countless of martyrs from Ming Xing Charity Society and Cheng Zhong Motivation Society were killed and both of these organisations were used by the Japanese as military police department and brothel for senior Japanese officers.

The Sim brothers were active members of Cheng Zhong back then.

[Raising fund to erect the monument](#)

Following the surrender of the Japanese Army, the Chinese community in Melaka was searching for their remains of the martyrs and anti-Japanese fighters. They planned to erect a monument by raising funds among the community. Only incomplete remains of 435 victims were eventually found, out of thousands of people killed by the Japanese troops. These heroes were then buried behind the monument on the 25 September 1946.

The remains of Sim Mow Zhou were identified by a dentist and his bone ash was put separately in an earthen jar before being buried. Majority of the victims were workers and villagers in Melaka.

82-year-old Lin Yuan Rui recalled that he saw a human head hung by the Japanese in front of Public Bank in 1942 when he was only 14 years old. He also saw the big hole caused by the explosion of a bomb in front of the old premises of HSBC Bank.

[Repairing the monument in 1993](#)

Lin said when renovation works on the monument was completed in 1993, he compiled some of the history of anti-Japanese fighters. Unfortunately, the files are lost today.

When asked why the inscriptions on the monument lacked a list of all the martyrs, Lin said he did not participate in the planning back then, although he said he did have a list of most of the victims obtained from the special supplement of Ming Xing Charity Society.

Chairman of Ming Xing Charity Society, Huang De Yi and his eleven family members were arrested by the Japanese soldiers and he was killed at Tanjung Keling.

Most of the martyrs had come from the society which was later turned into the headquarters of the Japanese military police.

He added, the society did keep some of the records on the Japanese occupation, but unfortunately most of them have been lost over the years.

As a consequence, he believed if no proper records were to be done in the future, the entire history would slowly fade into oblivion.

He agreed that it was an excellent idea to inscribe the names of the martyrs at the bottom of the monument. *(Translated by LIM LIY EE/Sin Chew Daily)*

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Tan Bao Tong hopes to understand more about the tragic history of the Chinese community from the inscriptions on the monument. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



There is a cemetery for the anti-Japanese martyrs behind the monument. Sim Mo Yi is standing on the left. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



• There used to be two other large monuments on both sides of the anti-Japanese martyrs' monument but they are no longer around today. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



• The pile of bones of the martyrs killed by Japanese soldiers found by the Chinese community in Melaka. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



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Besides the curved graveyard, there are some rectangular-shaped graveyards around the monument which are now covered in bushes. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



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Huang De Yi, chairman of Ming Xing Charity Society and a famous local leader, was killed by the Japanese soldiers at the age of 62. Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



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 Young and promising Sim Mu Zhou was killed by the Japanese soldiers at the age of 31.
 Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



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 Lin Yuan Rui: The history of anti-Japanese fighters in Melaka will slowly drift into oblivion.
 Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily



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 The faded inscriptions on the monument awaiting to be re-painted.

Photo courtesy: Sin Chew Daily