The Formation of Nationalist-Religious Country in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

After independence, attempts to reconstruct the history of ancient Malaysia recorded by colonial scholars have been made. However, there is still a less impressive explanation. Therefore, the following studies examine the history of the Malay community in a new interpretation. The method used in this research is phenomenological. With this method, it was found that the process of Malaysian independence in 1957 did not take place in a short time by the British and their elites but required a long time, and sacrifices were not small. Starting from the scholars’ awareness about Malay nationalism itself, which unfortunately has been forgotten or its role has been closed by historical writers.

1. Introduction

History is definitive, but it is a dynamic that needs to be constantly studied and reconstructed to extract the essence of the actual teaching of a historical event. It depends on the recorded material or source found and the critical comments that need to be made on it (Bonikowski et al., 2019). Nationalism is indeed something that continues to grow for various reasons (Cipelovitch & Pevehouse, 2019; Rahman, 2020). Apart from geographical reasons, the religious similarity is also a
strong reason for nationalism (Rahman, 2018). So is the case with Malaysia. After independence, efforts to reconstruct the history of ancient Malaysia recorded by the colonial scholars were made (Mohd Noor, 2011, pp. 29–50). On that basis, we can see the birth of several approaches to reviewing historical subjects (S. H. Abdullah & Hassan, 2007, pp. 61–74), among them;

a. An approach to Subaltern studies that reveals the history of the oppressed. They play a leading role in the course of history, but their role is forgotten because history writing is often full of colonial and feudal agendas (Baharuddin, 2004). This Subaltern approach born in India and Africa has begun to be adopted by many modern historians.

b. A challenging post-colonialism approach and reconstruction the science and history written by the colonialists (Yahya, 1994). Instead, the history of the colonialist's views will be revealed. It included attempts to reproduce all the knowledge produced by the western colonies. Clearly, the influence of colonial secular worldview has been applied to this science, either social science (Murad, 2005, pp. 91–92) or pure science (Shah, 2007, pp. 216–241). It is full of agendas of colonialism that the academy of the former colonies indirectly pursued.

c. The epistemological approach-occidentalism of Islam. It exposed the weakness of the colonial-orientalism approach adopted by western scholars. Instead, it adopts a holistic Islamic worldview rather than the mere patches of socialism (Baharuddin, 2004).

So, based on the three approaches above, this study was performed with various techniques; continue to use old historical material, uncovering facts and new material that is under-appreciated. It will be reviewed using; a) more critical and integrated reviews from various fields of knowledge, b) summarize material and reviews of historical facts that have been overlooked over time, and c) critical analysis of ideas made by western scholars. This is because most of the history of colonial history often denies the role of those who oppose the plan of colonialism. Therefore, this study seeks to apply these approaches to ensure a more conducive outcome to Islamic principles and Malaysia's independent reality.

2. A scenario of History of Nationalism In Malaya: A New Analysis

This study will not be commenting on the events of Malaya becoming independent in 1957, but instead will analyze the emergence of nationalist consciousness, which then generated the independence of Malaya. The basic premise of this study is the realization of nationalism is not started at the time of the outbreak of the Malayan Union, but the community early understood it. The problem is, there is a tendency that both the British and the British-sponsored elites are regarded as the instigators of the earliest nationalism. Looking at it further, the quest for independence sought by the colonial elite did not come to fruition, as they were initially designed to be leaders of the nation. It follows the policy expressed British elite schools for Malay speakers that bring the soul and spirit of the British. We can see how all British policies remained in the national government after Malaysia’s independence.

3. Education System in British Period And Its Relation With Malay Nationalism

Colonial Party does understand that the best way to change is through education of the community. Based on the Master-administrators such as Raffles, Swetenam, Skeat, Wilkinson, and Winstedt focus on the educational system in Malaya. Admittedly the British have brought changes in the formal education system in Malaya. This colonial education program is based on several key reasons.

First, it is following the policy of the colonial office in London that every colony is introduced to the educational system of the settlement. It was to show the British wanted to bring modernization to the colonies. It is said to be the result of the Victorian philosophy of Victorian times in Britain, which reflected British concern for the fate of the natives (N. A. H. Ismail, 1998, pp. 41–43).
Second, to get low-class workers for the British administration. This is because of the policy of decentralization. By the end of the 1850s, the Colonial Office in Calcutta had designated each colony to train and hire local workers as the administrative burden increased.

Third, the British needed to provide an education system to guarantee their continued power. Through the study of British scholar-administrators, they know the community social system is based on a feudal system where people would obey the king’s subordinates and superiors. To ensure that they gained legitimacy in the government and did not get any resistance from the people, they maintained this social stratum of feudalism. The best way is to look after the elders and bridge the gap between the elders and the people through the specialized education system. After all, it fits in with the policy of breaking the order of priority (Ozay, 2011, pp. 37–38).

The colonial people provided three different forms of education system between the upper classes, the public, and ethnic immigrants. For ordinary people, become the primary purpose of British colonial policy is:

a. for political stability, Malaya was in chaos due to education that could raise Malay-up revolt and expel the colonial as prevailing in India.

b. To maintain the status quo of the Malays so that they practice traditional ways of life expectancy as the colonial wanted to make the Malays forever farmers and fishers, and settled in villages with identity villagers who have existing skills and artistry.

c. Malay Education sponsored by the colonial expected only ethnic Malays held the rank low in the service of the colonial government. After graduation, jobs held by Malay children is just as cattle car drivers, farmers, fishermen, and operators of small-scale retail stores. The government also expects colonial Malay children who attend school to learn how to live a regulatory, obedient and honest life if they work in the future.

d. The government hopes that the colonial policy of Malay education they will be able to help solve the problem of illiteracy and the Malays can make smart and not to be cheated by people who are not considerate the more so in that there are various communities in Malaya (A. H. Salleh, 1974, pp. 141–142).

The school for majors, the MCKK, was created to produce elite and elite leaders who would assist them in all policies. The content of the lesson emphasizes the secular worldview. Emphasis is placed on personal development and leadership efforts following Eton Public School in Britain. All subjects such as history were taught based on their efforts to demonstrate British greatness in Europe. The MCKK emphasized the use of English (Stevenson, 1975, p. 180).

The French school there are so many disadvantages compared with MCKK. Among them,

a. English and better thinking are not provided. Master-administrator of the Colonialism said no point in teaching Malay English because it will cause students to be educated over who would disturb the status quo; it is sufficient for the ordinary requirements of the Malay boys, who will become bullock wagon drivers, paddy-growers, fishermen, etc. It had enabled them by the time they had passed the fourth standard to read and write the simple literature of their tongue. It was done to keep accounts if they are to become small shopkeepers and work simple problems in their country’s money, currency, weights, and measures (Report On Education Of The Strait Settlements, 1903, p. 58).

b. Malays form the curriculum for the school enough to give education and instruction. The British director of education, Wolff describes education as referring to developing and reviving what is already around them. At the same time, the terms of instruction are to add some new information to continue domestic life as farmers and fishers. In addition, the effort Winstedt, subjects carpentry farming skills to the Malay schools (Soda, 2001, pp. 188–230).

In contrast to the curriculum for elite schools such as the MCKK, they are encouraged to develop western worldview intellectual potential using English; The boy in the English school with a brain that has already begun to create on proper lines; he has begun to learn how to learn, he can digest
what he is taught, his progress at the English school is rapid and what he knows is likely to be knowledge and not merely 'cram' (Ginsburg, N., & Roberts, C., 1958, p. 221).

Sadly, Malay rulers, indeed British, agreed to provide such a system of education for the general public to help them face the challenges of modernization of uncertainty by letting them live in rural areas. They are expected not to venture into the modern world of the urban regions (Milne & Mauzy, 2019).

For the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, the education system introduced aligns with the concept of disunity that prevents different ethnic communities from living together in unity. They were allowed to set up their educational approach based on history and show their devotion to their home in the Chinese and Indian continents (A. J. Abdullah, 2012).

After Malaysia became independent, it was evident that national leaders continued this worldview tradition of British applied secularism. Most of them are British students born from elite education systems such as the MCKK.

The best examples of the pro-British nature of the British elite can be found in the Mental Revolution Program. It is a modernization and development ethos program in Malaysia. It is the business of the Malay political elite who want to develop the community to see the causes of the weakness of the Malays. It is known for the revolutionary mental movement initiated by Tun Abdul Razak in the 1960s and activated by UMNO Youth led by Dato “Senu Abdul Rahman. The purpose of the direction of the mental revolution is to change the way people think, think, and act to adapt to the times to encourage them to make more significant progress in all areas of life. Finally, Dato “Senu Abdul Rahman compiled them through campaigns and awareness courses in a book entitled Mental Revolution.

The main essence of this program is the importance of the Malay community to imitate the lifestyle that promotes secularism and British materialistic achievements. It directly resembles the approach used by the British scholar-administrators, such as exposing the weaknesses of the Malays who are reluctant to change and are adhering to the teachings of Islam. Mental Revolution Books has listed seventeen bad attitudes found in the Malay culture, the lack of initiative, lack of curiosity, rational mind is weak, lacking originality, lack of imagination, belief in destiny, and others.

The book’s main drawback can be seen from the attitude of the Malay leaders who comprise the class of Malay speakers. They do not empathize with the problems of the Malays, which feudal Malay and British colonial policy are oppressing.

Syed Hussein Alatas, in his book The Myth of Lazy Native (1977), argues that the story about the laziness of the Malays, who the occupiers always proclaimed, is baseless. Even worse, their ideology hides behind the law to mobilize the indigenous workforce and look for an excuse to oppress and colonize Malaya. In their view, the humid tropical climate, the sickness, and the leaders’ luxury have caused the people misery. They become frozen humans without any intention.

Syed Hussein Alatas (Al-Attas, 1989, p. 145) gave an example in which Hugh Clifford, a British colonial administrator who, said: "TheMalays have become members of the community who is not profitable and is not satisfactory because the Malays do not provide labor to develop the resources of the state,"In denied all the allegations, Syed Hussein Alatas has shown evidence that the Malay community in Malaysia to work hard to live as a human. They were diligent and skilled in their fields, but as a noble nation, they were not ready to become the tools of the capitalist West to be the enslaved people.

He also criticized the book The Mental Revolution in his work entitled Growing Up without Fruit. According to him, the book is a blended blend of ordinary knowledge without depth and influenced by colonial philosophy and Western Capitalism, unscrupulous, lacking in intellectual depth, has ridiculous conclusions in some examples, contradictory statements and neglects many previous works and opinions on the same issue of the Malay community in about a century. It does not undergo in-depth assessment or be referred first to the historical facts about the Malay custom (Al-Attas, 2005, p. 145).
Later, Syed Hussein Alatas (Alatas, 1979, p. 167) explained that the confusion Revolution Mental is generalize various special events described by the authors as saying:"All the negativity that is registered by the Revolutionary Mental exists among some Malays but is not affected in place to generalize to all Malays. Repeats Syed Hussein Alatas (Alatas, 1979): "If we generalize the character of a society based on the actions of a few, then we are in serious trouble. The community tends to steal because some of them steal; Malays are lazy as some did; Malay women are not faithful to their husbands because that's part of their nature; Malay crazy because some of them crazy, Malay smokers as a fraction do. Then we can calculate the continuous negative features of the Malay community, which is based on the fact, that some Malays sometimes exhibit these characteristics."

In this regard, Syed Hussein al-Attas introduced the theory of mentality captive, an overly pro-western attitude held by some in the Malaysian community. Among the principal attitudes of these groups; 1) Attitudes that imitate all values from the west rationally; 2) Unable to generate new ideas or approaches to address life's issues, rather perpetuate the legacy of colonialism; ) Do not practice critical thinking and do not object to anything presented to them from western sources and 5) Not aware of the weakness of their captive attitude (Al-Attas, 2005).

4. Instituting Itqan Muluk As A Trigger of Malay Nationalism

The author argues that the awareness of Malay nationalism begins with Perlembagaan Itqan flying in. This means that the question of nationalism and independence is nothing new, but Malay-Muslim scholars have reviewed it before 1957. If analyzed in-depth, it proved the superiority theory, worldview, and thought bachelor Malays compared with the idea of western nationalism.

Directly we can detect some Malay-Muslim nationalism essence contained in the PIM. It consists of;

First, the love of homeland (Asabiyah) is the noble nature that drives the Birth of the Islamic Kingdom. The spirit of love for the homeland is very much needed because the homeland is the main site for devotion to the commandments of God. It is clearly understood by the declaration of the state of Rajasthan as the Malays who hold to the principles of Islam. In this regard, the height of Islamic Sunshine and Islamic Shariah is the top priority of the Islamic State in Terengganu. This Islamic government is needed to carry out the Shariah implementation and to enable Islamic Islam to flourish while also establishing unity among Muslims.

On this basis, Ibn Khaldun emphasized that the nature of loving one's nation is the gift of God to every human being. It is like the genitals God provided for all humanity. If this genome is used for any illegal purpose, it is wrong, and if it is used for the proper purpose, it can be the basis of one's strength. Similarly, if a person were born without genitalia, it would be considered imperfect. We rationally acknowledge that it would be incomplete if a person were born without genitalia. This is because, with the help of the genitals, many benefits will come to human advantage. So, logically this genitalia, whether or not it is not a significant problem but must be subject to obedience to God’s law (Faghizadeh, 2004, pp. 15–118).

For Burhanuddin Helmi, the love of this homeland indeed has a symbiotic (interrelated) relationship with Islam. There are four elements related to the love of this nation, namely faith, self, nation, and religion. Faith stands above self. The self stands on the country, and the government must stand on the weight. Just as humans need the freedom and independence to live and qualify under the Islamic veil, nations' sovereignty is essential to ensure that religion is upheld (Jaafar & Al-Helmy, 2000, pp. 48–51).

Second, Rajasthan was declared as a Malay Islamic state. This can be seen in Clause 52 of the PIM clearly states;

"Indeed, were characterized and specified and defined forever the Terengganu government is the government of the Islamic Malayuviyyah, is said to be the religion of the state and the government then none can never be any other religion be called the religion of the state, even though many of all nations and religions secured and allowed to enter stay within the Terengganu state and territory."

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In line with this, PIM makers are working to make sure that the right rules govern their homeland. It also seeks to ensure that governmental abuses and tyranny do not occur in the state government.

Third, the nature of love for the homeland is not exclusive to the Malay Terengganu alone but equally open to other Muslim nations is the evidence of non-Malay peoples who embraced Islam as their own would be considered by the Malays. It is in line with the spirit of universality Islamic mentioned by surah al-Hujurat [49: 10 and 13]. The community is open to people who are not of their Malay race as a member of the community when it is based on the importance of Islam.

More unique, Islam has become the basis for Malay (Malayness) (Borhan, 2000, pp. 45–58). The Malay characteristics that are so dear to Islam have resulted in any attacks against Islam will be considered an attack on the base of Malay culture (Bird, 1883, p. 20). In addition, the non-Malay Muslim scholars who practiced the Malay-Islamic lifestyle and produced any helpful scientific contributions to the Malays were also recognized as Malay Islamic scholars. This statement can be seen in local interpreters such as Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih who is known for his excellent interpretations of the al-Rahman-led Interpretation of Understanding of the Quran. Although Arab and comes from Hadramawt Yemen, he is listed as a Malay Islamic scholars because of his interpretation of the Malay language as well as being the main reference Malay Muslims led him also in the line up as a Malay Muslim scholars (A. B. bin A. Rahim, 2004, p. 14).

Fourth, Terengganu sovereignty and independence must be maintained from occupation by foreign powers. Malay scholars were involved in preparing the PIM act on the awareness of Malay nationalism. They practice active, proactive, and strategic scientific thinking in the face of problems of their day. This thinking should reflect the PIM devotees being mujtahids of their time. They could predict what would happen (the sultan would agree to submit and remain under British rule) and prepare a plan for this to happen. Efforts to curb this British interference can be seen in clause 14 of the PIM, stating:

"Then it is not lawful and unlawful for the King to make an agreement or agreement to release or surrender his state and government or any part of his or Huquq’s power to any government or any European or other jurisdiction. So if the king tries the prohibition and this indictment is deemed to have broken the trust placed upon him, it is not lawful. So it is not obligatory on the government members, and all the people loyal to him should be removed from his throne and replaced instead."

This clause 14 expressly establishes that it is not lawful for the king to accept the alliance with the outside heathen powers. This is especially true because this clause 14 complicates Harold Mac Michael’s task of persuading the Terengganu Sultan to sign an agreement with the establishment of the Malayan Union, which brings the meaning of state power to British occupiers (Wahid, 1992, pp. 193–195).

In its chronological history, PIM is a continuation of the earliest Islamic greatness in Terengganu, dating from the later epoch. There has indeed been a ruling Islamic kingdom since the time of the rewritten stone in Terengganu. The cultural tradition of knowledge and approach that prioritized Islamic rule in Terengganu in the post-BBT era became a tradition lasting in Terengganu, which led to the birth of PIM (Nasir et al., 2015, pp. 146–147).

5. True Freedom Fighters who

study history proves that the Malay students studying in the Middle East exposed to the struggle "Pan-Islamism" under the leadership of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh is the originator of the battle for independence of withering away (Othman, 1998, p. 154). Compared with the nationalist feudal Malay (Maaruf, 1993, pp. 18–19) spirited British (Johan, 1983, pp. 134–145), it appears Nationalist-reformers of the early Malay is more animating the plight of the Malays are being excluded based on the British (Mutalib & Mutalib, 1990, pp. 18–19).
Faced with the two groups, the British conducted many significant policies;

a. tolerated a movement that supported British power and did not focus on political issues that could threaten British power (Othman, 2001, pp. 249–253).

b. to act harshly and suppress movements with political tendencies against British dominance. They were subjected to severe pressures, such as calling them left-wing and pro-Communist, followed by considerable mental and physical stress (F. H. Abdullah, 1985, pp. 149–153).

c. Implement a long-term action plan to break down roots to revive the Islamic movement. This can be seen from many vital facts such as:

1) The British vernacular education system was established based on ethnic differences to turn off the popularity of the short learning system in Malaya (Ahmad, 1985, pp. 221–222).

2) Efforts to introduce a system that proclaimed Rumi has a high commercial value has been somewhat off the popularity of Jawi writing system (Fadhil, 1995, p. 6), which was previously shown to successfully develop intellectual civilization of the Malay-Muslim community is quite high (Othman, 1995, pp. 53–55).

3) Introducing the concept of a “nation-state” based on the narrow spirit of asabiyah to a particular state and region replacing the spirit of Islamic unity (Embong, 2000, pp. 34–43). This policy is an attempt to split the unity of the Malays in the region so that it is not a threat to the Western colonial powers (M. A. Bakar, 1989, pp. 17–18). To clarify this approach, we can refer to the British and Dutch colonial policy was so worried about the role of hajj and Islamic educational institutions in the Middle East. They were notified that they had been the prime mover to the existing relationships in the Malay Muslims in the region.

4) Application of the subject in the school syllabus and Malay highlighting that the British as a hero, the savior of the Malays and the ambassador of civilization (Swettenham, 1893, p. 5,9) for in the Malay community.

5) Introducing a more modernized Western legal system replaces outdated Islamic law systems (Abd Rahim, 2001, pp. 39–41).

If referred to the historical development of Islam in the Malay world, we can affirm that the role of the Malay scholars is as an intellectual community in many things;


b. Extermination of feudalism and pre-Islamic values rooted in people’s lives through Islamic educational institutions (R. A. A. Rahim, 2000, pp. 22–25).

c. Seed growing cultural knowledge into the community can produce many human and religious literacy Malay able to act following the arrangement of his ability, disseminate it to the public, and serve as community leaders. It also gave birth to the Malays, who have a certain height and can become independent without relying on others (Ishak, 1982, pp. 202–204).

d. The catalyst for the business application of Islamic values into the culture of the community (Osman, 1989, pp. 278–280) until Islam later became a significant identity to the survival of the Malays themselves (Means, 1969, p. 288).


f. Designer and creator of the effective communication system (Jawi script) in the community subsequently became the intermediate language (lingua franca) for Islamic scientific development(Awang, 1981, pp. 80–85) and international relations.

h. Planning to strengthen business relations with people of Malay Muslims around the world series (Internationalism) under the concept of the Islamic Ummah (N. Abdullah, 1987, pp. 129–142).

i. The source of inspiration for the effort to inculcate the spirit of crusade in the fight against Western colonial power

j. Acting as the last bastion of the Ummah and experts referring to the people plagued by a crisis of confusion due to the widespread application of secularism sought by British colonialists (Othman, 2001).

k. Trigger early Malay nationalism was viewed from two aspects: (i) efforts to eliminate evil and injustice that occurs in the community (A. R. H. Ismail, 1995, pp. 163–192) (ii) attempt to free themselves from the shackles of colonial rule (Othman, 1998).


The post-independence period has raised awareness among the Malays that the Malay nationalist-Islamic homeland needs to care for some of the elements; religion, land, culture, language, and kings. If the inductive analysis of the history of the Malay culture in the Malay world, we would agree that the survival of the community depends entirely on four main principles;

a. Islam - which formed the basis of identity and pride of the Malays.

b. Land - specific geographical area that houses the Malay community. The identity and sense of pride of a person depend entirely on the ratio of their country. Human beings as social beings have always wanted to be associated with a community or nation that they would be proud to interact with. A country can exist only if it has a particular geographical area, people, and a stable system of government. The preservation of these three elements must be continued to prevent them from being destroyed, as is the case with Jews, Palestinians, and Afghanistan today. Every nation forced to settle in the homeless land will feel their identity and self-identity humiliated.

c. Political power - the power of the government that will carry out short-term and long-term policies (such as the NEP) (Aziz, 2000, pp. 94–101) for the benefit of the Malay race and culture.

d. Malay monarchical institution - as the patron of the sovereignty and supremacy of the Malay community.

Without these four foundations, Malay society and culture will be weak. They will suffer the same fate as experienced by the Palestinian Muslim community (Kling, 1999, pp. 4–11), Kurds, and Muslim minority communities in western countries.

Along with this awareness, several new developments have emerged that touch on the issue of modern nationalism.

a. The emergence of an awareness of the concept of Malay supremacy. To maintain the political survival of the Malays, in the face of political pressure from non-Malays, the Malay government still strives to maintain the principle of Malay supremacy in most of the formation of national policy. According to Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud (Daud, 2001, pp. 112–114), this principle of Malay supremacy stems from three main reasons; firstly, the early nature and height of Malayan civilization built by Malays; secondly, the ratio of sacrifice and blood of Malays who have shed a lot to defend Malaya against foreign occupation and finally thirdly, the nature of tolerance and willingness of Malays to accept with non-Malays to live and settle in Malaya. Although the Malay political authorities try to apply the political principles of pluralism to ensure the unity of all races in Malaysia, the basis of Malay identity and supremacy based on Islam is still firmly defended.

b. There is an awareness that the people need to maintain their country's independence ratio and pass it on to future generations. Keeping and filling this independence must be filled not only by creating development for all citizens but also with efforts and responsibilities to eliminate evil and tyranny that occurs in society (A. R. H. Ismail, 1995).
c. The emergence of awareness that the people need to have a high spirit of patriotism refers to
(A. H. Salleh, 1974);
d. A sense of affection and love for his own homeland.
e. Proud of his homeland.
f. Willingness to defend his homeland from enemy threats and attacks, whether internal or
external enemies.
g. Willingness to defend national interests when ridiculed and insulted.

6. Conclusion

Based on historical facts, we can say that Malayan independence in 1957 did not occur in a short
time worked by the British and its elite, but it took a long time and considerable sacrifices. It was
initiated in the form of an awareness of nationalism by the Malay scholars themselves, who
unfortunately had forgotten or closed their role by historians.

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