

The Historical Development of Orientalism Movement in Malaysia: An Analysis

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Abstract: This study attempts to analyse orientalist movement in Malaysia, especially, their thoughts which are supposed to influence the Malaysian society. This movement was related to the colonization of Malaysia by the Portuguese, Dutch and English. Then they collected all information from books and manuscripts to be adapted as academic research with orientalist will.

Key words: Orientalisme, colonization, globalisation, English, Malaysia, manuscripts

INTRODUCTION

Orientalism: The word orientalism is derived from the root word orient which means East. This word comes from the French language and is widely used in a variety of languages. While the word *Ism* is derived from the Dutch language which means a creed, flow or practice.

Orientalism (*al-Istisyaq*) is the Eastern knowledge or knowledge relating to the world of the East. The word orientalist (*mustasyriq*) refers to any Westerner who is an expert in the study of the East whether the expertise is at the highest, middle or lowest level in the fields of language, literature, civilization and religion. In short, orientalism (*al-Istisyaq*) is the Western studies relating to Islam either in the fields of language, literature, history, faith and civilisation in general (Zaqzuq, 1989).

Based on the earlier definition, it is clear that the field of orientalism is broad. It covers the fields of archaeology, history, language, religion, literature, ethnological, sociology, traditional customs, politics, the economy, the life of animals, environment, fauna and flora as well as many others (Suo'yb, 1985).

The extensive and rapid spread of Islam in the East and in the West had without doubt opened up the eyes of the heads of Christianity towards Islam. From then on the Islamic religion was studied in depth by Christians, so as to avoid their fellow Christians from converting to Islam. Yuhana al-Dimasyqi (673-749M) had written books on that matter. Among them are *Muhawarat Ma'a al-Muslimin* and *Irsyadat al-Jadal 62 Fi al-Muslimin*.

Further, the conflict that occurred between Muslims and Christians in Spain and Seville has led to the emergence of orientalism in the West as in the Crusade

that has prompted the Europeans to learn Islamic teachings and its customs. Therefore, it can be said that the early date of orientalism movement was the date of conflict between Christianity in the West and Islam in the East in the aspect of religion and ideology, since, the mid century (Zaqzuq, 1989).

The extension of Western Colonial Policy in the Islamic world also played a role in the views that Western people had of the East. In the mid 19th century, the colonial power had exploited the orientalist heritage materials in order to expand the territorial area in the East. In doing, so, this expansion policy also strengthened the position of orientalism and helped develop the orientalism movements in the East. The colonialists have succeeded in using a group of orientalists to expand their colonization policy in Muslim countries. Strong and official alliance between orientalists and colonialists to conquer and weaken the Muslims and their values received the blessing from a group of orientalists (Zaqzuq *et al.*, 1989).

For example, the British wanted to uphold their reign in Islamic countries such as India that has been under their power, since, the beginning of the 20th century. Lord Curzon, the most enthusiastic in England has planned to set up an East education institution to strengthen the British Empire in the East. The institution later became the University of London to study the affairs of the middle East and Africa.

The relationship between orientalists and colonialists was not merely to find rational reasons in relation to the policy of colonization because the orientalists reasons for colonization were there long before the colonization of eastern countries but also to dominate the people and subdue them (Al-Bahi, 1979).

In short, orientalism is not actually a movement that championed the values of knowledge that is to study the Islamic heritage in the Middle East, especially, in the field of faith and civilization but more to identify the source of the Islamic heritage in order to deviate the view of Muslims, so that, they look up to the West and Western civilization (Khatib and Yunus Al, 1984).

At the same time Muslims, also faced the advancement of Western imperialism which is divided into two stages, namely the early stage, aimed at gold, gospel and glory which was spearheaded by Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands. The second stage involved new imperialist powers in particular Britain and France in the late 19th century with various goals and influenced by several factors, namely economic, political, ideological, the spread of religion, the existence of the country nation, snobbery of Western powers, the leadership of imperialist counties, competition among imperialists and tension in the colonized countries (Yaacob, 2000).

The Encyclopedia Americana defines imperialism as the foundation aspires to establish, organize and maintain an empire. While Webster's New World Dictionary defines imperialism as a base or deeds in connection with the foundation and maintenance of empires through conquest, placement, economic or political domination (Watson, 1976). Longman modern English dictionary looks at imperialism as the expansion of power by one state to another by means of political, military or economic interference.

Imperialism in the Malay world occurs in several stages and strategies of which are taking important ports such as Melaka by the Portuguese, building ports such as carried out by the Netherlands in some Indonesian Islands, intervening in the conflict of the indigenous community being collaborators or colluding with several parties in order to weaken the target imperialism and conquering directly the indigenous territories (Yaacob, 2000).

They also invaded the thoughts and feelings, as well as provided regulations in line with their plans and ambitions, namely to put Muslims under the influence of Christianity and provide encouragement to its leaders to declare that the country is a secular country which is not bound with religion. For this purpose, they separated the Muslims from the Quran and encouraged them to stick to secular laws by being in their mainstreams and thoughts in the education system at the primary school level and higher education (Ahmad, 1980).

Lately, there appears a new and Foreign term in the lives of Muslims that is globalization. This term has arisen with the commencement of the new world order announced by former US. President George Bush, after

the end of the cold war drama, the perish of Soviet union and the end of the 1st Gulf War. These events give victory to the United States in terms of the physical (the Gulf War) and psychological (breakage of the Soviet union), thus, it clearly refers to American supremacy. On one hand, new world-order interpretation of the United States to be the main agents of trade and international economics has provided fertile soil for the growth of globalization. In this context, globalization is dominantly, an economic power and culture of the United States that moves rapidly at the international level and its movement goes beyond the limitations of the countries of nationality. In short, globalization, sponsored by the United States is the continuation of a new form of imperialism in the modern era.

In other word, globalization is a result of the new world-order that was carried out with detailed planning and attractive strategies towards the invasion of new forms in a modern way not like the invasion of the mid century. It was carefully planned by strategists to dominate the world using terms associated with democracy, freedom, culture, human brotherhood, justice and human rights. Globalization is a program arranged to destroy the world using a diverse culture and media be it print or audio-visual media. It also has spread in the education and study policy (Awang and Haji, 2003).

Western also dominated the mass media that spread local and international news. Thus, they managed to spread their thoughts in the society. This role is also played by international news agency controlled by Western powers led by the United States. Film productions, drama scenes, parties and TV programs are used to influence the thoughts and cultures of Muslims (Awang and Haji, 2003).

Great developments in the field of information technology, such as internet network have inspired the Western to practice globalization in this field. It gives them great opportunities to strengthen their domination throughout the world. Attack on the information technology thoughts are done through the four Zionist agencies which are Reuters, Associated press, United press and France press. These agencies not only dominated but also monopolized the world information network. These news agencies monopolized the news to take care of the West, especially, the United States. They also dominated the media products in the television programme which is a major education contributor in the houses (Hamidi and Datuk, 2003).

Western media was loaded with non-stop insults against Islam and its followers. Making it worse was when they smeared the noble personality of the Prophet (S.A.W.), rejected Islamic laws such as the law of usury in

muamalah and qisas and hudud in criminal matters. Their negative perceptions towards Islam were derived from the research carried out by the orientalist who opposed Islam. These things they do, so that, they can describe Islam as an outdated religion, a religion that brings backwardness or claim that Islam is a religion of war and violence. They also claim that Islam operates a policy of non-Muslims ethnic extinction with violence, disrespect to the non-Muslim minority, cruelty to women and many others (Hamidi and Datuk, 2003).

All the earlier facts reveal the widening influence of western globalization and imperialism. This is strengthened with the existence of some current movement network that co-operate closely with each other to prevent the rise of Islam. They are Zionism, Orientalism and Christianization.

The orientalist had cooperated with the colonial who dominated the Muslim countries with military strength in order to weaken the counter-attacks of the Muslims in the spiritual as well as psychiatric aspects and to create doubts in the faith of Muslims. They finally, managed to subdue Muslims under the civilization and culture of the West.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Portuguese and orientalism: In Malaysia, colonization and orientalism started when Portuguese dominated Malacca in 1511 and later on by the Dutch in 1641. In 1874, the British began to intervene in the administration of the Malay States leading to the grand opening of the orientalism movement.

When Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese, many Malay manuscripts were confiscated by them. Most of the manuscripts were not saved by Sultan Mahmud and the dignitaries of Malacca because at that time their personal safety, honor and property were more important (Harrison, 1966).

Among the Portuguese orientalist involved was Tome Pires who wrote *Suma Oriental* based on his research while at Malacca. It was believed that Tome himself witnessed and recorded all significant events that happened as soon as the Portuguese captured Malacca in around 1512-1515 (Harrison, 1966).

In addition, another orientalist figure, Godinhov d'Edridea carried out a research on the effects of historical heritage in Malacca. He studied Beraksara grave and its environment which is located on a hilltop in Tanjung Tuan or Cape Rachodo. Apart from that, Godinhov also studied a royal palace made of gold and broken marble in Telok Emas and a pool where the King's children bathe which was built from marble (Zaba, 1961).

Dr. Thomas or Luiz Felipe Reis was another Portuguese writer who was active in the study of the history of Portuguese-Malay. Among the works produced by Dr. Thomas were Portuguese in Malacca (1511-1580) in two volumes from Malacca to Pegu and Moluku to Malacca (Abdullah, 2004).

The Portuguese had been unloading the Malay treasures to the West. Alfonso d'Albuquerque himself strived very hard to collect all those treasures by ship but his efforts were unsuccessful because the ship sank into the sea and Albuquerque himself was almost drowned but managed to save himself (Zaba, 1961).

The Netherlands and orientalism: Next, orientalism was followed by the Netherlands, when they successfully occupied Malacca in January, 1641 by defeating the Portuguese. After the conquest of Malacca, Holland had a relationship with the State of Perak, Kedah, Ujong Salang, NaNing, Rembau and Johor (Jessy, 1964).

In this regard Bin and Munshi (1974), used to describe how the Dutch made the efforts to collect old manuscripts and books of Malay when he wrote: some days there came an order from the Betawi that is from the government secretary to Malacca, instructed my father to go to Riau and Lingga, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan to search for Malay scriptures to be as a Messenger to the Malay rulers, as well as to bring a letter from King Timmerman Tijssen and then there is the young master of the king supplying 500 dollars worth of money to go on a boat using Holland flag. Then, my father would go to all those states but only managed to get some gifts which are not very valuable from some of the rulers, some were paid by my father to copy those old chronicles and scriptures. At the end of it, about sixty volumes of scriptures with variety of names and types were collected.

Among the Dutch orientalist figures with information on Malay manuscript collections stored in the library of Berlin was Snouck Hugronje. He was a great Dutch orientalist figure who was proficient in Arabic and used to be a teacher of Arabic in Betawi (Jakarta). He wrote a lot of books about Islam and his research targets were mostly in the Dutch colony. Hugronje was in Malay Archipelago for 17 years and worked hand in hand with the Dutch colonial in finding the weak characteristics of Muslims (Jakub, 1970).

Among the works produced by Hugronje related with the development of Islam in the Malay Peninsular were *The pilgrimage to Mecca, Melaka and its geography in the 19th century* 1889 in two volumes, *the development of Islam in the East Indies* 1911 and *Acheh* (Umar, 1978).

Apart from that, another great Dutch orientalist figure was wemndly, an expert in Malay language who compiled

the registration of Malay books printed in Amsterdam in the year 1736. The registration contained the names of 69 Chronicles, Scriptures of Islam and so on (Ahmad, 1958).

Similarly, Harmanus Neubronner Van de Tuuk was another great Dutch orientalist figure who knew the ins and outs of Malay language. He was said to be born in Malacca and stayed in Malacca until 1894. He managed to register all Malay hand written letters and books stored at the intersection of East Indian company and also in the assembly of the Royal Asiatic society (Zaba, 1961).

J.P Heeves and F.W. Stapel were two Dutch orientalist figures who managed to produce great writings in five thick volumes. Those researchs titled *The Dutch Indies Diplomatic group* consisting of collection of political agreements and other agreements secured by the Dutch in the East, together with the special rights guaranteed for the Netherlands (Umar, 1978).

In the Netherlands, copies of the original texts of Malay literature were kept at the library in Laiden, Hague and Amsterdam. Dutch interest in the study of the Islamic East has put that country as the center of the world famous orientalism at that time (Umar, 1978).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English and orientalism: After the signing of the British-Dutch Treaty in 1824, the British began taking over Melaka and further widened its power over the Malay States by putting some Residents in a number of Federated Malay States from the year 1874 (Jessy, 1964).

The English orientalist figure who contributed most significantly to the orientalist movement in Malaya was Stamford Raffles. He was interested in researching matters relating to Malay language, the Scriptures, cultures, animals and trees. In doing his research, he was assisted by two to three English pastors (Zaba, 1961). At the same time, Raffles hired Malay people to collect handwritten scriptures and Malay stories. The result was hundreds of types of materials were successfully gathered from all over the region (Bin and Munshi, 1974).

Apart from that, Raffles was also said to have been conducting environmental studies. In line with that, he hired people to search for all types of leaves, flowers and moss. Some were hired to find all types of worms, locusts, butterflies, beetles, cicadas, centipedes and scorpions. Some were paid to collect the types of snails, clams, mussels, seashells, oysters and barnacles. Some others were hired to catch wild animals such as partridges, birds, deer, barking deer, mouse deer and so on (Bin and Munshi, 1974).

In this regard Bin and Munshi (1974), recorded everything in his book: then the bound Scriptures alone was about 300, other than the bound and the loose ones,

there were rolled ones as well and so, the three long leather boxes were full of Malay scriptures only. After that two boxes were loaded with Javanese, Balinese and Bugis letters and scriptures.

Another great British orientalist figure was Captain Thomas John Newbold (1807-1850) who contributed a lot in the orientalism research. For 3 years in Malacca in around 1832 until 1835, Newbold studied Malay with Abdullah Munshi which enabled him to write a book titled *British colonies in the straits of Malacca* (Bin and Munshi, 1974).

Apart from that, among the high rank English orientalists in the English administration was James Low. He translated a history of Kedah that was *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*. Another one was Sir William Edward Maxwell who wrote a book titled *A Book on Learning Malay* which was very famous. He also wrote important treatises on the history, laws, stories, beliefs and customs of the Malays which were kept in the Federal Royal asiatic society Magazine branch of the straits settlements. There was also Sir Hugh Clifford who wrote in the castle and the village, *A number of observations on the Blonde Skinned people and a corner of the Asian continent* and Sir Frank Swettenham who wrote *gross maps of the Malays, the Genuine malay people and Malay States under British ruling*.

There were also orientalists from among the Christian priests such as W.G. Shellabear who wrote a book titled *Malay History*, R.J. Wilkinson who was the researcher of the book *the English Malay dictionary and Malay beliefs* and R.O Winstedt who was an orientalist that contributed to the orientalist movement. Among his famous works were the *history of Johor, 1932, Perak, 1934, Selangor, 1934, Negeri Sembilan, 1934, Malay Peninsula, 1936 and the Malay Literary, 1939 Islam in the Malay world, 1947, Malay Peninsula with its History, 1948, Malay-English dictionary and the beliefs of Shamam and Malay Bomohs* (Zaba, 1961).

English colonial boosts the orientalism movement with the formation of English schools in the Malay States. On 21 October, 1816, the Penang free school, the first English school in Malay Peninsula was set up. The school received financial assistance from the East India company and the contribution from the Church (Jessy, 1964).

CONCLUSION

All in orientalism movement in Malaysia began with the Western colonization by the Portuguese, Dutch and English, then followed with the collection of information and materials in the form of books and old manuscripts. After that, the orientalists wrote and manipulated their writings based on their orientalism beliefs that ended up being referred to in their study.

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