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Ishak Saat, Mohd Kasri Saidon, Ahmad Zainuddin Husin, Ruhaizan bt Sulaiman@Abd Rahim

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i4/4062>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i4/4062

Received: 17 March 2018, Revised: 21 April 2018, Accepted: 26 April 2018

Published Online: 28 April 2018

In-Text Citation: (Saat, Saidon, Husin, & Rahim, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Saat, I., Saidon, M. K., Husin, A. Z., & Rahim, R. bt S. (2018). The Great Malay Movement. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(4), 794–804.

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Vol. 8, No. 4, April 2018, Pg. 794 - 804

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The Great Malay Movement

Ishak Saat

Faculty of Human Sciences, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900, Tanjong Malim, Perak,
Malaysia

Email: ishakhj@fsk.upsi.edu.my

Mohd Kasri Saidon

School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Email: kasri@uum.edu.my

Ahmad Zainuddin Husin

Faculty of Human Sciences, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900, Tanjong Malim, Perak,
Malaysia

Email: zainuddin.husin@fsk.upsi.edu.my

Ruhaizan bt Sulaiman@Abd Rahim

Faculty of General Studies and Advance Education (FUPL), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
(UniSZA), 21300, Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia

Email: ruhaizan@unisza.edu.my

Abstract

Melayu Raya was a struggle requiring unity of thought to unite and restore the integrity of the Malay archipelago. Through this movement they tried to reunite the Malay race as before the colonial era. During the colonial era, the Malay Archipelago was successfully separated into several separate entities. The political fighters in the Malay Archipelago trying to consolidate its own way. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam and Ishak Haji Muhammad represented Malaya while Sukarno and Hatta represented Indonesia and they were sharing the same goal. This paper refers to work of historical documents such as colonial files and the interviews of the struggles involved in the Melayu Raya movement. Therefore, this paper tries to uncover the struggles of Melayu Raya / Indonesia Raya with reference to the struggles of the Malays allied strategies in order to liberate the country from being further colonized by the West.

Keywords: Malay, Melayu Raya / Indonesia, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Malaysian Nationalist Party and Independence.

Introduction

The Malay Archipelago is large but separated due to its isolated geopolitical and geopolitical position. Seen as two large entities separated by the boundary position that officiates this separation without regard to the original Malay history of the Malay Archipelago / Archipelago, this separation consciously or unconsciously ignores the traditional culture of the family as a nation known as the Malay Archipelago. For the Malays, they have the right to interpret the Archipelago or the Malay Archipelago as the place of their blood. Hence I think the Malays are the native inhabitants of Nusantara, in other words 'son of the soil' (Saat, 2016, p.1) This historical fact cannot be denied by anyone. But this historical fact demands all nations to respect the history of a nation. The Malays should be aware and always be ready to claim their rights as the native indigenous people, and the rights must be guarded and fought (Mahmud, 1979, p. 33-34).

The era of colonialism showed that this conquest of the nation was a victim of the Divide and Rule Policy exercised by either the British or the Dutch. Through the Dutch English treaty of 1824, this conjugal nation was separated and isolated. Until now it's alienated and irrelevant. Soon, the next generation is no longer cultivating the grand culture of the great Malay tradition. The effect of this separation was that the Malays were forced to pay for the struggle to defend their homeland separately and isolatedly. Significantly after the First and Second World War, the struggle for independence became the main agenda of the Malay states in Nusantara. Indonesia is one of their iconic and united struggle.

The Great Malay Concept

Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy explained in detail the flow of thought to be applied in the Malay community. He argued that Malaya would only be strong and steady through the unity of the Malays in the Malay Archipelago, which was better known by the name of *Melayu Raya* (The Great Malay). He claimed that the split and the unity of the unity of the Malays was due to the arrival of the Western imperialists. He claimed that this prolonged colonization caused the *Alam Melayu* (The Malay World) to be separated and isolated. They became the small and isolated countries (Helmy, 1946, p.7). Hence, the struggles which were based on the *Melayu Raya* philosophy became a stance not only for him but to his followers, through the Malay National Party of Malaya (PKMM). Then he once again reiterated his stand and his hold on the *Melayu Raya* struggle by claiming that the Malay Archipelago, in terms of geography was a Malay archipelago since the beginning of time. This assertion was declared eight years later:

"The Malay Area was vast. Based on the Geographical and Geopolitic knowledge that people have written since the European people recognize this nature, it was their definitions to introduce and differentiate the Malay race, and the Malay-Malay lands with certain names: such as the Malay Archipelago, Malay-Indonesian, Indo-nesia-Asia, or Indonesia) and other names" (Helmy, 1954, p.21).

This understanding had been successfully cultivated to all PKMM members and their supporters. They had never given up in the struggle to uphold the philosophy of the Great Malay struggle.

But British colonialists were more comfortable talking to the moderates, comprising the traditional Malay elite. It was clear that some of their interests were guaranteed through the UMNO party, which was a group that has been awarded moderate (moderate) titles at that time. Their long history of close relationships ensured that the close collaboration between them was preserved and protected. This was because the ideas, thoughts, impressions and ideas of this middle class were in line with the British. Those who tried to suffocate their comfort would be considered as troublemakers and threats to security. These moderates were not only dissatisfied with the leftist or radicals, but were also actively opposing the efforts of importing foreign ideologies or forming political orders according to the republic of Indonesia or destroying the position of secular authorities. The Malay elite was a group of citizens who could cooperate with Western colonial powers. (Bakar, 1994, p.95) The allegations could be proven by seeing the nobles appointed to the Work Council and in fact they held important posts in the British administration in the early 20th century. Those that well-known as English-educated Malays were capable of governing the country after independence later. Their thinking was due to the following beliefs:

1. Initially, the Malay elite was a noble group occupying a high level of organization within the Malay community. Their ego was still thick in the society and it was difficult for them to subjugate the demands of the general public which were comprising of ordinary people. This phenomenon made it very difficult for them to work together in any field and occupation if they were paired with ordinary people.
2. Both the elite Malays are nurtured with Western education, thus resulting in the Malays who oriented Western thought. The views, ideas, arguments and standings of the Malay elite have been embodied in Western culture. This affects their stance not only in terms of socio-cultural and lifestyle but also affects the views, ideas, approaches and political stances that further support British powers (Saat, 2015, p. 112).

This phenomenon was the dominance of the Malay elites, and this answered the question of why they did not support the struggle pioneered by the Malay radicals, even though they were of the same race and religion (Kheng, 2014, p.271-272). Their status of Malay nobility was all overwhelming, while the dignity of the Malays has long been jeopardized since the colonization of Malaya.

The Great Malay Struggle

The collective agitation of the Malay dissatisfaction with their socio-economic and political position was made through the Malay Youth Union (KMM) established in 1938 by Ibrahim Haji Yaakub (IBHY). Then the same tone was also voiced by the religious educated, especially from religious institution of Maahad Il Ihya As-Sharif, Gunong Semangol, Perak. However, KMM's existence was not long since it was banned by the British as well as the Japanese as being stamped as a radical. KMM supporters had to think of new strategies to continue the unfinished struggle. They established the Peninsular Indonesia People's Republic (KRIS) in July 1945 led by Ibrahim Haji Yaakub, Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy and Onan Siraj (Saat, 2014, p.38) The Japanese era of collaboration was done in order to ensure the KRIS political struggle did not receive the same

fate as KMM. KRIS then cooperated with the Sukarno-led National Party of Indonesia (PNI) to realize the independence of the Independence through the Greater Malay concept. This allegation could be seen through the confrontation of KRIS leaders held in Taiping, Perak on August 13, 1945 to discuss Malaya's independence with Indonesia under the concept of Raya Raya/Indonesia Raya (Omar, 2015, p.116-117) Among the Malay political figures who attended the confrontation were Ibrahim Haji Yaakub, Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy and Onan Siraj representing KRIS with Sukarno and Hatta representing PNI (Latif, 1995, p.8) The action was taken as KRIS's struggle received the Japanese invaders' blessing by the slogan "Asia For Asia". The end of 1944 and early 1945 marked the weakening of the Japanese power because of the Allied attacks and the abolition of atomic bombs that destroyed the city of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Negotiations were held between the Malay political figures in Malaya and Indonesia in an effort to take over the state government when Japan surrendered and before the British returned to dominate Malaya. It was a daring act of radical Malays in politics in an effort to liberate Malaya. But this effort stunted when Sukarno and Hatta declared that Indonesian's independence was in 1945 excluding the Malay Peninsula. (Adil, 1985, p.249)

In Indonesia, the declaration of independence was made twice, one was in 1945, made by Sukarno with the Japanese blessing and the other one was in December 27, 1949, when the Dutch colonialist officially handed over sovereignty and granted independence to the people of Indonesia under the leadership of President Sukarno and Deputy President Drs. Mohammad Hatta. This incident once again raised the spirit of the independence of the Malay radicals in Malaya. The impact of the real independence of this land on the contrary, made all of Indonesia's descendants in Malaya welcomed it with joy. In Kuala Kangsar a massive celebration was held in 1949. The consensus of various parties to attend the mass celebration made the British felt threatened. Three days before the celebrations were held, the keynote speaker who would spark the spirit of independence in the celebration, was arrested and detained in Jerjak Island prison. He was Abdul Hadi Noor, President of the Indonesian Independent Society [PIM] (Dfamily, 1994, p.108-109) This arrest was a shock to the entire Malay community of Indonesians in Malaya, but the arrest of the figure had not been able to improve the situation.

Failure to achieve independence with Indonesia led to new strategic planning in order to gain independence from Malaya. They formed the Malay National Malay Party (PKMM) led by Mokhtarudin Lasso, Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam. PKMM was set up in Ipoh, Perak on October 17, 1945 (Adam, 2013, p.108-111). In the first PKMM congressional conference held in Ipoh on 30 November to 3 December 1945 resolved 8 key resolutions of the Malays, phases 1, 7 and 8 asserted:

1. Uniting the nation of Malaya, instilling national spirit among the Malays and aiming to unite Malaya within the big family of the Republic of Indonesia Raya.
7. PKMM wishes to cooperate with other nations living in this country, working well and working for Malayan United Front to make Malaya Merdeka, prosperous and happy as a member of the Republic of Indonesia.

8. Supporting Indonesian people in their struggle for Independence (UMNO/SG No. 96/1946).

This is a bold PKMM effort in the political struggle of the Malays, claiming and voicing their defense of their own destiny to British colonists. Although at the beginning of the establishment of PKMM there were elements and attempts to deviate the struggle of the Malays by embracing communism, but the efficacy and speed of the Malay-radical political figures succeeded in cleansing the flow of communism in PKMM.

The presence of Malay political figures such as Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al Baqir and Baharuddin Latif managed to control the situation from being trapped by communist elements. According to Ishak Haji Muhammad, they set up PKMM to take on the challenge and fulfilled the demands of the struggle to defend the Malays. In fact, the mastery of colonial powers and foreign immigrants, especially in the political and economic sphere in Tanah Melayu, has led the Malays to retreat and lag behind. He further stressed that the PKMM's struggle was in line with one of the United Nations goals under the provisions of The Charter of Human Rights. This Charter guarantees the rights of colonized human rights to seek independence, or at least self-governing, regardless of color, religion, speech, gathering, political parties, publishing newspapers, free from hunger, free from arrest and detention without going through legal process and physical and spiritual freedom. Based on this spirit, PKMM was established by young Malays for the sake of seeing the Malay race defended and achieving independence. (Muhammad, 1997, p.187-228)

The presence of PKMM was then accepted with enthusiasm by radical Malay youths and could undermine the position of British colonial powers and the Malay aristocrats who supported the British colonizers. PKMM had already sued UMNO's position under the leadership of Dato Onn Jaffar. Even this ongoing struggle also threatened UMNO's position under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al Haj. PKMM was so inclined to fight for independence by creating a great Malay state which was under the concept of Malay Raya. The presence of PKMM in the political affair of Malaya was not condoned by the colonialists. Hence, the journey of PKMM had a fairly difficult route. Many PKMM leaders were forced to bend in jail under the provisions of the Emergency Act 1948, on the charge of threatening national security. But this situation did not break the spirit of the struggle they had. Although their leaders were arrested and imprisoned, and they were even tolerated by the society, but they went through it with a steadfast heart (Ali, 2008, p.71).

Their struggle continued until the end of their lives. Even though they belonged to different organizations, their ideals of struggle were never extinguished. It grew all the time, either when they were imprisoned or after they were released. This claim could be proved through the role of a figure like Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Mustaza, Abdullah C.D., Musa Ahmad, Mustapha Hussein, Abdul Majid Salleh, Rashid Maidin, Zulkifli Muhammad, Hasan Adli, Abdul Rahman Rahim, Ibrahim Karim, Rashid Karim, Mohd. Yusof bin Ayob, and Ibrahim Singgeh, a radical political figure who fought in PKMM (Salleh, 1991). After being released from prison in 1955, all of them were continuously active in the political struggle.

They joined various existing political organizations such as the SeMalaysia Islamic Party [PAS], the People's Party of Malaya [PRM] and the Labor Party of Malaya [PBM]. They were still convinced of the struggle they've been through. They were merely reflecting on the history of the struggle they had once ventured into, bewildered by the bitter woes of the struggle for independence to defend their race, religion and state, and about the pain of being a Malay radical political fighters who were self-defeated.

The genetic factor was very important as it affected their souls, in shaping the burning spirit of the struggle. Following the persecution and brutality of the Dutch colonizers in Indonesia which resulted in suffering, death, poverty, arrest, imprisonment and murder, those who were of Indonesian descent hated colonists. After migration, they found that the British colonialist attitude in Malaya was not far apart with the Dutch's in Indonesia, therefore the seeds of hatred increasingly fertile among them. This factor led them to easily embraced the British anti-colonial struggle in Malaya. The independence of Indonesia's struggle for independence was strongly influencing the actions of Indonesians, because of the feelings of hatred and retaliation and desiring to dodge the Western colonial power. Abdul Majid Salleh had been accused and jailed and was a British political prisoners from 1948–1955 (Interview, Abdul Majid Salleh, 22 August 2002). Ibrahim Chik, who was the former PKM Central Committee member and once acted in the PKMM branch of Temerloh also made the same allegations (Chik, 2004, p.2).

PKMM has many followers comprising of Indonesian descents. PKMM had also established the basis of their struggle closely related to Indonesia. Through the Malay Raya concept, and 'Merdeka' slogan, also through the 'White Red' colored flag, it was enough to prove that their struggle matched with the elements of Indonesian independence struggle (UMNO/SG No. 96/1946). Hence, it was more effective and left a deep impact on the Malay radical political fighters in Malaya who were of Indonesian origin. They praised the famous Indonesian independence fighter figures, for example Ahmad Boestamam praising Sukarno and Bong Tomo's high achievement and leadership and their success in liberating Indonesia (Boestamam, 1983, p.1)

Similarly, the Insaf Youth Movement (API) movement led by Ahmad Boestamam was composed of most young Indonesians. They embarked on the spirit of anti-colonial struggle by the leadership of the API in a series of military exercises and organized political courses. They were focusing on the struggle for Indonesia's independence as an anti-British supporter. It was arguable that the idea of establishing the API was due to the influence of the formation of the 'Ants Army' in Indonesia, the leader of Sukarno (CO537/2140/136697, No. 61, p. 1). They were required to have white uniforms and black coats and were required to follow exercises such as foot parade. All API members would be trained in permanent camps as well as temporary camps (Interview, Ariffin Yunos, 2002) They would be deployed to join the PKMM and API anniversary parade to show a high spirit of struggle in society. They responded to this call enthusiastically. It is the style of training and leadership of Sukarno in the Nationalist Party of Indonesia [PNI] and the Ants. The influence of self and family background was the main driving force to their direct involvement in the fight against the colonialists. It was also acknowledged by one of the independence fighters of the radical movement in Malaya, Ibrahim Singgeh. He still remembered

his father's words forbidding him working with the colonial authorities. When he was offered to work as an assistant teacher after finishing his fifth degree in 1936, among his father's words were; "Do not ever become a company dog" (Interview, Ibrahim Singgeh, 30 December 2002). These words were embedded and became his hold during the fight in the Great Malay movement. At the same time, Malay radicals from Malaya migrated to Sumatra and Java to join the fighters against the Dutch colonizers of Sukarno. Two-way relations had existed in the anti-colonial movement at that time. Among those who acted like this were Mokhtaruddin Lasso, Dahari Ali, Ustaz Kassim Mutbiac and Dzulkifli Ownie (CO537/3751/136798, p.38).

They were once members of the PKMM leadership in Perak. The views were also supported by A. J. Stockwell stating that the existence of the Malay radicals was influenced by the educational background they went through (Stockwell, 1979, p. xv) West scholar views like of W.R. Roff and A.J. Stockwell were also certified and supported by Firdaus Haji Abdullah. He also categorized the Malay nationalism into three groups and two of them belonged to the radical religious educated and the other being secular educated radicals (Abdullah, 1985, p.33). Based on the scholars 'views, the researchers believe that the presence of secular educational institutions and the advancement of media technology had finally led to the Malays' mindset to rise against the British colonialists. The Malay consciousness was not favored by the British, therefore they were categorized into radicals. The categorization of those who championed Malaya's independence to radical and non-radical was a British colonialist effort that radicals did not get the support of the general public. To reinforce the British mastery of the Greater Malay movement then the Emergency Act 1948 was introduced to suppress the rise of the Malay radicals. In fact, the British accused and labeled the Great Malay movement with communist and radical titles aimed at obscuring the general Malay community in order not to support this struggle (Interview, Mahmud, 2003).

The British tried to cast various allegations against the struggle founded by this group. In fact, it was also rejected by some Malays. With their communist and radical allegations, the PKMM movement was labeled extremely dangerous. But they forgot that PKMM leaders had worked and managed to clear the influence of communists in their party to become cleaner and pure. This statement was acknowledged by Western scholars, A.J. Stockwell. Although at the beginning of its establishment was impregnated by communist ideals but the pursuit of purification was carried out by Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy after taking over the post of General Chairman I from Mokhtarudin Laso in 1947 after returning from attending the Inter Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, India (Stockwell, 1979, p.141).

In fact, the PKMM's objective, itself, has insisted that their struggle is based on nationalism. But their Malay nationalism is more focused on the concept of Malay Raya. Here are the objectives of PKMM:

1. Uniting the Malays, instilling a national spirit among the Malays and aiming to unite Malaya within the big family of the Republic of Indonesia Raya (UMNO/SG No. 89/46 and Ramlah Adam, 1998, p. 84-85).

This Phase 1 proves that the foundation of the struggle for the Greater Malay movement was devoted to PKMM (CO537/1582/136697 p. 1). Similarly, the phrase Republic of Raya/Malaya Raya also proved that they adhered to the concept of the Malay/Great Indonesian Raya struggle. The pillars of the struggle of the Malays are of Indonesian descent. The British documentary dated June 26, 1947 also proved that PKMM was no longer involved with communist activities. This statement was issued by J. D. Dalley, Director, Malayan Security Service in Malaya at a special meeting with Governor-General of Malaya in Singapore to discuss communism's activities and influence in Malaya. Clearly he submitted a report that the labor movement was the mastermind of communist activities in Malaya. He also denied that PKMM was involved in this communist-activity. His statement; "... the M.N.P. was not particularly concerned with Trade Unions".

Dr. Burhanuddin was not a communist or influenced by communism. The background of his religious education and led him to purge the PKMM from that belief. He strictly rejected communism as a political ideology or as a belief. This can be detected through his writings that affirm the struggle of the Malays and Islam, especially in *Our Struggle* (Helmy, 1946). He also denied allegations of the struggle to defend the land and the people contradicted the principles of Islam. Therefore, he was strongly insisted on the national concept of struggle and championing Islamic principles in accordance with Malay culture whether in the lead of PKMM or PAS later. In this work, he also indirectly touched other elements in upholding the true Malay nationality, such as sovereignty, the state's greatness and culture and Malay politics. The rhetorical words of Burhanuddin Al Helmy 'From the Ruin of Malacca City, We Build the Free Soul', plus the expression of the rhetorical words of the Malays, 'The Lost Missing World' (Funston, 1980, p.78 and Ahmad, 1997, p. xxvii), became the base and the foundation of the struggle to be applied to the PKMM and also PAS later. Dr. Burhanuddin believed that the struggle against the colonialists could be done through negotiating tables and in accordance with the legal remedies. His actions succeeded in clearing PKMM from being influenced by communism. This did not mean PKMM was not radical. This fact was proven to be true when the birth of API and AWAS as the youth wing of PKMM. This time PKMM became more radical in terms of the struggle to defend the Malays. PKMM could challenge UMNO's position. According to them, UMNO was only a Malay elite political party that lived apart from the general public of the Malays and they lived with the richness and enjoyment of life sown by the British authorities that they forgot about their original responsibility and struggle to defend and guard the Malays generally (Latif, 1995, p. 37)

Conclusion

The concept of Malay Raya / Indonesia Raya was a pure struggle of the united Malays in an attempt to reunite the Malay Archipelago into a real entity just before the colonial era. This struggle was carried out using political pathways and political co-operation across borders. Malay political leaders in Malaya as well as Indonesia sought to realize the idea of Greater Raya / Indonesia Raya. Although these efforts found a dead end but their efforts had become a historical record that there had been efforts made by the Malays to unite. However, the impact of occupation prevented this great goal. Separated with the isolated boundaries would not prevent the pursuit of the ultimate generation of the latter to continue to work in order to re-establishing the culture of the Malay community, as well as to be appreciated again.

Corresponding Author

Ishak Saat, Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Human Sciences (FSK), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900, Tanjung Malim, Perak. Tel: +605-4506667. Faks: +605-4598606. Email: ishakhj@fsk.upsi.edu.my

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