

The History of the Look-To-The-East Idea in Malaya during the British Colonial Era

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Abstract

This study will analyze the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in Malaya during the British colonial era. The methodology used is based on the observation method of the resources available in libraries and the National Archives of Malaysia. The main issue of this study is to unravel the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in Malaysia before it was made as the Look-To-The-East Policy in 1982 during the administration of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Developments around the world due to Western imperialism have driven the Malay community to re-examine their condition. At this point, many questions begin to arise why they are left so far compared to the advances made by Western civilization. Since the British colonial not very likely in the promotion of the modernization effort among the indigenous population, but preferred the efforts that can strengthen their importance, the greater responsibility lies within the intellectuals in Malaya. The main media used as a channel for the dissemination of their new ideas and thinking are newspapers and magazines. In Malaya, the emergence of so many newspapers and magazines in the first half of the 20th century was associated with the phenomenon of modernization. Therefore, when we want to examine the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in the Malay community modernization efforts at this time, newspapers and magazines serve as very useful documents.

Keywords: newspaper, look-to-the-east idea, Japan, magazine, Malay Community

1. Introduction

This study is an attempt to unravel the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in Malaya during the British colonial era. In terms of definition, idea is the process of searching for meaning and order to achieve desirable results. Look-To-The-East refers to the efforts of the parties in Malaya in doing research, analysis and selection of the best examples from Japan for the benefit of Malay community. Although the three major countries of East Asia are China, Korea and Japan, the study focus is directed to Japan only. Japan's role as a model for the development of the Malay community during the British colonial era has been touch by sixteen previous studies, among the important one are Abdullah Abdul Rahman (1906), Khoo Kay Kim (1984), Abdul Ghapa Harun (1988), Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim (1997), Abdul Aziz Mat Ton (2000), Mohamed Fairoz bin Ahmad (2010) and Ermy Azziaty Rozali et al. (2011). All of these studies only take certain aspects of Japanese values. This study will complement sixteen previous studies through the collection of all the resources in newspapers and magazines that indicate the existence of the Look-To-The-East idea at this moment.

2. The Early History of the Development of Journalism in Malaya

The emergence of journalism (Note 1) in Malaya and the subsequent history of its development are consistent with the presence of the Europeans and the solidification of Europe imperialism in this region (Adam 1992). The publication of newspapers and magazines in Malay Language began since the 19th century (Ismail, 2011). This was initially done by the Europeans, especially the Christian missionaries. They embarked on this activity with the aim of making the media their channel of delivering their sermons and preaches to the local people, especially among the Malay societies (Adam, 1992). The earliest newspaper published was *Prince of Wales Gazette* in Penang in 1806 (Adam, 1994). The earliest magazine published was *Bustan Arifin*. This magazine was published in Melaka in 1821 (Ismail, 2011). Later, several more magazines were published in Singapore and

Penang (Harun, 1988). In the Malay Sultanate states in Malaya, the first paper published was *Seri Perak* that had circulated first in Taiping in 1893 (Ismail, 2011).

It was not a coincidence that the publication in Malaya had happened at about the same time with the spread of Christianity teachings in this region. It was the Christian missionaries who had paved the way in popularizing the use of the printing machines (Adam, 1994) not only in publishing Bible brochures, school books centralizing on the formation of morale, dictionaries and Malay word lists, but also reading materials like newspapers and magazines regarded as valuable in the agenda of the Bible preachers spread Christianity among the native citizens (Adam, 1992). The tradition of magazine publishing started by the Westerners was then copied by the Chinese-Descendant society (Ismail, 2011), Jawi Descent (Ismail, 2011) and Arab Descent (Mustajab, 2011) either in the Straits of Settlement or the Malay states. They had published their own magazine (Harun, 1988). The first Malay newspaper named *Jawi Peranakan* was published in Singapore in 1876 (Adam, 1994). Since then, several more newspapers were published in Penang, Perak and Singapore. As the 19th century came to its close, this tradition had started to have its roots and undergo a very encouraging development. According to William R. Roff, since the publication of *Jawi Peranakan* until 1941, there were about 147 Malay newspapers and magazines throughout the Peninsula including in the Straits of Settlements (Harun, 1988). However, only several newspapers and magazines were able to be published continuously for more than five years. (Note 2)

The center of development of both these types of media before the Second World War was based on major cities like Singapore, Alor Star, Muar, Seberang Prai, Batu Pahat, Ipoh, Kuala Kangsar, Kota Bharu, Pasir Puteh, Seremban, Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Kuala Terengganu, Jasin dan Kuching (Zakaria, 1985/1986). In terms of publication, Kelantan was among the states that had actively published books, magazines and newspapers. Among the years between 1918 and 1941 Kelantan had published 12 magazines and several religious books which became texts throughout the hut institutions. From all these magazines published, 11 were published in Kota Bharu and another in Pasir Puteh (Hamid, 2007). (Note 3)

Although the newspapers and magazine publications in Malaya can be said to have prospered since the end of the 19th century, more exponential growth only took place in the first few decades of the 20th century. The publication of *al-Imam* in 1906 (Hamid, 2007) supported by several Malay intellectuals like Sheikh Salim Al-Khilali, Sheikh Tahir Jalaludin, (Note 4) Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi (Note 5) and Haji Abbas Taha (Note 6) had left a profound impact either in terms of tradition of journalism, or the role it played. These intellectual figures had played a great role in molding the new streams of thoughts in the Malay community (Rosdi, 2010). Through their writing, the Pan-Islamism stream of thought brought by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Sayid Jamaluddin al-Afghani had started to spread in the Malay society (Harun, 1988). The stream of thoughts of *al-Imam* was fitting with the circumstances faced by the Malay society during the British occupation. The under-development of the Malays in all aspects of life had started to worry various parties. The emergence of *al-Imam* had given room for the intellectuals to re-examine the position of the Malays in terms of the religious system or the socio-cultural system in a more critical way. Even, as we observe the writing in the magazines, it is obvious that the Malay community had cast aside the old thinking and the socio-cultural system that no longer was appropriate for the life at the time. In general, they propose that the Malays were ready to evaluate themselves in order to spot any form of weaknesses that they had (ibid.).

The influence of thinking founded through *al-Imam* then prospered and it began to fascinate the intellectuals, especially the religious intellectuals. This can be observed through several newspapers and magazines which were published later. Nonetheless, it has yet to reach an impressive level. The discussion only concentrates on the issues of acts of worship and religious laws. More profound and comprehensive thoughts on how to develop a modern community were only comprehensively established in the printed media around the 1920s (ibid.).

In the 1920s and up to the Second World War, Malay newspapers and magazines had emerged in abundance. The emergence of the media had formed some differing thinking patterns from one to another. Prior to the era of the 1920s, the traditional thought of *al-Imam* had influenced the writing in the newspapers and magazines, and instead, in the following decade, there was the stream of thought influenced by the Western philosophy. Both ways of thinking had given attention to the question as to how modern Malay societies were formed (ibid.). Between the 1920s and the 1930s, there were 34 newspapers and magazines in Malaya. This is following the increased literacy level among the Malays. Also in 1920s, the social awareness among the Malays has increased. This was exacerbated when there were observations on the widening difference of status between the Malays and the foreigners in the fields of education and economy. The social and the exponential economic development had made the Malays lag behind (ibid.).

The raising awareness among the Malays, other than having received the influence from the West Asia, (Hamid & Jalani, 2011) was also fuelled by the developments that had also happened in Indonesia. In the meantime, the political development in Malaya, especially after the arrival of the Chinese and their increasingly dominant position in the economy had ignited a sense of urgency among the Malays, especially the scholars. In the decades of the 1920s and the 1930s, they were instilled with a lot of modernization issues. Their concentration is directed on practical issues regarding economy, politics and the society. After the 1920s, all these issues have become increasingly substantial. Debates on religion were no longer emphasised in the news and magazines in Malaya (Harun, 1988).

Among some of the printed materials that were thought of as important in the British colonial era were *Pengasuh*, *al-Ikhwan*, *al-Hikmah*, *Utusan Melayu*, *Warta Ahad*, *Warta Malaya*, *Saudara*, *Majlis*, *Majalah Guru*, and a few others (Hamid & Jalani, 2011). The socio-economic issues of the Malays had also started to be discussed in English newspapers since the 19th century. This was because the Malays not only wrote in Malay newspapers, but they also wrote in English newspapers, for instance *The Penang Gazette*, *The Straits Echo*, *The Times of Malaya*, *The Malay Mail*, *The Singapore Free Press*, *The Straits Times* and *The Malay Tribune*; these papers had not neglected the Malay community (Kim, 2001). Based on the articles published in the newspapers mentioned, we were able to examine the development of thinking of the Malay intellectuals in this period. Among the most prominent were Zaaba, Rahim Kajai, Ishak Haji Muhamad, Syed Syeikh Al-Hadi, Onn bin Jaafar and several others. They were regarded as the main pioneers in the Malay modernization (Harun, 1988).

3. Look-To-The-East Idea During 1920s

The existence of the Look-To-The-East idea in Malaya was first detected through articles in *al-Imam*. In Malaya, those who support *al-Imam* newspaper thoughts and have the soul of a reformist were known as the Malay Young Front. Incidentally those who support this thought comprised of those who were relatively young. Malay Young Front's thoughts were opposed by conservative minded group known as the Malay Old Front. As a group who were earlier to commence position in the society, the Malay Old Front align themselves with religious administration of the Malay states and was supported by the British administration when needed, managed to control the activities carried out by the Malay Young Front. Since the Malay Young Front was denied the opportunity to spread their religious thoughts through formal religious institutions, activists of this movement spread their thoughts by opening schools and publishing newspaper such as *al-Imam* (Othman, 2004). *Islah* (reformist) movement or the spread of *al-Imam* was more capable of extending its influence and struggle in the Straits Settlements, namely Singapore, Malacca and Penang. These states which were not headed by sultanate had facilitated the Malay Young Front to spread *al-Imam* widely without facing resistance and problems (Samat, 1992).

One of the earliest published articles about Japan by *al-Imam* can be found as early as in its first edition. This reflects how Japan has received good acclaim from Muslim community in this region. The article was entitled '*Islam dan Jepun.*' (Ton, 2000). (Note 7) The message attempted to be conveyed by *al-Imam* through that article was its political implications; what profit and benefits acquired should the Japanese profess other religions, especially Christians. According to *al-Imam* analysis, in order to assert for Japan to chose Islam, it emphasized that Islam is a religion that only forbids evil things (which bring damage) and just advocates for good deeds. Thus, Islam is compatible with the highest levels in the progress of philosophy and civilization. However, Islam which was meant by *al-Imam* is based on the original teachings, which is based on the teachings of the Quran and Hadith (Ton, 2000).

Al-Imam had earlier stressed the importance of education, especially knowledge about the history subject and regarded it as the key to claiming the enlightenment and progress for a certain nation. History has shown that education is the only tool that is most important for a nation to progress. It is evident that by mastering history, as well as other knowledge, European nations and Japan have great impact and benefit in the development of their nations (Jaafar, 1980) *Al-Imam* article dated July 23, 1906 emphasized that knowledge was the key to excellence in this world and the hereafter. The acquisition of knowledge has made Europeans and the Japanese to progress very quickly (*al-Imam*, 1906, July 23).

Presenting the best example, *al-Imam* has urged the Malays to look to Japan. Japanese people were still adhered to their religion, but they still experience change or carry out reforms in the areas of politics, economy and defense. Notwithstanding any possible religion practiced by the Japanese, it remains to be developed well (Jaafar, 1980). According to *al-Imam*, religion is not a problem for the pursuit of progress. But what has been the actual problem was that the Malays were hesitant and skeptical to accept lessons taught to them in full. The Malays regard Western civilization as the enemy of Islam. According to *al-Imam*, this assumption is wrong and narrow,

where in fact, Japan considered and took Western civilization as a tool to advance their nation (ibid.). On the other hand, the Malays refused to encounter Western civilization, but the Japanese would scrutinized details of Western civilization to be investigated, in which any good elements will be adopted for the benefit of their people and the bad elements were be left behind. The Malays however were unable to do so because they are ignorant of the subject, especially the Malay leaders.

Pro-Japanese attitude became more apparent and interesting through the publication of *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* book written by Abdullah Abdul Rahman (Note 8) in 1906, which gave recognition to the Japanese government. *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* was a translation of an Arabic book entitled *al-Shams al-Mushriqah*, written by Mustafa Kamil Pasha. *Al-Shams al-Mushriqah* was written Mustafa Kamil due to his admiration towards Japan's success in their war against the Russian (Rozali & Othman et al., 2011). In 1907, The publication of *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* book by Abdullah Abdul Rahman received grants from the publisher of *al-Imam* and was published by Matbaah al-Imam in Singapura (ibid.). The promotion for *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* was done via advertisements in *al-Imam* magazines.

Al-Imam consider this translation as an effort to enrich the field of writing which can be beneficial and further enhancing the knowledge of the Malay community. Words of praise were also given to Abdullah Abdul Rahman for his efforts in producing *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* which could benefit and enlighten the Malay community. *Al-Imam* has always encourage these kind of efforts. *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* started to be sold at a promotional price of \$3.50 per copy, starting from 14 Mei 1907 until 1 Julai 1907. After that period, it was sold at \$5.00 per copy and postage will be charged for shipments to individuals who ordered from abroad (al-Kalali, 1907). Besides that, the content of *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* was also printed in *al-Imam* for promotional purposes (ibid.). *Matahari Memancar: Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun* received encouraging response from the Malay community until the Second World War (Laffan, 1996).

In the excitement of the strength of the Japanese, from time to time, *al-Imam* has continued to publish articles which highlighted their support towards Japan. For example, one of the articles stated about several German groups that sailed to Japan to learn some knowledge expanded in Japan which has eventually brought success in their war and administration. In this regard, *al-Imam* saw such situations as raising the dignity of Asian race and splendour for the Emperor of Japan, Mikado. By giving the article '*Kembali Cahaya ke Pihak Timur*' title, the writer emphasized that the center of knowledge which originated from East which then moved to West and now moved back to the East which was brought by a race which has not previously recognized by the civilized world (Ton, 2000).

Japan seems to be able to achieve progress not because they changed their religion the religion of the West. In terms of progress, religion has not been a question and problem. *Al-Imam* would later take another example from Africa. According to *al-Imam*, even though the King of Ethiopia converted to Christianity, His nation was still underdeveloped and also far from the level reached by the European (al-Imam, 1906, July 23). Touching on the expansion of power by Western colonialists, *Al-Imam* had officially criticized it because they would not bother anything said by the landlords. (al-Imam, 1907. April 14). *Al-Imam* stated that the Western powers had rampantly seized proceeds from earths from the land they conquered, disregarding any restrictions or conditions set by local communities (Jaafar, 1980).

Western powers also forced the Western political and economic systems upon the colonies without first investigating whether or not it is suitable with local communities' customs and situations. They also brought in religion that was contrary to religions of local community. In addition, the Western colonialists have also ignored the aspects of civilization and religion of the local community. They indiscriminately assumed that their civilization and religion is the most supreme, although there were some local civilizations which were older and more advanced than Western civilization. Based on history was clear that the expansions of the Western colonial powers had no other purpose except the ambition of squeezing all proceeds from the conquered countries (Keluaran, 1907, April 14) and also compete among themselves for future political purposes. As Western countries were far superior in the military aspects, they were seen as using force and violence to conquer new colony.

The emerging of Japan as a new force during the Meiji era has rival those Western powers. Japanese victory in the war with Russia in 1905 is the only historic event in the modern world where the power of the East has successfully defeated a Western power. Naval forces under the command of Admiral Tojo had defeated the Russian navy near Okinosima Island. Russian Navy under the command of Rojetvenski can be said to be the largest navy in the world has eventually sunk in the bottom of the Baltic Sea (Muhammad, 1998). The Russian

government is seen as a very big government and their mighty power for three centuries (three hundred years) were destroyed after their clash with Japan (al-Imam, 1907, December 6). Japan's victory in 1905 had been a great blow to the Western powers in which during that period has dominated the Southeast Asia and South Asia regions. Japanese victory in the war was highlighted, especially in carrying out its expansion mission throughout the East since Japan had done much in making Asian people to realize the advantages of the Eastern peoples Sea (Muhammad, 1998). (Note 9)

That day was considered as a glorious day for the people of Asia. Now the whole world knew that the Western powers could also be eliminated by the strength of the East. Japanese ships namely Tsikaya, Hiroso and Suzuki have made the West realized that the Eastern opponents they were facing now is no longer the same Eastern opponent that could easily toyed by them and enslaved at their will. Japanese victory in Port Arthur had pulled the thick blanket covering the body of Asians who was sleeping prior to that. Western historians had stated that day as Asiatic Reveille which signified the rise of Asians. History books explain that this was the border between Asian nation which were easily colonized and Asian nation which were aware of their rights (ibid.).

According to *al-Imam*, the 1905 event can be made as a source of inspiration for the Malays to form a new attitude towards life and also to the way they were being treated by British administration. The time has come for the Malays to speak to the British and Malay leaders (Jaafar, 1980). *Al-Imam* also criticized British economic system and Western capitalist system which were suppressive in nature which have been extorting and oppressing local people. According to *al-Imam*, in the economic aspect, Japan has been able to match the Western powers by being able to produce various goods for local people. Japanese products were also considered as cheaper compared to European products which became increasingly expensive (al-Imam, 1907, April 14). This results in the dwindling of European goods markets in Malaya with the emergence of Japanese goods. Western powers conquered colonies by force and this resulted in goods sold at high price, because there was no cooperation established with the local people. This makes Japanese products in more and more popular with the local people because they were very cheap. The arrival of Japanese people were welcomed and well received by the local people compared to the reception given to the Western people (Jaafar 1980).

Al-Imam in an article entitled '*Surat Kiriman*' urged local leadership to emulate Japan's efforts in producing produce the spirit and endeavor for progress (al-Imam, 1906, August 21). Japan was also respected upon the principle of raise the flags of justice and equating the status of all human beings. (al-Imam, 1907, August 10). Then, *al-Imam* brought forward the question whether what carried out by Japan was useless? It was seen as efforts to encourage people to actively involve in society. This matter should not be underestimated by the local community to think about (Ton, 2000). Besides it's determination to think about Japan's progress, *al-Imam* also proves that the pro-Japanese stance was not a singular stand. The pro-Japanese stance and anti-imperialism struggle was also accompanied by other countries. Via an article entitled '*Warta yang Tersalin daripada Setengah Surat-surat Khabar Mesir, Jawa dan Negeri-negeri yang Berhampiran dengan Dia*', Japan has come to the forefront to substitute Dutch in Java (Maghribi, 1908).

Another article could further strengthen the evidence of *al-Imam*'s attitude that coincides with other parties' opinion that felt happy on Japan's success which was being depicted as an Eastern side. *Al-Imam* published the entire Mustafa Kamil Pasha speech on a gathering commemorating the 608th year of Turkish Ottoman Empire in Istanbul. (Note 10) Japan's success has gained the spotlight by a figure well respected by *al-Imam* in its struggle of defending Egypt (al-Imam, 3 April 1908). If we looked further, the government of Turkey and Japan were already seen to have a number of similarities. For instant, the officers and employees of the government of Turkey and Japan comprised up of their own race. In addition the ruler of Turkey and Japan were also in close contact with their people. Japanese and the Turks were also seen as being very proud with their nobleness and the superiority of their race (al-Imam, 1907, August 10).

Al-Imam article dates February 4, 1908 attempted to associate the progress of a country with the king that rule the country. It was cited that the Japanese have the same physical build as the Malays, as a comparison. The question raised by the writer was, why the Japanese have been successful in "defeating those six footers beast?" What was meant by the term "beast" was the event where Japan defeated the Russian in 1905 war (al-Imam, 4 February 1908). The cause of this success would surely be the progress of Japanese society and the responsible of the Emperor of Japan to make it happen (Ton, 2000).

General attitudes of the Malays have also been *Al-Imam*'s target of criticism. The Malays were said to be clinging too strong on conservative customs and superstitions, such as showing respect towards kings and leasers by prostrating on the ground. *Al-Imam* have advised readers to critically examine the disadvantages in some customs and beliefs of the Malays as described in *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah* (Abdullah bin Haji Jaafar¹⁹⁸⁰).

Al-Imam assumed that all these things as utter nonsense (al-Imam, 1908, September 27) which should be forgotten and wiped from the minds of the Malays. The Malays are urged to be aware and rise because it is time that they strive and act as the Japanese. *Al-Imam* also praised Johor for its remarkable history. According to *al-Imam*, Sultan Abu Bakar as the founder of Johor government is 'sacred' because being able to develop Johor in different ways as a result of his observations on the success of the Japanese (al-Imam, August 1908).

Al-Imam article dates 27 September 1908 stated that after the Japanese had managed to defeat China in 1895 and Rusia in 1905, they had experienced steadfast progress due to their attributes of "full freedom, vibrant, civilized rules and wisdom." (al-Imam, 1908, September 27). Their success was the result of the efforts of its people and leaders who are competent as well as good and proper starting from the Emperor of Japan and his ministers in which matters like this can actually be implemented in Malaya whenever there was an awareness and willingness among the the Malays kings and leaders. But selfishness among them has caused the Malays to be left behind without proper guidance and leadership (Jaafar, 1980).

Al-Imam articles were viewed as attempting to convince the local community of how meaningful the history of Japan to Asian. Due to its stance towards Japan, and due to their effort in publishing an article entitled '*Islam and Japan*', foreign press have insinuated *al-Imam*, mocking it as publishing an opinion which was merely 'one drop from other oceans (al-Imam, 1907 August 10). *Al-Imam*'s publisher was viewed as a group that was isolated from local communities which were pro-British or Dutch. This was due to the fact that *al-Imam* viewed the emergence of Japan as a new power in Asia, in line with Turkey which fought colonialism and imperialism or defending Eastern civilization (Ton, 2000).

Besides *al-Imam*, Japan progress which could serve as a guide for the Malays can also be found in other articles and magazines. For instant, articles in *Neraca* dated March 29 1912 and June 5 1912 urged the Malays not to blindly imitate others, yet tried to emulate Japan in positive matters such as studying hard, being diligent, hate wastages and work for mutual success. (Neracha, 1912 March 29; Neracha, 1912 June 5). On the other hand, *Pengasuh* urged the Malay community to pursue the wealth of the world and the hereafter through acquisition of knowledge and authorities should play their role in establishing high schools, colleges and universities to advance the knowledge of the Malay community which were left behind in almost all aspects of life. An article in *Pengasuh* dated October 9, 1919 stressed that in reality, the world is being conquered by those who master knowledge, rather than by wealth as assumed by some people (Pengasuh, 1919 October 9).

Next, Japan's importance in education of the Malays has been asserted in *The Malaya Tribune* press. Based on letters published in *The Malaya Tribune* press, educational problems were considered as not only a problem of the Malays but also the problem of Muslims because from time to time the letters were published under the title '*Muslim Education*'. A letter dated November 18, 1919 which was published in that newspaper, written by A Young Muslim of India stated that the Malays have realised the immense and intense importance of education as an indispensable force in the making of a community or a country. (Kim, 2001). He later explained that the sooner they learn the value and benefit of sending a large number of Malay students to progressive foreign countries like America, Europe, England and even Japan for industrial education and technical training, the greater will be their gain, and happier, better and more hopeful will be the life and future of the New Malays (ibid.).

In the process of reshaping the Malay community, Japan was a country often highlighted as a model to be followed by the Malays. The success of the country was often associated with the hunger towards success within the Japanese. Japanese society was viewed to be able to practice modernization efforts systematically due to their strong spirit of nationalism. In addition, Japan also has leaders of wide knowledge who vigorously carry out the modernization efforts of their community. Therefore, in a short time Japan has been able to position themselves at par with Western countries. Based on the experience of Japan, it seemed that the Malay community was also able to do so (Harun, 1988).

4. Look-To-The-East Idea After 1920s

Throughout the 1920s until the time prior to the Second World War, Look-To-The-East idea was still continued by Malay intellectuals through their publication in newspapers and magazines in Malaya. The 20th century was seen as the century of competition for the Malay community to continue to live as a free and independent nation. This has been the philosophy of most articles published in Malay newspapers which often discussed about the importance of modernization in the Malay community (ibid.). In general, modernization was seen as a way of how a society strived to improve its position as a thriving community. The progress of a society in this context is based on the dominance of the community in areas such as industry, business, education, thinking, economic, political, social and culture (ibid.).

Socio-economic situation in Malaya showed that from time to time the Malay community was excluded from the development which was growing rapidly at the time. Malay society was seen as a society that lagged the most compared to foreigners, particularly the Chinese (Harun, 1988). The field of economic which had been completely monopolized by foreigners was no longer easy for the Malay community to venture in. Precisely because of that, in order to break the monopoly, the Malay community should first improve their proficiency in the field of education (Saudara, 1937, August 4). The next step was to open up wider opportunities for the Malays to enrol in English schools (Harun, 1988). *Pengasuh* urged the Malays to open their eyes to the progress of Japan during the Meiji era, which began in 1868. Japan was seen to be able to achieve rapid progress in the field of science and technology as a result of the advancement of knowledge learned from the West (Zakaria, 1985/1986). According to an article published in *Pengasuh* dated December 1, 1921, the Japanese wanted to acclaim high position in nobleness, prosperity and wealth amongst all races on this earth. The Malays must follow the ambition of the Japanese. (Pengasuh, 1921, December 1).

Al-Hedayah also urged the Malays to emulate the Japanese which actively involved in developing their country through education (Al-Hedayah, 1923 October). There are also efforts to develop a business culture in the life of Malay community as Japanese society itself (Kajai, 1928). *Al-Ikhwan* in an article entitled '*Adakah kaum Melayu ini dapat melepaskan wujudnya daripada hapus dan fana*' stated that if the Malays did not strive to change their lives, they would continue to remain in backwardness (Al-Ikhwan, 1930 October 16). Modernization was observed to take place in the Malay community given how widespread the effects of Western civilization on societies around the world. According to an article entitled '*Kemajuan Sesuatu Bangsa*' published in *Majalah Guru* magazine, "...the strong wind of progress and civilization brought by nations of greater advancement was something that could not be restrained." (Guru, 1930 October 1).

The importance of the Malay community to progress further was described in *Bulan Melayu* magazine. *Bulan Melayu* which focused on developing the women world has encouraged Malay women to look East. According to that magazine, when the role and activities of the Malay was compared with that of Japanese women, it was very clear that Malay women were still not very developed even though at that moment in Kelantan and Terengganu, there were more women than men are involved in small scale businesses. To encourage the Malay women to emulate Japanese women, *Bulan Melayu* have published an article which revealed about the migration of Japanese women from their village to the city to work in a factory because they wanted to help their own family which was gripped in hardship. At the factory, they were tightly controlled and were rarely able to return to their village. *Bulan Melayu* acknowledged the negative side of a system that extorted women, but praised Japanese women because of their dedication and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their families (Kim, 1984).

An article entitled '*Faedah Ilmu*' published in *Majalah Guru* magazine stated that educators among the Malays has urged the Malay community to emulate the Japanese, which in the past was a nation considered stupid and was never recognized by the European people. Since the Japanese become knowledgeable and educated, Japan continued to change even at a slow pace (Kasturi, 1933). Japan seemed to have become a powerful and influential nation in the world especially in terms of technological advancement (ibid.). The importance of public morals in shaping the progress of Japan was stated in *Al-Hikmah* in an article entitled '*Jalan Bagi Mengenal Adakah Negeri Itu Maju Atau Tidaknya*' (Al-Hikmah, 1934, April 1).

Next in an article published in *Majalah Guru* entitled '*Pelajaran di Negeri Jepun, Pelajaran Bahasa-bahasa Asing*' discussed recommendations made by Malay educators for the establishment of an institution to uphold journalism in Malay language. This emulated the Japanese which has set up a bureau namely Translation Office in 1811 for the purpose of translating foreign language. Later, Japan's Open Door policy has extended the functionality of Translation Office and Development Building has been established to study Western books and publications. This indicated a change in thinking among the Japanese at that time have developed increasingly (Ahmad, 1934).

The Japanese then take another step forward when they learn Dutch language thus introducing Japanese society to the Western world. Via this language, Japanese society acquires knowledge such as medical science. At this time, Japanese medical students enhanced their knowledge by learning English language to acquire knowledge other than medical science. Schools and colleges in the state has been using Western knowledge which was first taught by foreign scholars in their own language, but since the establishment of Translation Office, those languages have been translated into Japanese and was taught by Japanese teachers to their fellow countrymen. Although Japanese students are encouraged to learn various foreign languages, Japanese society in general view foreign language was merely a tool to develop thinking and knowledge of their race, and not for communication purposes (ibid.).

In an article published in *Majalah Guru* entitled '*Kewajiban Mengetahui Bahasa Asing*' and *Warta Malaya* in article entitled '*Belajar Bahasa Asing*' also urged the Malays to learn Japanese language. According to Malay educators, Japanese was a race that should be emulated because a lot of the progress made by the country could serve as examples for the Malay community (Penulis Lama, 1934; *Warta Malaya*, 2 July 1938). Elimination of negative elements and a more progressive education system was seen as paving the way for the Malay community to engage in various fields of economics, especially in the field of business. The excellences of Japanese society in business are described in *Al-Hikmah* in an article entitled '*Membaiki Perjualan*' (Al-Hikmah, 1934, July 10).

In an article published in *Al-Hikmah* entitled '*Hartawan daripada luar*' stated that for a new country like Malaya, government should implement policies that would enable it to protect the interests of the Malay community. This was based on the Japanese government which has been facing various problems in opening states due to their desire to benefit their people. They made progress with the capital acquired from within the state itself and its people worked under government's guidance and assistance (Al-Hikmah, 1934 September 20). The Malay intellectuals were afraid for the failure of various groups within Malay society in playing their role. Therefore, the Malays society would be a society which did not have direction as the Japanese in facing modernization had processed. This situation was described in an article published in *Warta Ahad* entitled '*Memperbaiki kehidupan orang Melayu*' (Ahad, 1935 May 5; Darul-ta'zim, 1939).

Watan Malaya in its article '*Harapan Kita Kepada Guru-Guru Perempuan Melayu*' stated that Malay educators voiced that the Malays should make Japan as an example in which many of their women had realized the importance of education. In 1931, there were 857 high schools built in Japan. In 1930s also, 8 private schools for women were built, where women received the same education as in university. Among the private schools were Tasuda College (to learn English), Japan Womens University, Medical College, Kobe College, Doshitta College and Christian College. To advance the education for Japanese women, their parents have sacrificed much where the gardens and their possessions were sold to finance their children's education. For Japanese society, university education is the best way to enhance the position of Japanese women considering the fact that university education would give them opportunities to get better post and life (Maayun, 1938).

The Malay intellectuals also drew attention to the aspects of nationalism in modernization process of the society (Abdul Ghapa Harun, 1988). It seemed that the Malay community needed to accelerate the adoption of nationalism to enable them to emerge as a nation that having national feeling as the Japanese. According to an article entitled '*Pergantungan bangsa pada kemuliaan*' published in *Al-Hikmah*, when there was no longer nationalism spirit within a particular race, then all its business and cleverness were of no value for the glory and pride of the race. (Al-Hikmah, 1940 May 30). Even though before the Second World War there were many newspapers and magazines published and most of the articles were related to backwardness and the need for change in Malay society, it was not intended to undermine the British colonial system in Malaya. On the contrary, thoughts being presented were intended to engage the Malay community in the colonial system, either in the administration or in economics by example which could be taken from the Look-To-The-East idea. Based on the thoughts presented in the newspapers and magazines during the period, social and political awareness among the Malay intellectuals had just entered the first stage as concluded by Edward Shill (Harun, 1988).

According to Shill, in this stage, struggles by the intellectuals did not show signs of a revolutionary nature and clear aims for independence (Shill, 1971). The direction of intellectuals' thought in Malaya as described by Shill was viewed to lead to history-based thinking in discussing the position of the Malays. The great era of Islam and the Malays during the reigns of Malacca Sultanate was often used to convince the Malays that they were a civilized and great nation (Harun, 1988).

5. Conclusion

In the Malay community before the Second World War, a group of Malay intellectuals who have a very high awareness about the position of their society in the modern world has emerged. They began to feel desperate when the Malays failed to participate in the socio-economic development which was rapidly taking place in Malaya. Thus, they began to look for the reasons why the situation occurred. The effort to bring change to the Malay community was not easy to be implemented. This was due to the fact that the society was under the colonial system, and the position of the Malay community was not easy to change.

Japan was seen as their model due to their success in develop progress and become so modern without making Western model as their axis. From this perspective, Japan should be made emulated. Japan managed to sustain their identity in the process of building progress. There were a lot of high and noble values in the Japanese society known as Japanese values which substantially identical to what advocated by Islam. Putting Japan as an

example and role model and seeing it as in the Look-To-The-East idea has been triggered since the beginning of the 20th century. Implementation of the Look-To-The-East Policy by the Malaysian government in 1982 was seen as continuation for these efforts and ideas.

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Notes

Note 1. Meaning the whole of the periodical publication, either newspapers or magazines.

Note 2. For further information on the life span of the newspapers and magazines published in this period, kindly see Mohd Radzuan bin Zakaria, *Majalah Pengasuh, Al-Hedayah dan Al-Hikmah: Perbandingan Tema*, Bachelor's Degree Thesis in History, History Department, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1985/1986, p. 2. See also Li Chuan Siu, *Iktisas Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Baru 1830-1945*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1978, p. 15. See also Mohammad b. Datuk Muda, *Tarikh Suratkhobar*, Bukit Mertajam, Matbaah Al-Zaniah, 1940, p. 401.

Note 3. See also Abdullah Tahir, Kemunculan dan Kegiatan Penulis-Penulis Kreatif Kelantan Sejak Sebelum Perang Hingga Kini in Nik Safiah Karim & Wan Abdul Kadir Yusuf (edited), *Kelantan Dalam Perspektif Sosio-Budaya: Satu Kumpulan Esei*, Kuala Lumpur, Malay Studies Department, Universiti Malaya, 1985, p. 27. Newspapers and magazines published in Kota Bharu before the Second World War were *Pengasuh* (July 1918 up to the present day), *Al-Kitab* (September ? - November 1920), *Al-Hedayah* (June 1923 - February 1926), *Putera* (October 1929 - ?), *Majalah Al-Kamariah* (January 1930 - ?), *Kencana* (April 1930 - ? 1931), *Suara* (March 1931 - ?), *Al-Hikmah* (April 1934 - ? 1941), *Sinaran Kelantan* (June 1938), *Al-Riwayat* (November 1938 - 1939) and *Cetera Kelantan* (1941?) and *Terok* (March 1927 - ?) One more magazine was published in Pasir Puteh.

Note 4. For further details on the life history of Sheikh Tahir Jalaludin, kindly see Mohd. Sarim Haji Mustajab, Tokoh-Tokoh Agama Dalam Persuratkhabaran Melayu Kurun Ke-20 in Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail & Mahani Musa (edited), *Akhbar dan Tokoh Persuratkhabaran Malaysia Kurun ke-20*, Pulau Pinang, Publisher Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2011, pp. 40-45.

Note 5. For further details on the life history of Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi, kindly see Sundusia Rosdi, Sumbangan Cendekiawan Peranakan Arab Dalam Persuratan Melayu: 1900-an Hingga 1960-an in *BiblioAsia* 5 (4), 2010, p. 5. See also Mohd. Sarim Haji Mustajab, Tokoh-Tokoh Agama Dalam Persuratkhabaran Melayu Kurun Ke-20 in Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail & Mahani Musa (edited), *Akhbar dan Tokoh Persuratkhabaran Malaysia Kurun ke-20*, Pulau Pinang, Universiti Sains Malaysia Publisher, 2011, pp. 53-58.

Note 6. For further details on the life history of Haji Abbas Taha, kindly see *ibid.*, pp. 47-53.

Note 7. This article was written by its writer after invitation by the Japanese Imperialist to few Religious Scholars from various religions in the world to find out the most authentic religion in the world. According to *al-Imam*, they were also invited to participate in the discussion but they could not do so. However, the article werved as his contribution in a debate to highlight the importance of Islam for the Japanese. Besides that, al-Imam has published news about the Turkish delegation in the conference through two of its articles in Anon, Islam dan Jepun in *al-Imam*, Volume I, i, 23 July 1906, pp. 27-31 and Anon, Islam dan Jepun (II) in *al-Imam*, Volume I, ii, 21 August 1906, pp. 56-63.

Note 8. Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman was an Islamic scholar which hailed from Muar, Johor. He served as Head, Islamic Religious Department of Johor (1932-1947) and was awarded the 'Dato' title. Abdullah was also actively involved in writing. For more information regarding this figure, please see Ermy Azziaty Rozali, Mohammad Redzuan Othman, Roziyah Sidik@Mat Sidek & Ezad Azraai Jamsari, Cabaran Membina Kemajuan Bangsa Melayu Dalam Matahari Memancar Tarikh Kerajaan Jepun in. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics and Strategic Studies* 38 (2), 2011, pp. 85-87.

Note 9. See also Abdul Aziz Mat Ton, *Politik al-Imam*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2000, p. 269. Rusia was the first Christian force that attacked Turkey and later destroyed the empire especially in Eastern Europe and Middle East since early 1870s. Then other European powers made part of the state under the Turkish Ottoman Empire as distribution territories among themselves in their bid to grab their colonies.

Note 10. The contain of this speech contained in article by Anonymous, Risalah daripada Makatab in *al-Imam*, Volume II, i, 12 July 1907, pp. 13-15 and Anonymous, Sambungan Risalah daripada Makatab in *al-Imam*, Volume II, ii, 10 August 1907, pp. 41-45.

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