

THE MALAY COMMUNITY RESPONSE OF TOWARDS MALAY SCHOOL EDUCATION AFTER THE WAR UNTIL 1957

Siti Fatimah Nur Ali¹
Khairi Ariffin²

¹ Post Graduate Student, History Department, Faculty of Human Science, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, (Email: sitifatimahnurali@gmail.com)

² Associate Professor In History Department, Faculty of Human Science, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, (Email: khairi.ariffin@fsk.upsi.edu.my)

Accepted date: 05-03-2019

Published date: 08-04-2019

To cite this document: Ali, S. F. N., & Ariffin, K. (2019). The Malay Community Response of Towards Malay School Education After The War Until 1957. *International Journal of Heritage, Art, and Multimedia*, 2(4), 56-62.

Abstract: *The secular education introduced by the British colonialists had various reactions among the Malays. Education provided by the British aims to maintain the status quo of the Malays. The Malay school education curriculum introduced by the British only emphasizes basic education such as 3R's which is reading, writing and arithmetic. The Malay community thinks education that introduced by the British were contrary to the Islamic religion and worldly. As a result, the parents of Malay children refused to send their children to the Malay school. Therefore, this study aims to examine the response of the Malay community towards Malay school education after the War until 1957. This study was conducted using a qualitative method that emphasized the analysis of documents obtained from the National Archives of Malaysia such as colonial records and annual report on education (Annual Report on Education 1949 by M.R Holgate). The findings showed that the Malay community was welcomed Malay education after the Second World War. The awareness of the Malay community is due to the encouragement of the government by providing the perfect education facilities for Malay education, such as scholarship assistance, food aid, and complete school facilities.*

Keywords: *Community Response, Malay Education and British Colonial*

Introduction

British colonialism introduced the Malay school education by using the Malay language completely beginning in 1920. Malay children aged 7 to 14 who live within a radius of two kilometers from the school area are obliged to attend school. They are also required to complete their education in the IV grade. In 1821, the British set up a classroom building reserved for Malay school education under the maintenance of Penang Free School (Radcliffe, 1970).

Malay school education was established only at the lowest level (Ibrahim Saad, 1977). This proves that the British only carried out social responsibility by providing basic education to the Malay children. The British have no policy with the aim of promoting the education of the Malay children into a complete education system in enhancing the knowledge of the Malays (Ramlah Adam, 1991). This is because British fears it leads to the consciousness of the Malay community to rise against the British colonial power of Malaya (Ibrahim Saad, 1977). The British colonial administration in the Straits Settlements established schools using the Malay language as the medium of instruction and providing Malay teachers to teach Malay children to read Malay by using *Jawi* and *Rumi* scripts. The education of the Malay school before the Second World War only focuses on 3R's which are reading, arithmetic and writing. Therefore, the curriculum implemented in Malay school education is also limited as it provides only basic knowledge for local children. The British colonialists wanted a secular education policy implemented on the Malay children by turning the children of the Malays as low-level workers to help the British administration (Ramlah Adam, 1991).

Literature Review

A study by Radcliffe (1970) titled *Education and Cultural Change among the Malays 1900-1940*, has explained that there were four types of education flows that have existed and operated before the outbreak of the Second World War in Malaya. First, the establishment of a Malay school under the British colonial administration. Second, the establishment of an English school founded by Christian missionaries and received financial support from the British colonial administration. Third, the existence of Chinese schools established by the Chinese community. In 1920, Chinese school management was taken over by the British colonial administration. Fourth is the setting up of Tamil schools established for children of rubber estate workers. Overall, David James Radcliffe's writing is more focused on the development of Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil school education. He also explained about the schools in the Federated Malay States during the British colonial period. In terms of area coverage, Radcliffe is also more focused on education in Selangor. This research also helps a lot in understanding the development of Malay school education either formal or informal Malay education. Ramlah Adam (1991) in her research about *Maktab Melayu Melaka 1900-1922* explain that education among Malay societies prior to the entry of British administration was focusing on agricultural skills, trade and martial arts. Secular education started in Malaya after the British invasion of the 19th century. The British began establishing a Malay school education that focused on basic knowledge. Although Ramlah's study only focuses on the setting up of the Malay College but there is also a description of the Malay school education. Her research also helped in obtaining information on early Malay education, policy and the goal of secular education by the British towards the Malay children. Abdul Aziz Mat Ton (1984) research in *Persekolahan Melayu 1945-1948: Satu Manifestasi Semangat Perjuangan Melayu* more focused on the struggle of the Malays on education. The study also explains the reaction of the Malays on education, the increasing of student attendance in schools, and the development of schools in Malaya. Abdul Aziz Mat Ton (1984) emphasizes that the struggle of the Malays in politics is divided into two currents namely radical group who want independence and those who still need British protection. This study also describes about the assistance given by the British to the children of the Malays who attend school. Overall, Aziz Ton's study devoted much to Malay education after the Second World War, including the issues that existed in Malay school education.

Issues in Malay School Education

Many historians have pointed out that British colonial Malay school education curriculum is very disadvantage to the Malay community. In the mid-19th century, the British had introduced

Malay school education specifically for the Malay children. The purpose of establishing a Malay school education is to provide minimum education opportunities to the Malay children so that they are not illiterate and can understand the instruction and regulations implemented by the British colonial administration (Abdul Aziz Mat Ton, 1984). The secular education system introduced by the British received various of negative reactions among the Malays. Various efforts were made by the British to attract Malays to send their children to school such as using the mediation of *penghulu* (headman or chief in Malay society) and Malay District Officers (Annual Report on Education, 1887). However, the efforts of the British became futile when the schools established by them were not accepted in the Malay community. This was because the Malays believed the secular education introduced by the British was against the Islamic teaching as it was purely concentrated on the 'worldly aspect'. Therefore, the Malays prefer to send their children to *sekolah Pondok* for deepen religious knowledge (Stevenson, 1975). After the Second World War, the number of Malay children entering school increased as a result of the Malay consciousness of the importance of education. The parents of the Malay children welcomed the education of the Malay school and many of them began sending their children to school (Abdul Aziz Mat Ton, 1984). The Malay school education has its many contributions, especially in the academic field in producing successful Malay children in their lives as teachers and community leaders who become important figures contributing to the nation's awareness and independence.

Research Methodology

This study is conducted entirely by using qualitative methods that emphasize on the analysis of documents and manuscripts. This study focuses on the use of primary sources of documents i.e. Colonial office record, education annual report such as Annual Report on Education 1949 by M.R Holgate, and State Secretary File. The study was conducted at the National Archives of Malaysia to obtain educational history resources in the British colonial era. To obtain the secondary sources, this study would be conducted at public universities in Malaysia such as the University of Malaya and National University of Malaysia. The evaluation of data and result would be done analytically and by hermeneutic interpretation. The research also conducted research on previous studies as a source of historiography by previous researchers and their findings were used as an analysis, material by researchers in looking at the coherence of this research such as books, journals, and thesis.

Findings

In the 18th century, the British began to introduce secular education in Malaya and cause various reactions among the Malay community. Education is based on 3R's such as reading, writing and arithmetic taught to Malay children to reduce illiteracy rate (Solomon, 1989). 'White's men's burden' concept causing Christian missionaries and some British officers to take the responsibility by introducing Malay school education in the Malay village (Ramlah Adam, 1991). According to Stockwell (1982), 'white's man burden' concept is one of the ways to destabilize the community that is considered backward. The British are of the opinion that they are responsible for civilization in Malaya. Additionally, this slogan is also one of the ways the West extends the colonies of their subordination, spreading Christianity. British colonialism introduced Malay school education only at the primary level and Malay children were required to study up to grade V to enable them to graduate (Khairi Ariffin, 2009). Education in Malay schools was free and Malay boys living near schools were required to enroll in school. Although the education provided was free, the parents of the Malay children need to spend money on children's school needs such as exercise books and inks (Annual Report on Education, 1949). In 1920, the number of schools established by the British colonial in Malaya is 346 Malay boy schools and 54 Malay girl schools. The total number of pupils in

the Malay boy school was 18,699, while the Malay girl school was only 1,620 (Annual Report on Education, 1920). The number of Malay girl admissions was very measly compared to the Malay boys because of the lack of encouragement and parental support. Parents of Malay children, assuming knowledge gained from the Malay school will cause their children to be exposed with love letter writing. In addition, parents of Malay children also think that reading and writing knowledge taught at school will also make their children clever in trickery. The Malay parents are also very concerned about the safety of their daughters. Therefore, parents feel wary to let their daughters walk alone to school. The mother also worries about losing an assistant at home to carry out house chores, activities if their daughter attend the school (Annual Report on Education, 1937).

After the end of the Second World War, the parents of the Malay children took the initiative to send their children to the Malay education school for giving education opportunities. The awareness on education importance began after the Japanese occupation of Malaya. The Malays are aware that education plays an important role in protecting the nation and the country from being oppressed by the British colonialists (Barnes Report, 1951). In 1950, the number of Malay schools increased to 1704 schools. The parents began sending their children to the Malay education school after the Second World War to get proper education. The demand for education among the Malay children was very high and the British began to establish another 227 Malay school in 1951. The total number of pupils in 1951 was 305,000 and 10,500 teachers were assigned to teach in Malay schools (Annual Report on Education, 1952). The table below shows the improvement of number Malay pupils who enrolled in Malay education schools after the Second World War:

Table 1: Number of Pupils Enrollment at the Malay School After World War II

Year	Boy	Girl	Total
1946	96,000	40,400	122,000
1947	122,900	47,800	136,400
1948	130,300	69,000	199,300
1949	151,400	81,200	232,600
1950	167,848	92,734	260,582

Source: Barnes Report, Report Of The Committee On Malay Education Federation Of Malaya, 1951.

Table 1 above shows the number of pupils in Malay schools after the Second World War. In 1946, 96,000 boys and 40,400 girls were enrolled in Malay schools, the total number of pupils enrolling in Malay schools is 122,000. The number of pupils enrolled in Malay schools in 1947 increased to 136,400, which is 122,900 boys and 47,800 girls. The pupil admission was also increased in 1948 were 199,300 pupils comprised of 130,300 boys and 69,000 girls were enrolled. In 1949, there are about 151,400 boys and 81,200 girls registered with the Malay school. Subsequently, in 1950, 260,582 pupils were registered where 167,848 of them were boys and 92,734 were girls. The increment of pupils in Malay schools is due to increase in number of schools in Malaya by British colonial, it will give education opportunities to Malay children.

In 1950, The complete infrastructures in school also encouraged the Malays to send their children to the school. The facilities provided were more or less aided the activity in the classroom (Repaire of Malay School Furniture, 1950). There were two types of facilities provided which were inside and outside of the classroom. Every Malay school had perfect classroom equipments such as desks, chairs, cupboard and blackboard. For instance, Sekolah Kampung Gelam in Malacca they conducted the teaching and learning session using the main

equipment like a blackboard. The equipments assisted the teachers to explain on what they were teaching to the students such as writing *jawi* or teaching in *rumi* alphabets. Wooden tables and chairs provided to pupils are the main necessities for ensuring comfort and facilitate the pupils to do the exercises given by the teachers. Teacher's desk and chair were also provided in the classroom. These equipments in the classroom such as desks, blackboard and chairs were supplied equally to all Malay schools in Malacca (Repaire of Malay School Furniture, 1950). Improvement of the equipments in the classroom was also performed like increasing the first aid kit, screen as well as water filters in school. These facilities were very important to facilitate the class journey. For example, the first aid kit was meant for the students' use during emergency in case if there was an unexpected accident occurred in the class (Furniture fo Malay Schools, 1952). For outdoor equipment, every Malay school provides a small library to pupils at school. They could borrow and return the books within the appointed period. The Malay schools in the Federated Malay States also provided free Malay newspapers, the '*Lembaga Melayu*'. Besides, about 920 books entitled George Washington Carver were distributed to the library of all Malay schools in Kelantan (Malay School Libraries, 1953).

After the war, every Malay school also equipped with cultivation sites for Gardening subject. Therefore, the facilities provided will drew the parents of the Malay children interest to register their children to the school. This was because the traditional Malay population during the British Colonial era concentrated more on the farming sector, which was inherited from their ancestors for generations (Ghee, 1977) For the gardening subject, the pupils would not be required to bring along the gardening tools from home because the school would provide them instead. Gardening tools that were provided to pupils are hoe, trowel, *rembas*, rake, watering pot, digger, pail, flower cutting scissors, machete and twigs (Gardening Tools in Malay Schools, 1953). The wells, facilities were also provided to ease the students to water their crops in their school garden. Construction of wells saves pupils' time because before welled are built, the boys had to go to the nearby river to collect some water. Other than for watering the crops, the well also functioned as the source of clean drinking water for students (Wells for Malay Schools, 1931). There was also a garden competition held between the Malay schools and the competition has received good response among Malay students. Agriculture Department of Malacca had an organized garden competition at the school level in 1949. It involved Malay schools in Jasin District, where 20 schools participated and the scoring throughout the competition involved vary of vegetables, tidiness of the garden and the freshness of the vegetables (Vernacular School Gardens, 1949).

The British Colonial also provided the food aid in the school, which was given to the underprivileged Malay students. The foods served comprised of *pisang goreng* or *kuih-muih*. Usually, there was a local Malay woman assigned to give the foods to the students of the Malay schools in the morning. Some of the students were given the basic food aid such as milk, cocoa and biscuits by the Department of Medical and Health. In some areas like Negeri Sembilan, there were balanced food aid supplied to the pupils. About 5,706 from 40,677 pupils had received daily food aid in Negeri Sembilan. This food aid included rice, peanut, fish, vegetables and oil. Meanwhile, 16,811 pupils received cocoa, 4,447 pupils received milk scheme and 1,528 pupils were given biscuit supply. The provided food aid was aimed to ensure the fitness of the students, improved their understanding in the class and increased their attendance to the school (Annual Report on Education, 1949). Other than food aid, the British Colonial government also provided educational aid in the form of scholarship to the Malay students. After pupils at the Malay school managed successfully ended their study till standard V, the British gave them the opportunity to further their studies in English schools. The requisite to obtain the scholarship was passing the entrance examination to the English school, excellent

academic achievement in Malay schools, underprivileged students and students that lived far from the English school that they had to rent a house (Amended Rules for the award of scholarship, 1931). The scholarship given to the Malay children caused many of them aspired to finish their study at standard V excellently to change their family's life in the village. For the pupils who that managed to secure a place in the English school, they would be placed in Special Malay Class during their first year. The following was a list of pupils from Malay school who successfully entered the English school:

Table 2: Name, List of Malay Pupil Girls accepted to enter the Special Malay Class I in French Convent School in 1951

Name	School
Esah binti A. Aziz	Ayer Molek
Mariam binti Hj. Zainuddin	Durian Daun
Sa'adiah binti A. Kudus	Bukit Baru
Kalimah binti Ab. Kiam	Kelebang Besar
Samiah binti Hj. Md. Shah	Melaka Pindah
Che 'Dah binti Bachik	Durian Daun
Zainab binti Harun	Tangga Batu

Source: Special Malay Classes For 1951

Table 2 enlisted the Malay pupil girls who successfully entered the Special Malay Class with French Convent School in 1951. There were 7 girls accepted, including Mariam binti Hj. Zainuddin and Che 'Dah binti Bachik from Durian Daun Malay School, Esah binti A. Aziz from Ayer Molek Malay School, Sa'adiah binti A. Kudus from Bukit Baru Malay School, Kalimah binti Ab. Kiam from Kelebang Besar Malay School, Samiah binti Hj. Md. Shah from Melaka transferred to Malay School and Zainab binti Harun from Tangga Batu Malay School. Education in English schools is free if Malay children get help through Malay schools. The Malay school administration will propose the names of the Malay children who have completed their studies and graduated excellently to English school to be admitted to Special Malay Class. For the Malay parents who wished to send their children directly to the English school, they would be required to pay the fee about \$30 per year (Annual Report on Education, 1953).

Conclusion

In conclusion, In conclusion, the British Colonial wished the introduced education system and curriculum would make the Malay children become 'a bit smarter' from their parents. The graduates from the Malay school system gave them difficulty to fill the position in fulfilling the job opportunity in public service sector of the British Colonial government or private company owned by the British. The academic qualification for the Malay in the British Colonial era was only capable to produce workers like farmers and fishermen. Therefore, the awareness of education among the Malays began to emerge after the Second World War. The Malays began to send their children to study in the Malay school to secure a place for furthering their study to the next level such as to the English school. The education given to the Malay children enabled them to be more knowledgeable compared to their parents. The introduced subjects also helped the Malay children to get a better job to change their life in the village. The curriculum taught in the school also helped the Malay children to develop more of their skills in theoretically and practically.

Acknowledgement

This paper is a result of Post Graduates Student research under the TOP DOWN Grant sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education under the supervision of the Center for

Research and Innovation (Research Management & Innovation Centre, RMIC) Sultan Idris Education University, TOP DOWN Grant Research Code: 2016-0219-107-41.

Reference

- Abdul Aziz, Mat Ton. (1985). *Persekolahan Melayu 1945-1948: Satu Manifestasi Semangat Perjuangan Melayu*. In K. K. Lim, *Masyarakat Melayu Moden* (pp. 230-249). Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Penerbitan Universiti Malaya.
- Annual Report on Education 1887, Supplement to the Straits Settlements Government Gazette
- Annual Reports on Education 1937, Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States
- Annual Report on Education 1949, Federation of Malaya
- Annual Report on Education for 1952, Federation of Malaya
- Annual Report on Education For 1953, Federation of Malaya
- Barnes Report 1951, Report of The Committee on Malay Education Federation of Malaya
- EDUC. PHG. 180/1952, Furniture for Malay Schools
- EDUC. PHG. 357/1953, Gardening Tools in Malay Schools
- EDN (MISC) 37/1953, Malay School Libraries
- E.O.M. No. 269/1949, Vernacular School Gardens
- E.O.M. No. 255/1950, Repaire of Malay School Furniture
- E. O. M. No. 258/1950, Admission of Malay School Pupils into English Schools. Special Malay Classes For 1951
- Ghee, L. T. (1977). *Peasants and Their Agricultural Economy in Colonial Malaya 974-1941*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Ibrahim, Saad. (1977). *Pendidikan dan Politik di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Khairi, Ariffin, 2009, *Dasar Kolonial British Terhadap Pendidikan Melayu di Tanah Melayu 1900- 1957*, Tesis Ijazah Doktor Falsafah, Universiti Malaya.
- N. S. SEC.GENERAL 415/1931, Amended Rules for The Award of Scholarship to Malay Boys at English Schools in Perak, Selangor & Pahang
- Radcliffe, D. J., 1970, *Education and Cultural Change Among the Malays*, Tesis Doktor Falsafah, Universiti Winsconsin
- Ramlah, Adam. (1991). *Maktab Melayu Melaka 1900-1922*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- S.C. 2024/50, Wells for Malay Schools
- Solomon, J. S. (1989). *Perkembangan Pendidikan Dwibahasa Untuk Perpaduan National di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: IBS Buku Sdn. Bhd.
- Stevenson, R. (1975). *Cultivators and Administrator British Educational Policy towards the Malays 1875-1906*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Stockwell, A. J. (1982). The White Man's Burden and Brown Humanity: Colonialism and Ethnicity in British Malaya. *JMBRAS: Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 44-68.