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1. Preliminaries: Replying to us, multi authored papers, bibliographical details
2. Checklist for Reviewing the Typeset Proof (what to check)
3. Journal Standard Style (order of your paper and the standard style of the Journal)
4. Documenting your Corrections (how to document a request for corrections)

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An Overview of Early Malaysian Settlement in Relation to Education

Maheran Yaman

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An Overview of Early Malaysian Settlement in Relation to Education

Maheran Yaman, International Islamic University, Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract: In the context of Malaysia's demographic heritage from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, this research demonstrates the importance of Islamic beliefs to Malaysian educational philosophy. The description is based on official policy documents. The influence of colonials Western pedagogies on education are described.

Keywords: Malaysia, Education, Colonial.

Introduction

THE MAJORITY OF the present Malaysian population were immigrants from pluralist societies, during various historic periods. They replaced the indigenous people in the fertile areas and forced them back into the deep jungle (Winstedt, 1948; Wilson, 1967). At this earlier and undated period, the purpose of education is assumed to have been as preparation to survive and to aid people to live in harmony with nature (Winstedt, 1948). Heine-Geldern and Callenfels date the Malay migration from Asia at between 2500 and 1500 BC (in Winstedt, 1948). The Malays had become, by the present era, the largest Malaysian ethnic group, followed by the later immigrant Chinese, Indians and others. Malay tradition records the first settlement of the Peninsula as occurring in Palembang in Sumatra. According to Cox (2000), the original Malays spread to Sumatra and Borneo and formed the Minangkabau peoples in Sumatra, a distinctive, isolated cultural group. The Iban and some Malay-Dayaks who are also included in this coastal Malay group, arrived in Borneo prior to the spread of Islam in South East Asia. It appears that Kedah was the first Malay-settled kingdom in Malaysia (Winstedt, 1950).

Malay society is extremely complex, due to Malaysia's geography and its multicultural origins. Nicholas and Soong (1998) state that in certain parts of Malaysia, the ability to speak the mother tongue and *Bahasa Kebangsaan* is still uncommon. The indigenous peoples and their advocates accuse the national government of taking a regressive step when it signed into law the 1996 Education Act. Under this law, the right to learn one's ethnic language, national language, mother tongue or indigenous language, does not exist. Therefore, there was a call on the Malaysian government to amend the Education Act of 1996 to reflect the National Education Policy as originally stated in the Education Ordinance 1957, ensuring the use, teaching and development of the mother tongues of Malaysian ethnic communities (Nicholas and Soong, 1998). Similarly, the Education Act does not include environmental education, which is particularly significant from the viewpoint of indigenous traditions.

Hindu Influence in the 14th and 15th Century

The Indian civilisation of Southeast Asia was the civilisation of an elite and not that of the whole population. The elite beliefs and way of life are still not well documented. The development of Indianisation occurred right up until the Majapahit Empire, centred in Java, which ranged from Rajasa (1222 to 1227) to Bhre Tumapel (1447 to 1451) (Cox, 2000). Winstedt (1950) notes that inscriptions prove the presence of *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* Buddhists in 4th century Kedah. The states such as Perak, Pattani and Kelantan were also influenced in the early 14th century by Hindu Majapahit. Little is known of the education system and methods of the Hindu era. The earliest manuscripts of the Malay-Hindu period are from the 14th century, written in a Perso-Arabic alphabet. However, it can be assumed that a small literate class of scribes were educated in this period, as a number of Indian epics were translated into Javanese and Malay. The copies were produced in *Kawi* script before 1400 (Windstedt, 1950, p.139). The Javanese cycle of Panji tales were translated into Malay in mediaeval Malacca, in Kelantan, when knowledge of *Sanskrit* and the *Kawi* script had waned at the end of the 14th century (p.142). It is reasonable to assume that until the 14th century and the earlier 15th century the Peninsula of Malacca then consisted of a number of separate Hindu or Buddhist kingdoms with strong connections with Sumatra and Java (Winstedt, 1948; Bastin and Winks, 1966).

The Acheh, Bausani and Javanese literature all show links with Hindu culture (Cox, 2000). The oldest existing Indian community in Malacca is the *Cetis,* who are descended from a money-lending caste in India. At its peak around 1450, the Malay Sultanate stretched from Kedah in the north to the Riau islands in the south and included several territories on Sumatra. Malacca was linked by trade with the Mediterranean and Europe; with the Middle East (via Gujerat and the Red Sea ports); with India and with most parts of Southeast Asia and China (Kheng, 1998). The Indian population increased in the four main Sultanates of the Malay Peninsula (namely Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan), otherwise known as the Federated Malay States (FMS), by almost twenty fold, from 20,000 in 1891 to 380,000 in 1931 (Smith, 1952).

Early Islamic Influence from 13th to 15th Century

By 1281, Islam had made some progress in Sumatra at Malayu (Malaysia), as the Chinese used the Muslims, Sulaiman and Chamsuddin to Malayu as emissaries (Cox, 2000). Marco Polo described the inhabitants in Perlak in the north of Sumatra as idolaters who, due to the Saracen traders, converted to Islam in 1291 (Marsden, 1948). The spread of Islam (most likely from India) can be identified as occurring via island-like centres from the 13th century (refer to Figure 1.1). The first Malay ruler who embraced Islam in the region was Sultan Maliku Salleh of Pasai (Sumatra) (Winstedt, 1923).

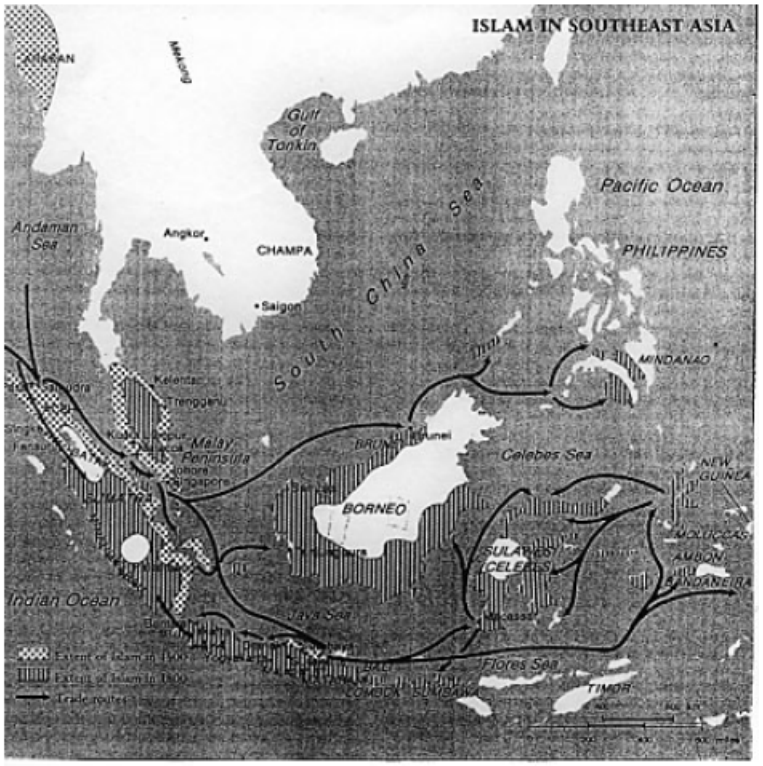

Figure 1.1: Map Showing How Islam Spread in South East Asia (Source: Johns, 1985, p.407)

Islamic Influence after 15th Century

By 1500 AD, the influence of Islam was limited to the North and East coast of Sumatra, southern Java and coastal areas of the Malay Peninsula (Cox, 2000). By the end of the 15th century it appears that most of the Malay kingdoms had converted to Islam, with Malacca as one of the first and most influential centres of the new religion, with its sizable and rich group of Tamil Muslim traders (Winstedt, 1923). The spread of Islam has an Arab source, but the spread of the religion on Malaysia is not directly related with the Arab countries. It appears that the early influence was from India, particularly from the west coast region, including Gujerat and Malabar (Drewes, 1985). The conversion to Islam brought with it the establishment of small Koranic schools, where most pupils learned by reciting parts of the Koran in Arabic and only a small minority became proficient in reading and writing. Conversion to Islam resulted in a number of Malay translations of Islamic jurisprudence and religious works. The first known Malay history work was the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), written in the 15th century in Malacca (Winstedt, 1948, p.130). There is some literary evidence of religious schools at the time, possibly run by Indian Muslims.

Drewes (1985) believes that the Southern Indian origin of Islam is the more correct historical hypothesis. This assumption is based on the presumed derivation of the title of the Malay religious teacher *lebai* (Winstedt, 1948, p.20) from the Tamil word *labbai* (written ilappai) and he considers it irrelevant whether this is interpreted from the South Indian Shafii Muslim sect called *labbai* centred at Nagore. It is difficult when reading from the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay History) to identify when exactly Islam began to play a role in South East Asia. It is roughly estimated that this occurred by either the 14th century in Pasai or the 15th century in Malacca (Cox, 2000). It shows, generally, that a predominantly Muslim upper class education was based on Islamic religious schools known as the *madrasa*.

The full history of Islam in Southeast Asia is still unexplored, apart from the history of the generation of trading centres at focal points in the archipelago (Winstedt, 1923). The urban history of the region is disparate and abrupt and the process and character of Islamisation is therefore of the same character. Lines of communication between urban centres in the archipelago cannot be taken for granted and it is not known whether the development of religious schools and centres of learning was consistent in Malacca, Aceh, Palembang, Banten, the port cities of North-East Java or Makassar. Each were autonomous and was open to the influence of a particular school of religious teachers (Cox, 2000).

Chinese Influence

Chinese trading and visits to the South-East Asian region may had begun in pre-historic times. Around 640 AD the *New History of the T'ang* mentions the first embassy of *Mo-Lo-Yu*. This refers to the country of *Malayu,* situated on the east coast of Sumatra in the region of Jambi. The pilgrim, I-Ching, stopped off there for a time in 671 AD and from his memoirs we know that between 689 and 692 Malaya (Malaysia) was absorbed by *Shih-li-fo-shoh* or *Srivijaya* (Winstedt, 1923, pp.126-127; 1950, p.37). I-Ching had travelled to India and had embarked from there to return to China and this contact with China extended also to the Arabs (Cox, 2000).

Evidence of the early introduction of Islam to China in 1657 AD is based on a *Mussulman* (Muslim) who held a position in The Astronomical Board at Peking. There are also Chinese records of Kedah in the 6th century, however, a stronger Chinese presence in the Peninsula can only be identified in the 15th century in Malacca, both in the *Malay Annals* and slightly later from Portuguese sources (Winstedt, 1923, p.132; 1948, p.18). According to Johns (1985), the oldest Chinese community in Malacca, is known as the *Baba and Nyonya*. Legend has it that their ancestors first arrived in Malacca on the ships of the Ming Admiral, Cheng Ho in the 1420s. They were given land for a settlement around Bukit China, where some intermarried with local Malays. The children from these mixed marriage are called *Baba* and *Nyonya* in Malacca or *Peranakan* (Kheng, 1998, p.9). The Chinese constituted (6%) of the population of Perak in 1901, where the tin mining area of Larut Valley is located (Means, 1970). Chinese immigration increased rapidly from the second half of the 19th century to the 1930s.

Early European Educational Influences in Malaysia

The first Portuguese arrived in Malacca in 1509 and had forcibly taken over the government of Malacca by 1511 (Winstedt, 1948). They governed for 130 years. The Portuguese had little contact with the interior of Peninsular Malacca (Bastin and Winks, 1966). They were, however, involved in a number of wars with the Acheh both in Malacca and in Sumatra (Winstedt, 1948). There were never many Portuguese in Malaya and their numbers in Malacca rarely exceeded 600 (Bastin and Winks, 1966). Missionary work started in 1545, with the arrival of Saint Francis Xavier. Malacca became the seat of a bishopric in 1558 and a cathedral and a state subsidised school were built. The Malay language was influenced not just by the Portuguese but, also by the Dutch and the English. The Portuguese influence persists today in the Malay language, which includes about 450 Portuguese words.

This view is supported by Bickmore, an American naturalist who sailed through the islands of Southeast Asia in the1860s. He took his lessons in Malay, the common language of the whole archipelago. The Chinese community leader was called *Kapitan Cina* by the Portuguese, a title that was continued by the Dutch and the British. It was probably during this period that the Malay language began to absorb foreign words, such as *sekolah* (Portuguese for school), *almari* (Portuguese for cupboard), *Feringgi* (which means Portuguese), *mandur* (Portuguese for overseer), *teko* (Chinese for kettle) and *cawan* (Chinese for cups) (Kheng, 1998, p.11).

The Portuguese Influence 1509 to 1640

Portuguese Schools

In 1532, the Confraria da Misericordia was founded in Malacca and the first European school on the Malay Peninsula was started by St. Francis Xavier (Leo, 2004) and was opened in 1548 as the Malacca

College (Winstedt, 1948). The teaching subjects included Latin and Portuguese. The school was open to both the Portuguese and the local children of Catholic converts. By the end of the first year, Fr. Francisco Peres wrote to Ignatius de Loyola that the school had 180 students. The subjects mentioned included Grammar and Latin. The school functioned in the morning and afternoon. At midday the boys were brought to the chapel at St. Paul's Hill, where they had religious instruction. In the afternoon the school re-opened for classes.

The school programme was developed to cope with the large number of students, as the capacity of the building was small. This practice of teaching in shifts is still used in Malaysian and Indonesian primary schools as a response to the climate and the large numbers of students and limited facilities. This school has survived to modern times as the College of St. Paul. It was the first boarding school, and a pioneer of all Christian missionary schools in Malaysia (Leo, 2004).

There is very little information in the literature published in English on the education system of the later Dutch colonial era in Malacca. As the College of St. Paul survived the Dutch period it can be assumed that the College and the private Koranic schools of the Portuguese period survived, although in a reduced scale in a town reduced in population from 20,000 to around 5,000 during the Dutch era, (described in the following section).

The Dutch Era 1641 to 1864

During the 17th and 18th century the Dutch settlers were the paramount European influence on the Malay Peninsula (Winstedt, 1923). However, after 1798, Malacca was reduced to a governor's province, as the Dutch ruled from Batavia in Java (Winstedt, 1948). In the Malay view, the Dutch were only interested in extracting profit from the land and they gave nothing in return, including education. There is a Malay proverb, *'seperti Belanda di beri tanah' (*translated as *'it's like giving land to a Dutchman*). It can be used to describe the Dutch attitude to educating Malays while being an occupier, for unlike British who contributed to education development during their occupation of Malaysia, the Dutch made no contribution to education.

British Influence

The Dutch had expelled the Portuguese from Malacca in 1641 and in 1795 were themselves replaced by the British, who had occupied Penang in 1786 (Gullick, 1981). In 1815, a proposal for a school on Prince of Wales Island was sent to the Governor and The Church Square was allocated for the school site. The plan for the school was based on Dr. Bell's ideas in Madras (Ung, 1989). Bell initiated monitor schools, better known as *Madras schools* in England, so-called after his experiments in Madras in 1808. Later, the method was applied in the *Lancasterian schoolrooms system*. The plan was divided into two rooms, with older students teaching younger students. Allocation of space for each student was six square feet (approximately 0.6 square metres). The architecture was plain with lime-whited walls and floor. The schoolrooms were furnished with long writing desks and benches. The space was left as open as possible for circulation (Seaborne, 1971). A day school for boys was opened in Penang in 1816 and the Penang Free School (the first English school) was born. The Chaplain was forbidden to undertake missionary work and was allowed to educate both in English and Malay (Gullick, 1981).

The Penang Free School was believed to have taught Malays in the Malay language in 1821 (Cheeseman, 1955). The term 'free' has nothing to do with payment or non-payment of fees but merely implies the freedom of learning for all and not just the *bumiputra* or the Malays (Gullick, 1981, p.33). The school provided education to male students who had not been to school previously, ranging from the age of six to nineteen. This was due to the new realisation of the importance of education among the Malay race (Cheeseman, 1955). In 1821, two schools for Tamils and Malays (offering instruction in their native languages) were opened within the school premises. The Tamil School continued until 1823 (Arasaratnam, 1979). Science was introduced into the school curriculum in 1923. In 1936, Science classes were started for Queen's Scholarship holders. For the first time an extension of the curriculum to include extra-curricular activities occurred at this time.

The physical education included gymnastic classes, volleyball, basketball, rugby and football. Swimming was introduced in 1936 and life saving was also taught. Penang Free School conformed to the Education Ordinance of 1957 and later the requirements of the National Education Policy of 31st August 1957. It became a national-type fully assisted secondary school, run by a newly constituted Board of Governors. No outdoor teaching was conducted, except for Physical Education and sports activities.

Early Education in the STRAITS Settlement

There were only missionary schools in the Straits Settlement (Penang, Malacca and Singapore) before the founding of the Singapore Institution in 1823. The Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca was founded in 1818 by the British Protestant Mission to China. The founders were missionaries such as the Chinese

scholar the Reverend Robert Morrison (Stevenson, 1975). The objective of the school was to promote Christianity, English and Chinese languages and literature. At its peak in 1834, there were seventy boys in the school (Begbie, 1967). Other 'free schools' were the Raffles College in Singapore (Singapore Institution) founded in 1823 (Winstedt, 1948, p.131) and the Malacca High School. Both were set up to produce local government staff and local school teachers (as with the Penang Free School) (Tregonning, 1969; Stevenson, 1975).

Earlier Portuguese and British Schools on the Malay Peninsula

Until the present day, the influence of Portuguese and British colonialists is seen in the building materials and the design of interior spaces of Malaysian classrooms. The use of clay bricks and cement render as finishes derived from Portuguese and British tradition, as did enclosed interior classrooms spaces. The Raffles College in Singapore and the Penang Free School (PFS) were both founded during British occupation in the early 19th century. They were designed to give an English type of education to the Malay leaders in the British administration. These educated Malays filled new positions as local magistrates, judges and superintendents of *Penghulu* (village elders) to help in the British administration. These local administrators mostly had an English language school education. The royals were also among the first to be convinced that a British type of education served their own interests in the increasingly English dominated region. Among them was Sultan Idris, a young Prince of Perak. In 1884, he visited London and was attracted to the British education system. When he came back in 1888, he set up a *Raja Class* (Royal Class) in the royal capital of Perak, Kuala Kangsar. A visiting British tutor taught the royals for a year (Andaya and Leonard, 1982).

This school was the base for the opening of the first government English school in Kuala Kangsar known as Clifford School in 1927. After the Perak royals, the Selangor royals requested another *Raja School* (Royal School) for their princes. In 1890, the Selangor *Raja School* was built with a tutor from Oxford, but it was closed in 1894. The Victoria Institution opened in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor in 1895 for those who were interested in study.

The formation of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896 united four states and created the Malayan Civil Services (MCS). In order to produce more educated Malays, a scholarship scheme was introduced which gave intelligent Malay children from vernacular (rural) schools the opportunity to become local teachers. The selected students went to the first-class English schools, such as the Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Taiping Central School in Perak (now King Edward VII School) and St. Paul's School in Negeri Sembilan (Andaya and Leonard, 1982).

In the 1890s, the problem of the lack of suitable local administrators remained. Additional scholarship schemes were initiated to educate both English and Malay boys in the Anglo-Malay Department, at Victoria Institution and in the Kelang Anglo-Chinese School, both in Selangor. At the second Durbar (Conference of Rulers) in Kuala Lumpur in 1903 there were 310,000 Malays, with 2,636 employed in government administration and 1,175 in the police force. R. J. Wilkinson (the Federal Inspector of Schools) established the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), popularly called the *Eton of the East* which opened in 1905. It followed the ideas of an English public boarding school but with an outward sense of Malay identity, such as the traditional costume as school uniform (*sarong, songkok* or head gear, *baju* or Malay shirt). One of the compulsory subjects was Koranic studies. Friday prayers and other Muslim events were held as holidays. The first graduates in 1910 were absorbed into the Malay Administrative service. MCKK was known as *Bab-ud-Darjat* or Gateway to High Rank.

R. J. Wilkinson also influenced the printing of Malay literature in *Rumi* (the Malay language in Latin characters) to make it more accessible than the older *Jawi* (Malay written in Arabic characters) (Andaya and Leonard, 1982).

In 1916, R. O. Winstedt became the Assistant Director of Education (Malays) and increased the standards of Malay vernacular education. He initiated the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) in 1922, (in Tanjung Malim, Perak), to teach the Malay teachers basic agricultural methods to be applied in villages. Middle class Malays of the SITC represented a different social hierarchy compared with the MCKK elite (Andaya and Leonard, 1982).

After the Second World War SITC became a focus of literary activity, such as the Malay Translation Bureau in 1924. The contribution of the bureau was to produce textbooks for Malay schools and the introduction of the Malay Library Service in 1929 (Andaya and Leonard, 1982). The students from the *madrasa* system of the Unfederated Malay States (UMS), especially Kelantan, continued their studies in MCKK, SITC, PFS and Malacca College from 1920 to 1930 (Andaya and Leonard, 1982).

Summary

In brief, Malaysia's education history has a rich background. However, the current situation, does not seem to reflect this history. It can be concluded

that the history of education up to present day Malaysia is varied. For example, Malay education was strongly influenced by Koranic teachings, which later extended to secular subjects. The village *pondok* schools, because of their rural locations and the nature of the native buildings, may have had fairly strong, although non-deliberate, connections with the surrounding natural environment. The independent religious schools (*madrasa)* took a more suitable approach to school architecture in tropical climate; for example *pondok* teaching which used a more culturally appropriate pedagogy such as *halaqah* (circle or grouping). This kind of focus on working in small groups within a class is mirrored by current Western pedagogy. The small group teaching allows teachers to function as facilitators, rather than instructors. A synthesis of Western and Eastern teaching styles would support new arrangements of classroom space, necessitating change away from a regimented seating arrangement, which is the standard approach at present in Malaysian primary schools.

There are elements of Islamic, Chinese and Tamil school education in the present school system of Malaysia. However, school architecture mostly still follows European architectural trends and construction techniques of the 19th century. The simple building traditions of most native Malay *pondok* schools of the past, using local materials, have yet to find their place in contemporary school architecture and pedagogies, although several other countries such as Australia, Pakistan and India are moving in this direction.

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About the Author

Asst. Prof. Dr. Maheran Yaman
An academia in landscape architecture reside in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Teaching in a 20 years old university consists of 100 international nations. Currently, involved in self sustained development for disabled in local village, using herbs as therapy and economic return. Also, is on an on-going research about colonial landscape archeology back home in Malaysia. A research member too with Kyoto University under JSPS undergoing a research about Mangrove.

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