

Recovery of Muslims' Past & the Others

Islamic Perspective of History

Edited by

Ataullah Bogdan Kopanski



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CHAPTER 5

THE VESTIGES OF EUROPEAN COLONIAL HERALDRY IN MALAYSIA

Noordalela bint Baharuddin

Presence of the European heraldry in the Malay lands is a direct result of the colonial invasions inaugurated by the Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1511 CE/917 AH. Coat-of-arms of Europeans other than Portuguese, Dutch and British are almost non-existent in Malaysia. The influence of Portuguese heraldry on the Malay decorative art and vexillia (flags) is extremely rare. Today, the Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial arms in the Malay Peninsula and North Borneo survived only as the archeological relics on historical monuments or as illustrations in the old books, documents, letters, private stationary, exlibrises, and on the pre-independence seals. The Dutch coat-of-arms survived only in archival documents, on the seventeenth and eighteenth century old maps and as rare archeological material. Definitely, the Dutch heraldry is much better preserved (or imitated) in the former colonial Dutch colonies of the 'East India', i.e. in the modern Indonesia than in Malaysia.

In the independent Malaysia, the British heraldry and vexillia are purely relics of the colonial past preserved in archives, museums and on historical buildings. But it is also a 'living tradition' in forms of accepted or imitated symbols, patterns and badges. Surprisingly, the American vexillia profoundly influenced the Malaysian post-*merdeka*