CHAPTER 6: BRITISH’S RESPONSE TO THE ROLES OF THE HADHRAMI ARABS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the British’s response towards the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in Malaya, particularly on the roles played by Hadhrami Arabs in religion, publication, politics and administration, and economics. Since the coming of the British to Malaya in the 18th century, many things have changed; the British did not only control the economic resources of Malaya, but also the administration. These changes indirectly threatened the authority of sultans over the control of politics, economy and administration of the Malay states. The last quarter of the 19th century had witnessed drastic changes in the Malay states administration, such as the expansion of British influence in Malaya. The Pangkor Treaty signed in 1874 was the beginning of British direct rule in the country. This treaty left a big impact on the administrative, political and social structure of Malaya and indirectly separated the functions and role of religion from politics, economics and administration in Malaya. In fact, the British unobtrusively tried to marginalize and paralyse the role of Islam as a way of life for the Malays in Malaya.

The involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in the Malay states’ politics and administration was also discreetly monitored by the British agents. The British were in the opinion that the Hadhrami Arabs have a considerable influence in Malaya as many of them held important positions in the country such as mufti, qādī, chieftain or penghulu as well as state officials. Furthermore, the Hadhrami Arabs also had close connections with the Malay rulers, as well as being well-regarded by the people in the society. The British always observe the Malays’ political movements and activities that could politically and administratively threaten their interest in Malaya. Through their residents and advisers, the British also kept an eye on the Hadhrami Arabs’ activities in
Malaya to control foreign influences such as pan-Islam and reform movements that had emerged in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt since the late 19th century. This situation further added to the British’s apprehension towards the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya. In this respect, this chapter tries to examine the British’s response towards the roles played by the Hadhrami Arabs and their involvement in the administration of religion, madrasah education, publication, politics and administration, and economics in the Malay states. This chapter will also chronicle some observations on the Hadhrami Arab-British relations in the 19th and 20th century Malaya.

**Religious Influence**

The British colonial records contain abundant information about the country that contributed to modern Malaysia historiography. However, when it comes to the subject of religion, nothing much was said about Islam. The British through the Pangkor Treaty agreed not to interfere in the matters related to religion and Malay customs. This treaty also led to the decline of the roles of the Malay Sultans into solely becoming the head of Islam and its religious affairs in their respective states. However, it seemed that the agreement was not followed by the British as they will not let matters related to religion stay as it is. Instead, they monitored the religious activities of the Malays through the Malay Sultans by introducing enactments and regulations issued to restrict the involvement of the Malays in religious activities that had the potential to threaten the British administration in Malaya.²

In general, the Arabs had a considerable influence in Malaya, particularly in religion where the Malays respectably looked upon them. This is especially for the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent. In addition to that, they were also perceived by Malays as noble ancestry from the lineage of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. The Malays

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1 The treaty was signed and executed by the sultan and chiefs of Perak before the Governor of the Straits Settlements in January 1874 which had resulted in the intervention of British Colonial rule in Malaya. 2 1957/0432/092, MISC 5530-1904, ANM (KL). 50 copies of translation of Mohamedan Laws Enactment into Arabic Malay, Aturan Undang-undang akan Menetapkan Hukuman atas Kesalahan Orang-orang Islam, under section 9 (B).
gave the Arabs, particularly the Hadhrami Arab religious scholars substantial respect derived from their feelings of gratitude towards the latter’s contribution in the Islamisation of the Malays in Malaya. Apart from that, the Hadhrami Arabs also enjoyed respect due to their commitment and sincerity in bringing about social change in the Malay community as well as well adapting to the Malay customs and way of life.³

The early Hadhrami Arabs to Malaya were mostly learned men. The Hadhrami Arabs played prominent religious, social, political, and economic roles in the life of the Malays. They also held religious positions such as mufti, qādī, and religious teachers or ustaz. They had high interest in Islam and had engaged in religious activities. Therefore, they emerged as the religious authorities in the Malay states. Famous Hadhrami Arab religious scholars like Sayyid Muhammad Zainal Abidin Al-Idrus, Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Sayyid Muhamad Al-Idrus, and Sayyid Alwi Tahir Al-Haddad were among the Hadhrami Arabs who contributed to the religious institution in Malaya during their time. However, the high positions secured by the Hadhrami Arab religious scholars and Arabs in general in the Malay states were perceived with suspicion by the British.⁴

Among the earliest perception of the British towards the Arabs in Malaya was expressed by Stamford Raffles in his report that was full of prejudice towards the Arabs, which is most probably due to his hatred and envy towards the former’s achievement and influence in Malaya religiously, economically, administratively, and politically. Raffles had indirectly identified these Arabs as descendants of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W and he refers to the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent on their inter-island trade activities in the Malay Archipelago. This inter-island trade were conducted by the Arabs who held religious titles of Syaikh (sheikh) and Sayyid (seyyad). Raffles also said that the Hadhrami Arabs took advantage of the Malays in Malaya and alleged that the

⁴ Ibid.
Hadhramis exploited religion as an excuse to reach out to the community from which they gain religious and political prestige and status in the society.

“…the Arabs who frequent to the Malay countries, and under the specious mask of religion, prey on the simple unsuspicious native. The Chinese must, at all events, be admitted to be industrious; but the Arabs are mere drones, useless and idle consumers of the produce of the ground, affecting to be descendants of the Prophet, and the most eminent of his followers, when in reality they are nothing more than manumitted slaves; they worm themselves into the favour of the Malay chiefs, and often procure the highest offices in the Malay states. They hold like robbers the offices they obtain as sycophants, and cover all with the sanctimonious veil of religious hypocrisy. Under the pretext of instructing the Malays in the principle of the Mohammedan religion, they inculcate the most intolerant bigotry, and render them incapable of receiving any species of useful knowledge. It is seldom that the East is visited by Arabian merchants of large capital, but there are numerous adventurers who carry on a coasting trade from port to port, and by asserting the religious titles of Sheikhs and Seyyad claim, and generally obtain, an exemption from all port duties in the Malay states”.

Despite their small number and claim as descendants of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., the Hadhrami Arabs have a considerable influence in Malaya where some of them engage in the administration as well as politics of the Malay states. In fact, the feeling of prejudice towards the Arabs had already rooted among the British since the late 18th century when Francis Light took possession of the Penang Island in 1786. In his dealings with the Arabs, Francis Light regarded them as “good friends and dangerous enemies”. The British befriend with Arabs for business purposes while at the same time take precaution with the Arabs who were considered as their enemy. Meanwhile, in 1822, Raffles had included a special area for the Arab settlement in his Singapore town plan in which he said that, “…The Arab population will require every consideration.”

The close relations built between the Malay rulers and the Hadhrami Arabs saw many of them being employed and appointed into high positions. The Hadhrami Arabs

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7 Ibid., p. 164.
in Malaya, in particular the Sadah were respected people in Malaya. Their credibility in
Islam earned them social prestige in the Malay society. The early Hadhrami Arab
migrants in the 19th century had good relationships with the ruling class and aristocrats
in the Malay states. The British administration in Malaya took a subtle approach when
dealing with the Hadhrami Arabs as many of them were respected scholars and figures
in the society. They also had substantial influence in the Malay states’ administration
and politics. The British worried that the Arabs would use their religious and political
influence in arousing the Malays against the British administration in Malaya. Viewing
the possibility of such a threat, the British took precautionary steps in dealing with the
Arabs, in particular the Hadhrami Arabs.

It is undeniable that the British intervention in Malaya brought big changes to
the Malay states’ administration. The British, with their own agenda planned to
establish a centralized control over the Malay states through a new government under
the Residential scheme system in order to monitor and have direct rule over Malaya.
Although it is stated in the Pangkor Treaty in article VI that the British officer or
resident will not interfere or touch on issues related to Malay religion and customs, the
reality was different as the residents still had some control over other affairs of the
Malays.

“… whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all questions other
than those touching Malay religion and custom”.§

Based on the above statement, it is clearly stated that the British took control
over the Malay states’ affairs through the so called adviser or Resident post in the
Malay states. The British in one way or another tried to separate between the role and
function of religion from other aspects of life including social, economy, politics and

§ Emily Sadka, “The State Councils in Perak and Selangor, 1877-1895” in K. G. Tregonning (ed.), Papers on Malayan History,
paper presented at the International Conference of South East Asian Historians, Singapore : Journal South East Asian History, 1962,
p. 90.
administration. However, the roles played by the residents had gone beyond expectations when they gradually managed to influence the sultans and Malay rulers. The British managed to play their roles in controlling the Malay rulers’ decision-making in matters related to the administration, economy and politics of the Malay states. They even interfered in matters related to religion. The British took a cautious approach when dealing with sultans in matters related to religion in order not to arouse the latter’s wrath and dissatisfaction.

However, towards the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, there were active religious and reform movements in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt pioneered by Jamaluddin Al-Afghami and his followers such as Muhammad Aduh and Rashid Ridha. This movement was also closely monitored by the British Malaya as they expected that the Malays would also be influenced by the movement, especially through Malay students who studied in Egypt. As a result, an enactment was introduced by the British in 1904 under section 9 (b) of the Mohammedan Laws Enactment which aimed to limit and control the influx of reform and pan-Islam ideas prevalent among the Malays. This pan-Islamic movement was a threat to the British administration in Malaya. The British also managed to get consent from the Malay Rulers to prevent activities of spreading or printing materials related to religion and politics in Malaya that do not have the consent or written permission from the Sultans. The person who engaged in such illegal activity would be fined $25.⁹

Influenced by the reforms and religious movements in Egypt, Malay students then spread the ideas to Malaya, which later on triggered the spirit of reform, pan-Islam, and nationalism in the country. Early 20th century Malaya also witnessed the emergence of Kaum Muda or the young reformists group mostly consisted of those who received religious education from the Middle East. This period also saw strife and contention

between traditional 'ulama' and Kaum Muda in matters related to religion and adat practices. The members of Kaum Muda were such as Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin (b.1869), Haji Abbas Taha (b.1885) and Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad Al-Hadi (b. 1867). Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi and his contemporaries were among the Islah figures who worked hard to do reform, including religious reform in the Malay society through publication of newspapers and magazines such as Al-Imam, Al-Ikhwan and Saudara.\(^\text{10}\)

Looking at the development of religious and reform movements in Malaya in the early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century was enough to give the impression to the British about the potential of this movement to grow further in the country. The differences between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua or traditional 'ulama' in issues related to religious doctrine and rituals was harnessed by the British as an opportunity to gain the support of the Malay rulers as well as traditional religious scholars in their effort to curb and bring down Kaum Muda activities. The Kaum Muda had caused a major stir in the country which encouraged the British to take action by amending the Muhammedan Laws Enactment of 1904 in 1925. This time the fine was increased from $25 to $200 or imprisonment and was applied to anyone who prints or publishes materials related to Islam without prior permission from the Sultan in the Council.\(^\text{11}\)

The amendment of the Muhammedan Enactment Laws of 1925 shows that the British were concerned and worried about the religious movement pioneered by the young reformists, among them was Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi and his comrades who vocally criticized the government as well as the traditional elites regarding religious matters. The Kaum Muda also openly attacked the traditional 'ulama' through articles and writings published in reformist newspapers and magazines. Those traditional 'ulama' who stuck to absurd adat practices and resisted were seen as obstacles to Malay progress. The young reformists also criticized traditional Malay elites such as the Malay


rulers and the dignitaries who were more concerned about their interests rather than the people or rakyat, as well as their failure to handle issues related to the Malays and Islam.\(^{12}\)

Moreover, the British got the upper hand in monitoring Malay affairs concerning religion as well as politics since they have control over the Malay sultans and rulers through Residents and advisers. This situation made it difficult for the Kaum Muda to disseminate religious thoughts of pan-Islam and to do reform in the Malay states. Nevertheless, the obstacles faced by the Kaum Muda did not stop them from continuing with the reform agenda as they moved their activities to the Straits Settlement of Singapore and Penang.\(^{13}\)

**Publication Activities**

The growth of the publishing industry in Malaya in the early decades of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century is also credited to the development of reform and religious movements in the Middle East. The emergence of the Kaum Muda in Malaya was pioneered by religious scholars and those who were influenced by the reform movements in Egypt. These young reformists took up the challenge to do reform in Malaya. The British had anticipated that this movement will spread in Malaya, and therefore had taken preliminary steps by introducing the Enactment of Mohammedan Laws in 1904 in order to control the printing and spreading of materials related to Islam in Malaya that do not have permission from the Sultans. Even so, this enactment was not so effective in the Straits Settlement, particularly in Singapore and Penang compared to the Malay states where the Religious Council is under the authority of the Malay rulers. This restriction did not hinder the young reformists who were persistent in continuing with the agenda of religious and reform movement in Malaya. As a result, publishing activities initiated by

\(^{12}\) Ibid., pp. 176-7.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
the young reformists or *Kaum Muda* as well as publications by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya were published in Singapore and Penang.\textsuperscript{14}

The emergence of *Al-Manar* as a response to government policies in Egypt had triggered the spirit of reform and nationalism among the Malay students who studied in the Straits Settlement. Inspired by the reform movement pioneered by Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and his followers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha in Egypt, several young reformists such as Syaikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Haji Muhammad Abbas Taha, Syaikh Muhammad Salim Al-Kalali, Sayyid Muhammad Aqil, and Syaikh Sayyid Al-Hadi published *Al-Imam*, the first reformist journal in Malaya in 1906. *Al-Imam* provided information about the outside world as well as relevant information on issues and events in the Muslim world. It was also aimed to awaken the Malays and to remind them of their condition and backwardness in the society compared to other races in Malaya.\textsuperscript{15}

The involvement of Hadhrami Arabs in the publication of newspapers and magazines in Malaya was closely monitored by the British authorities in the country to check on the journals’ contents as well as their involvement in the politics of Malaya. Apart from *Al-Imam*, there were several reformist newspapers and magazines published by the Hadhrami Arabs in British Malaya, such as *Al-Ikhwan*, *Saudara*, and *Warta Malaya*. These newspapers and magazines were either owned, sponsored or managed by the Hadhrami Arabs who were among the most influential figures in Malaya. Sayyid Syaikh al-Hadi, Sayyid Hassan al-Attas, Sayyid Alwi b. Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi, and Sayyid Hussein Ali al-Saqqaf were among the Hadhrami Arab individuals who were involved in the publication of newspapers and magazines in Malaya.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} William R. Roff, “*Kaum-Muda – Kaum Tua...*, p. 178. See also Ahmat Adam, *Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah Melayu Abad kesembilan Belas*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1992, pp. 32-5. See footnote no. 32. The author mentions about the printing laws in Malaya particularly in the Straits Settlements and in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) that introduced by the colonials aimed at curbing seditious publications.
\textsuperscript{16} Please refer to chapter three on the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in publishing industry in Malaya, and the newspapers published by them.
In 1925, an amendment was made to the old enactment of Mohammedan Laws of 1904 regarding the printing and circulation of materials related to Islam with a stricter fine up to $200 or imprisonment to those who did not abide to the regulation. The enactment that was once introduced by the British to monitor the progress of religion and Islamic movement of the Malays in Malaya was also one of the ways to keep an eye on the local publications in Malaya and to check on the nature of these publications (if they are on the government side (British) or anti-government). There are cases where articles or writings were rejected from being published due to their content that were reformist in nature. For example, three works by Ahmad bin Muhammad Ali were refused permission for publication by the religious authorities of Perak due to their reformist contents. Even Za'aba (Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad) was approached by a British resident asking him to withdraw the circulation of a book titled *Umbi Kemajuan* (The Roots of Progress) that is a collection of articles translated from the *Islamic Review* in Penang in 1932. He was also asked to apologise to the Sultan.  

The British authorities in Malaya even proposed a legislation to ban all ‘new styles’ of import newspapers and journals perceived by the British as a threat to the peace and political stability of the Malay states. There was a meeting held to discuss issues related to the “questions of prohibiting the importation into the Federated Malay States of ‘papers debating the Muhammedan religion’...”. However, the proposed legislation was rejected by the Conference of Residents. Illegal publications or publications that did not get the consent of the sultan and his advisers were addressed under the Seditious Publications (Prohibition) Enactment of 1919.

“...no amendment to the Muhammedan Laws Enactment [which, inter alia, provided penalties for the publication within the states of Islamic writings not formally approved by the Sultan and his advisers] is required, but that in any particular case action may be taken under the Seditious Publications (Prohibition) Enactment, 1919”.  

17 William R. Roff, “Kaum-Muda – Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction amongst the Malays, 1900-1941”, p. 178. At that time, Za'aba was a government staff at the Malay Translation Bureau at the Malay Teachers Training College, Tanjung Malim, Perak. Refer to footnote 51.
In some cases, the publications of journals by *Kaum Muda* or the young reformists were also rejected and prohibited from being circulated in certain states such as in Kelantan.\(^{19}\) *Pengasoh* (1918 – 1937), a periodical published in Kelantan by the Council of Religious and Malay Customs of Kelantan also attacked *Kaum Muda*’s views and regarded them as nonreligious. It was hard for *Kaum Muda* to spread reformist ideas in Malaya through the administration of religion in the Malay states because the religious councils are under the control of the Malay Rulers and traditional ‘*ulama*’. Therefore, the *Kaum Muda* took the initiative by establishing religious schools known as *madrasah*.\(^{20}\)

The *madrasah* also has elements of the Egyptian system of education. Yet, the *Kaum Tua* or the traditional ‘*ulama*’ never agreed with *Kaum Muda*. The *Kaum Tua* had a strong influence in Malaya as they were backed up by the Malay aristocracy and most of the time received administrative support from the British who were also concerned about the *Kaum Muda* activities in Malaya. Constant surveillance is conducted to monitor the *Kaum Muda* activities coupled with the introduction of an enactment to regulate their reformist ideas from spreading in the country.\(^{21}\) In fact, apart from being labelled as *Kaum Muda* by the traditional ‘*ulama*’ or *Kaum Tua*, the term *Kaum Muda* refers not only to this reformist group, but was also associated with the Young Turks in Turkey whose policies and approaches were viewed as deviating from the real teachings of Islam. This labelling was also intended to undermine the struggle of the *Kaum Muda* as well as to damage their reputation in Malaya.\(^{22}\)

The development of the publishing industry in Malaya, particularly reformist newspapers and magazines as well as the secular and religious schools (*madrasah*)

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19 This issue is also highlighted in *Al-Ikhwan*, 3, No. 7, 16 March 1929, pp. 215-220.
driven by the *Islah* or religious reform and the rise of nationalism in Malaya sparked a political consciousness among the Malays. According to Ahmat Adam, this awareness was also triggered by the economic and socio-political situation of the Malays who were left behind compared to other ethnic groups at that time.\(^{23}\)

The British continued to dominate printed media in Malaya, particularly when the First World War broke out in 1914. Following the declaration of war, a *fatwa* was issued by Syaikh al-Islam, Khayri Affendi in November 1914 to launch *Jihad* against Great Britain, France, Russia and its allies.\(^{24}\) The proclamation of *jihad* alarmed and concerned the British because the Malays in general respect and look up to the Turkish Government as a patron of the Muslims and Islam.\(^{25}\) Therefore, in order to control the dissemination of information of the *fatwa* as well as news regarding the war, particularly on the issue of Turkey and its efforts to rally support from Muslims from around the world, the British took immediate action by issuing an enactment through the Federated Malay States Government Gazette on 21\(^{st}\) November 1914. This enactment forbids the spread of news related to the war that is not in the British’s favour. Through the enactment, the British were given the authority to censor news reports of the war.\(^{26}\)

**Economic Involvement**

It is undeniable that the Hadhrami Arabs and Arabs in general were among the influential figures in the economy of Malaya in the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) century. They had trade contacts in the Malay World as well as in the Middle East. The Hadhrami Arabs were reported to be among the richest Arab individuals in Malaya. They owned vast properties in Singapore such as houses, shop outlets and lands. The Hadhrami Arab

\(^{25}\) “Memorandum on Indian Moslems,” Mark Sykes to A.H. Grant, Secretary to the Government of India in Foreign and Political Department, Simla, 1912, p. 2, L/PS/10/524 (Oriental and India Office Collection).
elites benefited from the world economic slump in the 1920s to 1930s that hit the country by buying assets such as lands, houses and shop houses at low prices. According to Lee Warner who was quoted in Ingrams, he mentioned that the “...whole streets in Singapore and Penang are owned by wealthy Hadhramis, mainly of the Kathiri tribes”.

J. A. E Morley explains how the Hadhrami Arabs managed to acquire a lot of property in Singapore, apart from the profits gathered from trade activities and also through their money-lending business. Normally, a borrower who wanted to take a loan had to deposit valuables such as a house, land or jewellery as collateral. However, sometimes, the borrower is not able to pay on time or did not have money to pay back the borrowed amount, resulting in the loss of the deposited articles, or collateral. In fact, the Hadhrami Arabs contributed tremendously in the economic development of Malaya, particularly in Singapore and competed with other races such as the Chinese, Indians and other foreign businessmen.

Despite Raffles’ first impression about the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya which sounded negative, he however came to realise that the Hadhrami Arabs’ presence in trade activities was crucially vital. Raffles then changed his approach towards the Hadhrami Arabs upon realizing the positive side of the Arabs which can benefit the British in the long run. Raffles realized that the Arabs did not only have the ability and skills in conducting trade, but also played important roles in inter-island trades in the Malayan waters as well as having good relations with the Malay rulers. This perception led Raffles to consider the involvement of the Hadhrami Arabs in his plan to develop Singapore as a trading post in the region.

“Let the Chinese and Arabs still trade to the eastward. Without them, the trade would be reduced to less than one third of even what it is at present; but let their trade be regulated…”

Apart from trading spices, textiles, commodities and services, the Hadhrami Arabs also indulged in the pilgrimage business by providing services as syaikh haji or hajj broker as well as providing facilities in terms of accommodation and also transportation from Malaya to Hijaz to hajj pilgrims. Some of them were involved directly in the conduct of hajj as mutawwif and syaikh broker or hajj broker. Sayyid Mohammad Al-SAqqaf was among the Hadhrami Arabs in Singapore who was involved in the profitable hajj business in Malaya. Sayyid Ahmad b. ‘Abd Rahman al-Saqqaf acquired more steamships to meet the demand of the pilgrimage business through his Singapore Steamship Company that was established since 1871. The company ferried around 3,476 potential hajj pilgrims to Jeddah in four steamships in 1874. It was reported that the Al-SAqqaf firm had ceased operating steamships before 1914, but they still operate as a pilgrim agency in 1940 with a branch in Jeddah. According to Aiza Maslan, around the 1950s, the Al-Saqaff family still had a monopoly of the hajj activity from Malaya as syaikh haji or hajj broker. Sayyid Ibrahim al-Saqqaf reported running this business based in Singapore, while Syaikh Ahmad Masyhor ran the business in Penang.

William R. Roff further adds that the task as syaikh haji or syaikh broker certainly fitted the Arabs or Hadhrami Arabs who were familiar with the Malay culture and ways of life as well as understanding their spoken languages. This is important to handle the potential hajj pilgrims from Malaya. What was important is that the syaikh

29 Ibid., p. 163.
31 Ibid., pp. 300-1.
hajj and brokers have experience and contact in Hejaz. Most of these broker hajj were based in Singapore and Penang, but they move all over Malaya as well as in the neighbouring countries looking for potential pilgrims.33

The British maintained good contact with the Hadhrami Arab elites in Malaya. In the beginning, the British seem to not have direct interference in matters related to hajj. The British however handled this matter positively as it was seen as a means of generating economic resources. In fact, it was a lucrative business not only to Hadhrami Arabs, but also to the British themselves. The British also had shares in the pilgrim industry which involved the transportation of potential pilgrims to Hijaz using their shipping company. The Blue Funnel Line belonging to the Ocean Steam Navigation Company was among the steamers which transported the Malay and Indonesian Muslims to and from Jeddah during the hajj season.34

Although the travel period from Malaya to Jeddah by steamship was shortened to between thirteen to seventeen days compared to sailing on a regular ship that took about three to six months (depending on the weather), the conditions on board the steamship was not pilgrim-friendly. The ship was overcrowded with pilgrims and the ships themselves were filthy. The ship did not only carry pilgrims but also merchandise as well as the pilgrims’ belongings. It was evident that the shipping company also hoped to gain some profit from the journey by carrying tradeable merchandise. These were among the reasons which attracted British’s concern for the Malay pilgrims, eventually leading to their involvement in the Malay pilgrimage to Makkah.35

The British administration in Malaya could not just ignore the problems faced by the Malay pilgrims in performing their religious duties, as the conduct of hajj is a

34 GA 602/27, National Archive Malaysia, Johor Bahru Branch, No. 2 in HCO 1069/27, Secretary to High Commissioner to General Adviser Johore; enclosure Report of 1926/27 Pilgrimage by Haji Abdul Majid Zainuddin, the Malay Pilgrimage Officer, September 1927, p. 1.
profitable business for the British as well. In order to guarantee continuous income from this business, the British began to introduce legislation and regulations in the Straits Settlement and the Malay states on matters related to shipping conditions and the welfare of pilgrims at the beginning of the 1890s.\textsuperscript{36} These regulations were important in order to improve and facilitate the \textit{hajj} activity and to ensure that the pilgrims’ welfare were taken care of to avoid epidemics and death. An arrangement was made between the British authorities and the Government of India regarding a hospital in Jeddah to cater to pilgrims from the British colonies during the \textit{hajj} season.\textsuperscript{37}

In relation to the influence of returning \textit{hajis} from Hijaz who were believed to be exposed to the political development in the Muslim World through their contact with Muslims from other countries in Makkah, some of them were thought to be involved in several conflicts and uprisings in Kelantan (1915), Terengganu (1928), and Pahang (1892). However, there is no strong evidence that could prove that these \textit{hajis} were exposed to ‘external’ influence while they were in Hijaz. Furthermore, by looking at the frequency of the disturbances and uprisings that occurred in the country, it is impossible to say that these \textit{hajis} were the main reason for the outbreak of these incidents.\textsuperscript{38} It is also said that the Hadhrami Arabs also played a role in the Terengganu Uprising in 1928 when Sayyid Saqqaf or Saggap was reported among the suspects in this incident.\textsuperscript{39}

However, Roff believes that there is a possibility for the Malay pilgrims to get information about the growing anti-colonial and pan-Islamic movement in other Muslim countries during their stay in Hijaz. Roff further says that through contact with Indonesian pilgrims, their Malay speaking-\textit{mutawwif}, mosque teachers or \textit{syaiikh}, the Malay pilgrims had definitely heard of or were exposed to Islamic modernist and reform ideas as well as feelings of dissatisfaction of their fellow Muslims whose countries were

\textsuperscript{36} William R. Roff, “The Conduct of the Hajj from Malaya, and the First Malay Pilgrimage Officer”, SARI, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, occasional paper, No. 1, 1975, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{37} CO 273/505. Inter Departmental Pilgrimage Quarantine Committee, Minutes of Meeting held at the Foreign Office, Wednesday, June 30, 1920.
colonized by the west. They might have also been introduced to the western ideas of democracy and self-government.\textsuperscript{40}

In fact, there was no major problem caused by potential or returning \emph{hajis} that could arouse British suspicion upon them. This could be the reason why the British adopted a tolerant policy on the \emph{hajj} activity involving the Malays, unlike the Muslims from Indonesia that were restricted from performing \emph{hajj} by the Dutch East Indies government.\textsuperscript{41} Although there were policies introduced by British Malaya regarding the \emph{hajj} activity, yet these policies did not burden the Malay pilgrims. It seems like the British tried to avoid conflict and also facilitated the Malays for their \emph{hajj} activities. This impression was important to the British, particularly during the critical period when the British and its allies were at war with the Turks in order to show that the British in Malaya are not anti-Islam. In fact, there is a hidden agenda behind the delicate and tolerant approach applied by the British towards the Malays’ conduct of \emph{hajj} in Malaya.

“Such a delicate policy on the Malay Conduct of Hajj was pursued by the British because they viewed it as important for governing the population, and it was always their priority to protect, as far as the protection lay within their power, the interests, religious and material, of those of their subjects who wanted to perform the religious obligation”.\textsuperscript{42}

The concern shown by the British towards the Malay affairs, especially on pilgrimage and other matters related to it was merely to protect the British’s interest in this industry as well as to monitor and control any political activities involving the Malays that could connect them with the outside world of Malaya. Such assistance would also boost their credibility and image in order to gain the trust and support of the Malays. They tried their best not to create awkward situations and prejudice that would


\textsuperscript{41} For further discussion on the restrictions imposed by the Netherlands East Indies on the Indonesian pilgrims, see Deliar Noer, \textit{Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942}, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 25-26.

\textsuperscript{42} Mohammad Redzuan Othman, The Middle Eastern Influence, p. 292.
affect their administration in the Malay states. However, on the British part, this issue did not stop there. The British also instructed the District Officers to keep an eye on the activities of the *hajis*. Through British observation, in particular in the 1920s, the *hajis* were also regarded as a potential threat to the British colonial rule in Malaya. As a result, the position of pilgrimage officer was established with Abdul Majid Zainuddin appointed as the first Malay Pilgrimage Officer. He was responsible to look after the Malay pilgrims’ welfare during their stay in Hijaz for the *hajj* season. Apart from that, Abdul Majid was also required to report to the British authorities any suspicious political activities that could harm the British interests in Hijaz and Malaya during the *hajj* season.

An extract from a political section of the Abdul Majid’s report on the Malay pilgrims’ activities was published in the Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence in the November issue of 1923. However, the report was credited to an anonymous Malay intelligence agent. It could be observed that from his report, not a single Malay pilgrim talked about politics or discussed issues related to current political affairs as they were rather busy memorising rituals and were very much engaged and focused on the pilgrimage. Abdul Majid also stressed that not a single attempt was made in the city of Makkah to spread any political propaganda among the pilgrims, either from the outside or through local influence. Also, no literature of political nature was available in the city because the security of Makkah by the order of Sharif Husayn had imposed censorship on written materials entering the country. This is because the city of Makkah has high potential to become a breeding ground as Muslims from all over the world meet every year to perform *hajj* and *umrah* there. In addition, Abdul Majid also recorded the


activities of Netherlands East Indies pilgrims such as their proposal to organize a congress of *Jam'iyat Ansar al-Haramayn* with the objective of overthrowing the Dutch rule in Indonesia.  

**Political Interests**

The Arabs in the Malay World, in particular the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent built close relationships with the ruling class through marriage ties with the Malay royalty and dignitaries. These opened more business opportunities and afforded them important political status, helping them gain respect and acceptance among the native Muslims. The Hadhrami Arabs played quite a considerable role in the political and administrative aspects of the Malay states where some of them were appointed to important positions such as ruler of a state, government officers, or *penghulu*.  

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands East Indies, the Hadhrami Arabs there were regarded as special individuals with the capability to lead others. They were even regarded as “natural leaders” by Sumit K. Mandal who said that the leadership potential in the Hadhrami Arabs were reflected in their political undertakings in the country.

The Hadhrami Arabs’ reputation in politics and administration of the Malay states caused them to be perceived with suspicion by the British. All their activities were discreetly observed by the British who were cautious about the Hadhramis’ participation in radical movements and anti-British sentiments in Malaya. However, it was undeniable that there are Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, particularly those in the elite group who had good contacts with British officials and had even became allies. The Hadhrami Arabs of Singapore in particular were in a good terms with British officials. It

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46 F. H. W. Stonehewer-Bird (under secretary of State for India) to Foreign Office, 9 April 1928, 1 June 1928), L/PS/10/632 (Oriental and India Office Collection).
was also through this contact that the British interfered into the affairs of the Malay states, such as in Negeri Sembilan.

Back in the early period of the 19th century, the Hadhrami Arabs-British relations was based on political and economic motives. In Negeri Sembilan, the Hadhrami Arab-British relations started around the 1830s when Sayyid Sha’aban allied with the British in the Naning War against Dol Said in 1832. This contact was a start to the British intervention in Negeri Sembilan. In the beginning, Dol Said received support and assistance from Rembau when Yam Tuan Ali sent his son in-law Sayyid Sha’aban who allied with Dol Said to fight against the British. Dol Said also received help from Yamtuan Ali of Remai and Recat, Datuk Kelana Putera Sungai Ujong, the chieftain of Gemencheh, the chieftain of Linggi and Malay dignitaries of Seri Menanti. Dol Said managed to gather 4,000 people and defeated the British army. They attacked and seized British headquarters at Sungai Petai on 24 August 1831, resulting in a loss on the British side.49

Due to this loss, the British rearranged strategies to defeat Dol Said. Sayyid Sha’aban who was a strong supporter of Dol Said withdrew from becoming allies with Naning due to the rumours spread by Dol Said. According to the rumour, he said that the British would attack Rembau once they defeated Naning. It was proven later on that this was not the case. Sayyid Sha’aban was offered by the British a sum of money asking for his withdrawal from giving support to Dol Said. Yamtuan Ali, Sayyid Sha’aban and his fellow chief men of Rembau signed an treaty of friendship in 1832 and Sayyid Sha’aban was offered $500.00 by the British to withdraw from the war.50 The treaty of friendship entailed the acknowledgement of the self-authority of Rembau, making Sayyid Sha’aban and the British allies.51 The agreement signed between

50 Ibid., p. 186.
Rembau and the British was a golden opportunity for the latter to interfere in Negeri Sembilan’s affairs. In April 1874, a treaty of friendship was again signed between Andrew Clarke, the governor of the Straits Settlement with Sayyid Abdul Rahman bin Ahmad al-Qadri, the Dato’ Kelana of Sungai Ujong which indirectly placed the district of Sungai Ujong under the British protectorate. This alliance benefitted both sides as the two tried to preserve their political interest in the state. This collaboration resulted in the introduction of the Residential System in Negeri Sembilan. Dato’ Kelana’s action was later on followed by other Malay chiefs of Negeri Sembilan.52

The British did not only interfere in the political affairs of Negeri Sembilan, but also monitored its external relations that could threaten their political interests in Malaya. In the 1890s for example, it was reported that Sayyid Hamid was involved in pan-Islamic affairs by persuading Dato’ Inas to write an appeal to a Turkish admiral who was then visiting Singapore to get rid of the infidels. As a result of this incident, Dato’ Inas was removed from his position while Sayyid Hamid was luckily unaffected from any action because of his close relationship with the Yam Tuan. However, it is believed that Sayyid Hamid was reminded of the consequences of his action. He then seceded from attending meetings and affairs of the state council. His son Tengku Dewa represented him in meetings and occasions in Negeri Sembilan until finally he succeeded his father in 1894.53 The British did not take direct action towards Sayyid Hamid, but instead psychologically and discreetly made the latter felt guilty. The British was always alert with such an issue that could potentially arouse anti-British sentiment in the Malay states.

Since the coming of British to Malaya, the Malay rulers started to lose their powers and rights as legal authorities in the Malay states. In other words, the Sultans had no final say and were powerless as they were controlled by the British residents and

advisers. In Terengganu, British’s intervention in the state caused dissatisfaction among the Malays, particularly the religious scholars or ‘ulama’. Sayyid Abdul Rahman, better known as Tok Ku Paloh was a prominent ‘alim in Terengganu who was believed to have managed to delay British intervention in Terengganu in the early 20th century. The British always tried to find an excuse to meddle in Terengganu’s state affairs. The Bangkok Treaty signed on 10 March 1909 between Siam and Great Britain was a start to their intervention in Terengganu with the appointment of W. L. Conley as the British agent assigned to assist Sultan Zainal Abidin III in state affairs and administration as well as in monitoring matters related to foreign merchants’ affairs in Terengganu. However, Terengganu never recognized the treaty. Instead, this issue had caused dissatisfaction and anger among the royals and dignitaries because the agreement was done without the knowledge of Terengganu.⁵⁴

Therefore, Tok Ku Paloh advised Sultan Zainal Abidin III to be very cautious in dealing with this matter. If the treaty were to be accepted by Terengganu, it will affect the whole state’s affairs, including religion, administration, economy and politics of Terengganu.⁵⁵ With the initiative of the dignitaries and royals of Terengganu, a constitution named Iqanul Muluk bi Tadilis Suluk was drafted for the State of Terengganu on 2nd November 1911 in order to protect the state from foreign invasion. From this law, it was clear that the people of Terengganu did not want foreign powers, particularly the British to interfere with Terengganu’s state affairs. Unfortunately, this constitution was not recognised by the British. In return, a commissioner was set up by the British and sent to Terengganu to check on the so-called ‘scandal’ in the state’s administration. This was merely a tactic to interfere in Terengganu’s state affairs by placing a British adviser in the state.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 185-186.
⁵⁶ Diary W. L. Conley from 11 July until 31 August 1909. From Anderson to Colonial Office, 22 September 1909, CO. 273/351(1). W. L. Conley was the British agent in Terengganu.
Through the appointment of British Residents and advisers in the Malay states, the British closely monitored the Malays’ movements that were deemed anti-British. The British were particularly suspicious towards the Hadhrami Arabs, and this became apparent particularly in the early 20th century when the people of Malaya started to get exposed to political developments in the Muslim World. The idea of pan-Islam, religious movements and nationalism started to hover in the Malay society through news reports and articles from local newspapers and magazines. However, these ideas received less response from the Malays since not everyone, particularly the masses from the rural areas had access to this information. Furthermore, the British were quick to take action in controlling and curbing the spread of such ideas from spreading to the Malay community.57

One example of this is the involvement of Sayyid Saqqaf, the son of Tok Ku Paloh who was reported to be involved in the 1928 uprising in Terengganu. It is said that he was one of the suspects who rallied support from the people of Terengganu in launching the uprising in 1928. However, the British authorities failed to formally charge him with the incident. The Terengganu Uprising in 1928 definitely reflected British’s involvement in local riots which showed the British authorities’ seriousness in addressing the issue by issuing a warrant to inquire, capture and shoot anyone who joined the rebellion against the Sultan and the government of Terengganu. All government officers, including penghulus and the masses were required to provide assistance to the Commissioner of Police whenever necessary. The letter issued on 22nd May 1928 was endorsed by the Sultan of Terengganu, Sultan Suleiman Badrul Alam Shah, who gave Mr. Mills, the Commissioner of Police of Terengganu full power to

conduct the investigation. The letter further stated that the Commissioner of Police was also given authority to use every means at his discretion to eradicate the said affairs.58

Based on the warrant, the rioters had caused chaos at Kuala Brang, followed by an attack on government offices. In fact, the word ‘government’ here refers to the British administration in Terengganu. As the investigation took place, a letter that was believed to be written by Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong urging Muslims to join Syarikat Islam and gather at Kuala Brang to raise the flag of Stambul or Istanbul was found. In addition, the letter also referred to Sayyid Saqqaf or Saggaf b. Sayyid Abdul Rahman as the Khalif or (God's regent) or Khalifah of Allah in Terengganu. This showed that Sayyid Saqqaf was someone important in Terengganu and he was a respected and influential individual among the members of Syarikat Islam. The title of the announcement letter, “Warta Sayyid Saqqaf b. Sayyid Abdul Rahman kepada Pengikut-Pengikutnya supaya berkumpul di Kuala Berang untuk memulakan kebangkitan” 59 clearly explained the objective of the gathering which was to start an uprising or kebangkitan. According to Mohammad Redzuan, the word khalifah and Istanbul used by Haji Abdul Rahman Limbung had attracted the British’s attention towards the uprisings which was apparently a gathering to show the people of Terengganu’s concern and sympathy for the Caliphate in Turkey.60

Although Sayyid Saqqaf was free from the allegation, nevertheless his movement and activities were closely monitored by the British. Sayyid Saqqaf was also reported to be involved in the politics of Terengganu when he joined the Kuala Terengganu Malay Association, a secret and confidential organization as its president, and also as the President of the Kuala Terengganu Malay Union that strongly protested

59 Ibid., p. 886.
against the Malayan Union proposal.\textsuperscript{61} Besides that, there was also a report on Sayyid Abdul Kadir or Tuan Dagang, another son of Tok Ku Paloh who also had a substantial influence in Telemong in the 1930s. He was reported as anti-British and regarded the latter as non-believers. He even did not shake hands with them.\textsuperscript{62} However, there was not much record on them from the British report as to what action was taken by the British in response to the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the politics of Terengganu. This matter could be considered as isolated cases by the British or perhaps they had little influence over the masses to spark riots or disturbances in Terengganu.

The British interference in the state administration of Terengganu regarding the introduction of land enactments and regulations caused a feeling of discontent among the people of Terengganu, particularly those in Telemong in which there were various taxes imposed on land as well as on livestock and crops. The Hadhrami Arabs also responded to the ridiculous policies introduced by the British administration in Terengganu by their involvement in a series of uprisings in the state.\textsuperscript{63}

Meanwhile, in cosmopolitan Singapore, Hadhrami Arab elites were in good terms with the British officials, though the latter was always cautious of the former’s affairs, particularly those concerned with international relations and issues related to the British’s interests in Malaya. The Hadhrami Arab-British relations in Singapore had already started as early as in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when the island was opened as a free port by Raffles in 1819. At that time, the Hadhrami Arabs of Sayyid descent received every consideration by the British that they were allocated specific areas for settlement. The 20\textsuperscript{th} century was the period of global contact where commercial interests and political influence became the main concern. The population of Singapore benefitted from the rapid growth of the cosmopolitan city with the latest technology facilitating commercial

\textsuperscript{61} Shahril Talib Robert, “The Trengganu Ruling Class in the Late Nineteenth Century”, \textit{JMBRAS}, Vol. 50, Pt. 2, p. 43. See also SUK. (SCAO) 57/1946: encl. 1 and 3.
\textsuperscript{62} Shahril Talib Robert, “The Trengganu Ruling Class in the Late Nineteenth Century”, p. 43; CLM. 229/1352: Commissioner of Police to CLM, 30 April 1934.
\textsuperscript{63} Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, \textit{Terengganu Darul Iman. Tradisi Persejarahan Malaysia}, p. 191.
and trade activities. Even though the Arabs were small in number compared to other ethnic groups in Singapore and Malaya, they however managed to attain a certain degree of social status in the society. The Hadhrami Arab elites benefitted much from their good relations with the British administration in Malaya.\(^6^4\)

Regardless, the British administration in Malaya was still suspicious of the Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the reformist and political movements in the country, especially when a number of influential Hadhrami Arab leaders had political connections with the Muslim World or in the Middle East as well as personal contacts with Muslim leaders. Sayyid Mohammad b. Ahmed Al-Saqqaf was one example. He had a close relationship with Sultan Abdul Hamid II (ruled from1876 -1908), leader of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople.\(^6^5\) Sayyid Mohammad Al-Saqqaf also had close relations with Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor. Seeing the close contact between the two, as well as the close contact between the Sultan of Johor and Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the British were anxious that Sultan Abdul Hamid II would make use of Sayyid Mohammed Al-Saqqaf in promoting pan-Islamism in Malaya. Despite the pan-Islamic appeal touted by the Malay dailies, as well as Malay sentiments towards the Turks as their patron and Sultan Abdul Hamid as the leader of Muslims, the movement did not interrupt the British administration in the country.\(^6^6\) As Mohammad Redzuan said, although Sultan Abu Bakar was in close contact with Sultan Abdul Hamid II, he did not show much zealous and interest in spreading pan-Islamic ideas championed by Sultan Abdul Hamid II in Malaya.\(^6^7\)

In order to control political movements in Malaya, particularly in Singapore, the British appointed Hadhrami Arab leaders as Muslim representatives. For instance, Sayyid Ibrahim Sayyid Omar al-Saqqaf (1899-1975) was one of the influential

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\(^6^7\) Ibid., p. 99.
Hadhrami Arab leaders in Singapore. He was appointed as government leader representing the island’s Muslim community. He was also known as Datuk S.I.O, and he had had good relations with Muslim leaders in the Middle East such as in Arabia as he used to be a member of the Legislative Assembly in Makkah during the reign of King Hussein I. He also became a member of the Legislative Assembly in Makkah in 1926 during the reign of King Abdul Aziz b. Saud of Saudi Arabia.68

Sayyid Ibrahim also played an important role in bringing mutual understanding between the people and the British administration. Even so, the British still viewed some Hadhrami Arabs with suspicion. For instance, Sayyid Ibrahim was accused by the British of encouraging and reviving the pan-Islam movement in Malaya. This probably referred to the Sayyid Ibrahim’s role as the prime mover of Genuine Islam and its pro-Arab stand reflected in the publication of articles and issues related to the Arab World, particularly on the concerns over the Palestinian conflict in the Middle East.69

However, based on the Political Intelligence journal published by the British in 1948, Sayyid Ibrahim Omar Al-Saqqaf was also reported to be involved in the efforts of establishing an Islamic party in Malaya. It was believed that a meeting was held at his house in Singapore on 29 February 1948. As a result, an Islamic political party known as Hizbu al-Muslimin was formed with the ultimate objective of freeing Malaya from colonial rule and to gain independence. This meeting was also attended by leaders of the Masjumi party from Indonesia.70

The first two decades of the 20th century witnessed significant political changes in the country with the outbreak of the First World War and the Second World War which affected the stability as well political structure in Malaya. Although Malaya did not participate in the First World War, the British were afraid that the Malays’ political

70 CO 537/3751, Political Intelligence Journal.
awareness will be aroused and interest in pan-Islamism is generated as an indirect result of the war. Generally, although the Malays were seen as untouched and unaffected by the global political events that occurred during the First World War, the British still took precautionary action in order to curb and restrict the Malays’ participation in political movements as well as the entry of information and news from abroad, especially from the Muslim countries in the Middle East to Malaya.⁷¹

As a result, a Criminal Intelligence Department was created to serve the purpose. In 1918 G.G. Seth was appointed as the director of the Criminal Intelligent Department. The initial reason behind the establishment of this department was to monitor political activities among the immigrants, in particular the Indians. However, the British saw the need for the department to extend its scope to cover other races in Malaya, particularly the Malays when some of the latter were found to be involved in local political activities in the 1920s (those who had political contact with the Middle East).⁷²

Worried about the political developments that occurred in Malaya, in the 1920s Laurence Guillemard sought the approval from the Colonial Office to create an office that would be responsible for matters related to the Malay affairs and their relationship with the British colonial rule in Malaya. Guillemard stressed on the need for this special secretariat in order to monitor the issue of the Malays which in his opinion, were much more educated and had progressed greatly from before. He was worried that these Malays may sometimes express their dissatisfaction toward the British administration in Malaya through local journals. He furthermore reminded the British to not be too contented with the support given by the Malay rulers during the war as things have considerably changed. The Malays were also concerned with the social, political, and

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⁷¹ Mohammad Redzuan Othman, The Middle Eastern Influence, p. 313.
⁷² Ibid.
economic disorder of the Muslim World. These issues could have affected and influenced the Malays.\(^\text{73}\)

The Political Intelligence Bureau was created in 1922 to replace the Criminal Intelligence Department. This time the bureau covered a bigger scope to embrace many aspects of Malaya, especially the political activities of the Malays. The British also produced a journal related to their political security policies in Malaya. The contents of *The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence* journal reflected the British’s perceptions of the political arena in the country.\(^\text{74}\) The British kept an eye on political activities in Malaya through various channels such as the restriction of press freedom and power of Malay rulers. They also suppressed potential political groups and activities that were bold and vocal in criticizing the British administration of Malaya.\(^\text{75}\)

The *Kaum Muda* was one of the target groups that was closely monitored by the British. Their reformist newspapers which voiced anti-British sentiments were also closely monitored. However, there was not much that could be done politically as the people were quite limited by different laws. Za’aba, quoted by William R. Roff in *The Origin of Malay Nationalism* once talked about the Malay politics, saying that “Everyone was afraid of talking politics. You couldn’t go against the sultans, and the sultans all had British advisers”.\(^\text{76}\) Za’aba’s point of view of the Malay politics at that time showed that the Malay rulers were also under the control and influence of the British.\(^\text{77}\)

With the establishment of the Political Intelligence Bureau, it showed that the British were concerned and had monitored the political changes that took place among the Malays in Malaya as well the political developments that occurred in the Muslim World that had the potential to influence the economic, political and social structure of

\(^{73}\) CO717/5, Laurence Nunns Guillemand to Viscount Milner, 8 November 1920.

\(^{74}\) CO 272/515, Laurence Nunns Guillemand to Winston Churchill, 24 February 1922. The bureau was again changed its name in 1933 to Special Branch.

\(^{75}\) Ibid.


\(^{77}\) Ibid.
Malaya. The reformist thoughts and pan-Islamism movement in the Muslim World, particularly in Egypt would have influenced the Malay students who studied there. This would include the role played by vernacular and local presses as well as foreign presses that advocated pan-Islamism. The British were anxious that the Malays would rise against the British administration in Malaya and ask for self-determination.\textsuperscript{78}

The first two decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century were a crucial period for the British who were involved in the First World War. The British were suspicious and aware of the activities of several Hadhrami Arabs who were anti-British. There were several Hadhrami Arab leaders in Singapore who had close ties with the Turks. Although there was no critical opposition and insurgency by Malays and Arabs in Malaya against the British administration, the British were always cautious and kept on monitoring their activities. For instance, Sayyid Mohammad al-Saqqaf, a well-known Arab leader in Singapore was reported to have close contact with the Turks.\textsuperscript{79}

Sayyid Mohammad was a successful entrepreneur with businesses and political contacts in Malaya, Indonesia, Makkah, China, Turkey and also in Europe. He was also in good terms with Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople. He was conferred by the sultan a reward known as Osmaniah Order due to his excellent service. Sayyid Mohammad also had vast influence and contacts in the Malay World, especially in the Indonesian islands such as Siak, Langkat, and Pontianak where he also received honours from the sultans and rulers from these places including the Governor of the Straits Settlement and the High Commissioner of the Malay states.\textsuperscript{80}

The British looked into the historical contact between the Hadhrami Arabs with the Turks, particularly the close contact the al-Saqqaf family had with Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Constantinople. The al-Saqqafs were pro-Turkey and strong supporters of the Ottoman Caliphate. Such a relation caused worry on the British side as this would

\textsuperscript{79} Syed Mohsen Alsagoff, \textit{The Alsagoff Family in Malaysia}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
lead to unwanted political interest. The British looked into this matter as a threat and considered Sayyid Mohammad to have the capability of influencing and spreading Turkish influence in Malaya.\(^81\)

The British were a bit relieved when Sayyid Mohammad al-Saqqaf passed away in July 1906. His nephew, Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf took over the roles and responsibilities of by his uncle as a Muslim and Arab leader in Singapore. He also inherited the business empire of the al-Saqqafs. Sayyid Umar Al-Saqqaf was one of the most successful and influential Hadhrami Arab leader in Singapore. He had good links with British officials and befriended influential officials from the Straits Settlement e.g. in Singapore such as the Governor of the Straits Settlement, the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States and Major General Henry Ridout, the General Officer of Commanding Troops in Malaya. Sayyid Umar was also in close contact with the royal family of Johor and was in very good terms with Sultan Abu Bakar and his son Ibrahim.\(^82\)

In his dealings with the British, Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf was pro-British. Initially, he was in favour of the Turks and was a strong supporter of the Ottoman Caliphate, in particular during the outbreak of the First World War. However, his stand towards the Turkish and Ottoman Caliphate started to change when he was informed and convinced by Dudley Ridout, the General Officer Commanding the Troops of the Straits Settlement of the Turks' misrule and domination of Turkey by Germany.\(^83\)

The British tried to get support from the Malays as well as the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had caused the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Muslim Caliphate. The Turks that were perceived by Malays as the leader of the Muslims were in a crucial situation. Their failure in the war was a great

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83 Mohammad Redzuan Othman, ‘Conflicting Political Loyalties of the Arabs in Malaya,’ p. 39.
blow to the Muslims. However, the British worried that the Turks will use pan-Islamism as a tool to gain support and sympathy from Muslims. Sayyid Umar Al-Saqqaf was among the Arabs who sympathized with the Turks. The British were concerned that Sayyid Umar Al-Saqqaf would do something to rally support from the Malays and Arabs in Malaya for the Turks’ cause. Because of this, the British took a decisive action by creating false information regarding the Ottoman rule and the domination of Germany over Turkey for fear that the Turks would make use of pan-Islamism to gain support from other like-minded Muslims.84

Sharif Husayn took bold action by launching an uprising against the Ottoman rule in Hijaz. It was an awaited moment by the British who were at that time at war with Turkey. In this Arab revolt, Sharif Husayn managed to oust the Turks from Makkah and the whole Hijaz. He then proclaimed himself the king of the Arabs.85 The British through its foreign office ordered Henry Mac Mahon, the High Commissioner in Egypt to supply and facilitate Sharif with all assistance needed in order to weaken the Ottoman rule in Hijaz. To facilitate his revolt against the Turks, Sharif Husayn had taken the initiative to publish a special edition of the newspaper Al-Qiblah in Makkah which was circulated to all Arabs in Hijaz, as well as those in Southeast Asia such as the Malay states, Singapore and Indonesia. This newspaper served as an important source of information regarding the Turks and the Ottoman Caliphate in order to undermine the cause of the Turks. This was seen as a way to raise sympathy from the public to support Sharif Husayn, so the public had received and perceived the wrong information that the British and Sharif Husayn wanted them to believe.86

Brigadier-General Dudley Ridout, the General Commanding Officer of the Troops of the Straits Settlement was the person responsible to carry out the plot. To facilitate this task, the newspaper Al-Qiblah was published and distributed to the

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., p. 40. See footnote.
86 Ibid., p. 41.
Muslims in the Malay world including Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The audience included the Hadhrami Arabs.

“I have also recommend, a recommendation which I am glad to say is being put into effect, that copies of “al-Kiblah” emanating directly as it does from the Shereef of King Of Mecca and therefore of more active influence than papers issued in Egypt, be circulated to the Arabs in this country. I have recommended privately to Mr. Gaselee that an attempt be made to circulate through the vernacular Malay Press, articles in Malay prepared in London giving instruction on a scale modulated to the capabilities of the native mind, regarding the false aims and objects of Germany and Turkey in relation to Islam and the Arabs and the true relations of Germany and Turkey towards Islam and the Arabs as compared with the position and attitude of Great Britain and her allies.” 87

Upon receiving this news, Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf renounced his support for the Turks and turned to the cause of King Husayn, the Sharif of Makkah after being convinced by Ridout. 88 Sharif Husayn himself was pro-British. In order to show his support for the British, Sayyid Umar offered his property in Jeddah to be used by British officials. 89 Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf also refused to receive a cable from India sent by Akhbar c/o Khilafat to his son Sayyid Ibrahim informing of Kemal Pasha’s victory. The note had also included the request to inform all Muslims of prayers of thanksgiving that should be recited in all mosques. At that time, Sayyid Ibrahim was in Hejaz managing Sayyid Umar’s pilgrim office in Jeddah. 90

The Hadhrami Arab elites’ support for the British administration in Malaya was shown in a declaration given to the British authorities proclaiming their loyalty and full support. In the Singapore Mutiny event that broke out in February 1915, the Hadhrami Arab leaders played significant roles in assisting the British authorities in bringing down riots in the island. Sayyid Umar al-Saqqaf together with Sayyid Muhammad Aqil were

89 L/PS/10/599 (Oriental and India Office Collection) Arthur Young to Bonar Law, 28 August 1916.
among the Hadhrami elites who were involved in bringing peace to the island. Several meetings were held in order to explain to the public the situation and actions taken by the British to expel rumours and battle the riot.\textsuperscript{91}

A meeting was held at the Victoria Hall on 6\textsuperscript{th} March 1915 and was attended by some three thousand people from different ethnic groups and communities in Singapore showing their loyalty to the British. This included the Arabs who represented the Muslims of the island. In their speeches to rally support and convince their fellow brethren to give their undivided loyalty towards the British, an Egyptian teacher delivered a speech, comparing the rules of the Mamluk with the British’s. He further described that the sultans of the Mamluk dynasty were harsh oppressors while giving credit to the British colonial rule in Egypt that had raised a great number of Muslims to a better life, as well as brought the country to a better level of human civilization.\textsuperscript{92} In this gathering, a secret agent from the General Office Commanding the Troops who came from India reported that the Muslim leaders of Singapore were loyal to the British. However, he further said that feelings of dissatisfaction still existed among the Indian Muslims and subordinate groups of Arab immigrants. “Generally, disaffection existed among the Indians and “lower class of immigrant Arabs”.”\textsuperscript{93}

Although the Turks lost in the First World War, this incident did not affect the political situation in Malaya, most particularly in Singapore. During the war, the situation in the country was under control. Although there were Arabs on the island who sympathized with the Turks, there was no distressing situation reported. Nevertheless, the British were always cautious when dealing with the Arabs in Singapore. Through their undercover agents, the British collected information regarding the Arabs,

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p. 39. See also CO 273/421. Arthur Young to Lewis Harcourt, 11 March 1915, Singapore Disturbance, Attitude of Moslems, Straits Settlements, Government House, Singapore, pp. 8-10. CO 273/425, Sayyid ‘Umar al-Saqqaf to Arthur Young, March 1915. There is also an extract of news regarding the event published in the \textit{Malaya Tribune}, Monday, 8 March 1915, “Moslem Mass Meeting, Address of Loyalty to the King”.

\textsuperscript{92} Mohammad Redzuan Othman, “Conflicting Political Loyalties of the Arabs in Malaya”, p. 39; see also CO 273/421, enclosure extract from \textit{Malaya Tribune}, Monday, 8 March 1915.

particularly those who were suspected of working against British interests in Singapore. In this respect, there were several Arabs who were in close contact with the British, working as undercover agents in Malaya such as Sayyid Muhammad Aqil and Syaikh Awad Zaydan. Sayyid Muhammad Aqil delivered information through R. J. Wilkinson, the colonial secretary and officer who administered the government of the Straits Settlement.94 The Criminal Intelligence Department that was established earlier on was responsible for monitoring the Muslims’ activities and their political movements in Malaya especially Singapore, which was populated by many Arabs.95

The involvement of Hadhrami Arabs with the British against Muslims by spying on their activities had caused anger and dissatisfaction among the Muslims. These feelings were further aggravated when some of them really indulged in conspiracies to bring down the Ottoman rule in Turkey. Although their part in this was small, the impact was still considerably immense. The later impact of this led to the fall of an Islamic Caliphate in the Muslim World. This was seen as unforgivable by fellow Muslims when they betrayed their fellow brethren for the sake of material lust and promises by the colonials. Sayyid Muhammad Aqil and Syaikh Awad Zaydan were among those who allied with the British. Blinded with rewards offered by the British, Syaikh Awad Zaydan was responsible for the controversial issue of the caliphate by claiming that this post should only be held by Arabs. He also made a false statement and alleged that it was taken from the words of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. This fake statement was translated into Malay and circulated to the public. Copies of these papers have also been posted on the walls of the Grand Mosque of Singapore. His actions were said to receive great criticism from the Muslims and eventually led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and at the same time, destroyed Muslim unity.96

94 Ibid., p. 48. See FO 371/5236, Lee Warner to the Undersecretary of State, Foreign Office, Downing Street, 15 July 1920. 95 Ibid. 96 FO 371/5236, Dunn, Consul of British Consulate General, Batavia to Ear Curzon of Kedleston, 18 May 1920, p. 2.
There were efforts made by *Syarikat Islam* lead by Tjokroaminoto. Tjokroaminoto held a feast at a house of his *mutawwif*, Syaihk Ahmad Kudus in Makkah which was attended by 150 guests of natives of the Netherlands East Indies. At this meeting, Tjokroaminoto talked about the need to combine all Malayan countries and the Hijaz under Muslim rule directed by a real *khalifa* with his seat in the Hijaz, free from all foreign influence and interference. Tjokroaminoto proposed to take over the responsibility as the leader of *Syarikat Islam* and envoy from Java, and that he will explain to all Malays the necessity of expelling the White races from the East. In the meeting, the name Ibn Saud was mentioned as the possible *khalifa*.97

Another meeting was held on 15 April 1926 at Jaid in Makkah attended by some 1,000 Syrians, Egyptians, Indians and Malays. Basically, the essence of all the speeches was the absolute necessity of driving out the White races from the Malayan countries as they monopolised the authority and power and swallowed the wealth of the natives. Due to Tjokroaminoto's plan, a number of Sumatra Malays visited Malaya after the *hajj* to stir up anti-British feelings amongst the Malays.98

The situation in Singapore was quite tensed compared to the Malay Peninsula when almost every Arab were discussing and talking about the caliphate issue. Generally, in the early 1920s, the Arab community in Singapore could be divided into two groups; those who supported the British and Sharif Husayn and another group who were anti-British. The Arabs who were pro-British were criticized and accused as allies to the British by the anti-British. Sharif Husayn was also criticised by the anti-British and anti-Sharif Husayn for breaking up the Muslims’ solidarity. Whilst in Indonesia, the situation was almost the same where Muslims were also in a dilemma. A group of Hadhrami Arabs in the Netherland East Indies (Indonesia) was also reported to have connections with the Hadhrami Arabs who were residing in Singapore. “The Bin Abdat

97 CO 273/543/16, Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence, Tjokroaminoto, p. 8.
98 CO 273/543/16, Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence, p. 8.
family and the al-Djofri (al-Jafri) families were identified as Hadhrami families who were anti-British and connected with Singapore (the latter family was also connected to Java). They were known to be leading anti-British Kathiri allies and opponents of the pro-British Qu’aiti regime and to the British as well”.99

The British also recorded a request by the family of the former Sultan of Turkey asking for assistance which was received by a ruling house in the Federated Malay States. The exiled members of the Sultan of Turkey were residing in France. They asked for assistance in view of the past services of their predecessors to the cause of Islam. However, the British believed that such an appeal should be treated as of no account and should be left unanswered.100

The defeat of the Turks in the First World War was a blow to the Muslim World. According to Nurfadzilah, in order to eliminate the feelings of hatred and dissatisfaction of the Malays, especially among the Hadhrami Arabs, the British took initiative by introducing English education. Education was seen as a way to eliminate anti-British sentiments among the Arabs in Malaya.101 Henri Onraet reported that an Arab named Sayyid Zainal Abidin al-Sagoff was put under the care of an English tutor and soon lost any anti-British feelings he might have had before.102

It is observed that in the early decades of the 20th century, particularly during the 1920s to 1930s, the involvement of Malays in politics was minimal. In fact, it was the British policy not to encourage the Malays’ participation in politics. The British would use any means to control the influx of outside influence that could arouse the masses’ consciousness about the critical political scenario in Malaya. Meanwhile, the Hadhrami Arabs were also not too passionate in their reactions or interactions with the political development in Malaya in the early decades of the 20th century as compared to the late

99 List of leading Kathiri’s who are pro-British in Singapore. Unsigned and undated, IOR. R/20/A/1409. See also Nurfadzilah Yahaya, Good Friends and Dangerous Enemies, p. 66.
100 Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence, Request for Assistance from ex-Sultan of Turkey’s family, p. 7, CO273/534.
101 Nurfadzilah Yahaya, Good Friends and Dangerous Enemies, p. 66.
102 CO273/534. Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence, Request for Assistance from ex-Sultan of Turkey’s family, p. 7. Ibid., p. 88
1940s. Their passion was roused then, especially when the spirit of nationalism was at its height, as well as the period of deciding Singapore’s participation into Malaysia and its subsequent separation from Malaya in 1965.103

It was only after Malaya was occupied by the Japanese army during the Second World War that the Malays started to realize and at the same time inspired by the Japanese policy resounding anti-Western colonialism in Malaya. The Malays then started to get involved in politics, by rallying protests opposing the British’s proposal of the Malayan Union Scheme in 1946. The period after the Second World War also observed the involvement of Hadhrami Arabs in Malay politics with prominent figures taking up the cause, such as Sayyid Alwi b. Sayyid Syaikh Al-Hadi and Sayyid Jaafar Albar. Many other new faces of Hadhrami Arabs in Singapore had gotten involved in the politics of Malaya as they started to become aware of their social and political status in British Singapore. Their involvement was to fight for their and the rest of the Muslims’ rights through the establishment of SUMNO.104

Due to the emergence of political consciousness among the Malays involving government officials and administrators, the British began to take security measures by setting up a special branch of police in Singapore. This special branch was tasked to control and monitor the political activities of Malaya. A special branch of the police was founded in Singapore from 1948 to 1953 to monitor illegal political movements, parties or organizations that were suspected of having connections with communists in the island. Anyone suspected of having a connection or sympathized with the communist movement was arrested or silenced. This period, however, created a political vacuum in

104 For example, in Kedah the Malays awareness in politics has long been embedded since before the Second World War. It was however, has been banned and prevented by the Malay royalty and dignitaries who considered politics as ‘haram’ or illegal. These elite groups also look down and hate those who involve in politics and even regarded the political party as a communist party or “parti komunis”. This notion became widespread and even influenced the masses which had caused them refrain from getting involved in politics and even to hate it. According to SUARA SEBERKAS, “Politik dipandang oleh kebanyakan orang-orang Melayu sebagai perkataan haram atau menyalahi kerajaan semata-mata”. So, it is clear that the government (British) was the mastermind who controlling the politics of the Malays for the sake of their political and economic interests in Malaya. See SUARA SEBERKAS, Year 1, No. 4, April 1946, p. 3.See Azmi b. Saad, ‘Penubuhan dan Pergerakan Politik Melayu Negeri kedah 1945-1955,’ journalarticle.ukm.my/525/11.pdf. accessed on 15 May 2014, and SUARA SEBERKAS, Year 1, No. 4, April 1946, p. 3; See also Mohd. Isa Othman, Pengalaman Kedah & Perlis Zaman Penjajahan British, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distributors Sdn. Bhd. 2001, p. 236.
the island that was later filled by Singapore’s United Malays National Organization (SUMNO) who represented the Malay community in Singapore. This was how the British authorities managed to monitor the political developments in Singapore in order to maintain peace and stability among the multiracial community in the island.¹⁰⁵

In 1926, the Political Intelligence Bureau of Singapore reported that a group of Indonesians had planned to establish a club in the Kalang district, Singapore. The group was intended to have ties to the communist movement in the Netherlands East Indies. There was also a report received by the Political Intelligence Bureau of Singapore saying that a Malay communist newspaper will be published in Singapore and funded by the N.E.I communists. On 29th May, it was reported that Haji Jaafar held a private meeting at the house of Sayyid Mahdar discussing the issue of the formation of a club consisting of 500 members. Earlier in that month, a club was founded in the Province of Wellesley by Sultan Perpateh, wherein members were mainly Javanese from Sumatra.¹⁰⁶

The 1950s was a period that observed a series of political upheaval in the country. Sensitive issues involving Islam and the Malays received quick responses from the Malays and Muslims in the country. However, the British perceived these incidents as a form of protest by the people against the Government’s policy. For example, the British was of the opinion that the Muslim religio-political minority agitation was endeavoured to exploit every incident such as the Hertogh case, those convicted in subsequent riots, and the showing of the film “David and Bathsheba” to put pressure upon government policy. The Muslim affairs in the country were disturbed during the month when there was opposition by the All Malaya Muslim Missionary society and the Singapore Muslim League. It built up until the showing of a controversial film called

¹⁰⁶ CO 273/534, Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence, Communist Centre in Singapore, p. 9.
“David and the Bathsheba”. The evidence pointed out that the opposition was mainly from a small minority of South Indians of strong Muslim religious views and political inspirations. The release of the film by the Appeal Board with augmented Malay representation in the Federation of Malaya did not weaken vocal opposition in Malaya. Apart from that, the British also mentioned about the role played by the Arab magazine *Al-Qalam* wherein its Arab publisher, Sayyid Hussein Ali al-Saqqaf attacked Dato Onn, the IMP, the Secretary of the State’s proposals for Chinese citizenship and the Singapore Government policy in respect to the film “David and the Bathsheba”. He also reported to be endeavouring to form an Islamic party and also championed a unified religious administration throughout Malaya independent of the Government and supported by a body called the Muslim Brotherhood.

The British also expressed their worry over the political and religious connections between the Muslims in Malaya with those in Indonesia and India. They were also concerned about the Muslim People's Organization movement who on their tour to Indonesia passed Singapore and then on their return stopped by at Singapore for a few days. This group of Muslims sympathized strongly with Egypt, Tunisia and Iran. The report further stated that the Muslim People's Organization sought to mobilise religious feelings for political purposes. One of their objectives was to assist in the liberation of Muslim people from foreign domination. The group was also reported to be in touch with Mohamed Karim Ghani, the riot leader in Singapore and had arranged for his visit to Karachi to attend a Muslim People's Organization conference on May 10, 1952. The Muslim People's Organization also established relations with the MASJUMI Party during their tour to Indonesia.

The British also reported about a visit by Syaikh Said Mohamed Ramadan to Indonesia, who also paid a visit to Malaya. On the evening of 11 March 1952, Syaikh

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108 Ibid., p. 16.
Said Mohamed visited Johor Bahru from Singapore accompanied by Dato' Sayyid Ibrahim Al-Saqqaf, the president of All Malaya Muslim Missionary and several other prominent members of the All Malaya Muslim Missionary Society. The party had dinner at the residence of the Menteri Besar of Johor which was attended by several UMNO officials, including the President of Religious Affairs and the Acting Mufti of Johor. Syaikh Said Mohamed also gave a lecture to about 200 people on the issue of Islamic religion yet had touched nothing on politics.\textsuperscript{110} The British authorities in Malaya always kept an eye on the political movements of Muslim organizations and parties in Malaya. For instance, they checked on the All Malaya Muslim Missionary Society’s annual general meeting on 19th April 1952.\textsuperscript{111}

The close political connections between Muslim organization outside Malaya such as the World Muslim Conference in Karachi, India with the Malaya Muslim League of Singapore was also monitored by the British authorities. For instance, there was an attempt made by the organization to stir up feelings over issues afflicting the Muslims in Tunisia. The Secretary of the World Muslim Conference wrote to the Secretary of the Malay Muslim League proposing a demonstration on 1st February 1952 to show their sympathy towards the Muslims of Tunisia. However, the situation in Malaya did not allow for such a demonstration although the local Muslims had sympathised with the Tunisians.\textsuperscript{112}

There was another Muslim organization known as the Singapore Muslim League. The organization had its annual general meeting on 3rd February 1952 which was attended by about 100 members who were mostly Indians and Pakistanis. There were about 10 Malays, but not a single Arab attended the meeting. M. J. Namazie was re-elected president and Che Sidek, J.P., the president of the Singapore Malay Union was elected as one of the vice presidents. However, there was a misunderstanding about

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p.8.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p.8, CO 537/3751, “Malaya Political Developments”, Political Intelligence Report, p. 257.  
\textsuperscript{112} CO 1022/434, “Muslim Affairs in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore”, p. 18.
his appointment as he was absent from the meeting, and later announced that he was not a member of the league and rejected the appointment.\textsuperscript{113}

On the issue of the showing of the film "David and the Bathsheba", the \textit{al-Qalam} magazine had criticized the government’s insensitivity towards the feelings of Muslims at a time “when the Government need the services of the Muslims to fight communism".\textsuperscript{114}

\textbf{Conclusion}

As evidenced, the Hadhrami Arabs played quite a considerable role in Malaya. Despite their small number, some of them had huge influence on the economic, political as well as administrative aspects of Malaya. The Hadhrami Arabs’ involvement in the administration of the Malay states was seen by the British as a threat to its interests in Malaya. Considering such an influence possessed by the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, the British took a subtle approach in dealing with the Hadhrami Arabs while at the same time maintaining the benefits they derived from their overall control in the Malay states. The British it seemed was afraid that the Hadhrami Arabs would use their political and religious influence to encourage the Sultans and the rest of the Malays to fight against the British administration in the country. Meanwhile, on the Hadhrami Arabs’ side, particularly the elites, links and good ties with the British officials were perceived as beneficial too. They even pledged their loyalties to the British, particularly after the mutiny in Singapore.

The Hadhrami Arab elites also maintained good relations with the British administration in order to preserve their business interests and influence in Malaya. Despite this, the British was still suspicious of the Hadhrami Arabs’ loyalty towards the British administration in Malaya as among them, there were also several figures who

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 18.
were anti-British. The British however succeeded in winning the Hadhrami Arab elites’ support, contributing to their relative success in the administration in Malaya. For instance, through the assistance of several Hadhrami Arabs, the British Malaya managed to influence the people’s perception of Turks’ domination and their role in the First World War. The British officials took advantage of their close relationship with the Hadhrami Arab leaders in order to keep an eye on their fellow Muslims, for example on their religious and political activities in Malaya.

Although there were concerns on the part of the British regarding the spread of pan-Islamic ideas in Malaya (by the Malay students who studied in Egypt) and also the role played by reformist newspapers published by the Young Faction or Kaum Muda in Malaya (pioneered by Islah or reformist figures such as Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin, Haji Abbas Taha, and Sayyid Shaykh Al-Hadi), the response shown by the Malays was not so overwhelming. It was the reformist thoughts of Al-Afghani that managed to mobilize the Malays and stirred up political consciousness among the masses. The internal conflicts between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua was tapped by the British to create tension among the Malays on issues related to religious practices and adat. In fact, it was the British who masterminded this conflict as they fuelled the tension and conflict by supporting and backing up the Malay rulers and traditional ‘ulama’.

In terms of the Muslims’ religious affairs, in particular the hajj conduct, after several incidents related to pilgrims in terms of health and welfare, the realisation of the economic gains associated with the industry, and in the interest of controlling the Malay pilgrims’ participation in radical political movements while they were in Hijaz, the British decided to interfere in this issue. This resulted in the improvement of the pilgrims’ welfare and health during their stay in Makkah. A Malay pilgrimage officer was appointed to monitor the smooth running of the hajj conduct. These actions were seen as manifestations that the British were not anti-Islam.