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HABIB NUH'S CONTRIBUTION IN CONTEMPORARY OF SINGAPORE POLITICS

SUMBANGAN HABIB NUH DALAM POLITIK KONTEMPORARI SINGAPURA

*¹Mujar Ibnu Syarif,
²Arip Purkon

¹⁻²Faculty of Sharia and Law Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic
University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author; e-mail: * mujar@uinjkt.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore rarely and forgotten dimensions of political discourse in Singapore that influenced by Habib Nuh. The study discusses the contribution of Habib Nuh's Islamic teaching and notion to political landscape in contemporary of Singapore secular state. Habib Nuh, who was from the pre-war era, is well known and revered by many in South East Asia and was admired by both Muslim and non-Muslim. He achieved fame from his thinks, unique and distinct lifestyle and saintly miracles which continued till after his death. His tomb frequented by visitor from various ethnic group and religion, so represent the religious and cultural diversity that make Singapore a beacon of cosmopolitanism among the great cities of Asia. This study uses descriptive and analytical methods as well as oral history. The results of this research highlight two conclusions. Firstly, Habib Nuh evoked the spirit of nationalism into the soul of the Malay Muslims of Singapore, leading them to have the courage to resist the arrogance and end the political domination of the British colonialists in Singapore. Secondly, Habib Nuh introduced the foundations of Islamic politics that emphasises a politics of multiculturalism that forms the political situation in contemporary period in Singapore.

Keywords: Habib Nuh, Political Contribution, Saintly Miracles, Singapore, Muslim

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk meneroka dimensi-dimensi perbincangan politik yang jarang dan terlupakan di Singapura yang dipengaruhi oleh Habib Nuh. Kajian ini membincangkan sumbangan ajaran Islam dan pemikiran Habib Nuh terhadap lanskap politik di negara sekular Singapura pada masa kontemporari. Habib Nuh, yang berasal dari era pra-perang, dikenali dan dihormati oleh ramai orang di Asia Tenggara dan dikagumi oleh kedua-dua Muslim dan bukan Muslim. Beliau mencapai ketenaran melalui pemikiran dan gaya hidupnya yang unik dan berbeza, serta mukjizatnya yang suci yang berterusan sehingga selepas kematiannya. Kuburnya sering dikunjungi oleh pelawat dari pelbagai kumpulan etnik dan agama, sehingga ia mewakili kepelbagaian agama dan budaya yang menjadikan Singapura sebagai mercu tanda kosmopolitan di antara bandar-bandar besar di Asia. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah deskriptif dan analitikal serta sejarah lisan. Hasil penyelidikan ini menekankan dua kesimpulan. *Pertama*, Habib Nuh membangkitkan semangat nasionalisme dalam jiwa umat Islam Melayu di Singapura, mendorong mereka untuk mempunyai keberanian menentang keangkuhan dan mengakhiri dominasi politik penjajah British di Singapura. *Kedua*, Habib Nuh memperkenalkan asas politik Islam yang menekankan politik multikulturalisme yang membentuk situasi politik pada zaman kontemporari di Singapura.

Kata kunci: Habib Nuh, Sumbangan Politik, Mukjizat Suci, Singapura, Muslim

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of writing this article is to explore a rare and forgotten dimensions of political discourse in Singapore that was influenced by Habib Nuh, who was from the pre-war era, is well known and revered by many in South East Asia. Habib Nuh's migration from his homeland to Singapore gave the example of the need for Singapore's Muslim minorities remain in their homeland and participate in the political processes of secular state of Singapore. This is in contrast with the opinion of an Ottoman jurist had told the Bosnians, when Bosnia Hercegovina came under Austrian control, that they must all migrate to Muslim territory. A Bosnians official wrote to Rashid Ridha (1863-1935) complaining such Ottoman jurist opinion. Rida wrote a scathing attack of the Ottoman jurist insisting that Bosnians should remain in their homeland (Ridha, 1992).

Besides that, Habib Nuh's political decision also very different to Maududi, the founder chief of *Jama'at-e-Islami*, that asked his followers while leaving for Pakistan in 1948, not to participate in (secular democratic) politics in India. Maududi had forbidden

Jama'at members to vote in the elections of “secular democratic” state because he considered it *haram*. Secularism and democracy were the ultimate symbols of *tâghûtal-nizâm* (idolatrous system).

This article discussed the contribution of Habib Nuh’s Islamic teaching and notion to political landscape in contemporary Singapore. This article traces the rarely and forgotten dimensions of political discourse in Singapore that was influenced by Muslim intellectuals, such as Habib Nuh. This is an important political topic. But, discussions such as this are rare in the modern age.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study use the library and field investigations and political historical approach. The library research was conducted by gathering data from sources of bibliography related to the topic.

There were five pieces of literature that discussed the biography of Habib Nuh. *Firstly*, "The Grand Saint of Singapore," written by Mohammad Ghouse Khan Surattee. This book discussed biography of Habib Nuh, since his birth until his death. The focus of this book discussion layed on Habib Nuh' miracles. Among the literatures on Habib Nuh's biography, this book is the most comprehensive one. However, the authors of this book, did not discuss anything on Habib Nuh's political contributions in contemporary Singapore.

Secondly, "My Journey to the Land of Love Hadramawt Tarim," written by Umm Soffah Nourellyssa. As per the title, this book only explained the experience of the author's journey. Discussion about Habib Nuh only mentioned in passing, especially on his miracles.

Thirdly, "Isa Kamari on the Foundation of Singapore", written by Harry Aveling listed in *Asiatic*, vol. 8, Number 2, December 2014. In this article discussed the biography and the role played by Habib Nuh in the early days of foundation of Singapore, especially when Singapore come under the British rule, which at that time, led by Sir Stamford Raffles. In this book elaborated the possibility of Habib Nuh become the leader of modern Singapore. However, because he was more interested in matters of religion, the author concluded, Habib Nuh less suitable chosen as leader of modern Singapore.

Fourthly, the article presented by Burhanuddin Al-Helmi in 2005 in “*Simposium Tasawuf dan Tarikat*”. In this article, Burhanuddin al-Helmi explained that Habib Nuh provides useful lessons for those seeking to reconcile harmonious inter-racial relations with

intense religiosity. Therefore, no wonder, if his tomb is until today frequented by visitor from various ethnic group and religion.

Fifthly, “Islam and Human Diversity Vernacular Religion Confronts the Categories of Race and Culture,” written by Vincen Cornell, listed in edited book entitled *Humanity: Texts and Contexts Cristian and Muslim Perspective*, edited by Michael Igrave and David Marshall. In this book, Vincen Cornell explained, Habib Nuh and his tomb represent the religious and cultural diversity that make of Singapore a beacon of cosmopolitanism among the great cities of Asia.

The fundamental difference between those references with this article is, their discussion focus only on biography of Habib Nuh. While, in this article covered in depth about Habib Nuh's political contributions in contemporary Singapore. This study used the library research and interview approach. The library research was conducted by gathering data from sources of bibliography related to the topic.

HABIB NUH’S PROFILE

Habib Nuh al-Habshi (Nourellyssa, 2005), the Grand Saint of Singapore, or to use his full name, Sayyid Nuh bin Sayyid Mohamad bin Sayyid Ahmad Al-Habshi, was born during a storm, around 1788 CE or 1202/3 AH, aboard a ship making its way from Palembang to Sumatra (Surattee, 2008), hence his dedication by his parents to the Prophet Noah (Aveling, 2014). Habib Nuh Al-Habshi was an elder brother to Sharifah Aloyah. His mother was Sharifah BahiyahBinte Aqil (Nourellyssa, 2005). The title *al-Habshi* or *al-Habashi* came from his 10th grandfather, Habib Abu Bakar Al-Habashi. He was bestowed this title because, it is said, he resided in Ethiopia for nearly twenty years. *Habsyi* or *Habashah*, is the Arab name of Ethiopia. His progeny now adopt the title *al-Habshi*, not *al-Habashi* (Surattee 2008). Another version from the writings of Sayyid Abbas Al-Habshi, the greatgrandson of Habib Nuh, states that Habib Nuh was born in Kedah. However, the *Ensiklopedi Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu* states that Habib Nuh was born around 1788 in Penang (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1999).

This apparent contradiction unravels when we consider the geopolitical situation, which at that time was undergoing some significant changes. Penang was once part of the dominions of the Sultan of Kedah. In 1786, the island was given over to the Englishman,

Francis Light, in exchange for British protection of Kedah against possible raids from Siam and Burma. Nonetheless, Penang was, at least around the time of Habib Nuh's birth, barely two years after the hand-over, in the minds of locals, still part of Kedah. So, there is no contradiction in the various accounts of his birthplace (Surattee, 2008).

Habib Nuh moved to Singapore around 1819 on the invitation of Habib Salim bin Abdullah Sumayr, a follower of the Naqshbandiyah sufi order from Hadramaut. During that time, Singapore was being rapidly developed by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles of the East India company. According to Isa Kamari, Habib Nuh arrives in Singapore apparently walking on the water (Kamari, 2011). Habib Nuh resided in Singapore for 47 years and frequently visited Johore and other states in the Malay Peninsula.

Some source state that Habib Nuh first took up residence at Kampung Kaji, a village located beside the Sulthan Mosque in today's Arab street of Singapore. In Singapore, he achieved fame not through his scholarship, but rather through his idiosyncratic lifestyle and saintly miracles which continued till after his death at his tomb in Palmer Road, Tanjung Pagar (Said, 1993). His wide connections are evidenced by his advice to a visitor, Haji Said from Besut, Terengganu to send his children for religious classes with Sayyid Abdurrahman, i.e. Tokku Paloh (Surattee, 2008).

Habib Nuh married a Malay Lady, Anchik Hamidah from Teluk Air Tawar, Wellesley Province, Penang. From his marriage with Anchik Hamidah, according to Muhammad Ghouse Khan Surattee, Habib Nuh blessed with one child only, Sharifah Badariah (Surattee, 2008). While according to Umm Soffah Nourellyssa, he have another daughter named Sharifah Ridwan (Nourellyssa, 2015).

ACCOUNTS ON SAINTICAL MIRACLE

Stories on Habib Nuh often revolve around his saintly miracles (*karâmah*) derived from the reports of the People of Righteousness. Among the examples of Habib Nuh miracles were he could disappear from one place, appear at another instantaneously. He was even seen in front of the *Ka'bah* in Mecca every Friday. Another story stated, he could transform water into milk (Surattee, 2008).

Other information said, his tomb undamaged when bombed by a Japanese fighter plane (Sholeh 2009). Syeykh Hasan Al-Katib, the late custodian of the *maqam* then, Habib

Al-Khair, narrated an extraordinary even that occurred during the Japanese air raid in World War II. A Japanese fighter plane released a huge bomb directly above the roof of the tomb. The surrounding buildings were destroyed while the front door of the tomb was shattered. Habib Al-Khair suffered minor injuries. Not a trace of the jackfruit tree beside the main door was to be seen. However, it was Allah's will that the tomb itself was left undamaged. Another story stated, the bulldozers could not move when the government of Singapore planned to relocate his tomb for the construction of a major expressway (Musthafa, 2009).

Eventually, the government agencies amended the plan. The route of the East Coast Parkway was redrawn, allowing for a 10-metre detour are around the Mount Palmer. Both the tomb and the mosque were saved from demolition. According to Sheykh Hasan Alkatib, the government eventually directed the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) to preserve the tomb of Habib Nuh as well as Haji Mohamad Salleh Mosque. It is a wonder how this could have happened in a country such as Singapore which is, after all, a secular country. However, the construction company faced huge difficulties in laying the foundations for the expressway, resulting in project delays. Eventually, a high-ranking officials, who was Cinese, met with the trustees of the *maqam* and requested that a supplication be made to lift the difficulties faced. Water from the *maqam* was also requested. The water was poured on the ground where the foundations were to be laid. After that act, the project run smoothly and was completed on schedule (Surattee, 2008, Zaki, 2009).

EVOKING NATIONALISM AND STRENGTHENING MULTICULTURALISM

The political analysts do not have the same opinion about the presence or absence of Habib Nuh's political contribution in contemporary Singapore. According to Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi, Habib Nuh had no political contribution in contemporary Singapore. If Habib Nuh, who was surely learned and good-hearted, and so that, many Singaporean Malays considered him a saint, not only embraced the spiritual and the ritual of Islam, but also embraced Islamic teachings on business and finance, governance and administration, he could become model of a possible leader of the Singapore Malay community". But, because "He had no influence in administration of the island", Munsyi Abdullah added, "No, he could not lead the Malays"(Aveling, 2014).

The opinion of Munsyi Abdullah, according to Harry Aveling, is a myth and subversive strategy that originally introduced by the British. As known, in order to maintain

their rule over Singapore, the British always seek various ways to close the Malays Muslim occasions, including Habib Nuh, to get involved in political stage. This is clearly illustrated in Raffles statement, “Do not give them opportunities in business; don’t let them rise too high in administration” (Aveling, 2014).

In contrast to the opinion of Abdullah Munsyi as mentioned above, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Sains Malaysia, said that, in general, Syed had huge contribution in injecting the spirit of nationalism into the soul of the Malays Muslim. The political role like this, according to Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, also played by Habib Nuh in contemporary Singapore (Hamid, 2001, Al-Helmi, 2005). If this argument accepted, we can conclude, Habib Nuh had a significant political contribution in the contemporary Singapore.

Nuh evoked the spirit of nationalism into the soul of the Malay Muslims of Singapore, so that they have the courage to resist the arrogance and end the political domination of the British colonialists in Singapore. Habib Nuh provide invaluable example for the Singapore Muslim minorities, to show courage in doing the opposition in order to stop arrogancy or abuse of power committed by the state officials.

In this case, Habib Nuh had introduced an ideology of resistance and opposition to colonial powers. This ideology, according to John O. Voll, is continuity from idea of *hijra* to develop in the colonial age, serving as an ideology of resistance and opposition to colonial powers, and later, as an ideology of rebellion against indigenous Muslim Governments, as in the case of the followers of Sayyid Quthb (Voll 1987).

The British colonialists assume Habib Nuh who had absolutely no fear of them as a symbol of the resistance of the oppositions that has the potential energy to ignite the courage of Malays Singapore to undermine the power of the British colonialist in the region of Singapore. Therefore, the English colonialist in Singapore, since the time of Sir Stamford Raffles, did not favour Habib Nuh’s way. Much effort was made to subdue Habib Nuh so that he would come under their authority. But Habib Nuh remained firm and continued in his efforts to evoke the spirit and courage of the Malays Singapore to end domination of the British colonialist in Singapore.

The British authorities were constantly finding ways to curtail Habib Nuh’s influence on the community. He was even imprisoned a few times on trumped-up charges. Each time Habib Nuh was imprisoned, he always seemed calm. To their astonishment, he would

invariably be found on the streets the morning after his imprisonment. Once he was even found walking with children in front of one of the colonial offices. Needless to say, this bewildered the colonial officials.

THE POLITICS FOUNDATION OF MULTICULTURALISM

Nuh introduced the foundations of Islamic politics emphasises a politics of multiculturalism. The theological basis of Habib Nuh's multiculturalism political concept, according to Vincen Cornell, can be found in the two verses of the Quran. (Qur'an, 30: 22) and (Qur'an, 49: 13). In line with both verses, a famous hadith of prophet Muhammad states that there is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor for a red man over a black man, nor for a black man over a red man, expect through piety. (Ibn Hanbal, 478).

Muslims often cite these two verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith above mentioned in interfaith gathering to demonstrate that Islam is tolerant in spirit and to argue that God encourages Muslim to embrace religious diversity. As practicing Muslim and scholars, according to Vincen Cornell, the diversity of the world's religions is a part of God's plan for humanity.

The peace process and dialogue requires tolerance and mercy, and these two qualities were visibly present in the Prophet of Islam. The teachings of Prophet Mohammed is a message not only for Muslims, but for every human being to be at peace with their fellow human beings. However, the reality is that Muslims and others have forgotten this teaching of the Prophet.

Given this scenario, no civilization can live in isolation, closing its doors to global knowledge. If there is any civilization wishing to opt for seclusion, it should make sure it is entirely self-dependent in all aspects of life; which would be extremely difficult and next to impossible to achieve and sustain. Such an exclusive way of living is against the spirit of the Qur'an, which calls for communication among tribes and nations (Qur'an, 49: 13). In this respect, communication between humans is vital since it is a realization of *tawhid* at the horizontal level of human existence. (Quran, 3: 193). Nevertheless, there are many ways to communicate, and the context of communication that we are now dealing with is dialogue. As a true Muslim it is obligatory for one to show respect and compassion towards other faiths so that they may understand that Muslims strive for peace

and love and that it is their religion, Islam, which teaches them to be peaceful and compassionate. Good conduct plays a commendable role in helping others to understand Islam and Muslims and gain their respect.

What we see today is a totally different picture worldwide. There is much animosity and incompatibilities going on between different religions; between two religions or between the same religious communities, for example, the Shia *vs.* Sunni, Tablighi Jamaat *vs.* Deobandi, and Ahle Hadith *vs.* Jamaat Islamiyyah. The same thing is happening within other religious communities, such as in Hinduism, where there will always be a monopoly of power for the Brahmins over the Dalits (weaker sections) and with other groups who are not economically well off. Until today, the caste system is alive in Hinduism. In Christianity there are also differences between the Catholics and the Protestants and with other groups within the faith. So, it is clear that no culture or religion is without differences, but they must be dealt with through a process of dialogue so that peace can prevail. The basic dialogue process would begin by listening to everybody's grievances and differences and then coming to a consensus (Kurucan and Kasim, 1999).

For managing religious differences it is paramount for all the religions to be moderate enough in their religious beliefs and practices and to always try to give space to other faiths as well. Moderation does not mean that one should forsake their religion; rather it means one should at the same time not let their religious practices be a problem for others who are not of the same faith (Wani, Abdullah and Chang, 2015).

Because Habib Nuh had an inclusive view, tolerant, and very appreciate to those who different religions, according to Kushimoto Hiroko (Hiroko, 2013), during his lifetime, Habib Nuh admired by both Muslim and non-Muslim. The proff, according to Sheykh Hasan Al-Khatib, Habib Nuh who liked to watch Chinese opera performances, ever attended the opera on the invitation of the Budhist priest from the nearby temple. Though he did not understand the Chinese language, he was reported to have said, "I understand the whole plot of the story and received from it many insights on which to reflect"(Surattee, 2008).

Habib Nuh's life, according to Burhanuddin al-Helmi, provides useful lessons for those seeking to reconcile harmonious inter-racial relations with intense religiosity. His tomb is until today frequented by visitor from various ethnic group and religion (Al-Helmi, 2005; Hamid, 2001, Farhana, 2013). Melody Zaccheus reported, every day, up to 100 visitors from Singapore and beyond make their way up its 49 steps to pray and lay flowers on the marble

grave of renowned healer Habib Nuh. According to Vincen Cornell, Habib Nuh and his tomb represent the religious and cultural diversity that make of Singapore a beacon of cosmopolitanism among the great cities of Asia (Cornell, 2011).

POLITICAL PARTISIPATION OF MUSLIM MINORITIES

In theory, the position of Muslim minorities residing in non-Muslim territory, such as in Singapore, is problematic because of the traditional dichotomy between *dâr al-Islâm* and *dâr al-harb*. In practice, the persistent existence of Muslim minorities residing outside *dâr al-Islâm* challenged this dichotomous view. The status of Muslim minorities residing in non-Muslim territory has been the subject of juristic debate at least since the second/eighth century.

The issues raised by the historical and doctrinal precedents were not only of theoretical significance. The concept or *hijrah* played a role both in the internal political struggles of the early Islamic state and in matters relating to foreign policy. Since the second/eighth century, significant Muslim populations have resided in non-Muslim territories. Especially in coastal India and China. In the late Umayyad period, Muslims reportedly fled the tyranny of al-Hajjâj bin Yusuf (41-95/661-714) by taking refuge in Malabar, India. During the reign of al-Mahdi (158-169/775- 785) and Harûn al-Rashîd (170-193/786-809), Muslim lands were lost to non-Muslim rule. In the fifth/eleventh century, large Muslim populations came under non-Muslim rule in Messina and Sicily. The problem of how to treat Muslims who reside in non-Muslim territory became particularly urgent in the seventh/thirteenth century, when vast Muslim territory was conquered in the East by Mongols and in the West by Christians (Lewis, 1988).

These historical challenges elicited a variety of responses from Muslim jurists. Some jurists argued that Islam and *dar al-Islam* are inseparable and that Muslims therefore may not reside in non-Muslim lands under any circumstance. Other jurists conceived of *hijra* as a dynamic concept that requires Muslims to be in a constant search for lands in which they can attain greater religious fulfillment. Some of these jurists argued that it may be recommended or even obligatory for a Muslim to reside among unbelievers.

The early jurists addressed the issue of a non-Muslim who converted to Islam while in non-Muslim territory. Should that person now migrate to *dâr al-Islâm*? One might expect Sunni jurists who were accustomed to the formal association of the polity with Islam to

demand that such a person immediately migrate to dar al-Islam. But examination of the historical progression of juridical thought on the issue suggests that such an assertion should be qualified.

The early Hanafi jurist, al-Shaybani (d. 189/804), reports that the duty to migrate to the land of Islam (ard al-Islam) after conversion was abrogated at the time of the Prophet. Those who convert but do not migrate to dar al-Islam are like the nomads (a'rab) who accepted Islam but refused to join the Prophet in Medina. Although they are Muslims, they are not allowed to share in the spoils of war. However, al-Shaybani reports on the authority of Abu Yusuf (d. 182/798-99) that Abu Hanifa (d. 150/768) disapproved of Muslims residing in non-Muslim territory.

Early Maliki jurists were less equivocal. Sahnun (d. 240/854) reports that Malik (d. 179/796) strongly disapproved of Muslims traveling to the lands of non-believers for purposes of trade because they might become subject to the laws of unbelievers. The operative legal cause in Malik's view is that Muslims will be forced to submit to non-Muslim law, an issue that later became a crux of legal discussions. It is also reported that Malik discouraged people from residing in territory in which the Companions of the Prophet are vilified. This is taken by later Maliki jurists to mean that residence in lands of widespread sin is not allowed.

Al-Shafi'i (d. 204/819-20) chose a very different approach. He argued that even after the establishment of the Islamic state in Medina, 'Abdallah bin 'Abbas (a Companion of the Prophet) and others were allowed to reside in Mecca (then a non-Muslim territory). Additionally, the Prophet allowed nomadic tribes that converted to Islam to remain outside the domains of the lands of Islam. The Prophet, according to al-Shafi'i would not have given these people a choice of residence if it was sinful for them to retain their independence. Consequently, Muslims who convert in non-Muslim lands may reside there unless these Muslims fear enticement away from Islam.

As a continuation of the opinion of al-Shafi'i, Khaled Abou el-Fadl, deliver a new question, "Can Muslim minorities participate in the political processes of a secular state?"(El-Fadl, 2005). As response of this fundamental question, in contemporary era, many people feel that Islam is quite incompatible with secularism. Some even maintain that as long as one is Muslim he cannot be a secularist. This is further reinforced by the propaganda by some

Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia that secularism is *haram* (forbidden) and that all secular nations are enemy of Islam.

Maulana Maududi, the founder chief of Jama'at-e-Islami also said that secularism is *haram* (prohibited) in Islam and all those who participate in secular politics in India will be rebels against Islam and enemies of the messenger of Allah. Therefore, he asked his followers while leaving for Pakistan in 1948, not to participate in (secular democratic) politics in India. Maududi had forbidden Jama'at members to vote in the elections of secular democratic' state because he considered it *haram*. Secularism and democracy were the ultimate symbols of *taghutal-nizam* (idolatrous system) (Enginer 2000).

The scholars of India, does not seem to comply with the Maududi's political advice. Because believed that Islam has always stresses religious pluralism, tolerance, respect for others, upholds pluralism, freedom of conscience and human democratic rights and thus does not clash with the concept of secularism, then the Jama'at wisely has transformed itself in India and is active on several fronts like human rights, communal harmony and peace. It is also interesting to note that a secular set up like India's 'ulama accepted secular principles of governance and never objected to it. In fact, the 'ulamain India stress secularism and urge upon Muslim masses to vote for secular parties. Of late the Jama'at-e-Islami-Hindh has also accepted secular democracy and has even set up a secular democratic front of its own, particularly after demolition of Babri Masjid and the riots that followed it. Thus it will be seen that the Indian 'ulama have shown a way in this respect by accepting secularism. Islam and secularism can and should go together in the modern world. Therefore, it is no wonder if a Muslim, viz Abul Pakir Jainul Abdeen Abdul Kalam Muslim, successfully elected as president of the India that it majority of the population is Hindu (sworn in on July 25, 2002 as the third Muslim president of the 12 Indian president).

In contrast to al-Maududi, who chose to leave India which he considered as a secular state, Habib Nuh instead, decided to leave his homeland and chose Singapore that adopted a secular political system, which at that time led by Raffles, as his new country. The political decision of Habib Nuh, of course, had inspired the Muslim minorities of Singapore to remain in their homeland, work, and participate in the political processes in contemporary Singapore. In order to legitimize their political participation, on May 26, 2006, at Ritz-Carlton, Singapore, contemporary Singapore Muslim Minorities asked for a fatwa to Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Cairo, "Is it possible for

Muslims to be at ease living and participating in a secular state without feeling less Muslim or can they as Muslims co-exist within a plural society in a multi-religious society, without compromising and sacrificing their Islamic values?" As response to the question, Sayyid Tantawi said the following, "The answer is very clear, "yes." It is possible for a Muslim minority to live in a State with a non-Muslim majority; and all of them live in cooperation, harmony, love, for the common good, in order to have peace, justice and prosperity, because the prosperity of the State will benefit both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Despite living as a minority, Sayyid Tantawi added, Singapore Muslim Minorities have religious freedom. I was told that in Singapore, although Muslims represent only 15%, they have about 70 mosques where they are free to practice Islam. At the same time, we find that non-Muslims also have the same freedom and no one is restricted in this sense. In such a case, it is incumbent upon the minority to respect the majority and vice versa. This will ensure that everyone lives in peace and prosperity in all fields of life.

As long as this is the case, Sayyid Tantawi said, we as Muslims should respect the majority. We have to work together to maintain peace and promote positive exchanges, amongst all citizens living here in Singapore. We have to work together to promote peace and security. You have to respect the creeds and beliefs of the others and be cooperative, and to respect the law and legislation of the State because such legislation guarantees the freedom of religious belief and other human rights.

It is a two-way traffic. The majority has to respect the minority and accord them the rights. And the minority has to respect the majority because they live together peacefully. This way, nations can progress and prosper. By doing this, we are implementing what has been ordered by divine religions and what is agreed upon by rational and wise human minds (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, 2006).

When given two choices, between participate and not participate in political process, and Muslims minorities in a non-Muslim state, such as in Singapore, should chose the option for participating in political process and take important and reasonable steps to seize strategic political positions, especially the position as head of state. As some non-Muslims also always tried to get strategic political positions in Muslim countries. Tis opinions do not seem to deviate from the guidance of the Qur'an. Because in the past the Prophet Yusuf, as narrated in the Qur'an (Qur'an, 12: 55-56), had worked as Treasurer (finance minister) of Egypt which at that time led by Pharaoh (Crone 2004), viz King Heksus (Al-Usairy, 2003).

Political career as treasurer of the Egypt has ever been achieved by Prophet Yusuf in the past, and at present, the success of an Indian Muslim, Abul Pakir Jainul Abdeen Abdul Kalam, became president of the Indian Hindu majority state, presumably need to be emulated by other Muslim politicians who live as minorities in other non-Muslims countries, including in the United States. It is an achievement to be proud of and can be emulated, if Muslim minorities in America in particular and in another non-Muslims state in general, can pursue a political career to succeed as head of state as well as achieved by Muslim minorities in India and Singapore as achieved by Halimah Yacob who became the country's first female president and was sworn in as Singapore's eighth president without a vote.

Therefore, the opinion of al-Maududi cited above should be rejected. Because if accepted, his opinion would cause the difficulties and detrimental to Muslims. By participating in the political process, Singapore Muslim minorities will be able to fight for their political aspirations. Conversely, if they does not participate in political process, they will have many difficulties in realizing their social and political aspirations in contemporary Singapore.

The result of this study indicated, political analysts do not have the same opinion about the presence or absence of Habib Nuh's political contribution in contemporary Singapore. And the finding of this study indicated, that Habib Nuh admired by both Muslim and non-Muslim, his life, according to Burhanuddin al-Helmi, provides useful lessons for those seeking to reconcile harmonious inter-racial relations with intense religiosity. His tomb is until today frequented by visitor from various ethnic group and religion. According to Vincen Cornell, Habib Nuh and his tomb represent the religious and cultural diversity that make of Singapore a beacon of cosmopolitanism among the great cities of Asia.

CONCLUSION

This article managed to yield the conclusions that Habib Nuh evoked the spirit of nationalism into the soul of the Malay Muslims of Singapore, leading them to have the courage to resist the arrogance and end the political domination of the British colonialists in Singapore. It also discovers that Habib Nuh introduced the foundations of Islamic politics that emphasizes a politics of multiculturalism that forms the political situation in the contemporary period in Singapore.

Habib Nuh' political decision to leave his homeland and migrate to Singapore that adopted a secular political system, which at that time led by Sir Stamford Raffles, as his new country, of course, had a significant implication, viz inspired the Singapore Muslim minorities to remain in their homeland, work, and participate in the political processes in contemporary Singapore.

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