
WARTA JENAKA AND WAK KETOK: VISUALISING THE OTHER IN EARLY MALAY EDITORIAL CARTOONS

Ahmad Murad Merican

International Islamic University Malaysia
ahmadmurad@iium.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This article defines Malay identity through their portrayal of the Malay Other – the Arabs, Indian Muslims and the Europeans. The Arabs and Peranakan Arabs were identified as foreigners in disguise, the Europeans colonisers as harbingers of modernity. From this perspective not much has been written, using editorial cartoons in Malaysia. This article then focuses on the depiction by the Malay of what constitutes the foreigner (and the West). The medium of the cartoon was a recent innovation in Malay-language newspapers, having first appeared in the first issue of *Warta Jenaka* a weekly pictorial newspaper on 7 September of 1936. This article surveys three major periodicals in the 1930s including that of *Warta Ahad* and *Utusan Zaman* in their construction of ambivalence toward colonialism and Western influence. These were the inter-war years. The periodicals capture Malay sentiments couched in humour and sarcasm ranging from the “proximate” culture of the Arabs to British or European notions of “race”, “modernity” and “progress.” It is cognizant of the colonial condition and the milieu and the inherent character of the Malay press, serving as instruments of criticism and satire. The visual “ethno-nationalistic” discourse is observed about the trajectory of “modernity” brought into Malay awareness during the period.

Keywords: *Editorial cartoons, Malay periodicals, the Other, Sarcasm, Europeans*

INTRODUCTION

The Malay encounter with Europe and the Western world through the selected Malay writings and journalism from Abdullah Munsi¹ through *ql-Imam*² saw the image of the White man under different social and political conditions. At the same time, it resonates on the Malay image and identity. From that perspective, not much have been written about editorial cartoons in Malaysia, even more so on Malay editorial cartoons. This paper surveys the available work on the subject. The medium of the cartoon was a recent innovation in Malay-language newspapers, first appearing in the first issue on 7 September, 1936 of the weekly pictorial newspaper *Warta Jenaka*, which seems to have been a direct borrowing and adaptation from European, more specifically British cartooning (Muliyadi Mahamood,

2004: 14-15, 97). This paper focuses on the depiction by the Malay of what constitutes the 'proximate' foreigner (and the West).

Three significant works and writings on depictions in Malay cartoons have been referred to. Specifically, the paper focuses on how the cartoons define Malay identity through their portrayal of the Malay other—the Arab, the Indian Muslims and the Europeans. The Arabs and Peranakan Arabs were identified as foreigners in disguise. Mulyadi Mahamood's seminal work titled *The History of Malay Editorial Cartoons (1930s-1993)* published in 2004 provides a discussion on the cartoon narrative. Another, more of a popular appraisal of early Malay periodicals is *Senda Sindir Sengat* by Zakiah Hanum (1989). Deborah A. Johnson's (2006) "Wak Ketok Defends Melayu: Mediated Exchange and Identity Formation in late 1930s (*Comparativ* 16: 68-86) uses the framework of mediated exchange within the forces at work in the Malay community at that time.

It must be born in mind that the study of Malay editorial cartoons should be studied according to the character of the Malay press. Malay cartoons first appeared in the 1930s through the works of several regular and freelance cartoonist in three major newspapers, namely *Warta Jenaka*, *Warta Ahad* and *Utusan Zaman*. In his work, Mulyadi describes some of the functions of Malay editorial cartoons. In addition to entertainment, they also functioned as instruments of criticism and satire, "in line with the goals of the papers to raise the Malays' consciousness about their rights and their future" (2004: 14). Apart from containing political, social and economic criticisms containing the Malays, the cartoons also depict the image of the Malay Other – dominantly the Arabs, Indians and Chinese. The latter two were described as *orang dagang*.

Warta Jenaka, published every Sunday was the 'sister periodical' to *Warta Ahad*, published every Sunday. The former was first published on 7 September 1936 while the latter on 1 January 1930. Those were the interwar years. The Malays in Malaya were aware of the various conflicts in Europe, the Arab world, China and Japan. Malay periodicals and newspapers at that time provided the vehicle for expression and nationalist sentiments. Cartoons and caricatures began to emerge as satirical and political manifestations evoking the Malay consciousness.

Among the columns in *Warta Jenaka* was given the name 'Kelawak Kita.' According to Zakiah Hanum, 'Kelawak' is a word created by *Warta Jenaka*—the abbreviation from the words 'kelakar' and 'lawak,' both carrying the meaning 'funny' and 'humorous.' The 'Kelawak Kita' column carried the writing by Ketuit—bringing humour to its readers, while the column 'Rencah-rencah Pembuka Selera' (appetizing ingredients) by Pak Lacok represented humour through the style of the Arabic language. Pak Lacok resonated the Malay sentiment on the Arabs and Peranakan Arabs. While the Malays revered the Arabs as Muslims, the Malays at the same time despised their brethren for apparently being 'more Islamic' or more modern than the Malays themselves.

THE OTHER MALAY (AND THE MALAY OTHER)

In Malay history, there has always been the Other, of Otherness, of self-definition, deriving from who is not a Malay. In history, the Malay, perhaps like the Japanese (See Tanaka, 1995), need an orient, but much in dissimilar assumptions. Edward W. Said, in his Preface to *Orientalism* (2003: xiv) argues that there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples

and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their sakes, and on the other hand knowledge—if that is what it is—that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation, belligerency and outright war. There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for control and external dominion. That as we understand, is in the psyche of the Europeans, or Imperial Japan.

The story of an ionic, idealized White invokes the characteristic of Orientalism—the White man as God syndrome. The white man mistaken for a god is one of the oldest clichés in contemporary popular culture. This is seen in books, movies and cartoons. The Rudyard Kipling story made into the John Huston film, *The Man who would be King*; or the adventures of Indiana Jones in the *Temple of the Doom* are not disinterested reports or literary deceptions. These are consciously deployed ideology to explain the innate superiority of Europe to all parts of the European psyche. In modern times, the White Man becomes the god of scientific wonder and superior technology (Sardar, 1999: 8). The bearer of such advancement is the ‘unsophisticated’ Other. This paper illustrates the Malay conception of the West, and its derivatives; and the image of Europe as represented through the Malay religious brethren in the Arab. The expression as the Other finds its way in humor and sarcasm. On the one hand, it is an act of engaging with the West; on the other hand, is an act of reservation to one’s kin—in segregating and at the same time associating Islam to ethnicity.

VISUALIZING THE WEST AND THE REST

Warta Jenaka uses a regular contributor who went by the name S.B. Ally (Salleh bin Ally). He created caricatures expressing Malay sentiments on external threats – real or perceived. At that time, the Malays felt the need to express themselves, contributing to the rise of new forms of public opinion-making which saw newspaper increasingly filled with public views of the situation in Malaya and Singapore. This enlarged participation in a burgeoning Malay press was largely a response to what Malay writers perceived to be the changing circumstances of life in Malaya (Emmanuel, 2010). The Malay were worried. They felt helpless because the administration of Tanah Melayu was under the British. They were disappointed with the British and develop a sense of being marginalized in their *Tanah Air*. The narrative of grievance in being unfairly treated began to emerge in the Malay psyche. This was represented through the caricature in *Warta Jenaka*. According to Zakiah Hanum (1989: 3), the Malays blamed the West for the some of the features of modernization. It has corrupted thought and behaviour, especially of the urban Malays. The Malay brought the question of “Timur untuk Timur” (The East for the East) through caricatures (see Figure 1) depicting political leaders and figures in the East and West—in this case, supporting the Japanese (against the West).



Figure 1: “Timur untuk Timur”

Barat: “Dia orang makan nasi gorenglah!”

Gandhi: “Sahabat-sahabar kita itu mengapa master tidak jemput?”

Pemimpin Jepun: “Dia orang sudah kenyang rah!”

(Trans: East for East

The West: “They’re eating fried rice!”

Gandhi: “Why didn’t you invite our friends, Master?”

Japanese Leader: “They’re already full!”)

Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 17 February 1938, p.8.

The Great Depression did not help either. There was a great sense of introspection and a heightened consciousness in the Malay psyche. The anxiety on the subservience to the *bangsa asing* was a predominant theme in the Malay press. It has to be noted that with a deepening downturn from 1931, the growing consciousness translated into an increasing number of articles about economic questions, particularly Malay economic participation in the colonial economy. This dominated the opinion, editorial, commentary and letters columns of Malay newspapers through the first half of the 1930s. Emmanuel notes that it was a common theme among writers and contributors to Malay language periodicals to speak of a rising ‘consciousness’ (*kesedaran*) in the Malay condition. A contributor to the Kuala Lumpur-based *Majlis* put it succinctly: “Malay men and women were now conscious that their race was languishing far behind and were trying to catch up with the other races that had achieved progress well before us.” (al-Bilal, *Majlis*, 17 January 1935)

Malay society at that time was well aware of the world. They embraced cosmopolitanism. At the same time, they were uneasy with the facets of modernity which began to penetrate the Malay psyche. Many had blamed the West. There was a heavy dose of sarcasm. The cartoons in such periodicals as *Warta Jenaka* portrayed such issues as the portrayal of Western culture and modernism.³



Figure 2: *Barat Tinggal di Barat – Timur Tinggal di Timur*
(Trans: The West Remains the West, The East Remains the East).
Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 7 September 1936, p. 15.

An example is the cartoon by Abd Manan titled “Barat tinggal di Barat, Timur tinggal di Timur” (The West Remains the West, the East Remains the East) which appeared in *Warta Jenaka* (7 September 1936, p. 15). The cartoon makes a statement – critical of the West and critical of the Malays who are fascinated with the West. It shows the Malays, depicted by a couple of monkeys appearing to ape the West (Figure 2).



Figure 3
Lelaki: “SubhanaAllah moden Barat moden Timur.”
Kulit: “Kulit kata mari.”
Kacang: “Kacang kata aku moden.”
Ular: “Hairan.”
(Trans:
Man: “Oh my God!...Modern West, Modern East.”
Pod: “I said, come here.”
Peanuts: “We are modern.”
Snake: “Unbelievable.”)
Source: *Warta Jenaka* 23 November 1936, p. 18.

Like Abd. Manan, Abdullah Abbas also represents Westernized Malays as monkeys. However, unlike Manan's monkeys who are dressed in Western apparel, the monkeys drawn by Abdullah were dancing, watched by a snake and a man dressed as an Arab (see Figure 3). The Malay image of the Arab is always linked to Islam; hence the Arab as a religious and pious man. The snake says "I Can't believe this," while the man says "Oh my God! ... Modern West, Modern East." A tasbeeh (rosary), drops off his hands. Between the "pious" Arab and the monkey couple, peanut peels are calling the peanuts to return: "Come here," while the peanuts say "I am modern!" The Malay proverb *bagai kacang lupakan kulit* (Like peanuts who forget their pod). The caricature by Abdullah was sending a message for the Malays not to forget their origins. Animals are used to represent the West and modern attitudes.



Figure 4

Mem: "Terimalah apa yang saya kasi Encik! Jangan peduli apa-apa perbuatan orang-orang gaji saya itu."

Lelaki China: "Manyak silap!"

(Trans:

The European lady: "Accept what I'm offering you, Mister! Don't take heed to what y servants are doing!"

The Chinese man: "That's a big mistake!")

Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 6 January 1938, p. 10

At the same time, the Malays are fascinated by Western culture and their way of life. The Malays were cautioned that the foreigners always work together to take advantage of the Malays to control the economy in colonial Malaya. In this regard, Mulyadi (2004: 28) also looks at the technique of the cartoonist. He draws our attention to the linear images, capturing and appropriating gestures of the characters. This is depicted through the image of a European lady (or how a *perempuan orang putih* is supposed to be) as though she is a model in an advertisement or fashion photography. S.B. Ally (in Figure 4) tries to present her as the opposite of the Malay woman.

The colonial policy of importing labour into the Malay Peninsula was a subject of intense interest and concern of the Malays. By the beginning of the last century, Chinese

and Indian immigrants far outnumbered Malays in Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. In 1911, the total population for the three states was 918,291, of whom 408,957 were Chinese, 165,844 Indian and 333,731 Malay (Census of the Federated Malay State, 1911). A complex legal and economic system, unrelated to traditional Malay society, had been brought into existence to serve the Western economic enterprise. All four states (including Pahang) were administered by a large and proliferating European bureaucracy increasingly centralized in Kuala Lumpur. For the most part, the ordinary Malay peasant had gained little material benefit from the wealth and revenue of the new administrative arrangement. On the other hand, the rulers and the upper ranks of the aristocracy had been compensated for the loss of all but the symbols of power. They were awarded with substantial regular incomes. The Malay elite in the states under British protection in 1910 was certainly not unaware of the potential advantage to them of economic development (Roff, 1967: 93). Under the administration, the *orang-orang asing* (foreign people) as popularly described by the Malays had made several demands. One such was from the Straits Settlement. The Chinese population had demanded to the British to be recognized as “Peranakan Selat” (Straits born). In the Federated Malay States, the Chinese termed themselves as *local born* “bangsa Malayan” (Malayan race). This aroused intense concern and uneasiness among the Malays toward British policy of encouraging immigration and favouring the migrants.



Figure 5

Gajah (Bangsa Asing): “Hei! Mesti kasi lekas apa-apa kemahuan aku!”

Lelai (Kerajaan Tanah Melayu): “Baik! Baik!! Jangan gaduh kita nanti kasi lekas.”

Ayam (Orang Melayu): “Apa macam aku punya kemahuan?”

Lelaki (Kerajaan Tanah Melayu): “Ooo..Engkau diam dahulu.”

(Trans.:

Elephant [The Foreigner]: “He! Fulfil my demands now.”

Man [The government of British Malaya]: “Alright! Alright! Don’t get angry, we are giving it to you quickly!”

Chicken [The Malay]: “What about me?”

Man [The government of British Malaya]: “Ooo...You keep quiet!”)

Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 10 February 1938, p. 10.



Figure 6

Ayam Betina (Administration): Lima puluh tahun lamanya aku mengeram baruah menetas dengan pertolongan Profesor Amerika. Sukalah hatiku melihatkan "anak kita" subur dan sihat rupanya."

Ayam Jantan (Kerajaan Negeri Melayu): "Anak kita? Mustahil aku bieh naik di atas belakang engkau, selagi kakiku trikat seperti ini. Lagipun aku ini tidak bertaji macam engkau! Bagaimana boleh dikatakan aku jantan."

Makanan ayam = Sagu hati

Tahi ayam = Suara orang Melayu

Biwak = Orang Besar Melayu

(Trans.

The Hen [Administration]: "For fifty years I have been sitting on my eggs, and now they have hatched thanks to the Amerian Professor's help. I am so happy to see how healthy and strong 'our children are.'

The Rooster (Malay government): "Our children? How could I have climbed onto your back, with my feet tied like this? Besides, I don't have spurs like yours! How can I be called a male?"

The Rooster's Food = Consolation

The Roosters Excrement = the voice of the Malays

Monitor Lizard = Upper class Malays)

Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 20 January 1938, p. 10

In the framework of British policy, this found expression among the Malays and in and expressed through the Malay press. One such person was through Malay journalist and editor Abdul Rahim Kajai. Kajai sees the Europeans and British in Malaya as *bangsa pemerintah* (ruling race) who dominated the administrative machinery, the economy and education. His hostility toward the British was not as intense as compared to the immigrants. Rather his critique on the British was because the latter failed to protect and safeguard the Malays as the "*warga negara*" of Tanah Melayu (Abul Latiff Abu Bakar, 1984: 186-187). These claims included wanting to see the rights and privileges of the Malays defended. The Malays were told to stand firm amid the growing stream of immigrants. Such expressions seem to be structured through present-day national discourse. Maier (2010) describes such claims as an ethnic or ethnicised nationalism focussing on one's group culture and traditions rather than a civic nationalism where Kajai and the Malays would have accepted the multiplicity and diversity of the Peninsula and would have created notions and community that went beyond the Malay community.⁴



Figure 7: *Hak-hak, faedah-faedah di Timur Jauh*
(Trans.: The rights and benefits in the Far East)

Source: *Warta Jenaka*, 3 February 1938, p. 10.

The alter ego of Abdul Rahim Kajai was *Wak Ketok* (Uncle Knock). The relevance of *Wak Ketok* lies in the identity of the Malay and the notion of the Other. The Malay was increasingly being defined against both a “Chinese” and a “Malay-Arab” or a “Malay-Indian Muslim” racial “other.” Deborah Johnson (2006) describes that the “nerve-centre” of Malay consciousness in the 1920s and the 1930s was a growing awareness of the problem of Malay backwardness. This is intertwined with Malay identity (*takrif Melayu*) as being shaped in the mirror of a “foreign other,” which in the first instance was not a European “other,” but more local and proximate, disguised as “foreigners” (*orang asing*) and foreign traders (*orang dagang*) or “others” against which it was defined and contested.

Moving from the macro picture of European colonialism and conceptions of “race” to the micro picture of local rivalries, concerns and perceptions, the picture became more complex and layered. Colonial power and influence reeded to the fringes as the local collective rivalries and grievances that shaped perceptions of difference and marked the boundaries between “us” and “other” or “foreign” became more apparent.

(Johnson, 2006)

In her investigation on cultural interaction and exchange in identifying the leading “actors” and their interests, motivations and contributions, Johnson delves into “*Wak Ketok*”, the cartoon character published in the weekly *Utusan Zaman*, the illustrated weekend newspaper first published in Singapore on 5 November 1939. It was the companion Sunday paper for *Utusan Melayu*.⁵ “*Wak Ketok*” was the voice Kajai, through the form given by cartoonist Mohd. Ali Sanat. According to Mulyadi (2004: 39), *Utusan Zaman* relied solely on Ali Sanat’s contributions for its cartoon illustration until the paper closed down in 1942 during the Japanese Occupation. In her paper, Johnson argues that competing local traditions and other more proximate external cultural influences had an important role in mediating the dynamics of the interaction process. She defines “mediating” influences and actors as those which

occupy an intermediate or middle position and serve as an intervening agency—not only as a kind of passive filter, but also as an autonomous agent active in shaping outcomes. They add a further layer in the interaction/transfer process and can serve as bridges (facilitating transfer), as barriers (resisting transfer), as filters (selecting elements transferred), or as prisms (enabling but diverting flows in new directions with new complexions; perhaps also adding further possible outcomes). Johnson reasons that it was easier to borrow from the proximate culture of the Arabs, while “nonetheless rejecting their leadership claims. Importantly, specific aspects associated with the “West” and “modernity” were rejected, as in the aspects of the “other” that were seen as morally permissive and “orientalist.”

Another aspect of the mediation was the transfer process from the West. What we see are ideas of predominantly British or European notions of “race” and “nation,” “modernity” “progress” and “development.” Johnson asks a series of significant questions begging the question: “what were the understandings before the colonial presence?” requiring newer understandings to be grafted and measured against. She presupposes that ideas concerning Islam were re-presented in the modern twentieth century context. Did the ideas influence the Malay sense of identity? Were the Malay Arabs merely mediating actors filtering a “Western modernity;” or should they be seen rather as contending actors advocating “Islamic modernity” filtered through its interaction with “Western modernity?”

Johnson represents an interesting study of the ambivalence on Colonial or Western influences. British colonialism was just one of a number of “actors” operating in what she suggests as a “multilateral” arena of interaction. Consequently Wak Ketok is a “window” through which to view such micro-level interactions between multiple and complex—with competing and sometimes contradictory motivations – actors and agents at a specific site (the British Straits Settlement of Singapore, the *Utusan Zaman* in the Malay community) at a particular time in history (1939–1941). Wak Ketok is engaged in a discourse about racial identity. *Bangsa* (translated into English as “race”) was the specific term used.

Wak Ketok, reflecting the Malay representation for a Javanese, and not so much seeing the characters as having Javanese origins as suggested by Johnson, and his tendency to be critical of people and situations around him, first appeared in the first issue of *Utusan Zaman* on 5 November 1939.⁶ Wak Ketok came to embody Kajai’s personality and thinking. There was a collective difference and grievance.⁷ This was directed at several ethnic groups in which the Malays and Kajai interacted in Malaya and Singapore. One of which was the “Arab” community—the Arabs and the Peranakan Arabs—defining the boundaries of Malay identity, which Wak Ketok was depicted as defending. The DKA (Darah Keturunan Araba, or those of Arab Descent) were seen as foreigners in disguise (*Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940: 2).

Wak Ketok was critical of the pretensions of the wealthy Malay/Arab community—their Westernized lifestyle, their assumed piety while at the same time being depicted as engaging in drinking and gambling, which Islam forbids. What is significant and forms one of the main strands of argument in this postscript is that the boundaries of Malay identity were being shaped by collective grievance directed not at the colonial regime in the first instance, but at an “other” within the local Muslim community.

Both *Warta Jenaka* and Wak Ketok cartoons make direct reference to Malay proverbs or sayings and to the characters and themes of traditional Malay stories. One cartoon (see Figure 2) refers to the Malay saying *kacang lupakan kulit* (the bean forgets its pod) and is applied to the “nouveau riche” who forgets his humble origins. Another refers to Mat Jenin. Both

are examples of critique directed at a small English-educated elite (including those from traditional Malay royalty) by a nascent Malay vernacular-educated elite from more humble social origins, who felt a connection with the issues facing ordinary Malays (Johnson, *op.cit.*)

A prominent feature of the Wak Ketok cartoon itself is the nose. His nose seems at times much longer and more pronounced (when shown in profile)—especially when he is in the guise of an Arab or a Western (-ised).⁸ Among the Malay, Europeans (and Westerners) are commonly seen as possessing sharp, pointed noses (*hidung mancung*). The foreigner, in Malay cartoons through the ages, have pronounced noses of the *mancung* type. While Kajai (through Wak Ketok) was critical of the Arabs for their moral shortcomings, their extravagant lifestyles, their presuming to lead the Malay-Muslim community, he was equally critical of Malays for their deference to the Sayyids for their lack of Malay pride and support of fellow Malays. This led him to create nine classifications where his “*takrif Melayu*” would not fit into. Among them, Arab father Malay mother; Indian Muslim father Malay mother, Syed father Syarifah mother, Arab father Indian Muslim mother, etc.⁹

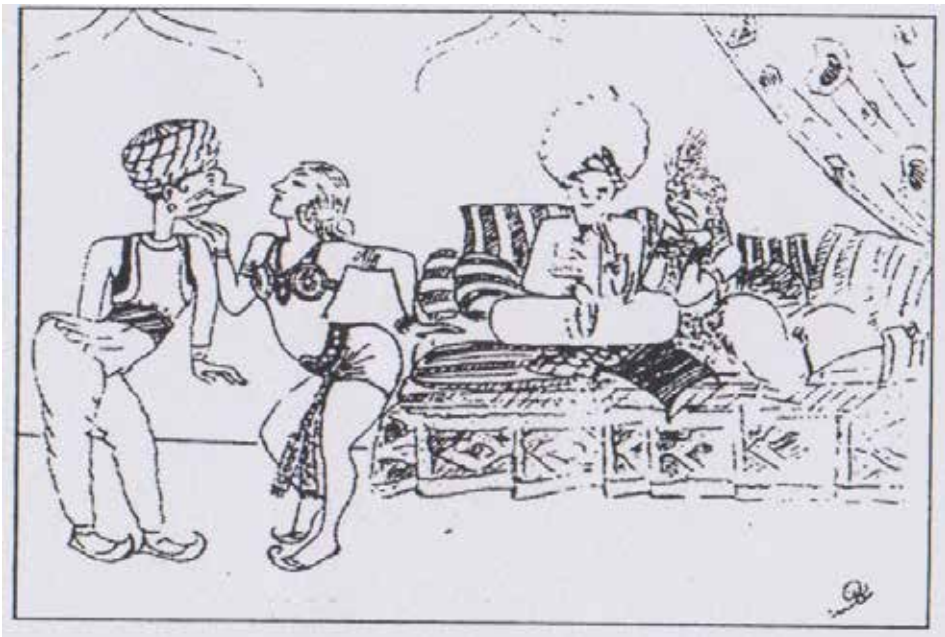


Figure 8: *Wak Ketok Mati Masuk Syurgakah atau Neraka?*
(Trans.: Will Wak Ketok Go to Heaven or to Hell When He Dies)
Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 4 February 1940, p.2



Figure 9: *Dari Mana Wak Ketok Dapat Gelaran Yang Mulia?*
 (Trans: Where did Wak Ketok Get His honourable Title?)
 Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 20 July 1940, p. 17.

The anti-Arab sentiment was presented in several ways by Wak Ketok. The most obvious was the representation of their moral decline. Acting as a Malay-Arab, Wak Ketok behaves in a non-Islamic fashion, dancing wildly, drinking alcohol and gambling. He was also portrayed as a mean husband and a hypocrite (see Figure 8).

In Figure 9, we see a clear portrayal of the West. Wak Ketok was having a Western-style dinner with his wife—fine dining. Notice the use of cutlery, which is alien to the common Malay. Acting as an arrogant Malay-Arab, the sharp-nosed Wak Ketok was portrayed in a suit. He Malay-Arabs at that time were seen to be the purveyors of modernity, and obsessed with the West.



Figure 10: *Wak Ketok Memberi Amaran Hendak Marah*
 (Trans.: Wak Ketok Warns He is Getting Angry)
 Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940, p. 12.

The caricature in Figure 10 shows Wak Ketok preparing a cocktail for a Malay-Arab who was waiting while his mouth says the name of Allah. In most of Wak Ketok's caricatures, the Arabs were seen as pretenders and hypocrites. The Arab and the Peranakan Arab images mediated between the Malay and the European.



Figure 11: *Wak Ketok Memberi Amaran Hendak Marah*

Wak Ketok berjaja ikan
Ada kerang ada lokan
Tak dibeli Jawi Pekan
Serani sudah lakukan
(Trans. : Wak Ketok Warns he is getting angry
Waki Ketok sells fish
There are cockles there are clams
Malay-Arabs do not buy them
For they have been bought by the Eurasians)
Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940, p. 12.

The caricature and the subsequent caption (Figure 12 – Figure 16) reflected the boycott of the *Utusan Melayu* newspaper by the Peranakan-Arab community in Pulau Pinang.



Figure 12: *Wak Ketok Mati Masuk Syurgakah atau Neraka?*
(Trans.: Wak Ketok goes to Heaven or to Hel when he Dies?)

Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 4 February 1940, p.2

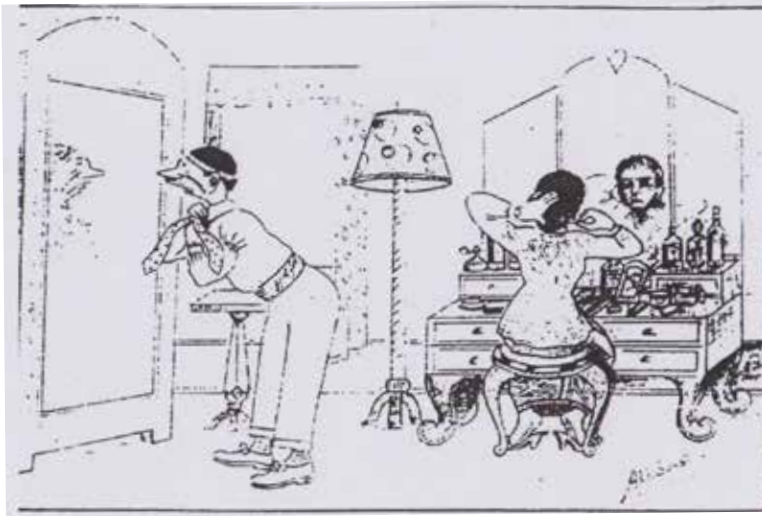


Figure 13: *Wak Ketok Mabuk Sporting Spirit.*
(Trans.: Wak Ketok is a Sporting Spirit)

Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 10 December 1939, p.2



Figure 14: *Ana fikir bansa Melayu ana ini sudah kena sumpah katak hijau. Jikalau betul suedha kena sumpah ana mahu bertanya siapa sumpah? Ke atas tak berpucuk, ke bawah tak berurat, di tengah-tengah dilarik kumbang. Sport gadis tak boleh, mendirikan kebangsaan haram, mengeluarkan suratkhobar najis. Membuka suara mencarut. Berkata benar anti-Islam. Memakai Yang Mulia berdosa. Minta sedekah dia orang tak kasi. Bila berniaga tengoklah ana di atas terjerit-jerit menyerukan kebangsaan Melayu di kedia ana tetapi orang Melayu paling muka. Kedia ana kosong."*

(Trans: I think my race has been charmed by the green frog. If that it true, I would ask who did it? There are no shoots are the top, no roots at the bottom, and eaten by bugs in between. Flirting with girls are forbidden, so also with building a nation, and filthy to publish a newspaper. Expressing ourselves is likened to a foul mouth. Speaking the truth is anti-Islamic. It is sinful to use the title "honourable." Nobody gives to beggars. Here I am doing business, striving for Malay nationalism just to find the Malays turning away. My shop is empty.)

Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 26 November 1939, p.2.



Figure 15: Waktu nazi Jerman hendak membolot Poland tempoh hari tiba-tiba di tengah jalan bertemu dwngan Soviet yang berkata kepadanya – “Jaga! Ukrain dan kawasan Rusia Putih di Poland Timur aku punya.” Kebetulan Soviet sudahpun mencacakan tiang sempadan di mana Nazi mesti berhenti. Lihatlah askar Nazi walaupun roda keretaya bendera swastika tetapi terpegun dan tercengan-cengan lakunya melihat kawannya.

(Trans.: When the German Nazis were on their way to capture Poland recently, they suddenly found a Soviet in the middle of the road. He told them - ‘Beware! Ukraine and the White Russian ar in Eastern Poland are mine.’ By coincidence, the Soviet had placed a border market to indicat where the Nazis should stop. Just look at that Nazi soldier. Eventhrough the wheels of his wheelbarrow bear a swastika, he looks stunned by his counterpart’s behaviour)

Source: *Utusan Zaman*, 12 November 1939, p.22.

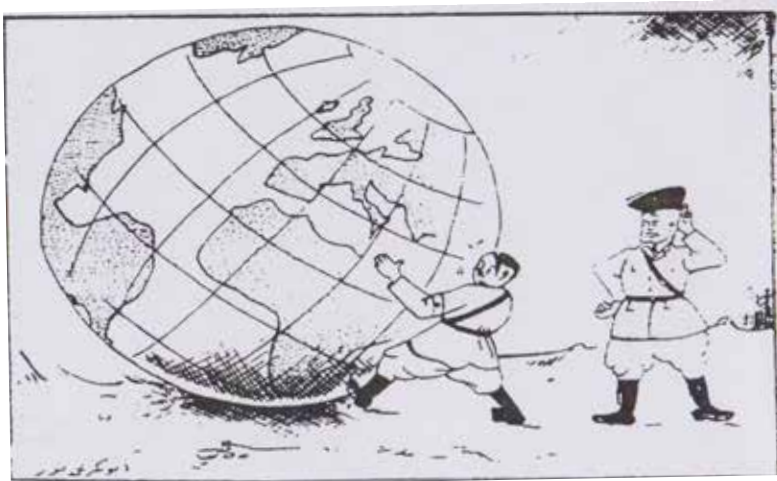


Figure 16

Hitler bermimpi tangannya cukup panjang dan bidang dadanya cukup luas boleh memangu dunia tetapi orang yang bukan Nazi melihat menggaru-garu kepala sambil berkata di dalam hatinya– “Bodoh sungguh orang ini, barang yang bukan-bukan disangkakanya bola

(Trans.

Hitler is dreaming that his arms are long enough and his chest broad enough to hold the world on his lap. But the man who is not a Nazi looks at him scratching his head. His heart says – “This man is so stupid, he thinks this is a ball.”)

Utusan Zaman, 26 November 1939, p. 7

CONCLUSION

Through Wak Ketok, Kajai was increasingly hostile in his criticism whom he labelled as DKA (Darah Keturunan Arab) for those of Arab descent and the Arab Peranakan (Arab local born) and DKK (Darah Keturunan Keling), for those of Indian Muslim descent. Apart in using language – rhetorical and symbolic, Kajai through Wak Ketok also fought a visual battle. Drawing upon, from what Johnson terms as Western-derived notions of “modernity,” Kajai created a new ethno-nationalist discourse, involving a new awareness (*kesedaran*) as individuals and as a people (*rakyat*), as citizens and as a *bangsa* (people, race or nation). Wak Ketok’s Malay identity comes to be comprised and associated with the Malay language, tradition, identification with a homeland, a racial (biologically derived) and ethnic (socially-constructed) identity and a locally filtered and constructed “modernity.” (Johnson, 2006).

The Malays have associated (and at the same time dissociated) themselves with Arab or European traits and characteristics in ambivalent terms and also quite derogatory terms. Through the cartoons, the Malay may be seen to assume a subordinate relationship to the several Others. But a re-reading of the narrative would find the absence of social distancing between them. In what we have seen throughout this paper, the Malay response to an external other, the foreign other, is not totally detached but integral to the framework of interaction. The “us” is also a part of the Malay other.

NOTA

1. See for example, Ahmad Murad Merican (2011). Occidentalism in the Malay World: The West Through the Eyes of Abdullah Munshi. Malay Literature, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 109-129,
2. Ahmad Murad Merican (2005). Pemikiran Pergerakan Reformasi Eropah melalui Kewartawanan Syed Sheikh al-Hady. Melayu: Jurnal Antarabangsa Dunia Melayu, vol.4, no.2, pp. 96-108.
3. The periodicals were also critical of the Malays. It seems that Malays were apt at going into debts. The image of the lazy Malays and other negative traits were portrayed.
4. Maier’s assertion on the Malay and Kajai’s position isolates the Malay from other communities in Southeast Asia and Asia under colonial conditions during the period. As such, it was a naïve assessment, dominated by the assumptions of present-day notions of civic tolerance and multiculturalism, making inappropriate expectations about such societies. See Hank Maier (2010). The writings of Abdul Rahim Kajai: Malay nostalgia in a crystal. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 4 (1): 71-100.
5. In this sense, in some ways, Utusan Zaman was part of the “fitting culmination of a whole generation of Malay journalistic enterprise.” See W. R. Roff (1967). The Origins of Malay Nationalism. (New Haven: Yale University Press, p.177).
6. Thereafter he appears in each issue of the newspaper, sometime on the front page, and often as much several times per issue. Johnson describes him as a complex and chameleon-like figure changing in dress and appearance from that of a person from the Javanese *bhupati* (upper or ruling class in the then Netherlands East Indies), to a middle or upper class Malay, to a rural Malay peasant to a wealthy Arab or to a westernized persona. See Deborah Johnson (2006). “Wak Ketok Defends Melayu: Mediated Exchange and Identity Formation in the later 1930s.” Singapore, *Comparativ* 16 (2006), pp. 68-86. A Samad Ismail notes that his Javanese name and attire reflected the cosmopolitan nature of Singapore whose Malay population were of Javanese descent from Java, Sumatra and the rest of the may archipelago. See Hamidah Hassan (2004) in Cheah Boon Kheng (ed.), A. Samad Ismail: Journalism and Politics, Kuala Lumpur, p. 40.
7. Maier argues that Kajai’s narrative was a projection of his nostalgia and idealism. See Maier, op.cit.

8. Or when he is in situations of moral laxity or danger. When he is Malay, he is invariably shown so that we look at him front on and his nose seems to be flatter, the typical Malay nose. See Johnson, op. cit.
9. See the Leader, “Kesimpulan Takrif,” (Concluding the Definition), *Utusan Zaman*, 5 October 1940, p. 14.

REFERENCES

Books and other publications

- Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar. (1984). *Abdul Rahim Kajai: Wartawan dan Sasterawan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Emmanuel, M. (2010). Viewpapers: The Malay Press of the 1930s. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 41(1), 1–20.
- Johnson, D. A. (2006). Wak Ketok Defends Melayu: Mediated Exchange and Identity Formation in late 1930s Singapore. *Comparativ* 16 (3). Retrieved from <https://www.comparativbe.net/v2/article/view/1131>.
- Khalid al-Bilal. (1935, Jan. 17). Bahtera perusahaan Melayu terbentang. *Majlis*, p. 8.
- Maier, Hank 2010. The writings of Abdul Rahim Kajai: Malay nostalgia in a crystal. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4 (1), 71–100.
- Merican, Ahmad Murad (2011). Occidentalism in the Malay World: The West Through the Eyes of Abdullah Munshi. *Malay Literature* 24 (1): 109–129,
- Merican, Ahmad Murad Merican (2005). Pemikiran pergerakan reformasi Eropah melalui kewartawanan Syed Sheikh al-Hady. *Melayu: Jurnal Antarabangsa Dunia Melayu*, 4 (2), 96–108.
- Muliyadi Mahamood. (2004). *The history of malay editorial cartoons (1930s-1993)*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications.
- Roff, . R. (1967). *The origins of Malay nationalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin
- Sardar, Z. (1999). *Orientalism*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Tanaka, S. (1995). *Japan’s Orient: Rendering pasts into history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zakiah Hanum 1989. *Senda Sindir Sengat*. Petaling Jaya: : Lajmeidakh.

Newspapers

- Utusan Zaman*, 26 November 1939, p. 7
- Utusan Zaman*, 12 November 1939, p.22.
- Utusan Zaman*, 26 November 1939, p.2.
- Utusan Zaman*, 10 December 1939, p.2
- Utusan Zaman*, 4 February 1940, p.2
- Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940, p. 12.
- Utusan Zaman*, 31 August 1940, p. 12.
- Utusan Zaman*, 20 July 1940, p.17.
- Utusan Zaman*, 4 February 1940, p.2

Utusan Zaman, 31 August, 1940, p.12.

Utusan Zaman, 5 October 1940, p. 14

Warta Jenaka, 10 February 1938, p. 10.

Warta Jenaka, 6 January 1938, p. 10.

Warta Jenaka 23 November 1936, p. 18.

Warta Jenaka, 7 September 1936, p. 15.

Warta Jenaka 7 September 1936, p. 15.

Warta Jenaka, 17 February 1938, p.8.