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Syed Farid Alatas & Abdolreza Alami (eds.) (2018), *The Civilisational and Cultural Heritage of Iran and The Malay World: A Cultural Discourse*, Petaling Jaya: Gerakbudaya Enterprise, 187pp.

Reviewer: Zaid Ahmad. Universiti Putra Malaysia

There has been a long-standing debate among historians and researchers about the forms and patterns of cultural interconnections, interactions and influences that took place along with the spread of Islam to various part of the world. Similarly, the interconnection between the Persian civilization and the Malay world is no exception. By Persian civilization I mean the civilization that was established long before the existence of the present Islamic Republic of Iran.

Historically, the interaction between the Middle East (including Persian) and Southeast Asia (including Malay Archipelago) had already taken place as early as during the first and second century Islam. Several studies had been carried out to look at the presence of Persian elements in the Malay society. G.E Morrison for example wrote a quite specific article entitled “Persian Influence in Malay Life (1280-1650)” in *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* (JMBRAS) in 1955 in which he furnishes us with evidences and arguments that show the direct connection between the Persian and Malay World. Other scholarly studies can also be found in the works of Paul Wheatley (1921-1999), Vladimir Braginsky (1931-2016), Allesandro Bausani (1921-1988), Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Beg (1944-), among others, who had already made significant contributions to this subject.

The present volume is a compilation of papers presented in the International Conference on Civilisational and Cultural Heritage of Iran and the Malay World: A Cultural Discourse held on 11 and 12 February 2017 in Kuala Lumpur. It assembles 15 chapters altogether including an opening speech by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Malaysia, HE Madame Marzieh Afkham and the final statement of the seminar. Except these two chapters, others are based on papers presented in the seminar. It begins with a paper

written by Muhammad Bukhari Lubis entitled “Persian Loanwords in Malay: An Analysis of Spelling and Meaning”, followed by Larry Francis Hilarian’s paper on “The Persian and Arabian Musical and Cultural Impact on the Early Global Trade-Route to *Lautan Melayu*”. Chapters four, five and six are based on paper written by Hussain Heryanto on “The Role and Contribution of Iranian Scholars to The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Indonesia”, followed by Mahmoodreza Esfandiari & Faezah Rahman’s paper on “Sufism: The Way of Intercultural Dialogue Between Iran and Malay World” and a paper by Teo Lee Ken on “Justice and Social Thought of Syed Hussein Alatas and Ali Shariati”. Chapter seven presents Syed Farid Alatas’ paper on “The Persian Roots of Malay Political Theory: *Taj Al-Salatin*”, followed by Hamideh Molaei’s paper entitled “Us and Us? The Representation of Iran in Malaysian Popular News Media and Vice Versa Through an Intercultural Approach” in chapter eight. Chapter nine presents “An Introduction to Hamzah Fansuri’s *Sharabul-’Ashiqin*, *Asrarul ‘Arifin* and *Al-Muntahi*: A Translation Project in Progress” by Amir H. Zekrgoo and Leyla H. Tajer” and chapter ten on “Cultural Discourse Between Iran and the Malay World: Why and How?” By A.M Sabeghi. Chapter eleven presents Azhar Ibrahim’s paper on “Mirroring the Mirrors of Princess: Persian *Adab*, Humanism and *Tajus Salatin*”, followed by chapter twelve by Neda Zoghi on “The Art Economy and Globalisation: A Study of the Market Condition of Iranian Art in Malaysia”. Chapter thirteen was written by Bastian Zulyeno entitled “Assessing the influence of *Siyasat Name Nizam Al-Mulk* on *Tajus Salatin* Bukhari Aljauhari”, while chapter fourteen presents Elham Sadat Mirzania’s writing on “Zheng He’s Voyages and Ma Huan’s Account on Malacca.

The major theme of the book is a collation of cultural discourse between the two nations, Iran and the Malay World. Iran or Persian or known as Parsi in Malay language, was once a great civilization and had a long history of trade and cultural connection through maritime activities with Southeast Asia including the Malay world. Afkham had pointed clearly the significance of this initiative to bring up the historical, cultural and civilisational relationship between the two important geopolitical region i.e Iran and West Asia.

Chapters in this volume present the authors take on the Persian

influence in the Malay world covering at least three major areas namely 1) language and culture, 2) literary tradition, and 3) socio-political thoughts and contemporary issues. The presence of Persian elements in Malay vocabularies is distinctly presented by Muhammad Bukhari Lubis in his study on the Persian loanwords in Malay language. The fact that there are so many Persian origin words in Malay vocabularies is in itself evident that those Persian words had eventually entered into Malay tongues and undergone localization process. Examples such as *bandar*, *pasar*, *pahlawan*, *firman*, etc. are among Malay words that were adapted from Parsi.

Chapter three presents Hilarian Larry Francis' perspective on "The Persian and Arabian Musical and Cultural Impact on the Early Global Trade-Routes to *Lautan Melayu* (The Malay Sea)". He explores Persian musical and cultural traditions, trying to redress the seemingly neglected Persian cultural contributions from West Asia to Southeast Asia. Music melodies and instruments play very important role in the construct of cultural identity. The author explains how foreign music (read: Persian music) and musical instruments had been brought and adopted in the Malay world by way of cultural absorption. In the case of Malay music, the element of Persian music in the Malay world can be found in both melody and instrument. The arrival of *gambus*-type instrument and *barbat* in Malay music is one of the clear marks of Middle-east and Persian influence.

Chapters seven, nine, eleven and thirteen deal directly with classical literature based on 17th century literary works. If I may single out, a classical work that seems to be given most attention here is *Taj al-Salatin* written by Bukhari al-Jawhari (1603). We also have chapter nine dealing with Hamzah Fansuri's *sufi* works *Sharab al-'Ashikin*, *Asrar al-'Arifin* and *al-Muntahi*. To study the pattern of cultural influence between tradition is not an easy task. The *Taj al-Salatin* (Crown of the Kings) by Bukhari al-Jawhari can be studied from many angles. *Taj al-Salatin* belong to genre of *nasihat*, and is considered one of the most apparent marks of Persian literary influence in the Malay world. It portrays a distinct resemblance of the *andarz* genre (wisdom or advice) in Persian literary tradition. Syed Farid Alatas traces the root of classical Malay political theory - what he claims to be containing the elements of pre-mordern that is still

relevant to contemporary politics, meant to provide wisdom and guidelines for kingship and good governance. It is from this point of view *Taj al-Salatin* corresponds closely to *Siyasat Nameh* and *Nasihah al-Mulk* by Nizam al-Mulk and al-Ghazzali respectively. The Persian prosodies including *mathnawi*, *ruba'ie* and *ghazal* are also clear marks of Persian influence which form the distinct feature of the text.

Azhar Ibrahim in his chapter undertakes a thematic analysis of Persian *adab* literature and humanism, and comes up with a critical evaluation beyond what he claims to be the popular philological approach confining within the issues of textual semantics, versions, diffusion, origins, and the like. He upholds the universality of humanism and recognizes the common *adab* heritage in the text and the presence of humanistic affiliation nuanced in its particular local expression.

Bastian Zulyeno carries a more specific textual analysis by making a comparison between *Siyasat Nameh* and *Taj al-Salatin*. He gives a detailed account of the pattern of similarities that occur in both texts. From the analysis, he finds that the composition of *Taj al-Salatin* was initially inspired by *Siyasat Nameh*. Both carry a common theme - justice. The presence of Persian-genre poems namely *ghazal*, *mathnawi*, *ruba'i* and *qit'a* portray clear evidence of Persian elements.

Amir Zekrgoo and Leyla Tajer present the background of their translation project of Hamzah al-Fansuri's works. Their proposed project is to translate classical works by Hamzah Fansuri (d.1590) namely *Asrar al-'Arifin*, *Sharab al-'Ashiqin* and *al-Muntahi* into Persian. Fansuri was well known with his *sufi* doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*. The presence of Persian elements that exhibit in these works can be taken as a basis for further investigation. The appearance of Persian characters such as Abu Yazid al-Bustami (d.874), Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d.1111), Farid al-Din 'Attar (d.1229), Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) and others gave strong indication that Fansuri was very familiar with Persian sources, hence the Persian influence in his writing is inevitable. *Sufi* doctrines practised in the Malay world were specifically discussed by Mahmoodreza Esfandiari and Faezah Rahman in chapter five. They highlight the role of several

prominent *sufi* figures in propagating *sufi* doctrines and traditions the Malay world including Fansuri, Sumatrani, Raniri and others.

Overall, this volume does a fine job, presenting the discourse on dialogue and interaction between Persian and the Malay world from different angles. Each contributor presents a particular take on a subject, stimulating further reflection while providing interesting information and observation. The publication of the current volume is commendable. This is another contribution towards enrichment of authentic reading materials on this subject and certainly a significant move towards a more substantial intra-civilisation dialogues within Muslim societies. Minor glitches which do not significantly affect the credibility of this work, perhaps the inconsistency of the romanised Arabic spelling and transliteration style. *Taj al-Salatin* for example was written as *Tajussalatin* and *Tajus Salatin* in different places. Although variety of style is unavoidable due to the fact that these articles were written by different authors, but as a single volume it would be good to keep it uniformed. Syed Farid Alatas and Abdolreza Alami are to be congratulated for conceiving of this work, and their effort for selecting, compiling, organizing, and editing and finally making this volume available for readers.

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