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Hajj and the Malayan Experience, 1860s–1941

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Abstract. Contrary to popular belief, the hajj is a high-risk undertaking for both pilgrims and administrators. For the Malay states, the most vexing problem for people from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War was the spread of epidemics that resulted from passenger overcrowding on pilgrim ships. This had been a major issue in Europe since the 1860s, when the international community associated the hajj with the outbreak and spread of infectious diseases. Accusations were directed at various parties, including the colonial administration in the Straits Settlements and the British administration in the Malay states. This article focuses on epidemics and overcrowding on pilgrim ships and the resultant pressure on the British, who were concerned that the issue could pose a threat to their political position, especially when the Muslim community in the Malay states had become increasingly exposed to reformist ideas from the Middle East following the First World War.

Keywords and phrases: Malays, hajj, epidemics, British administration, Straits Settlements, Malay states

Introduction

As with health and education, the colonial powers had to handle religion with great care. The colonisers covertly used these three aspects not only to gain the hearts of the colonised but, more importantly, to maintain their reputation among other colonial powers. Roy MacLeod, for example, sees the introduction of Western medicine to colonised countries as functioning as both cultural agency and western expansion (MacLeod and Lewis 1988; Chee 1982). The issue of religion was no exception. In fact, in the context of British intervention in the Malay States, sealed with the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, the religion, customs and traditions of the Malays were the only matters in which the British pledged they would not interfere. In reality, this was not the case. The introduction of British laws in the Malay States indirectly downgraded the status and role of Islamic laws on which the administrative system of the Malay States was based prior to British rule. In the Malay judicial system, legislative power was held by the Sultan followed by the Mahkamah Balai (the Syariah Court, which was based on the laws of the Melaka sultanate and other relevant laws) as the highest court. However, the position and function of the Mahkamah Balai was abolished by the colonial administration in the 1920s (Ramizah 2009).

According to T. A. Manring (1968), the colonial law introduced by the British had its own objectives:

> First it wished to provide for the needs of the colonial power, and second, it provided a means of administering the colony, avoiding conflict and disruptions. The needs of the colonial power were, for the most part, commercial in nature. Indeed the establishment of the British protectorate over the Malay States was the result of a need to protect British (and Straits Chinese) commercial interests. The legal system, then, reflected the needs of the growing commercial framework of the Malay States.

Within the context of the discussion, the hajj is an example of the British attitude towards issues that involved religion. In comparison to the Dutch, who had tightly controlled the Muslim community from the very beginning to avoid potential uprising, the British were not yet interested in or had little concern about matters related to the hajj in the Malay States. The hajj was still an individual concern, with the *syeikh haji* (religious/spiritual leader or scholar) being the most important individual in its undertaking. However, this changed when hajj pilgrims were singled out as the main cause of epidemics. Pilgrims, too, had increasingly voiced complaints in newspapers and magazines about official neglect of their welfare, while reformist ideas from the Middle East had opened the eyes of colonial officials on the importance of the hajj. In line with Anderson's (1983) remark that religious assembly could unite human beings from all over the world, Harper (1999) sees the First World War (1914–1918) as the cause of a crisis of no small measure for the colonial regime. One of these causes was the returning pilgrims who brought home a diversity of experiences from Arabia including political ideas. The British perceived the new reformist ideas, or *Islah*, as politically dangerous because they could spread rapidly throughout the Malay Muslim community. It was in this context that the history of the hajj in the Malay states was placed under colonial control; at one point, it was even placed under the Malayan Political Bureau, the colonial intelligence organisation that was based in Singapore at that time.

Brief History of the Hajj in the Malay States before the Second World War

The study of the hajj from a historical perspective is not new. Misbaha (1986), Alwi Syeikh Abdul Hadi (1955), William Roff (1982), Mary Bryne McDonnell (1986) and, most recently, Eric Tagliacozzo (2013) are among those who have highlighted its history with various emphases. The works of Misbaha and Alwi Syeikh Abdul Hadi are both general narratives on Malay people's preparations once they decided to perform the hajj; they also include the difficulties pilgrims encountered during the long voyage, such as passenger overcrowding, health

problems and death. The earliest scholarly study in the Malay states was by William Roff, who focuses on safety and sanitation in hajj ships. He concludes that it was due to these issues, in addition to political ones, that the British interfered in the hajj through surveillance, regulations and organisational participation. Mary Byrne McDonnell's study is much more intensive in nature. She highlights the diverse effects of the hajj rite on the socio-economic aspects of the Malay community from 1860–1981. However, McDonnell's discussion on diseases touches only on the problem of cholera and overlooks the problem of overcrowding on pilgrim ships. The latest study by Tagliacozzo (2013) shows more understanding of the hajj in Southeast Asia, although his focus is on Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population.

In the Malay states, the earliest hajj undertakings were started in Singapore. In 1849, the exchanges of correspondence between Singapore and Bengal mentioned 83 deaths of pilgrims en route from Jeddah to Singapore on a 290-ton ship that carried 520 pilgrims (Roff 1982). Many pilgrim ships from the period 1870–1972 recorded Singapore as their port of departure. According to Roff (2005), through hajj activities, Malays from the Malay states were placed with other Muslims from diverse social and economic backgrounds in Singapore. The *syeikh haji,* who were mostly of Arab origin, established their centres in Singapore and travelled throughout the peninsula and other parts of the Malay world to recruit potential pilgrims. Prior to congregating in Singapore, pilgrims from the Malay States (including the Straits Settlements) congregated in Aceh to board trading ships from Hadramaut (in Yemen) that were bound for Jeddah.

In 1864, Pulau Pinang became the focus for pilgrim ships from Singapore and Indonesia. This was recorded in the diary of Syeikh Omar Basheer, an important religious leader in mid-19th century Pulau Pinang. Syeikh Omar was also a hajj agent. In this capacity, he kept records of ships, the names of pilgrims who had registered with him and the fare that was charged to them (Syeikh Omar n.d.; Mahani 1995). His diary shows the special importance of the hajj rites to the Malays. In fact, Syeikh Omar also allowed for *upah haji*, or performing the pilgrimage on behalf of someone else, with a fee.[1] Syeikh Omar was highly regarded by the Pulau Pinang Muslim community. In the case of Sheikh Omar, both the title of *haji* and the acquisition of religious education in Makkah were crucial determinants of one's social standing.

Notably, 1884 was the first year for which statistics of pilgrims from the Malay states were found; in this year, 2,806 made the pilgrimage to Makkah. Until 1941, the number of hajis in the Malay states increased, although it fluctuated due to existing international conditions, as shown in Table 1. In addition to being dependent on the international political situation, which affected sea passage, the pattern of Malay travels to the Hejaz was considerably influenced by people's

financial standing (Abdul Kadir 1982). This is evidenced by the increase in the number of Malays who performed the hajj in 1911, which was 11,707 following the boom in rubber prices during 1909–1912. Drabble (1967) reiterates that high demand for rubber land during this period led Malay smallholders to sell their lands to foreigners or to rubber companies at a very handsome price. This view is supported by Andaya and Andaya (1982), and the argument corresponds with the views of Michael Swift (1967) and Syed Hussin Ali (1972), both of whom discuss how Malays sold their lands solely for the purpose of going to the hajj. However, the fall of rubber prices to an unprecedented low in 1913 similarly affected the hajj, and hajj pilgrims decreased to 8,344 in the following year.

During the First World War, hajj activities came to a halt. It resumed in 1919 but in small numbers because of the post-war recession. However, as shown in Table 1, the number of pilgrims increased significantly in 1920 due to considerable improvement in travel safety. When opportunities were available, the hopes and intentions of the Malays to perform hajj, postponed for several years, were utilised to the maximum. However, the 1925 Hejaz War again interrupted the smooth flow of hajj activities. When conditions improved, as in 1928, the number of Malay hajis increased again. The period from 1930–1940 showed a marked decline in their number following a worldwide depression; hajj activities ceased again in 1941 because of the Second World War. In short, both war and rubber prices had a marked influence on the number of pilgrims from the Malay states. Between 1875 and 1895, the fare was approximately $300 for the two-way trip and the stay in the Hejaz. However, from 1923 to 1941, this increased to $500–$680; in 1929, the fare was an exorbitant $900.

In the early days, Malays departed to Makkah in trading ships; these were small 100- to 300-ton sailing ships owned by private individuals from several countries (Roff 1982). As a port that connected other ports in Southeast Asia with Hadramaut, Aceh indirectly acted as the departure point for Malay pilgrims traveling to either Hadramaut or Jeddah (Hoyt 1991; Anderson 1971). The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 encouraged the growth of steamers in the service industry and provided opportunities for European shipping companies to compete for the lucrative transportation of pilgrims from the Malay states and Indonesia to the Holy Land (Turnbull 1989).

The Ocean Steam Ship Company Limited, also known as the Blue Funnel Line, monopolised the transportation of pilgrims to Jeddah. According to reports of the British Consul at Jeddah, before 1928, as much as 85% of Malay pilgrims travelled through this company (Nabihah 1978). Two other companies that offered similar services were the Ocean Navigation Company of Hong Kong and the Straits-Hejaz Company. However, from 1928 on, neither of these companies was granted the right to transport pilgrims because of constant problems during

the long journey and their failure to bring home the pilgrims within the stipulated time. The *Polyphemus, Adrastus/Euryades*, *Automedon*, *Autolycus* and the *Clytoneus* were some of the Blue Funnel Line ships involved in the pilgrimage.

Table 1. Statistics of hajj pilgrims from the Malay states, 1885–1941

Year	Pilgrims	Year	Pilgrims	Year	Pilgrims
1884	2,806	1904	4,246	1924	3,317
1885	3,685	1905	5,349	1925	–
1886	2,889	1906	6,511	1926	550
1887	2,084	1907	5,172	1927	1,940
1888	2,659	1908	4,689	1928	9,875
1889	2,361	1909	2,930	1929	4,646
1890	3,532	1910	7,177	1930	4,353
1891	4,120	1911	11,707	1931	1,334
1892	4,667	1912	8,743	1932	329
1893	5,764	1913	11,243	1933	320
1894	2,209	1914	8,344	1934	514
1895	4,998	1915	World War 1	1935	712
1896	2,837	1916	World War 1	1936	1,046
1897	4,635	1917	World War 1	1937	2,882
1898	2,528	1918	World War 1	1938	5,115
1899	3,090	1919	1,270	1939	2,059
1900	2,107	1920	14,397	1940	45
1901	4,356	1921	9,593	1941	World War 2
1902	4,896	1922	5,671	1942	World War 2
1903	7,612	1923	5,576		

Sources: McDonnell (1986); Abdul Kadir (1982)

For the Malays, the journey to Makkah began with the selection of a *syeikh haji*. The choice was based on recommendations from friends in the same village or through campaigns by runners or brokers on behalf of the *syeikh haji*. The duties of the *syeikh haji* were to provide accommodations and to secure tickets and official passes for the hajj. In the Malay states, *syeikh haji* or brokers were required to obtain licences from the Director of the Political Investigation Bureau of the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States (British Adviser Kelantan 430/25). Administration of the hajj in the Malay states from the 1920s until the outbreak of the Second World War was placed under the Political Intelligence Bureau, which was established in 1922. Its headquarters was in Singapore. The *syeikh haji* and brokers who were given licences were also required to provide reports on the pilgrims in the first month of the hajj season to the Director of the

Political Intelligence Bureau. Pilgrim accommodations were also required to be inspected by the Director and a police officer from the rank of sergeant upwards at all times. Failure to comply with these regulations would result in licence cancellations (McDonnell 1986). The Political Intelligence Bureau was also responsible for issuing passes that were introduced in 1924 through The Pilgrim Pass Rule of 1926. Each pilgrim was charged a fee of $0.50 for these passes. A statement issued in the newspaper *Idaran Zaman* on 11 February 1926 stated that the *haji* pass was obtainable from the District Officer or at the land offices in Singapore, Pulau Pinang and Melaka. One of the main aims for establishing the Political Intelligence Bureau was to prevent pilgrims from the Malay states from being influenced by political movements that had mushroomed in the Hejaz, particularly the "Pan-Islamic" movement[2], the *Khilafat* and Russian communist propaganda (McDonnell 1986; Roff 1978). This corresponds to the 1927 report of the Acting British Consul in Jeddah, which reiterates that "the advantages of Mecca and the Hejaz generally as a headquarters for anti-European agitation in the Near and Far East need hardly be dwelt upon" (FO 371/12248).

In this regard, one of the threats to the British was the spread of "Pan-Islamic" thought, notably through the *syeikh haji*. This fear was based on the resurging Islamic community that began in the Middle East and spread rapidly to the Malay states through Hadrami (Yemeni) Arab traders and returning pilgrims. Before the First World War, Malays were strongly convinced that the Ottoman Caliphate possessed exceptional powers and that its powers were invincible. Syeikh Wan Ahmad bin Wan Muhammad Zain Mustafa al-Fatani played a vital role in the spread of this idea, instilling among Malays a feeling of awe at the power of the Ottoman Caliphate. His book *Hadiqatul Azhar wal Rayahin* written in 1886 described the Caliphate as the most illustrious royal dynasty after the *Khulafa' al-Rashidin.* This was based on its determination to launch a holy war against the enemies of Islam, protect the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and safeguard the welfare of pilgrims and the Muslim world as a whole. By the end of the nineteenth century, Pan-Islamic sentiments had suddenly increased, following the publication of Malay newspapers such as *Chahaya Pulau Pinang*, *Lengkongan Bulan* and *Jajahan Melayu* (Mohammad Redzuan 1996; Reid 1967). *The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence*, which was published in the mid-1920s, carried several reports that linked the *syeikh haji* to the spread of the above ideas (Roff 1975).

In comparison with British India and the Netherlands East Indies, British Malaya showed little interest in the political implications of the pilgrimage. According to Tagliacozzo (2013), the British, whom he describes as "the most important players" in the hajj industry of the 20th century, taking over the role previously played by Holland, had begun to show an interest in the activities of the Malays following concern over possible uprisings among students educated in the Middle

East. The hajj opened the Malays to the idea of *Islah* that had started in the Middle East. McDonnell (1986) views this period as representing "the emergence of embryo political awareness among educated Malays". From that time onwards, the British no longer viewed the matter lightly; they believed the best way to restrain political activities among the Malay haji was to send an officer to the Hejaz (Tagliacozzo 2013). The matter was raised by J. N. E. Zohrab, the British Consul in Jeddah, when he proposed that a confidential agent of the Consulate be sent to Makkah.

> The province of Hedjaz is the centre to which the ideas, opinions, sentiments and aspirations of the Mussulman world are brought for discussion. The annual meeting at a fixed time ostensibly for the purposes of the Pilgrimage of Representatives from every Mussulman Community affords a means without creating suspicion to exchange opinions, to discuss plans, to criticize the actions of the European Governments and form combinations to resist the supremacy of the Christian Powers. (Roff 1982)

In response to the proposal by Lord Dufferin, the British Ambassador to Constantinople, for the appointment of a paid British secret agent residing at Makkah, the Colonial Office appointed a Muslim Vice-Consul at Jeddah in 1882 upon the suggestion that "surveillance of sanitation and security could usefully be combined". The first holder of this post was Dr Abdur Razzack from India. He was seen as the right choice, but his roles and responsibilities were revised in 1888. He was asked to present a separate report on politico-religious movements, the Wahhabi propaganda, the Ottoman Caliphate and activities of Muslims from Central Asia in the Hejaz (Roff 1982). It seems that Dr Abdur Razzack's annual reports failed to provide sufficient intelligence to the British. In 1897, another proposal was drawn up to create "an Indian Muhammadan Detective Agency at Constantinople, Mecca, Jeddah and Baghdad". However, the proposal was never implemented because of the prevailing view that information from Jeddah and Makkah could be more efficiently obtained by the "occasional deputation of secret agents" (Roff 1982).

The lack of focus on pilgrims from the Malay states in the report presented by Dr Abdur Razzack created a need for a representative to cater to Malayan pilgrims to obtain a clear picture of their movements in the Hejaz. The Colonial Office responded to the suggestion from the Director of the Political Intelligence Bureau with an initiative to improve the administration of pilgrims, from issues of stranded pilgrims to concern over the property of deceased ones. In January 1924, Abdul Majid Zainuddin was selected as the first Malay Pilgrimage Officer. Although he was responsible for the registration of Malay pilgrims in Hejaz, the depositing of return tickets and the management of the effects of deceased

pilgrims, it was clear that his appointment was in line with British policy. However, as Eric Tagliacozzo (2013) explains, "it was clear that the British had an eye on the big picture of the hajj and that reimposing an official presence in the Hejaz was important as the war drew to a close". Clearly, this was partly to keep an eye on Britain's political rivals.

The appointment of Abdul Majid Zainuddin was linked to the British concern over the effect of political propaganda on Malay pilgrims in the Hejaz, such as "Pan-Islam", the Khilafat movement and Russian communism. Like Dr Abdur Razzack before him, he presented a report on administrative and political issues related Malays' performance of hajj at Makkah. Unsurprisingly, he was labelled a British political spy by Za'ba and Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz (1975). Whatever the counterarguments, one could not overlook the personal contribution and service of Abdul Majid Zainuddin to the social welfare of pilgrims from the Malay States. Haji Nik Mahmood, the pre-war Chief Minister of Kelantan, acknowledged the services of Abdul Majid Zainuddin in his letter to the British advisor in Kelantan (Chief Minister's file, MB 260/30). Roff (1975) echoes a similar assessment when he writes:

> If Abdul Majid scarcely passed full muster as an intelligence agent, he was a first rate pilgrimage officer. His reports always contained sound, practical advice about real pilgrimage problems of the moment, and he provided a great deal of personal assistance to those in distress, even to the point of lending them money or buying them food or drink out of his own pocket.

In spite of the negative reactions directed at Abdul Majid Zainuddin, Roff's study shows that the reports he presented in 1923 do not correspond with perceptions held of him. According to him, the pilgrims were not interested in national affairs, and there was no political propaganda among them because they were busy with the hajj rituals. Through his official duties in Makkah throughout the hajj season, Abdul Majid Zainuddin had the opportunity to interact with Malay pilgrims and to see the problems they faced. He made numerous suggestions towards improving the administration of the hajj. Many of his suggestions were enacted by the colonial administration that benefitted Malay pilgrims. Among his important proposals was to make it compulsory for pilgrim ships to provide food during the long hajj voyage. This proposal was made in 1930.

Epidemics and the Hajj

In addition to the provision of passes and the selection of *syeikh haji*, vaccination and immunisation were made compulsory for pilgrims from the Malay states. This was implemented in response to constant health problems linked to hajj

activities in the Hejaz. The state of exhaustion after the long voyage was compounded by overcrowding with pilgrims coming from all over the world without vaccination or immunisation. Conditions worsened with the unregulated problems of sanitation in the Hejaz and were further compounded by inadequate medical services from qualified medical personnel. Quite often, this led to epidemics of contagious diseases, and returning pilgrims became carriers of these diseases.

In the early 19th and 20th centuries, the diseases linked to pilgrims were cholera, smallpox and the bubonic plague. These were the most common in the Holy Land and often exacted a great loss of lives during the hajj season. The first cholera epidemic reported to hit the Hejaz was during the 1831 hajj season. That year, as many as 3,000 pilgrims lost their lives in a three-week period (Peters 1994). Further epidemics linked to the hajj occurred in 1841, 1847, 1851, 1856–1857 and 1859. From 1865–1893, a series of eight cholera outbreaks was reported in the Hejaz. In an 81-year period, 27 cholera outbreaks occurred during hajj season, with outbreaks originating from the Hejaz (Bayoumi 1972). Notably, this outbreak was often linked to the Malays of Southeast Asia. Pilgrims from Singapore and Java, for example, were seen as carriers that led to the cholera outbreak that struck the Hejaz in 1865 (Long 1979; Peters 1994).

One of the most serious threats to pilgrims was smallpox. Abdullah Munshi's (1960) narrative in his *Kisah Pelayaran Abdullah ka-Judah* recorded a smallpox outbreak during a hajj voyage. However, information about smallpox outbreaks in Makkah was obtained only in 1927, and the Health Department at Makkah claimed pilgrims from Java were carriers of the virus (FO 371/12248). Smallpox epidemics were also reported in 1925, 1929, 1932, 1933 and 1940. Following a report of a smallpox epidemic in Singapore in 1925, the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance, Section 42(1) No. 157 was implemented (HCO 1305/1928).

In the 19th century, in addition to cholera and smallpox, pilgrims also faced the threat of bubonic plague.[3] Statistics issued by the Jeddah Health Office show 51 cases of deaths from bubonic plague between 8 June and 30 June 1897. On 10 June 1897, an epidemic was officially declared in Jeddah (FO 195/1987). Because the declaration was issued by the Ottoman Caliph, no one was allowed to leave Jeddah, and the authorities issued orders for germ eradication in every house and pilgrim lodging. Following the outbreak, the Bubonic Plague Commission at Istanbul was ordered to the Hejaz to supervise control of the epidemic. Medical officers of the Bubonic Plague Commission sanitised suspected pilgrim lodgings. Those found with cases of bubonic plague were ordered closed and declared unfit for habitation. Pilgrims from the Malay states were affected by such outbreaks. According to the Perak Government Gazette,

they were not allowed to return home without undergoing strict quarantine measures (*The Perak Government Gazette* X[5]). Between December 1908 and April 1909, 178 cases with 160 fatalities were recorded in Jeddah. In 1910 and 1911, a similar epidemic was reported in Makkah (FO 881/9624).

Epidemics of cholera, smallpox and bubonic plague were closely linked to the problem of sanitation. As discussed earlier, the cholera outbreak that struck the Holy Land was reported to have been spread by returning pilgrims to other countries, including the Straits Settlements. Between 1842 and 1843, the disease was reported to have claimed 200–300 lives in Singapore (Low 1850; Turnbull 1972). Many lives were again lost in Singapore in 1851, 1852 and 1853 (*The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 25 April 1851; 7 January 1853). The epidemics in Singapore were closely linked to its location as a major port where pilgrims from neighbouring countries, including the Malay states and Indonesia, converged. Problems of overcrowding, unhygienic conditions and malnutrition among pilgrims waiting for months for their ship at Singapore were unavoidable. This is consistent with the records of Ismail bin Haji Abdullah Umar Effendi from Medan, Indonesia, who was visiting Singapore during this period. He saw for himself the deplorable conditions the pilgrims endured during the 1920–1921 hajj season:

> There were great numbers of people at the time in Singapore who wanted to go to Makkah, more than ten thousand waiting for the ship to depart. Therefore all the *syeikh* houses were crammed with people who wished to go to the Holy Land. Even the five-footpaths were turned into places to sleep at night, as were the roads in front of houses. When there were no more people passing by, around ten at night, mats were spread in the middle of roads and small lanes like "Arabstreet". It is here that the people slept. If I walked to "Arabstreet" or "Brasbassahstreet", I could see them all, dirty and emaciated, with hardly a single clean face. Starvation was plainly written on their faces were. (Ismail 1924)

Turnbull (1989) concludes that the lack of a sewage system and supply of clean water in Singapore worsened the conditions of the pilgrims who had congregated in the port city to such an extent that it was labelled a centre for the proliferation of infectious diseases like cholera. Overcrowding in Singapore occurred as a result of regulations that required prospective hajis to present their tickets in person to secure hajj passes. The problem was highlighted by the Secretary of the Johor Government below:

> … A majority of the prospective haji went to wait in the houses of the *syeikh haji* in Singapore over scores of days or several

> months, to wait to obtain tickets for their passage on ships during the time that they gathered in large numbers in Singapore. I fetched an officer of the Department to look at the conditions of the haji, and found them sitting on the five-foot ways all along houses in the lanes of Kampung Jawa with their wooden luggage boxes and personal effects. They appeared to be dirty and destitute. (Nabihah 1978)

The issue of overcrowding on pilgrim ships further worsened pilgrims' condition. There were constant reports that the ships were overloaded with pilgrims beyond the permissible limit. Colonial Office records of pilgrim ship indicate that seven out of 29 British ships that departed from Singapore from 1870–1872 were overloaded beyond the legally permissible limit. There was evidence of malpractice on the part of various parties, including the shipping company and the Master Attendant at Singapore. Eldon Rutter perceived this as an opportunity for European shipping companies to extract huge profits at the end of the nineteenth century by making use of every available space. Pilgrims were placed on the deck of ships, while the sections below were filled with trading goods and supplies such as rice, sugar, coffee, timber and other goods to be sold in Jeddah (Rutter 1929). Obviously, the welfare of the pilgrims was completely ignored by ship owners. The pilgrims who were placed on the open decks were in danger of falling overboard during stormy weather or struck by big waves. There was no supervision by the authorities concerned in the administration of the hajj in matters of sanitation, food and water supplies, cooking premises, air circulation, sleeping space, toilets or medical facilities (McDonnell 1986).

It is interesting that all types of ships, including cargo ships, were allowed to profit from the hajj business. A report of the British Consulate in 1875 stated that European ships bound for the East stopped over at Jeddah to pick up pilgrims. In addition to pilgrims being packed to maximum capacity on decks that were filled with cargo, ship owners also ignored matters of safety and welfare (FO 78/2418). The Governor of the Straits Settlements, William Orfeur Cavenagh (1859–1867), recorded that the Malays had provided accounts of the suffering and poor treatment received at the hands of ship captains all throughout their voyage (Cavenagh 1884). Henry Carter, who served as a ship captain to transport pilgrims on several occasions, described the condition of the ships as worse than that of a slave ship:

> For the 18 or 20 days of the voyage to Jedda a thousand pilgrims were cramped together, with little room to move and little or no fresh air. They slept on the bare decks and, stretching hoarded savings to cover a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, subsisted on

> whatever food they had been foresighted enough, or affluent enough, to bring with them. (Allen 1965)

A crowded ship results in a deplorable state of hygiene; this was further aggravated by the physical demand of a long voyage, which rendered pilgrims vulnerable to various illnesses. The poor sanitation in the Hejaz did not help to improve matters for the pilgrims; unclean water sources, disorganised disposal systems for human and animal waste, dirty accommodation facilities and dirty and polluted air all further threatened the health of pilgrims (FO 881/4845). Hajj reports in 1926 and 1929 show that most of the pilgrims from the Malay states did not have enough money to secure suitable accommodations. Usually, they stayed among a large group of people in very old hotels that were infested with bedbugs (Ochsenwald 1984). In addition to the dirty conditions, which were strewn with rubbish, hotels usually did not have good air circulation or adequate lighting. Proper human waste disposal facilities were not available. Instead, human waste was channelled into containers below the buildings through open conduits at every level. This resulted in the entire building being filled with a foul odour (FO 371/11436; FO 371/14456). Such extremely poor conditions were the cause of high death rates every time a cholera outbreak occurred (Ochsenwald 1984).

At the international level, the connection of the hajj with the spread of diseases gave rise to heated discussions among various parties. Because the hajj was performed simultaneously by millions of Muslims from all over the world, diseases spread easily among pilgrims packed closely together without any form of immunisation. Following a cholera outbreak in 1865 that claimed a large number of lives and later spread to Europe and America, the Third International Sanitary Conference was held in Istanbul on 13 February 1866 specifically to discuss the cholera threat (Long 1979; Roff 1982). Among the most important resolutions passed at the conference was the recommendation that urged the Ottoman Caliphate to institute criminal proceedings against anyone who gave false information to health administrators in relation to the outbreak of cholera on pilgrim ships. The resolution also proscribed further voyages to the Holy Land if there was an epidemic in India. Subsequently, a series of international sanitary conferences was held specifically to control the spread of diseases related to the hajj and, at the same time, put into place various procedures in relation to hajj voyages, the inspection of ships and the establishment of quarantine centres at the northern and southern entry points of the Red Sea.

Measures taken by the international community gave the impression that the world considered hajj the carrier of infectious diseases. In fact, in the words of Achille Adrien Proust, "Europe realized that it could not remain like this, every year at the mercy of the pilgrimage to Mecca". To Europeans, the annual

assembly of Muslims was like a breeding ground for diseases that threatened the health of the international community (Roff 1982). Such a perception was a blow and an embarrassment and jeopardised the reputation of the British, who had all along been mouthing platitudes about being the benign "protector" of their colonies.

British Response to the Problem of Disease among Pilgrims

The international community's response to the issue of the spread of contagious diseases that were linked to the hajj was worrisome to the colonial administrators in the Straits Settlements and the Malay states. Beyond the discussions and resolutions on epidemics passed by various parties, it was clear that the image of the British as "protectors" of the colonies was considerably compromised. Apart from maintaining a good reputation at the international level, it was more important for the British to preserve their standing in the eyes of the people under their protection. Tagliacozzo views the wartime period as very important to all colonial powers in convincing the Muslim community that the colonial administration was doing its best to protect their interests. Tagliacozzo (2013) observed that "in the surveillance and criminalization of parts of hajj, European regimes found a vast transnational vehicle to test their advancing abilities of control".

To restore their tarnished image, in the early 19th century, the colonial administrators in the Straits Settlements and Malay states drew up legislation that imposed stricter control over conditions on board ships, similar to the Indian Native Passenger Ship Act of 1887 and the Ottoman Pilgrim Traffic Regulations of 1888 (Roff 1982). The Merchant Shipping Act 1910, Part IV, among others, established that every pilgrim ship should be equipped with a treatment room, have one doctor for every 1000 pilgrims, provide sufficient fresh water and food supplies and strictly adhere to every procedure of care for the ship’s cleanliness. A confirmation certificate would only be issued for the pilgrim ships after they had fulfilled these conditions. However, these regulations were ineffective, and the fines imposed on recalcitrant ship owners were too light; their implementation was weak due to the insufficient personnel to supervise the relevant ports (McDonnell 1986).

The International Sanitary Conventions of 1921 and 1926 sparked amendments to conditions on pilgrim ships in accordance with proposals recommended by Abdul Majid Zainuddin that made it compulsory for every shipping company to provide food on board (Roff 1975). From the time of his appointment, Abdul Majid Zainuddin lobbied with great determination for the proposal to be implemented; his efforts bore fruit in 1927 with the implementation of a committee chaired by J. D. Hall. The Committee reconsidered all the suggestions and arguments

presented by Abdul Majid Zainuddin, the British Consul, the Political Intelligence Bureau and shipping companies (British Adviser Kelantan K1577/27). During the 1929 hajj season, the Merchant Ships Ordinance 1929 was implemented, making it compulsory for all shipping companies involved in the hajj business to ensure the well-being, health, safety, and comfort of pilgrims. In 1924, Abdul Majid Zainuddin also suggested that pilgrims be prohibited from bringing their own provisions and cooking their own food on the ship deck to ensure cleanliness and safety on board (McDonnell 1986).

Despite the various measures taken and the meting of fines, overcrowding on ships remained a major problem from the 1920s until the 1940s. Malay newspapers and journals routinely printed Malay views and dissatisfaction with regard to the transportation of pilgrims to Jeddah. Among the issues raised was the special treatment accorded British officers returning home on leave or retirement; such treatment was never extended to Malay pilgrims. Neglect of pilgrims' comfort during the voyage was considered an insult to Malay's self-respect, religion and race (Muhammad Rafiqi 1930). An editorial in the newspaper *Saudara* (1936), for instance, called on the authorities to take immediate action on these problems:

> I paid a visit to the ship in question [the *Cyclops*]. The scene that I witnessed and the attention it drew to the horrific conditions of my brothers[2] on that ship compel me to write again, urging those in authority over the pilgrims' problems of transportation with the hope of raising feelings of awareness and compassion in their hearts, and these people who are in charge and yet forsake the pilgrims in managing their voyage … whoever among us with any human sentiments would agree with me on the conditions, and warrant regulations to provide for them on the ship because preparations for the passage of these pilgrims is not very different from moving a herd It saddens my heart to say this … so is it right just to stand aside with arms folded and keep silent about conditions that are hurting thousands of my people who are my brothers each and every year?

Nevertheless, adherence to the regulations as outlined by the 1926 Convention, particularly on overcrowding and sanitation aboard pilgrim ships, gradually improved from 1934 with ships departing from Singapore to Jeddah compared to those returning from the hajj. This compliance was due to stricter enforcement by the Political Intelligence Bureau at the port of Singapore, whereas supervision at Jeddah rested on the shoulders of the Malay states hajj officers, who were already burdened with many responsibilities (McDonnell 1986).

In the effort to reduce the spread of epidemics, the Pilgrim Ships Rules of 1929 called for adequate medical staff and sufficient medicine for the welfare of pilgrims. It was also compulsory for Malay pilgrims to obtain cholera vaccination and smallpox immunisation before departing for the Holy Land. The efforts began earlier, when J. D. Hall, in his report on quarantine procedures at Kamaran (located in the southern part of the Red Sea), proposed that vaccination enforced by the Dutch East Indies Government be adopted by the British for pilgrim ships departing from Singapore and Pulau Pinang. The proposal was initially rejected by the Chief Public Medical Officer of the Straits Settlements (HCO 1305/28). It was brought up again by A. W. Hamilton, the Acting Director of the Political Intelligence Bureau from 1926–1927 and the Mohamedan Advisory Board, Singapore because pilgrim ships from the Malay states had to undergo arduous procedures at the Kamaran quarantine centre. On the other hand, ships from the Dutch East Indies that carried pilgrims who had already obtained immunisation and vaccination had to wait for only two hours without having to disembark. In 1930, the Regulation and Control of Pilgrim Ships and Pilgrims (Enactment No. 7 of 1930) was passed in the Malay states in line with current provisions, as enforced in Singapore but with several amendments. The most important requirement was the presentation of evidence of jabs for cholera and smallpox vaccination. Pilgrims who tried to avoid health inspection or departed without immunisation would be fined. The regulations and control measures were instituted in response to health problems and the spread of epidemics, which had become an issue in the history of hajj. In accordance with the new regulation, Malay pilgrims from 1930 onward, like those of the Dutch East Indies, were allowed to sail to Jeddah without having to stop at the Kamaran quarantine centre (Yegar 1979).

In controlling and supervising hajj matters, the colonial administration constantly found itself caught between efforts to protect its reputation and the desire for profit. McDonnell (1986) stresses that changes made to shipping regulations to ensure the voyages fulfilled certain sailing standards were in fact driven mostly by pressure from the international community and, at the same time, were enforced to protect the British reputation. This was in marked contrast to the wants of British shipping companies to secure the maximum numbers of passengers to reduce costs and to compete with shipping companies from other countries. The British officially objected to the compulsory quarantine procedures on all pilgrim ships from regions affected by the epidemic, claiming that the procedures interfered with the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion. However, Long (1979) and Peters (1994) view these objections more as a tendency to protect their commercial interests, as these quarantine procedures resulted in a loss of £ 500 to the shipping companies. The same situation arose when the Singapore municipal committee requested to Singapore authorities that health checks be conducted on every ship that called at Singapore to check on

quarantine procedures for passengers who had contracted diseases and to impose a fine on ship captains who had allowed infected passengers to disembark. However, the proposal was ignored by E. A. Blundell, Governor of the Straits Settlements (1855–1859), with the excuse that it interfered with the smooth flow of trade. Among the reasons given for the objection was that the health check procedures would create uneasiness among traders. The measure also required the Straits Settlements administration to incur heavy costs while its efficacy was not guaranteed (SSR [SNL] V 23).

Conclusion

The hajj undoubtedly played a very significant role in the lives of Muslims, including the Malays. The unity of the Muslims through the hajj was a cause of worry for colonial powers, including the British. The hajj was a test case for the British claim that their own brand of administration was the best for Muslim interests. Health problems and the spread of epidemics that resulted from overcrowding in pilgrim ships severely tested British capabilities. Although the British administration tried its best to maintain its good reputation by improving hajj services, commercial interests constantly appeared to undermine official efforts; to the British, the desire for profit from hajj activities was much more important than the welfare of pilgrims.

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Notes

1. The hajj may be performed on behalf of someone else due to the death of an individual who satisfies all conditions obligatory for the performance of hajj but does not fulfil it because of obstacles or the person does not have the physical capacity owing to ill-health, age and so forth.
2. The term "Pan-Islam" was commonly used by the West in reference to efforts of the Islamic community to unite against and oppose Western colonisation and to drive Westerners out of Asia and Africa.
3. Bubonic plague is disease in which the bacteria *yersinia pestis* weaken the lymphatic system. It is spread by infected bugs from small animals with sharp teeth, such as rats. Symptoms of bubonic plague are swelling of the lymph nodes, particularly in the underarms, groin and neck, development of red spots on the skin that turn black, breathing difficulties, continuous vomiting of blood

and pain in the limbs. The disease usually causes death within four to seven days in 50% of infected victims.

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