

Scholars' *Jihad* Ta'limi in Pahang During the 19th Century

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Abstract: Islam in Pahang during the 19th century flourished as a result of the effort of Islamic scholars during that time. Scholars being exemplary really work hard to convey the message of Islam to the community. The struggle to make the community fully understand the true Islamic teachings is one of the branches (manifestation) of *Jihad* known as *Jihad Ta'limi* (The struggle to educate). This paper will try to showcase the Islamic scholars involved in this struggle to educate the masses in Pahang during the 19th century. Content analysis was used as the methodology in this study. Through this study, it has been found that a few Islamic scholars were actively involved in the course of propagating the true Islamic teachings in their pursuit of establishing a true and solid Islamic understanding in the community. The existence of tolerance between the rulers and the scholars is a factor that acts as a catalyst in the development of Islamic propagation until today.

Key words: Jihad Ta'limi • Islamic scholars • Islamic propagation • Pahang

INTRODUCTION

Most oriental scholars or orientalist believed that Islam was spread by the sword or through warfare which contributes to a complete misunderstanding and misconception of the term *Jihad*. Islam as a religion that practices diplomacy and openness will not force anyone especially the non-Muslims to accept the religion. Being a religion of peace, Islam does not believe in bloodshed for the sake of victory. *Jihad* in most cases is associated with Holy War which originated from the Crusade. This misinterpretation has its roots during the Crusade when the phrase Holy War was used to describe the war against Muslims. Even though the Crusade happened centuries ago, Western scholars until today define *Jihad* as a Holy War and the term Holy War is non-existent in Islamic dictionaries. If the term Holy War is translated into Arabic it would become *al-Harb al-Muqaddasah* (Sacred or Blessed War) or *al-Ma'rakah al-Muqaddasah* (Sacred or Blessed Battle) which is non-existent either in the Quran or in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him. War is usually referred as *Qital* or *Harb* in the Islamic dictionary [1].

The term *Jihad* is not exclusively used to describe fighting in the battlefield as it has a diverse meaning and application. For example, performing the *Hajj* and being kind to one's parents are also a form of *Jihad*. The wide and diverse meaning of *Jihad* which is not exclusively associated with war makes it possible for humans as servants of God to engage in *Jihad* as a form of worship which promises great rewards. *Jihad Ta'limi* (The struggle to educate) is one of the many forms of *Jihad*. It is a form of *Jihad* with the objective of propagating and imparting Islamic knowledge not only to non-Muslims but also to the Muslims. This paper will discuss and reveal prominent Islamic scholars in Pahang during the 19th century who were committed to the realization of the objectives of *Jihad* which is to nurture knowledgeable beings and establish a more conducive Islamic environment in Pahang against the backdrop of civil war and British colonization during the period.

General Definition of *Jihad*: The word *Jihad* is derived from the root word *j-h-d* or *Juhd* which forms the verb *Jahada*. This verb generally means a struggle or exertion of effort or the employment of a person towards a

commendable aim, warding off obstacles or defending oneself in a fight [2]. KamusDewan 4th Edition meanwhile defines *Jihad* as an intense struggle to achieve the grace of God or a struggle against a nation's enemies, evil desires, dictators and others [3]. *Jihad* can also be defined as every effort that requires massive energy in the pursuit of a noble and ideal cause which is to attain the pleasure and forgiveness from God. In conclusion, *Jihad* is the struggle and fight against the enemies of God and nation and also defending the religion and truth with all available resources inclusive of material wealth and one's own life. The Quran being a revelation of God, mentions *Jihad* numerous times which indicate its exceptional position. The word *Jihad* is consistently associated with the clause 'belief in God and His Prophet' making it a yardstick in attaining the highest position beside God [4]. Attaining this high position does not only promise rewards in the hereafter but also goodness in this world. The various scopes and forms of *Jihad* that are not only restricted to war, present wide opportunities for mankind to engage in *Jihad* as a means of drawing nearer and closer to God.

Jihad Ta'limi: *Jihad*, from the Islamic viewpoint is following God's commandment in doing good and avoiding evil. *Jihad* can be practiced either in a personal capacity or within a community. The term *Jihad* also refers to the various actions, words, writings or jobs which are related to a profession, community, or family. It is a spiritual form as a means to draw nearer to God in the hope of getting the rewards in heaven. In other words, *Jihad* is an intense fight or opposition or defense and effort in achieving a goal or objective. The *Jihad* in calling people to the religion of Allah must employ appropriate methods based on the audience's intellectual level. To the lower intellects, good guidance and teaching should be provided while for the more intellectual group exchanging ideas and opinions is more appropriate. Calling people to Islam especially to the non-Muslims requires proper and suitable approach. Forcing them to embrace Islam is strictly prohibited as there is no compulsion in religion which is clearly stated in many verses in the Quran. It is clearly evident that Islam is not propagated by force or by the sword as claimed by many orientalists.

Oral or speech *Jihad* is one of the forms of *Jihad* execution or implementation. It is not exclusively used to call the non-believers to Islam but can also be utilized when confronting the hypocrites by presenting facts and explanations to counter their arguments. The *Imams* (leaders in Islamic school of thoughts) are united in their opinions that the hypocrites are bound by the same laws and regulations in Islamic jurisprudence thus war cannot be declared upon them unless they openly renounce

Islam. Apart from utilizing the oral *Jihad* towards non-believers, it is also used to strengthen the Islamic understanding among the Muslims. The writers opine that *Jihad* through education or *Ta'limi* as being one of the forms of oral *Jihad*. *JihadTa'limi* is an intense effort to teach, transfer knowledge and nurture anyone interested in acquiring Islamic knowledge and consequently practising Islam in its true sense. The implementation of *Jihad* through education is similar to oral *Jihad* except that in oral *Jihad* the intense effort is directed towards overcoming injustice and calling the deviants back into the Islamic fold. The real measure of success in *JihadTa'limi* is when the true, correct and complete Islamic knowledge is conveyed in the process of educating every Muslim. *JihadTa'limi* is implemented in many ways such as study circles (Halaqah), discussion groups (Usrah), constructing schools and many more. It can be seen that *JihadTa'limi* was implemented in Pahang during the 19th century.

Pahang in the 19th Century: Pahang is a state in the east coast of the Malay Peninsula with land area of 13,820 square kilometer (28% from total land area of the peninsula) making it the biggest state in the peninsula. As a result of the British colonization at the end of the 19th century, Pahang was made one of the states in the Federated Malay States together with Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan [5]. The Pahang River which flows through the state is the longest river in the peninsula. Pahang is demarcated with Kelantan to the north by Mount Tahan while Lebir River in Kelantan provides political, economic and social connection between the two states. The Kemaman River, Dungun River, Terengganu River and Kerbat River meanwhile define the borders with the state of Terengganu [6]. The population of Pahang consists of Malays as the majority and other ethnic communities such as the aborigines, Chinese, Arabs and Europeans. Begbie reported that in 1834, the total population of Pahang is 59,000 which consisted of 20,000 males, 19,000 females and 20,000 children. Skinner stated that there were 63,000 people in the state with 50,000 Malays, 10,000 Chinese and 3,000 aborigines and Newbold meanwhile calculated that the population at 40,000 [7].

The Malays mostly settled in the interiors of the state along the Pahang River and their economic activities revolved around agriculture, industries such as cloth weaving, boat building and other jobs. Living with the close proximity to the river makes it convenient for the people to fish and water their plantations. The Malays professed the Islamic faith and Islam probably was

introduced in the state as early as the 11th century or even earlier. This is due to the discovery of a grave in the PermatangPasir Village in Pekan dated 419 Hijrah which is equivalent to the year 1028 AD [8]. It is likely that Islam was introduced earlier here given the proximity to the states of Malacca and Terengganu which accepted Islam in the 15th and 14th centuries respectively. There are several factors that contributed to the acceptance of this new religion throughout the state inclusive of the interiors. The acceptance of this new religion coincides with the migration of the Minangkabau community during the second half of the 16th century. Graves of Syeds were found scattered in many places which proved the existence of Islamic missionaries in the state. The rise of Islam is usually centered around the state capital but it does not mean that the interiors were neglected in the propagation of Islam as this duty was carried out by the Minangkabaus.

Islam slowly gained acceptance in Pahang not only by the common people but also the state ruler. By the 19th century, Islamic practice improved considerably even though there were no concrete evidence to support this but based on the writings by Abdullah Munshi, around the year 1838 when he found a mosque near the house of the Bendahara (Minister in charge of property and finance) [9]. He further noted that Friday prayers were held in the mosque. Even though he described the Pahang Malays as being lazy and of low intelligence, he heard Quranic verses being recited in the village. From the above statements, it can be deduced that the Malays in the state subscribed to the Islamic religion. If they were able to perform Friday prayers, it is definite that they subscribed to the first pillar of Islam, which is the affirmation that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His last Messenger. Furthermore, the recitation of Quranic verses showed that they were exposed to the Quran.

There were also Chinese in the state during that time. When Abdullah Munshi came to Pahang, Chinese communities were already present having villages of their own which are separate from the Malay villages. Inter-ethnic assimilation exists at that time as a result of cross-cultural marriages between the Malays and the Chinese. Up until the arrival of Swettenham in 1885, there were about 200 to 300 Chinese in the state. In 1891 the Chinese population grew to 3,241 as a result of the British administration and the introduction of the steam ship service from Singapore to Kuala Pahang and Kuantan. The Chinese were involved in trade and mining. The Chinese were largely concentrated in Pekan and Penjom being the trading centers of the state [10].

The aborigines are natives of the state and their contribution towards the development of the state are mainly through the production of forests products. Around 1891, the population of aborigines in the state stood at around 3,500. They occupied forests areas along the Pahang River and their main occupation was concentrated in the production of forests produce such as rattan and gum. The forests products were then sold to Malay traders, agents of the state rulers or Chinese traders who took the products to the river port to be sold or exported. Additionally, at the end of the 19th century, there were around ten to twenty Europeans in the state. In 1887 when the British stationed their representative in the state, the Europeans population grew and in 1891 their population became 102 people. The Europeans were mainly engaged in prospecting work in the mining industry in the state. Generally the people of Pahang lived in villages. The three biggest villages in Pahang are situated in Chenor, Temerloh and PulauTawar. Every village is administered by a village chief and the size of the of the chief's house usually corresponds with their jurisdiction and the number of their followers [11].

In the early 19th century, the state was governed by a Bendahara even though there was a Sultan from the Riau-Johor-Pahang Empire. Only during the second half of the 19th century Pahang had its own Sultan who was formerly a Bendahara. He took the name of Sultan Ahmad al-Muazzam Shah and he ruled from 1863 to 1914. It is during this period that the British colonization took place with the appointment of J.P. Rodger as the first Resident. The colonist took away not only the political powers of the Malays but also reconfigured the traditional system at that time apart from plundering the state's wealth. During the 19th century Pahang had its state capital in Pekan which is situated at the rivermouth of the Pahang River, where the ruler and his clans resided. Trade activities including imports and exports were supervised by the Ruler and his men. As a melting pot of various communities, Pekan emerged as a big settlement with Malay, Chinese and Arab villages. Being situated at the rivermouth of Sungai Pahang, Pekan was poised to play an active role in the economic and social development of Pahang.

Jihad Ta'limi by Islamic Scholars in Pahang During the 19th Century: IbnManzur in *Lisan al-Arab* stated that the word *Ulama* is the plural of *Alim* which means knowledgeable person. According to KamusDewan, the word *Ulama* (scholars) refer to a knowledgeable or intellectual person well versed in Islamic knowledge.

Meanwhile Rushdan M. Aminin Ensiklopedia Islam stated that the *Ulama* refers to a knowledgeable person or a specialist in a field of study. The scholars are very important as they are considered as specialists in the various religious disciplines such as jurisprudence, traditions of the Prophet p.b.u.h., interpretation, Islamic faith and other Islamic field of study. Islamic scholars are agents of change for the society. Their thinking and character moulding has successfully created a society with high moral and religious values. The 19th century witnessed the increase in the number of Islamic scholars in Pahang. Even though the second half of the 19th century, Pahang was engulfed in civil war and the resistance against the British colonization, the scholars still played their roles in developing the spiritual aspect of the society in Pahang.

The society was able to recognize the scholars through their involvement in the administration or in Islamic propagation and knowledge dissemination. The discussion on *Jihad Ta'limi* by Islamic scholars in Pahang will highlight a few scholars who were prominent in the teaching and disseminating Islamic knowledge in Pahang as well as their personalities and their writings. It should be noted that the scholars, apart from their involvement in the field of education, they also assisted the ruler in the administration of the state. The overlapping roles of the scholars as educators and administrators clearly show that they are versatile and able to work together with the ruler and other chieftains in governing the state. Not much was written about the propagation of Islam through teaching in Pahang during the 19th century which was founded by Tok Shihabuddin in the 18th century but there were a few notable scholars who were involved in *Jihad Ta'limi* in Pahang. Contrary to the situation in Kelantan and Terengganu where Islamic education showed tremendous progress, the situation in Pahang received less attention and not much writings and research were done.

Based on a few records from Kelantan, there was a scholar from Kelantan who was actively involved in Islamic propagation in Pulau Tawar, Jerantut, Pahang during the 1890s or earlier than that by the name of Tuan Haji Ishak. He is a descendant of Sheikh Abdul Halim who established a well-organized Islamic education system in Kelantan. Other descendants of Sheikh Abdul Halim who became famous Islamic scholars are Tuan Haji Yaakob or popularly known as Tuan Padang, Haji Ahmad and Haji Taib [12]. There were no clear records of Tuan Haji Ishak's activities in Pulau Tawar but it can be assumed that his migration to Pahang is associated with the propagation of

Islam to the communities in Pulau Tawar. It was likely that the arrival of Tuan Haji Ishak was contemporary with the appointment of Haji Uthman bin Senik as the first *Mufti* (Islamic jurist) of Pahang since his date of arrival coincided with Haji Uthman's arrival in Pulau Tawar in the 1880s. Pulau Tawar at that time was the fort of a famous Pahang warrior, Imam Perang Rasu or better known as Tok Gajah. His arrival may also intend to inject fighting spirit to the people of Pahang in their fight against the British colonists. The true understanding and practice of Islamic teaching not only strengthens the faith but also increases the awareness and conviction of the people in their struggle against the British infidels. The writers are confident that Tuan Haji Ishak is one of the scholars who undertook this role.

Based on other records from Kelantan and Terengganu, there were students from Pahang who were under the tutelage of the various scholars in the aforementioned states. It is safe to assume that these students, after the completion of their studies went back to teach religious subjects in their respective villages due to the fact that during those periods; teaching and spreading religious knowledge is seen as an obligation and responsibility in nurturing and moulding a true Islamic society. There were a few other scholars who were involved in *Jihad Ta'limi* throughout the 19th century in Pahang. One of them is Allahyarham Mufti Mukhsin bin Habib Abdul Rahman. His name was mentioned in an article entitled 'Bayani al-Sirki' written by Sheikh Abdullah bin Sheikh Muhammad Riau in 1803 where Sheikh Muhammad wrote 'as to what follows, I intend to deliver the message in this article to the state of Pahang through a great man, the honourable chief Mahusin, the son of the late Habib Abdul Rahman.'

There was also Allahyarham (May Allah bless his soul) Imam Perang Sanggang (1820-1900) who was one of the Eight Chieftains of Pahang in the 1880s. His real name is Teh and he is also known as Imam Teh the son of Kadi Abu Bakar. He was the head in the district which was under the jurisdiction of the Temerloh Chief but being politically lucid his influence and position often times surpassed the Temerloh Chief. Allahyarham Imam Yaakub bin Lebai Muji (1842-1928) was another scholar who was engaged in *Jihad Ta'limi*. His family originated from Kelantan but he was born in Sanggang Seberang Temerloh, Pahang. His grandfather, Imam Derajat came to Pahang as an Islamic missionary. He was sent by his father to study in Kelantan and Patani after which he continued his religious studies in Mecca. He spent a considerable time in Mecca and only returned to Sanggang in 1902.

Mufti Haji AShukur bin Haji AbdKadir was one of the scholars involved in the propagation of Islam in Pahang. He was born around 1770 of Javanese lineage and resided in Chenor. His father came to Pahang as a trader and stayed in KampungSekara. He received his early education from his father who was also a scholar educated in Mecca. Upon completing his studies under his father, he went to Mecca for a few years and upon returning to Chenor, he established a religious school. Due to his prowess in Islamic knowledge, he was appointed as a *Mufti* (jurist) in 1830 at the same time Kadi Abu BakarSanggang was appointed as the Chief Judge as mentioned in W. Linehan's book 'History of Pahang.'

Mufti Mojhsin bin Haji AbdShukur was appointed as a Mufti replacing his then ageing father. His mother was from Pekan and he had a brother from a different mother, Kadi Abdul Rahman. He was referred as the Mufti by the Chief Judge of Pahang, Kadi Haji Ibrahim bin Hurairah in his book *Syifa al-Abdan*. It was stated in the book that he was stripped from the post when Sultan Ahmad Syah I ascended the throne and Habib Muhammad Amin was appointed as the new Mufti. The last scholar engaged in *JihadTa'limi* in Pahang during the 19th century is Mufti Habib Mohammad Amin. He was the first *Mufti* appointed by Sultan Ahmad Syah I after he ascended the throne of Pahang. Habib Muhammad Amin originated from Mecca and later resided in Singapore. His position as the Mufti was mentioned in a poetry of Sultan Abu Bakar Johor during the visit of Sultan Ahmad Muazzam Shah to Johor.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the above discussion; *Jihad Ta'limi* was employed as a method in guiding and educating the society about Islam. Even though the impact of the scholars' struggle and effort were not clearly evident, the writer opines that Islamic understanding was prevalent as a result of their effort in disseminating Islamic knowledge and practice. Since not much research and writing with the emphasis on the Islamic scholars of Pahang is available, the writer suggests that a comprehensive and thorough research be conducted on these scholars so that their contributions and writings will not be forgotten by generations to come.

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