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Hacking The Geneology and Typology of Reforming Malay-Nusantara Islamic Thought In Singapore's Al-Imam Magazine (1906-1908)

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<p>Keywords : <i>Al-Imam Magazine;</i> <i>Renewal of Islamic Thought;</i> <i>Malay-Nusantara</i></p>	<p>Abstract <i>Al-Imam is the first magazine in Persada Alam Melayu-Nusantara that promotes the renewal of Islamic thought and voices the awakening of the backwardness and stagnation of Muslims in this region in the first decade of the 20th century. The managers of Al-Imam magazine claim to be students of Sheikh al-Imam Mubammad Abdub and Rashid Ridha. Thus, in terms of spirit, material, and publishing format, Al-Imam magazine is a "duplication" and "extension" of Al-Manar magazine, which was published by Muhammad Abdub and Rashid Ridha in Cairo, Egypt, from 1898 to 1935. On this basis, the genealogy and typology of the renewal of thought voiced by Al-Imam magazine in the Malay-Nusantara region are based on and get a strong influence from the rational-progressive renewal of Islamic thought by Mubammad Abdub and Rashid Ridha, especially as stated in Al-Manar. Although Al-Imam magazine was only published for two years (1906–1908), its role and influence were large and wide in this region. The most obvious influence of Al-Imam Magazine is seen in the publication of Al-Munir magazine by Abdullah Ahmad in Padang in 1911–1915.</i></p>
<p>Kata Kunci : <i>Majalah Al-Imam;</i> <i>Pembaruan</i> <i>Pemikiran Islam;</i></p>	<p>Abstrak <i>Al-Imam adalah majalah pertama di Persada Alam Melayu-Nusantara yang mengusung pembaharuan pemikiran Islam dan menyuarakan kebangkitan keterbelakangan dan stagnasi umat</i></p>

Melayu-Nusantara

Islam di kawasan ini pada dekade pertama abad ke-20. Pengelola majalah Al-Imam mengaku sebagai murid Syekh al-Imam Muhammad Abdub dan Rashid Ridha. Dengan demikian, dari segi semangat, materi, dan format penerbitan, majalah Al-Imam merupakan “duplikasi” dan “kepanjangan” dari majalah Al-Manar, yang diterbitkan oleh Muhammad Abdub dan Rashid Ridha di Kairo, Mesir, dari tahun 1898 hingga 1935. Atas dasar itu, genealogi dan tipologi pembaruan pemikiran yang disuarakan majalah Al-Imam di kawasan Melayu-Nusantara didasarkan dan mendapat pengaruh kuat dari pembaruan pemikiran Islam yang rasional-progresif oleh Muhammad Abdub dan Rashid Ridha, khususnya seperti yang tercantum dalam Al-Manar. Meskipun majalah Al-Imam baru terbit selama dua tahun (1906–1908), namun peran dan pengaruhnya sangat besar dan luas di wilayah ini. Pengaruh Majalah Al-Imam yang paling nyata terlibat pada penerbitan majalah Al-Munir oleh Abdullah Ahmad di Padang pada tahun 1911–1915.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century, Singapore became a cosmopolitan city, which, according to Roff (1994), had the same position as Malacca in the 15th century. Singapore's cosmopolitanism, particularly at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, established it as the center of Malay-Archipelagic Islamic scholarship. Anthony Reid expressed the position and importance of the city of Singapore as a base for religious activities and the struggle of Muslims in the Malay Archipelago:

Singapore became a gathering place not only for aspirants who annually went to Mecca from the fiefdom but also for the disaffected, adventurous, and so on, who willingly chose this place as a base for activities or actions that disrupted Dutch interests in the Dutch East Indies Archipelago, as has often been shown. Here, the enemies of the Dutch government could meet and occasionally appeal to the Turks, with assurances that the British

Occupying Government had little knowledge of or concern for what they were doing (Reid 2003; Kaptein 2003).

In those eras, many ulama (Muslim scholars) settled in Singapore to carry out religious activities, including voicing religious teachings through publishing newspapers and magazines or journals in Malay. In the Malay world, according to Roff (1967b), in 65 years (from 1876 until before the outbreak of World War II), there were no less than 147 publications. Among the many Malay newspapers and magazines that existed before Al-Imam was published in 1906, for example, was Jawi Peranakan (1876), the first Malay language newspaper in this region. Following Jawi Peranakan, in 1877 there were two Malay newspapers, namely Najumul-Fajr and Circulation Al-Shamsu Wal-Qomar.

Then in 1888, the Malay School was born there, followed by Sri Perak (1893), Tanjung Penagari (1894), Warta Leaders (1895), and Colonel Melayu (1896). In 1890 alone, three Malay newspapers were published: Lengkongan Bulan, Bintang Timur, and Cahaya Pulau Pinang. In 1901, there was one Malay newspaper whose existence was reported, namely Jambangan Warta. Later 1904, two media were born, namely the Garden of Knowledge and Khazanah al-Ilmu. However, no evidence can be investigated to prove the existence of other Malay newspapers and magazines in 1906. In that year, only Al-Imm existed, apart from Cahaya Pulau Pinang (1900–1908), but the latter was a daily newspaper and not published periodically. Both Cahaya Pulau Pinang and Al-Imm stopped publication in 1908 (Roff 1967b; 1972; Hamzah 1991).

It is a shame that the "renewal" magazine, Al-Imm, could only survive for two and a half years (July 1906–December 1908). The issuance constraints were allegedly due to shortages and funding difficulties. In a 1961 thesis entitled "The Life and Time of Syekh Syed Al-Hadi," Tan concluded that regarding the termination of the publication of Al-Imm, "it is possible to be in

debt to pay for the lack of funds...." Abdul Aziz bin Mat Tom expressed the same opinion in his thesis "Ansarul Sunnah Movement in Malacca Youth Activities," which, agreeing with previous research, stated that so far, there is no reason for discontinuing the publication of Al-Imam Journal other than financial problems (Hamzah 1991).

Even though the "Penbaharuan" magazine was published only in 1908, its influence was so widespread that Al-Imm magazine played an important role in seeing the genealogy continuity of intellectual-religious renewal in the Malay Archipelago (Holt, Lambton, and Lewis 1970). So great is the function and role that has been carved by the journal Al-Imm in launching the renewal movement that, because of that, this journal is sometimes also called "Jurnal Pembaharuan," especially in the field of religion in Alam Melayu, to the extent that a very authoritative senior historian, Taufik Abdullah, "spoke" through his rhetorical question: "How will the religious reform movement in West Sumatra be understood, for example, if the publication of Al-Imm magazine in Singapore is not taken into account? (Abdullah 2000).

Previous research revealed that Indonesia's Typology of Islamic Thought consists of several types (Nihaya 2012). Next, there are similarities, and the similarities in these two magazines (Al-Munir and Al-Imâm) are not mere coincidences but policies (Sarwan 2010). The development of Islam in Singapore cannot be separated from the process of Islamization that has taken place in the Archipelago and Peninsular Malaysia (Ajat 2020). The Al-Imam magazine, which was published in Singapore, became the publisher for the publication of al-Munir magazine in 1911–1916 in Padang Minangkabau, which is now Madrasah Iqbal al-Islamiah in Singapore, which became the model for evaluating the Adabiyah school, which was founded in 1909 (Palawa 2022). Based on the previous research above, there are several novelties, including the typological aspect that departs from Malay (before Indonesia), which then shows the novelty of Islamic thought in

Malay, and previous research has mentioned the differences in each thought.

This study, following its object (materials and materials), is library research supported by field research (Surur 2017). The first type of library research is intended to gain an understanding of the object under study through a review of written materials contained in al-Imm magazine and other books that contain relevant information needed to understand the research problem. The data for this research were obtained from written materials (Surur et al. 2023), especially from writings and articles in Al-Imm, the primary source. In addition, this type of research also uses data taken from previous writings about al-Imm in general that are relevant as a secondary source. The latter type of field research is intended to obtain information, especially about the influence of the renewal of Al-Imm's thought. These materials were obtained from informants or respondents through data collection instruments, namely interviews with prominent figures in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia who are believed to be able to provide accurate information.

The method used in this study is exploratory (exploring and searching) to obtain material and data about the renewal of Al-Imm's thought. This research uses the historical approach and content analysis techniques on existing written data. In his analysis of the contents of the text being studied, the researcher criticizes internally, namely by questioning whether the data is authentic, and externally, namely by examining motives, neutrality, and goals.

Furthermore, in analyzing the data obtained from existing materials, the researcher began the study by taking several steps. First, in the early stages, the researcher tries to understand the data linguistically and understand the context and era in which the text or work was written. This step is essential for writers to take in order to avoid, according to hermeneutic experts, "textual alienation" in understanding the texts or works properly and correctly.

Second, in the exploratory stage of the data collected through interviews, the researcher gave the informants freedom to convey information about individuals active in thought renewal activities and their views on Al-Imm's thought renewal. Likewise, for data obtained from written materials, especially primary source data, researchers will primarily allow Al-Imm to "speak for himself," especially concerning expressing his ideas and renewal thoughts.

Third, at the critical analysis stage, the researcher will present subjective-critical analyses and attempt to make assessments of al-Imm's renewed thought and its influence on Malay Archipelago religious activist figures who can be believed to be supporters, propagators, or critics of al-Imam. Critical analysis was also carried out on the data collected through interview data collection instruments to trace Al-Imam's influence on intellectuals in the archipelago.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objects of Al-Imam's Thought Renewal

Three significant topics focus on Al-Imam magazine's renewal of Islamic thought (Ton 2006). First, there is the field of religious teachings. Almost certainly, in the discussion of religion in both the fields of aqidah and fiqh, Al-Imam refers to the renewal of al-Manar's religious thought, which Muhammad Abduh commanded. From the analysis of the article's contents, it can be concluded that Al-Imam places great emphasis on the purification of Islamic aqeedah with references to the Qur'an and al-Hadith. Undoubtedly, the renewal of religious thought and understanding is the primary concern of Al-Imm magazine. In this regard, Al-Imam has clearly defined his programs and solidified his stance in the face of the lameness of constant change in all aspects of human life: religious, political, legal, and social dogmas.

Political education is one of Al-Imam's priorities (Ton 2000). Politics is everything related to formulating and

implementing government policies (Makka 2023). In essence, politics is related to humans who permanently live in society. By nature, he is a social being who is always dynamic and developing. Therefore, politics is a symptom that manifests in human development, so political education trains people to socialize and make policies about it. The policies to be drafted are greatly influenced by the conditions faced by the community, thus allowing for new rules to be approved and removing rules that are no longer relevant.

Al-Imam magazine itself states its position:

Its Qiblah (direction) is religious renewal (Islah fi al-Din); its Imam (guidance) is the Qur'an; and its Madzhab (school of thought) is the Sunni school of thought. Its practice is the practice of the pious predecessors (salaf shalih) and all the moral Mujtahid scholars (those who qualify to give religious opinions) (Hamzah 1991).

Al-Imm immediately took action to introduce religious reform in the country was to recommend that Muslims not hesitate "to abandon all acts of heresy, superstition, and superstition, as well as other harmful behaviors" (Hamzah 1991). Then Al-Imm emphasized positive aspects: "It (this journal) opposes those who commit all forms of bid'ah and lies in Islam, greedy humans, and amulet sellers, and forbids and prevents evil" (Hamzah 1991). In facing the background of Malay society, which is still traditional and conservatively oriented, this magazine voices the spirit of Islamic renewal. Syed Sayyid al-Hadi, for example, is the most prolific contributor to writing in Al-Imm, emphasizing the urgency of education and reform for Malays and calling on the Malay community to get rid of un-Islamic practices in everyday life (Mutalib 1995).

Second, in the social and educational fields. In this field, Al-Imam became the main mouthpiece of reform, especially regarding the importance of education and studying religious knowledge as well as other sciences, including foreign languages. Al-Imam explained the critical principle of emulating Muslim

scholars and intellectuals in the past who achieved excellence because they did not leave the Qur'an for study and, at the same time, used knowledge from outside Islam. Very loudly, Al-Imam emphasized his conviction that the progress obtained by the West was obtained from Islamic teachings. Therefore, taking the main points from the West for the advancement of Muslims is necessary.

In the social field, al-Imam adheres to the second typology of Fazlur Rahman, namely, classical modernism. In contrast, in non-religious matters, he is open to Western civilization to achieve Islamic progress. Therefore, she is very keen on fighting for intellectualism. In expressing the rise of the Malay Archipelago's Islamic community from ignorance, poverty, and backwardness, Al-Imm mentions several formulas for solutions and "medicines," such as scientific abilities and technical skills, unity in dealing with enemies, and education to save from suffering and weakness. However, Al-Imm emphasized that "knowing our religious orders will strengthen and awaken all our desires." "Because religion is a proven remedy for all the ills of our community" (Roff 1994).

In line with the author's conclusion, Rashid Ridha's position above is as pointed out by Fazlur Rahman in his book *Islam*, which states that the Salafi movement, under the leadership of Muhammad Abduh's student from Syria, Rashid Ridha (1865-1935), moved continuously towards a type of fundamentalism that is getting undeniably closer to Wahhabism. Not only Rahman but also Gibb (1991) gave the same assessment of the paradigm of Muhammad Abduh's thought, which revived the dialectical way of thinking with the rationalization of previous ulama thoughts. The followers of Muhammad Abduh's teachings, led by his student from Syria, Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Ridha, continue this thought process with a subtle, characteristic movement toward extremism. So, Al-Imm's position in the typology and mapping of the renewal of Islamic thought cannot be generalized to one particular typology, depending on the

object of thought discussed. Moreover, in the year *Al-Imm* was published (1906–1908), Rashid Ridha's attitude and thoughts were not yet fully as described by Rahman and Gibb.

Furthermore, Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin correctly summed up the root causes of the decline of the Islamic community from its past glories in *Al-Imm*, as quoted by Roff, as follows:

The root cause of the decline of the Islamic society from its past glories is that they no longer follow, in their ignorance, God's commandments as expressed through the words and life of the Prophet Muhammad. As a tool for discovering and understanding God's law, humans have been gifted with intelligence (reason), an intelligence that we must use and develop. According to the Imam, Islam is not hostile to science and progress, as described by Westerners. On the other hand, a proper understanding of obedience to Islamic law and spirit is the only way to compete with those who rule us today (Roff 1994).

The purpose of *Al-Imm* magazine is to respond and, at the same time, provide solutions in human life, such as religion, politics, education, and the sociocultural field. As a result, *Al-Imm* magazine stated its purpose and purpose in its first publication: to remind those who have forgotten, awaken those who are asleep, guide those who go astray, support them in speaking wisely, and invite Muslims to strive earnestly to live according to Allah's, God Almighty's, commandments, so that they achieve true happiness in life in this world and gain Allah's pleasure in the hereafter (Hamzah 1991).

Third, in the political field. In several of his publications, *Al-Imm* also emphasizes the importance of the unity of the house. He emphasized the importance of political independence for Muslims to support progress through editorial writings and articles, especially from Sayid Sheikh, who graduated from Saudi Arabia and al-Azhar in Egypt (Roff 1967b). Therefore, according to Fiah, *Al-Imm*'s political influence through Sayid Syekh greatly

influenced political thinking among young people (Al-Imam 1906). It can be understood that the influence of pan-Islamism that he brought from the Middle East and the life that was heavily influenced by the Hadrami people who lived in the area of Singapore at that time had colored Al-Imam's stance in the political field (Hamzah 1991).

Local wisdom is a view of life and knowledge as well as various life strategies in the form of activities carried out by local people in responding to various problems and meeting their needs (Laffan 2015). This needs to be used as a basis for determining policy in the political sphere. Politics involves policy implementation, so it needs to be aligned with the local culture in an area.

The attitude of pan-Islamism shown by Al-Imam through Sayid Syekh is influenced by the romanticism of the glory of Islam in the past. This can be seen from the several publications of Al-Imam when he was the editor, replacing Sheikh Muhammad Tahir. The articles in Al-Imam often praised the greatness of the Ottoman Empire led by Caliph Abdul Hamid, especially in the military field. In a specific article, Al-Imam even praised the greatness of the Ottoman warships, which were large and equipped with weapons (Puteh 1996; Asra and Yusuf 2018). In doing so, Sayid Sheikh paid even less heed to criticism of Sultan Abdul Hamid from some Islamic scholars and leaders in the Middle East (Azra 1999).

Genealogy and Patterns of Al-Imm's Thought Renewal

Examination of the format, content, and contents of Al-Imam's publication leads to an understanding that Al-Imam is not only similar and identical to al-Manar, but it is not uncommon that several important issues contained in al-Manar's publication are even translated to be published in Al-Priest. So, in short, the pattern of renewal of al Imam's thought is also identical to the pattern of renewal of al Manar. While the local aspects that have developed in Singapore, including in the Malay World in general,

the colonialism aspect that occurred in the archipelago contributed to the emergence of political ideas of the Malay world, including those who realized the intellectual abilities that had been achieved by the Malay community, namely the Jawi script, This can be seen from the newspaper magazines that preceded it, which carried the concept of "Nation, Islamic Nation" through the magazines that had developed (Anynda 2019).

Genealogically, the intellectual behind the kitchen and the founder of Al-Imam, especially Sheikh Muhammad Tahir bin Jalaluddin al-Minangkabawi al-Azhari, is a Minangkabau descendant who had the opportunity to continue his studies in the Middle East and met essential figures such as Muhammad Abduh. Likewise, his best friend, Sayyid Syekh, had become the adopted son of Raja Ali Haji in Riau Lingga (Roff 1967b; Abdullah 2000).

Therefore, the style of reforming Al-Imam's Islamic thought was heavily influenced by Muhammad Abduh. Meanwhile, the influence of Rashid Ridla, as explained in the previous chapter, especially regarding their political thoughts, still needs to be questioned. However, little can be found in the political thoughts of Sayid Syekh, who was quite familiar with the life of the Riau Malay kingdom in his youth.

Furthermore, the ideas for renewing Al-Imam's thought were not only influenced by contributors, some of whom were descendants of Hadrami, and several local scholars who graduated from the Middle East; it is inevitable that their influence also developed among intellectual circles at that time in Malaysia and Indonesia. This can be proven by the fact that after the end of the publication of Al-Imam in 1908, it was also followed in Indonesia by the publication of al-Munir, which, according to Hamka, was nothing but "copy and paste" in terms of appearance, article content, and format so that it functions as a continuation of Al-Imam's renewal of thought (Hamzah 1991).

Shaykh Muhammad Tahir's influence and renewal

thoughts spread throughout Sumatra, namely in Minangkabau, Palembang, and Bengkulu. In addition, because of his influence, Al-Imam is also read on the island of Java, especially in Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, and Surabaya, and his influence extends to Kalimantan. Meanwhile, the influence of Sayyid Sheikh can be traced in Riau, especially in the Riau Islands. Looking at the style of Islamic thought adopted by Syekh Tahir in the development of religious organizations in Indonesia, and we can find similarities or equality in the thinking of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Persis, Al Irsyad, and Al Wasliyah. In political organizations, al-Islamic thinking can be measured at a certain level in organizations such as Sarekat Dagang Islam, Sarekat Islam, and Masyumi.

Its influence on the world of education, especially the growth of the intelligentsia in Malaysia, According to Fiah, Al-Imam's influence can be identified by several personnel at the Malay College of Kuala Kangsar, the Sultan Idris Training College, for aristocrats. Zainal Abidin Ahmad is a Malay intellectual who is very concerned about the problem of poverty, both knowledge and wealth, which causes Malay people to fall behind. Abdul Rahim Kajai, who founded the *Majlis* newspaper in 1931–35. This newspaper is known to have inherited the spirit of nationalism, which Al-Imam developed. It is alleged that Al-Imam inspired the figure of Ibrahim Yaakoob, who appeared as a young Malaysian figure actively fighting for radical nationalism in his country.

The Influence of Al-Imm's Thought Renewal

It is not easy to know how big the circulation of Al-Imam magazine is. However, Roff (1967a) does not think that the primary readers of Al-Imam are intellectual circles in almost all areas of British Malaya. This is based on the fact that Al-Imam has representatives in all areas of the kingdom of Malacca, and the article contributors to this magazine come from Johor, Perak, and Pahang (Abdullah 2000). In Malaysia, Al-Imam has inspired

the growth of similar publications. Among them is "Neracha" (The Scale) in Singapore, fronted by Haji Abbas bin Muhammad Taha during 1911–1915. Haji Abbas bin Muhammad Taha was previously one of the editors of Al-Imam. It is, therefore not surprising that the discussion on religion in the publication of the balance sheet bears a resemblance to Al-Imam. In Indonesia, as Hamka believes, Al-Imam's thoughts were continued by Al-Munir, who became a source for supporters of ideas for reforming Islamic thought.

First, in terms of Aqidah. This can be understood from Al-Imam's criticism of the condition of the Islamic community in Malaya, Indonesia, that they have not only forgotten their religion but their God. Furthermore, al-Imam warned that if Allah has been forgotten, our people will be destroyed (Fiah and Purbaya 2016). Apart from that, some criticisms are aimed at the practice of reading prayers over graves by religious people who are paid a certain amount of money (Roff 1967b). Both of these must be understood in the context of societal and religious practices that are not only oriented toward economic and political interests but are also intertwined with local religious traditions widely practiced by Malays.

Second, in the field of Sharia. Articles on matters of worship and fiqh debates mark this. The debate in the field of fiqh is allegedly also the theme of the debate between "old people and young people." So, for example, Al-Imam had to include a special booklet publication on the subject of dog licking with the title "Important Treatise on the Problem of Dog Licking Above the Four Madzhabs" at one point (Roff 1994; Hamzah 1991). Apart from that, there are also discussions about things that are usually considered unclean by the elderly to wear, such as a tie and a hat. Al-Imam responded to this as something never prohibited by the Qur'an and hadith. In response, several Al-Imam publications related to law in Islam emphasize the importance of returning to the Qur'an and al-Hadith rather than practicing religion by unthinkingly following taqlid (Surur and

Pujilestari 2021). Al Imam's stance in various published articles demonstrates his reformist style of not adhering to and adhering to one school of thought (Azra 1999). Da'wah activity is a transformative effort to spread the message of Islam. Fundamentally, Islamic da'wah is oriented toward efforts to realize better Muslims (Mualimin 2020).

CONCLUSION

From the previous typology and mapping of the renewal of Islamic thought, the mapping of Al-Imm in the renewal of Islamic thought, although not easy, can be identified. Identifying Al-Imam correctly and precisely becomes difficult because between Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha (between teacher and student), not only are several ideas different, but more importantly, the two have different paradigms of renewal thinking.

Starting from the publication of Al-Imm in 1906-1908, there are still around twenty-five years of possibilities for Rashid Ridha's thoughts to change and move away from the thoughts of his teacher, Muhammad Abduh. In other words, it can be emphasized that the typology of thought renewal carried out by Al-Imm magazine is progressive rational thought with a powerful influence from the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha, as stated in the two previous magazines, namely al-Urwah al-Wusqa and al-Manar.

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