

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERATION AS A HERITAGE IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC AND ISLAMIC MALAYONESIAN LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

A number of scholars defined moderation in the 1990s to be the best policy in leadership instead of optimization. We show that the Malayonesian great leaders at least from the 7th century AD up to the 17th century AD explicitly adhered to a moderation or *wustaisation* doctrine of leadership. An outstanding leader during pre-Islamic period was Sri Jayanasa, the founder of the Sriwijaya Kingdom, Sumatera in the 7th century AD, who implemented *waropaya* (a sufficiency policy, a kind of moderation) for his people to achieve *sukha* (joy). Sri Jaya Indarawarmadewa, who is known as a king for the Champa Kingdom, Vietnam in the 11th century AD who practiced *sanama* (moderation) and *paksapata* (balance and justice). Another leader, Patih Gajah Mada, the greatest *prabu* (the prime minister) of the Majapahit Kingdom, Central Jawa in the 14th century AD was *sarjawa upasama* (humble and not arrogant) and he practiced *prasaja* (a kind of moderation). In the period of Islamic Malayonesian kingdoms notably during the Aceh Kingdom, Johor-Riau Kingdom, and Patani Kingdom in the 17th Century AD leaders were taught or advised to be *wusta* (Islamically moderate) by their leadership and

management *gurus*, notably by Bukhary al-Jawhary in his *magnus opus* on the subject, *Taj al-Salatdin*.

Keywords: leadership quality, moderation practice, *wustisation* practice, pre-Islamic Malayonesian Civilization, Islamic Malayonesian Civilization.

1. Introduction

A basic assumption in the present (Western) management and leadership policies, as taught in management science or operational research, is that the best policy must necessarily be an optimum policy. Even economics has been defined as an optimization (Intrilligator 2002).

Since as early as 1970 many scholars have shown their dissatisfaction over the present economics paradigm, especially those who are concerned with a new world order (a world better in justice, sustainability,... and happiness in life) under the name of environmentalists, and ecologists and activists. The Islamic scholars who prescribed religious based knowledge paradigm known as Islamisation of knowledge are also concerned, though they are less promoted by the West. Thus many ecological economists, the earliest being Veblen (1899/2011), have argued for the need to be less *homo oeconomicus* in consumption and to not pursue status but rather happiness. But then, happiness was defined in terms of utility and economics of consumer behaviour with *homo oeconomicus* deeply embedded within, in other words, “optimisation of the utility function” (Bruni 2006). Examples of such writings within this new millennium are multifacious (e.g. Barnett (2003), Gowdy and Mayumi (2001), Jerom *et al.* (2008), and Hands (2011)). The subject of happiness itself has been left out for a long time and it resurfaced only recently with the intention of formalizing a better concept to represent happiness in relation to the utility function (Shaharir 2008)

The return to economics with happiness as the ultimate objective was mainly caused by the failures of economic development. In this respect, Kapp (1988) is regarded as the pioneer, who believes that economic development or growth is detrimental to environment. Kapp developed a human-need-based economic behavior as against “a utility based” criterion. Moral values are the objects of this new model of behavior. His view was then developed with many stronger and more articulate views held by Mishan (1993) and many ecological and environmental economists in 1990s, notably Postel (1990) with his famous introduction of a new substitute of economics subject, which he

called 'eco'-nomics, and Redman (2001) with a new perspective of the environmental impact on humanity. The discourse has been carried forward in this millennium, forward as we see a much waited review of the famous controversies on limits of growth by Meadows *et al.* (2004), a comprehensive treatment of Portel's eco-nomics by Bartlemus (2010), on "green economics" by Wall (2006), and refreshing issues on economics growth by Pucher *et al.* (2007), Magnani and Tubb (2008) and Tarp (2010), on poverty by Weiss (2008). At the same time, decision based on optimisation theories such as via methods in linear programming or optimal growth control modeling in search for the best policy of management in development or sustainability have not been rejected since its first respective promising results by Bartelmus (1979), and Ramsey (1928), until today. This is shown by an extensive survey by Bartelmus (2010) and Farzin (2010).

However, the concept of an optimum policy is all but based on extremism. In fact, an optimum policy is defined as a policy in which the relevant measures of performance, such as return, profit, wealth, growth,... etc. achieve its maximum (the highest) numerical value (especially in monetary sense).

Meanwhile, Naess (1976) seems to have deviated from normality through his normative view on the equality of all living things (species) known as Gaia hypothesis. Not only that the move was contrary to *homo oeconomicus*, it also comes with some religious flavor and hence it is not surprising that the work has been less promoted and less accepted by Western scholars in general. This, however, has perhaps somewhat changed following the argument of Faucheux (2001) that any definition of sustainable development must necessarily be normative (which includes faith, moral conviction and pre-analytic vision). But only in the 1990's a few scholars such as Durning (1992) and Segal (1999) have proposed **moderation in consumption** as the best mean of achieving "good life" (described by them as simplicity, contentment and less guilt about social inequities).

Earlier, Shaharir & Rohani (1996), in an effort to formulate a better utility function in such a way that the theory would be more compatible with the normative behavior of Muslims, proposed an **Islamic moderation**, *wustaisation*⁽¹⁾ in consumption. In other words, Islamically, the best way to achieve satisfaction, the level of the best consumption, is no longer an optimal level but *wustdo* or simply *wusta*. Shaharir (2003, 2005, 2006a,b) has formulated a mathematical model based on a working definition of the Islamic moderation to replace the concept of optimum and hence changed the whole theory of optimization and its applications

in economics and management. However, the complete theory of *wustaisation* is yet to be fully developed.

In the political arena, especially after “September Eleventh” 2001, the West has always reminded the Third World leaders, and in particular the Muslims, to be moderate. Thus, many Muslim leaders, as well as scholars have become very defensive towards their heritage on moderation as if the moderation in Islam was new or inappropriate in this modern world. On the contrary, We believe our work mentioned briefly above should have been used for a better articulation of moderation from the Islamic perspective. However, here we want to strengthen further the concept of moderation from its historical perspective of the people in south-east Asia, whom we refer to here as Malayonesia. This is very relevant to the Muslim World, since Malayonesians represent the biggest number of Muslims in the world.

Malayonesia is the region in south-east Asia referred to by some as the Malay Archipelago (first coined by the British naturalist, Wallace in 1860s), albeit smaller (since it does not include southern Thai and small portion of Kemboja-Vietnam). Other names are the Malay World (especially before the formation of Indonesia), *Nusantara* (first coined by the ruler of the Majapahit Kingdom in the early 14th century where originally it did not include the center of the Majapahit Kingdom, Java), and even the name *Malaysia*; and many other names referred to by the European scholars in the 19th century. But, as noted by Shaharir (2010), with the obvious fact that Indonesia is becoming more dominant as a nation-state in South-East Asia (by its sheer population and coverage), it is not surprising that we very often come across the term Indonesian Archipelago, Indonesian World or Indonesian-Malay World instead of just Malay. Thus, we choose to repopularise Malayonesia, first coined by George Earl a British Ethnographer in the middle of the 19th century.

The purpose of this article is to show that the practice of moderation or *wustaisation* is not new. We attempt to show that the practice of a kind of moderation among Malayonesian leaders not only began during Islamic era but also in the pre-Islamic Malayonesian Civilization, a civilization in South-East Asia during the period of 2nd century AD to 14th century AD.

Our research materials for this article includes an Old Malay Inscription written in the second half of the 7th century AD the Sriwijaya Kingdom centered at Palembang, Sumatera; an Old Champa inscription written in the end of the 11th century AD in the Champa Kingdom centered in the Middle of the present Vietnam; and an Old Javanese

manuscript written in the second half of the 14th century AD during the height of the Majapahit Kingdom centered at the Middle of Jawa, another pre-Islamic Malayonesian Kingdom.

2. Various Kinds of Moderation Practiced During the Pre-Islamic Malayonesian Civilisation

As mentioned in the “Introduction,” there were many pre-Islamic Malayonesian kingdoms, but for the pupose of this paper we concentrate only on three kingdoms: The Sriwijaya, Champa and the Majapahit kingdoms, each of which existed before the 15th century AD. We show that each of these pre-Islamic Malayonesian Kingdom has great leaders who practiced their own kind of moderation.

2.1 A Moderation policy, *Madhyamaka*, by the Founder of Sriwijaya King in the 7th Century A.D

A Latin transliteration and an English translation of an Old Malay inscription dated 684 AD at Talang Tuwo, Palembang were found in Coedes & Damais (1992). The Inscription is also transliterated and translated into the present Malay by Noriah (1999). These are our sources of study for this inscription. In this inscription, it is stated that Sri Jayanasa, believed to be the earliest king of Sriwijaya Kingdom, had practiced a kind of moderation during his kingship in which his policies are said to be for *sarwasatwa sacaracara* (all beings movable and immovable) to achieve their *waropaya tmu sukha* (best initiative, *upaya*, for meeting joy). According to further explanation by Coedes & Damais (1992) *upaya* here is one of the ten perfections (*Dasa Paramita*) of the *Bodhisattwa* in *Mahayana* Buddhism (the religion of Sri Jayanasa and almost all the following kings).

Literally, *upaya* here is “skilfull means” (not quite the same as the “*upaya*” in the present Malay, which means potential, able, capable, energy, power etc but nothing to do with religion anymore). The word *waru* in the *waropaya* does mean “the best” but not optimum in the Western sense. Instead it is subjected to the other *paramita*, in particular the sixth *paramita*, the *prajnana* (knowledge and wisdom) which subscribes, among others, a method of moderation known as *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way). In *Mahayana Buddhism* the two views on existence namely objective existence (the existence which does not depend on external objects that is also known as eternalism), and nihilism (all things are intrinsically already destroyed or a denial of an existence) are extremisms. *Madhyamaka* is the middle view between these two

views and hence the Middle Way. Nagarjuna is the founder of this Buddhist school.

2.2 The Moderation Practiced by The Great Champa Kings, the *Cakravantins*

According to historians, as already noted in Shaharir (2010), the title officially granted to a great Hindu Malayonesian king is *Dewaraja/Devaraja* (Deity King or King of Kings), while to the Buddhist king, *Cakravantin/Chakravantin* (King of the World). The earliest *Dewaraja* that we know is Jayawarman/Jayavarman II, the first Funan-Chenla or Kambujadesa King 802-834 AD (Jacques 1995). Unfortunately, we have yet to know the qualities of this *Dewaraja*, unlike the qualities of the *Cakravantin* which we shall discuss further below.

We found that the earliest *Cakravantin* known to historians so far is the king of the Champa kingdom, Yan Po Ku Sri Paramesvaravarmadeva, who governed the kingdom in 890s AD as written in an inscription found at Phui Qui, Vietnam (Jacques 1995). However, the qualities of a *Cakravantin* were found only, as far as we know, in a much later inscription dated 1088 A.D, during the reign of Jaya Indravarman II. The inscription found in Myson/Mison, Vietnam according to Finot (1906) and Maspero (1920/2002), states that a Champa king named Yan Po Ku Sri Jaya Indarawarmadewa/Inderavarmadeva was given the title *Cakravantin* (Leader of the World) because he had 32 ideal qualities of a leadership in which one of them was *sanamu* (meaning balance and just), a kind of moderation, particularly in pursuing *triwarga/trivarga* (three objectives in life): *artha/harta* (wealth), *kama* (desire) and *dharma*; (virtue) ; and in establishing *paksapata* (balance and justice) which is also a kind of moderation.

2.3 Prapanca Theory on Best Leadership and Management During Majapahit Kingdom

During Majapahit Kingdom, a scholar named Prapanca (1365/2008) wrote his *magnus opus* (in Old Jawa language), *Nagarakritagama* 1365, in which he describes the *Pustaka Hasta Dasa Prateming Prabu* (Eighteen Qualities of Great Leaders).⁽²⁾ Among the qualities is a kind of moderation which he terms as *prasaja* (moderate in life style which includes *aparigraha* which means not seeking wealth, glittering, and pleasure). Another quality, *sarjawa upasama* (humble and not arrogant) also signifies a kind of moderation. Lastly, the *masihi alam Buwana* (loves this world) points out any leader who enherits this quality would obviously ensure that there would not be any form of exploitation

(extremism) being done towards nature. This is certainly another kind of moderation in leadership and management that the world needs.

3. Bukhary al-Jawhary Theory on Great Islamic-Malayonesian Leadership: The *Wusta* axiom

Bukhary al-Jawhary (1603/1992), in his *magnus opus*, *Taj al-Salatin* (written in 1603 in classical Malay, *Jawi* characters) indirectly provides a list of a great leadership and management axioms which were obtained by Shaharir (2010). Among those axioms, there is one which stated as “*berhemat*” which means among others, a kind of moderation namely “*tidak membesar diri*” (humble or not self-glorified) and “*tidak suka kemewahan*” (abhors high and luxury expenditures). Then there is another axiom which was stated as “*budiman*” (his translation to the Arabic word *ulil albab*, the Islamic intellectual) which means, among others, an independent thinker yet humble to God by practicing *tahajjud* (praying after midnight, after having some normal sleep) regularly for admitting his weaknesses before God, recognizing His Greatness of God, seeking His forgiveness and His guidance) as found in *al-Qur’aan* (there are 22 verses in 10 *Surahts* which refer to *ulil-albab*).⁽³⁾ Thus the “*berhemat*” and “*budiman*” contains precisely, among others, a characteristic of an ideal leader which fits to be considered practicing *wusta*, or “Islamically moderate.” Thus an ideal Islamic leader must necessarily practice the Islamic moderation or *wustaisation*.

4. Conclusion

We have shown that great Malayonesian leaders since the 7th century AD practiced an explicit form of moderation or *wustaization* policies. The policies known as “*berhemat*” and a kind of *wustaization* found in “*budiman*” or *ulil albab* were subscribed by a well known Islamic Malayonesian scholar, Bukhary al-Jawhary, in the early 17th century AD. Earlier, the Buddhist policy of moderation, the *Madhyamaka*, was practiced by the earliest Sriwijaya Kingdom in the 7th century AD: The *prasaja*, *sarjawa upasama* and *masihi alam buwana* were practiced by the greatest leader of the Majapahit Kingdom, Pateh Gaja Mada, in the 14th century AD; and another kind of moderation termed as *sanamu* and *paksapata* was practiced by any great Champa king referred to as the *Cakravantin* since the 9th century AD.

Footnotes

- (1) from the Arabic, *wustdo*, which means moderate, middle way, just and balanced, etc.
- (2) A Dutch translation of *Nagarakartagama* is published by Hadi Pustaka 1919. A translation into Indonesian Malay is available in Internet. Retrieved Jun 3, 2011, from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/48962935/Kitab-Nagarakertagama> . A list of *Pustaka Hasta Dasa Prateming Prabu* is available in *Wacana Nusantara* which is retrieved June 3, 2011, from <http://www.wacananusantara.org/2/353/pustaka-hastadasa-parateming-prabu>.
- (3) *al-Qur'aan* (as translated by Yusuf 'Ali, "*The Holy Quran*" available online) : the 10 *Suraht* and 22 verses in the *al-Qur'aan* mentioned in the text regarding *ulil albab* are *Suraht al-Baqaraht* [2], verse 179, or simply Q2:179; others are *Q2:197; Q2:268; **al-'Imran* [3]:7; *Q3:190; Q3: 191; **al-Maa'idah* [5]:100; *Yuusuf* [12]:111; *al-Ra'ad* [13]:19-22; *Ibrahiim* [14]:52; *al-Mu'minuun* [23]:54; *Shaad* [38]:29; Q38:43; **al-Zumar* [39]:9; *Q39:18; Q39:21; **Ghafir* [40]:54; **al-Tdalaq* [65]:10, Those with the asterisks contain the specific characteristics of an ideal leader specifically mentioned in the text.

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