

ABDULLAH MUNSHI AS THE CAPTURED CHARACTER IN HIS OWN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

¹Rahimah Hamdan, ²Arba'ie Sujud & ²Nik Nur Hasmiru Husna Bahari

¹Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Malaysia

²Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: rahimahh@upm.edu.my

DOI: 10.24815/.v1i1.14441

Abstract

This paper was aimed at identifying the captive attitude of Abdullah Munshi in his work and to analyse how the West came to recognise him as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature'. Abdullah Munshi's courage in challenging the existing literary conventions and in introducing a Western style of writing to Malay audiences earned him this title. This recognition made him the most credible Malay literary figure from the perspective of the Western colonialists, especially with his first autobiographical work titled *Hikayat Abdullah*. His reputation continued to rise until several scholars began to dispute his credibility by arguing that he did not deserve to be recognised as such. Abdullah Munshi was labelled as an individual who was captivated by everything concerning his Western benefactors, as illustrated in his magnum opus. With this phenomenon in mind, this study applied the text analysis method to the first Malay autobiography, the *Hikayat Abdullah*, based on Syed Hussein Alatas' concept of a captive character. The findings of the study revealed that Abdullah Munshi conformed to five criteria in this concept of a captive character, namely, a person who copies the activities of Westerners and regards them as beneficial; a person who is unable to raise new questions in life; a person who regards Western knowledge to be the best; a person who accepts the suggestions of Westerners without objection; and a person who thinks so highly of the West that he fails to realize that he himself has become a captive. This means that Abdullah Munshi was a person who was a captive of the West, as he himself revealed through his autobiography. To summarize, it can be proven that the recognition accorded to Abdullah Munshi as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature', which led to the separation of Malay literature into two periods, was the best agenda by the West to ensure the relevance of their presence in the colonies, particularly in the Malay World.

Keywords: Autobiography, captive character, *Hikayat Abdullah*, Syed Hussein Alatas, Malay.

1. Introduction

The 19th century is etched in the records of history as the era of Western colonialism in the Malay World. This century witnessed the arrival of colonial powers from the West whose aim was basically to acquire control of the raw materials in the Malay World (Leur, 1955; Vlekke, 1965; Bastin, 1965; Andaya & Andaya, 2015). With this objective in mind, the British colonialists managed to dominate the economy in Malaya as did the Dutch colonialists in Sumatra, Java Island and its surroundings. In this context, what was even more interesting was the strategy adopted by both these colonial powers to realize their colonization goals. The colonial powers at that time were convinced that their objective of gaining control of the raw materials could be achieved easily and effectively if they were to also take charge of political and social matters, especially the culture of the indigenous people in their colonies (Al-Attas, 1969; Milner, 1995; Cohn, 1996; Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, 2009). This perspective then gave rise to colonial strategies aimed at 'softening' the objective of acquiring raw materials (Gullick, 1995). In other words, British and Dutch colonialism in the Malay World was systematically strategized so that the natives themselves would embrace colonization as 'something good' (Alatas, 1972; Stockwell, 1982). To succeed in their 'holy mission', the British colonialists, especially those serving in the Malay World, were required to immerse themselves into the Malay culture. This demand itself motivated them to learn the language and literature of the Malays. Hence, some Malay language teachers emerged, including Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi (known simply after this as Abdullah Munshi), who was responsible for teaching the language and culture of the Malays to the colonial officers (Wilkinson, 1907; Milner, 1995; Putten, 2006; Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, 2009; Rahimah Hamdan et.al, 2016a; Rahimah Hamdan and Arbaie' Sujud 2016b; Rahimah Hamdan et.al 2016c; Rahimah Hamdan et.al 2018).

Clearly, in the process of understanding the Malay culture, these colonial scholars were forced to recognize the literature of the Malays. Hence, there appeared scholars like Wilkinson (1907), who described Malay literature as 'lacking in literary value' so much so that if the Malays were to continue reading it, they would be swept further away from the tide of civilization. In that regard, the Western style of writing was introduced to the colonial society, i.e. writings that emphasized reality. In response to this challenge, Abdullah Munshi produced the first Malay autobiography titled *Hikayat Abdullah*, which recorded his life's journey from childhood until the time when he served as an interpreter for the British. This work was based on the idea of realism in writings, since Alfred North, an American missionary had requested of Abdullah Munshi, "[...] whatever of interest [...] their rajas, laws and whatever Europeans would like to be informed of" (Skinner, 1978, p. 481). Based on this writing scheme, Abdullah Munshi turned out to be highly critical in his opinion of the rulers and the Malay society to the extent that his writing was praised as, "[...] a work of singular interest in beautiful Malay, and in all respects a new thing in the language", until finally, he was accorded the title of 'the founder of Modern Malay Literature' by R. J. Wilkinson in 1907 (Wilkinson, 1907, p.60). Then, R. J. Wilkinson, who was the secretary to the Resident of Perak, referred to Abdullah Munshi as 'the pioneer of Modern Malay Literature' in his Papers on Malay Subjects in 1907. Abdullah Munshi's work was held up as a 'model' by other colonial scholars in an effort to understand the worldview and ethos of the colonized society. Finally, in 1959, Abdullah Munshi has officially conferred the title of 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature', marking the beginning of the separation of Malay literature into two periods, namely, the traditional and the modern (Skinner, 1959).

2. Research Problem

According to Skinner (1959, p. 6), the recognition of Abdullah Munshi as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' was attributed to his call to his people to abandon their narrow-minded attitude that had been passed down through their literature and culture. Indirectly, he was hoping that Malay authors would move forward and strive to 'break out' from the conventional way of writing. Skinner's (1959, p.6) reason for praising Abdullah Munshi was reinforced by his argument that Abdullah had his own style of writing, which did not conform to any model or style of his Malay predecessors, and that Malay writers who came after Abdullah had a role model whom they could emulate. Based on these factors, Abdullah Munshi deserved to be recognized as an agent of change in Malay Literature. Skinner's opinion was developed by Hussein (1974), who made a distinction between the traditional and modern in Malay literature based on the introduction of the printing machine. For him, the printing machine not only brought changes to Malay literature but also revolutionized the concept of Malay literature (Hussein 1974; Gallop 1990).

In conjunction with this, Abdullah Munshi deserved to be recognized as such based on his style, which differed from the conventions embraced by previous Malay writers, as acknowledged by A. Bakar Hamid (1979), Johns (1979), Yahya Ismail (1987) Kassim Ahmad (1981), Mohd. Taib Osman (1988) and several others (just to mention a few). Although Abdullah Munshi successfully introduced a new perspective to the world of Malay literature until he was conferred the title 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature', his contributions are still in doubt and his recognition is still being rejected by several other scholars. They have introduced other figures who, according to them, are more deserving of that title such as Hamzah Fansuri, Mohamad Salleh Perang and several others because the authors and their works are closely related to the community. For example, those who have countered this claim include Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1971), Sweeney and Phillip (1975), Sweeney (1980), (Ras 1985), Watson (1989), Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1997) and several others (just to mention a few). As a consequence, a group of scholars has emerged who believe that Abdullah Munshi should be praised as the pioneer of modern literature because of his admiration and 'captivation' of the West (Murad, 1996). This was supported by Sweeney (2005), who labeled Abdullah Munshi as 'a stooge of the West', as well as by Taslim (2016), who downplayed Abdullah Munshi's adulation of the West as a society that was far more knowledgeable, courteous and civilized than the Malay community. Therefore, was this Father of Modern Malay Literature, in fact, so captivated by the West that he considered everything that was introduced by the West to be the best for his community? Was he himself a 'captive person' in his autobiography? If this is true, what is the relationship between his 'captivation' and this prestigious recognition? Moving on from here, a study was conducted by Awang (2008) on the first Malay autobiography by Abdullah Munshi titled *Hikayat Abdullah* with two objectives in mind, namely to identify the captive character of Abdullah Munshi in his work and to analyse its relationship to his conferment as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' by the West.

3. Research Method

This study used the method of text analysis on the *Hikayat Abdullah* (2008) by focusing on four activities to solve the two objectives of this study. To achieve the first objective, namely, to identify the captive character of Abdullah Munshi in his work, the following activities were carried out:

- i. Describing the concept of the 'captive character' from a scholarly perspective;
- ii. Linking that concept with Abdullah Munshi's character in his autobiography.

For the first activity, namely, describing the concept of the 'captive character' from a scholarly perspective, it was found that only the notable scholar, Syed Hussein Alatas (2005), carried out a study into this concept with regard to the Malay community. He was engaged to correct the studies by the West, most of which were prejudiced against the Malay community. Issues of the 'lazy native', 'babelism' and the 'captive mind' were brought up in his study (Alatas, 2005). One of the concepts that were introduced by him, namely, the 'captive mind', was used in this study with a focus on just the 'captive character', which is outlined by five criteria, namely:

- i. A person who copies the activities of Westerners and regards them as beneficial.
- ii. A person who is unable to raise new questions in life.
- iii. A person who regards Western knowledge to be the best
- iv. A person who accepts the suggestions of Westerners without objection.
- v. A person who thinks so highly of the West that he fails to realize that he himself has become a captive.

In this regard, to perform the second activity, the 'captive character' framework of Syed Hussein Alatas was linked to Abdullah Munshi's character in his first Malay autobiography, *Hikayat Abdullah* (2008). This, in turn, led to the achievement of the second objective, which was to analyse the relationship between Abdullah Munshi's 'captive character' and his recognition as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' by the West.

4. Results and Discussion

According to Alatas (2005, p. 1), the 'captive character' in the community appeared as a consequence of Western colonization. This view was acknowledged by Alwee (2009) and Kamarudin (2015), who were of the opinion that the 'captive character' occurred in colonized societies because every action by the West was deemed to be correct, true and to be emulated without considering the suitability and effects of such an action. Hence, by examining the *Hikayat Abdullah* (2008), this study will be able to prove whether the author, Abdullah Munshi, was a 'captive character' in his own work? Was it this figure's 'captivation' with the West that sparked his recognition as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' by the West? Thus, the concept of the 'captive character' by Alatas (2005) (hereinafter referred to simply as Alatas) will shed light on this phenomenon.

4.1 A Person Who Copies the Activities of Westerners and Regards Them as Beneficial

According to Alatas (2005), the copycat nature of individuals can be divided into rational copying and irrational copying. Rational copying occurs when a person follows external cultural elements for certain reasons that are considered to be rational. On the other hand, irrational copying occurs when a person is influenced by external cultural elements and directly accepts that culture without considering whether it is necessary or not. On examining the *Hikayat Abdullah*, it was found that there clearly were aspects of flattery and copying of the activities of the West that were deemed to be beneficial. For example, there was 'rational copying' by Abdullah Munshi to learn the printing technology that was brought into Malaya from the West. Abdullah Munshi's captive character was clearly reflected when he expressed his desire to learn and to know everything about the printing technology (*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p.120). Thus, Abdullah Munshi was more of a rational copycat because he was aware of the benefits that would be gained by him and his people if he were to master the technology. As a result of this technology, literary works

could be printed and distributed more extensively compared to handwritten books. Furthermore, Abdullah Munshi's familiarity with the Christian missionaries and administrators like Stamford Raffles himself made it easier for him to freely master that technology. Thus, he became the first Malay individual to be skilled in using the printing tool until he was called 'The Father of Malay Printing' (Gallop, 1990). Awang (2004) reinforced this opinion by stating that Abdullah Munshi was later named 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' because of his determination to learn about printing technology. Awang (1996, p. 132) added that Abdullah Munshi also described the printing tool in the *Hikayat Abdullah* and expressed his hope that the introduction of this technology would lead to the development of Malay literature. His concern for Western technology indirectly made his recognition as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' relevant because of his strong support for anything new from the West that he considered should be accepted and copied as it would benefit the Malay community.

4.2 A Person Who is Unable to Raise New Questions in Life

According to Alatas (2005), such a person is incapable of raising new questions that are necessary in his environment but instead simply continues with whatever is raised by Westerners, for example, questions regarding the care of the environment that came up after Independence. Such issues were never ignored by the Malays but, instead, had been considered as important by them. However, it was only after these issues were raised by Westerners that the Malay community began to show an interest. An examination of the Malay autobiography, *Hikayat Abdullah*, revealed that there was one issue that was addressed by the West through Abdullah Munshi but it was something that was forbidden to be discussed by the ordinary folks. This issue had to do with the rulers and their government. The Malays regarded the rulers as their hierarchical leaders and their benefactors at the highest level. The birth of the 'devaraja' concept and the 'ruler as the Caliph of Allah SWT on the face of the earth' reinforced the concepts of sovereignty, curses and treason in the relationship between the rulers and their subjects. This meant that treason against the ruler was something that was feared because the people linked it to sovereignty and curses. But in reviewing *the Hikayat Abdullah*, it was discovered that Abdullah Munshi courageously went against that convention by criticising the behaviour of the Malay rulers (*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p.187).

The *Hikayat Abdullah* illustrates how very interested the West was in knowledge unlike the Malay rulers at that time. This showed the 'captive character' of Abdullah Munshi in criticizing the Malay rulers in reaction to his disappointment over their rejection of a proposal by Stamford Raffles to finance the studies of the rulers' children in Bengal. Abdullah Munshi's captive character was apparent when he used the word 'foolish' to describe the sultans and went overboard in praising Stamford Raffles for the offer. This coincided with the statement by Tengah (2000, p. 127) that Abdullah Munshi's admiration of the Western way of life and thinking was too excessive until he dared to humiliate and discredit the Malay rulers. These criticisms proved that Abdullah Munshi's captive character was too aligned towards the Westerners until he regarded them as being more attracted to knowledge than the Malay community. The *Hikayat Abdullah* also looked at other examples that were upheld by the West. For example, Abdullah Munshi supported the economic activities of the West. In this aspect also, he highlighted the shallow thinking of the Malay nobles, who disapproved of the manner in which the Westerners conducted their economic activities. The *Hikayat Abdullah* also reinforced the captive character of Abdullah Munshi because he believed that what was important to the West would benefit the Malay community (*Hikayat Abdullah* 2008, p.168).

Nonetheless, *Hikayat Abdullah* shows how highly the Westerners valued commercial activities because of the lucrative income. Abdullah Munshi tried to show that the Westerners were interested in sharing their business knowledge with the Malays. However, he also described the attitude of the Malay royals and nobles, who refused to grab the opportunity to do business because they believed they would be lowering their dignity as sovereign rulers. This situation revealed the extent of Abdullah Munshi's captivation until he was prompted to recount the good things that had been brought in by the West to help raise the standard of living of the Malays as well as the shallow thinking of the Malays, represented by their rulers, in refusing to change their way of life so as to be more successful instead of depending on hand-outs from the colonialists. According to this passage in the *Hikayat Abdullah*, the importance of knowledge and economics was first introduced by the West, and Abdullah Munshi was 'captivated' by the wisdom of this colonial idea. This further proved the captive character of Abdullah Munshi in his inability to raise new questions that were needed in his sphere of life.

Indeed *the Hikayat Abdullah* was closely related to Abdullah Munshi's recognition as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' based on his admiration of the West, especially since he dared to openly criticise the Malay community and rulers in his work and to shower excessive praises on the West. In addition, his work was accepted by the West until it came to be regarded as the most comprehensive report of the life of the Malay community. This coincides with Sweeney's (2005, p. 13) view that Abdullah Munshi's writings were accepted by the West as a 'Westerner's report' of the Malay community, where the Malays were described as uncivilized people who were lacking in knowledge. This statement was supported by Ahmad (2008, p. 60), who stated that the Malays liked to waste their time on things such as cock-fighting and shooting ducks and monkeys for the fun of it. This situation earned Abdullah Munshi the title 'Father of Modern Malay Literature' from the West because he showed his familiarity with the West in his writing. This recognition was also bestowed on him because the West saw Abdullah Munshi as a highly knowledgeable individual, unlike the Malays and their rulers, who liked to waste their time on useless matters.

4.3 A Person Who Regards Western Knowledge to be the Best

According to Alatas (2005), this phenomenon occurs when a person receives his education directly from a Western educational institution or learns from Western reading materials. This situation clearly showed that such a person is a 'captive' without him being aware of it. For example, the phenomenon where people feel that they need to learn the English language, use reading materials from the West and further their education in the West to succeed in life. Individuals who are captivated with the West will have a strong desire to acquire Western knowledge, which they hold in high regard compared to their own Malay language. Through the *Hikayat Abdullah*, this aspect of desiring to use Western reading materials and to study in the West was clearly revealed in Abdullah Munshi's description of his own character in that work. As a writer for Stamford Raffles, Abdullah Munshi had the advantage of mingling with Westerners. Through this association, he began to be attracted to the English language and became interested in learning it so that he would be able to read materials in English (*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p.105).

Thus, it clearly explains Abdullah Munshi's desire to learn the English language and to read English books. His captivation was striking in his keenness to teach the Malay language to Mr. Milne so that he, in turn, would be taught the English language by that individual. Sweeney (2007, p. 276) reinforced that statement by saying that Abdullah Munshi began to learn the English language initially by memorizing the vocabulary and learning English

grammar under the guidance of Father Milne and Mr. Ince. Abdullah Munshi's determination reflected that he was more attracted to the English language than to his own Malay language. In addition, he used the Spelling Book given to him by a Christian missionary, as his guide in learning the English language. His admiration of the West was obvious in his desire to learn English through the use of Western reading materials. It was clearly shown in his work, namely, the *Hikayat Abdullah*, that Abdullah Munshi was captivated. Although he had not been educated in the West, he still learned English by referring to Western reading materials until he became fluent in the language and was able to understand it. This third aspect of the captive character further emphasized the recognition accorded to Abdullah Munshi as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' by the West. This was because the above excerpt clearly showed that as he was mingling with the Westerners, Abdullah Munshi was determined to learn the English language and to refer to a lot to reading materials from the West. The willingness of the Westerners to teach the English language to Abdullah Munshi and to provide him with several books from the West shows that they mixed freely with him. Western scholars were proud of Abdullah Munshi's mastery of the English language, so much so that they recognised him as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature'. Furthermore, Abdullah Munshi's praise of the Westerners in his writings reinforced the idea that the recognition had a lot to do with his relationship with the Westerners.

4.4 A Person Who Accepts the Suggestions of Westerners without Objection

Alatas (2005) described this criterion as a person who enjoys comforts as long as he is sheltered by the West, so much so that he is not aware that he has become a captive. For example, the term 'institution', which was introduced by the West to denote an educational centre, is still in use today. A captive character will not look for any new term to replace the word 'institution' and will not challenge himself to oppose the introduction of the term. This aspect of a 'captive character' was found in Abdullah Munshi himself as he fully accepted whatever terms or concepts that were introduced by the West. In fact, he never objected to or tried to counter any matter presented by the West to the Malay community. The *Hikayat Abdullah* records an episode where several Western terms were introduced to the community, and Abdullah Munshi accepted these with an open heart and mind (*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p.122). It describes how the Westerners carried out their plan to build 'a house' and for Mr Milne to present it as the Anglo-Chinese College. This was sad because it was not right of the Westerners to give the house an English name because it was built on Malay land. However, in Abdullah Munshi's view, as expressed in his autobiographical work, no one objected to the name of the college. As a consequence of giving that name, the word 'College' or kolej has remained and continues to be used until today to refer to a higher educational institution. Indirectly, this situation clearly proved that Abdullah Munshi was a captive of the West. In addition to the house being named the Anglo-Chinese College by the West without any objection from Abdullah Munshi, other terms are also mentioned in the *Hikayat Abdullah*. This aspect can be further reinforced to prove that Abdullah Munshi was so captivated that he never opposed or contradicted the actions of the Westerners in Malaya. The *Hikayat Abdullah* also highlights how the West came up with terms to symbolize a building as a place of learning. Although this should not have happened in the Malay World, Abdullah Munshi, being a representative of the indigenous people, was so captivated that he accepted it without protest (*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p. 190).

The *Hikayat Abdullah* clearly shows that Abdullah Munshi was so captivated that he accepted the name that was given for that 'house of knowledge' with an open heart. It can be seen that keeping the term 'institution' has had a great impact on the lives of the Malays.

This is because the use of the word 'institution' by the Westerners is gradually being accepted in the lives of the Malays until the present day. This is because there was no objection from the Malay scholars, starting with Abdullah Munshi when the term was first introduced by the West. This situation clearly illustrates how Abdullah Munshi always regarded Western society as being always in the 'right'. Therefore, the acceptance of the terminology provided by the West without protest in the *Hikayat Abdullah* matched the aspect of the captive character outlined by Syed Hussein Alatas. In this case, the captive character is defined as someone who never objects to whatever is laid on his plate by outside sources. Abdullah Munshi clearly mentioned these terms in his autobiographical work, whereby he came to be regarded as a 'captive character'. The recognition of Abdullah Munshi as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' was closely related to his admiration of the West. By means of this aspect, he also expressed his praise for Western matters or terms that were adopted by the Malays. In addition, he also extolled the benefits to be gained by the Malays from the adoption of such terminology or concepts, whether in terms of the economy or education. Murad (1990, p. 79) reinforced the above statement about Abdullah Munshi, who always supported whatever was done by the West and did not listen when his father objected to his studying with an English priest at the Anglo-Chinese College. Because of this, Western scholars have always regarded him in a positive light and have praised him as a Malay writer with a modern mind. Hence, he deserved the title 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' due to his efforts to always have a positive view of the West.

4.5 A Person Who Thinks So Highly of the West that He Fails to Realize that He Himself Has Become a Captive

The final aspect of the 'captive character' is the act of flattering foreigners without realizing that one has become a captive. According to the Kamus Dewan (2007, p.1389), 'menyanjungi' (flatter) means to have a high regard for the goodness and courage of a person or a people and to elevate them to a noble position and sing their praises. Abdullah Munshi so admired the West that he did not realize that he himself had become a captive, as revealed in the *Hikayat Abdullah*. This was the most obvious aspect because Abdullah Munshi always described his life with the Westerners and praised them for all sorts of things. His actions showed that he was strongly captivated by the West, as revealed in the following poem extracted from the *Hikayat Abdullah*:

'Mr. Raffles and His Wife'

Whistling-duck on the floor,
Rambai fruit in the rice;
Mr. Raffles is a smart man,
He knows how to win a heart.

Rambai fruit in the rice,
Ideals are delicious to the taste;
He knows how to win a heart,
With his courteous ways.

Ideals are delicious to the taste,
The shrub has its thorns;
With his courteous ways,
He gets along with his wife.

The shrub has its thorns,
People are running by the roadside;
He gets along with his wife,
Like the moon with the sun.

(*Hikayat Abdullah*, 2008, p. 206)

The above poem extracted from the *Hikayat Abdullah* directly shows Abdullah Munshi flattering the West. Abdullah Munshi used a *pantun* (Malay poem), which symbolises the intellectualism of the Malay community, to personally flatter Stamford Raffles and his wife. The above excerpt directly proves that Abdullah Munshi was so much in awe of the West that he failed to realize that he had become a captive. Among all his works, the *Hikayat Abdullah* is the one that highlighted the most his admiration of the West. This was proven when almost the entire work was a report on the West. For example, several chapters in the *Hikayat Abdullah* were written specifically about Sir Farquhar and Mr. Raffles alone. This revealed the special honor given to the Western colonialists in his masterpiece and, more especially, in his heart until he felt no guilt about contaminating the literary works of the Malays, where his focus should have been more on what was special about the Malay community. Mohamad and Yahya (2005) agreed with Alatas that 'captive characters' have a big problem because, in reality, they are not aware that they are captives. As such, they no longer regard Westerners as 'outsiders', what more as 'foreigners'. Consequently, Abdullah Munshi's recognition as 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature' had a lot to do with the reforms or changes that he brought about as a result of his admiration of the Westerners as his benefactors. This gave the Western colonialists the opportunity to strengthen their position in Malaya to ensure that the Malays continued to hold them in high esteem through the positive reports provided by Abdullah Munshi in his masterpiece. As a reward for the honor bestowed on them by Abdullah Munshi in his autobiography, the *Hikayat Abdullah*, Western scholars conferred on him the title of 'The Father of Modern Malay Literature'. This recognition did not have the support of the Malay community at that time, especially since his writing was so critical of his own people. Awang (1996, p. 134) labeled him as a 'sycophant' of the English and, at the same time, rejected his work that exposed the shortcomings of the Malays. For that reason, Abdullah Munshi had no followers until the end of the 19th century, when several modern authors like Mohamad Salleh Perang and a few others in the south of the peninsular dared to continue with the autobiographical tradition introduced by him.

5. Conclusions

The recognition accorded to Abdullah Munshi as the figure who brought about the separation of Malay literature into two periods must be reviewed in a logical manner. A person who is accorded such an honour should represent his community. Furthermore, the 'captive character' of Abdullah Munshi, as portrayed in his work, clearly proved that he was biased towards the West. Needless to say, this title that was conferred on Abdullah Munshi served to soften the presence of the Westerners in this colony as a power that would be beneficial to the natives. This was in line with Cohn's (1996, p.46) opinion that the colonialists were always up to their tricks to ensure that their presence in the colonies was welcomed, in line with the motto, 'Knowledge is Power'. The experience of the British in

India proved that “To appear legitimate in the eyes of the Indians, the British thought they had to demonstrate respect and interest in those Indians and institutions that were the carriers of the traditions”. Thus, it is not surprising that they used this same formula in their colonisation of Malaya. Meanwhile, those scholars who reject the recognition accorded to Abdullah believe that a great ‘modern’ author is one who is responsible to his audience. Clearly, based on this study, Alatas’ (2005) concept of the ‘captive character’ fits Abdullah Munshi perfectly, as could be seen in his work. Therefore, other studies that can challenge what has been handed down from the colonial era should be carried out so that something true and transparent can be presented for the benefit of our beloved homeland.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded under PUTRA GRANT (GP/2018/9599500) by Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia.

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