# Local History as a Counter-Hegemonic Discourse In The Social Sciences: George Town Festival (GTF) and the Forgotten Malay Narrative

Muttaqa Yushau Abdulrauf[a']*
*Department of Management and Humanities*
*Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS*
Email: myushau@gmail.com
&

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Murad Merican[b]
amurad_noormerican@petronas.com.my
*Department of Management and Humanities*
*Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS*
Email: amurad_noormerican@petronas.com.my

**Abstract:**

The influence of Eurocentric historiography in the social science has inevitably conditioned the representations of local histories of the post-colonial societies. This conditioning is manifested significantly at academic, policy and popular platforms. Thus, the George Town Festival (GTF) in Pulau Pinnang which started in the year 2010 in Penang-Malaysia fits perfectly into the discourse of misrepresentation of history. GTF traditionally brought together different Ethnic Nationalities including Peranakans, Hokkiens and Indian Muslims. Their Historical and heritage landscape in pulau pinnang has continued to be celebrated, alas!!! This has been without recourse to the history of earliest founding community who had built Tanjong and its proximities, before 1786. It must be remembered and be reminded   that the history of Pulau Pinang did not start from 1786. Our main contention lies in interrogating the forgotten Malay narrative in the GTF, and its overall consequence on Malaysian Historiography in the social sciences. Under what epistemological assumption did the knowledge production about non-western societies' did takes place? What are the alternative responses to the Eurocentric perspective? What role could a local history play as a counter-hegemonic response to the Eurocentric historiography in the social sciences? What is the forgotten Malay narrative in the GTF?

**Keywords:** *Malaysia, Social Sciences, Eurocentrism, Counter-Hegemony, Local History*

1. **Introduction:**

The influence of Eurocentric historiography in the social science has inevitably conditioned the representations of local histories especially of the post-colonial societies. This conditioning is manifested significantly at academic, policy and popular platforms. Thus, the George Town Festival (GTF) in Pulau Pinnang which started in the year 2010 in Penang-Malaysia fits perfectly into the discourse of misrepresentation of history. GTF traditionally brought together different Ethnic Nationalities including Peranakans, Hokkiens and Indian Muslims. Their Historical and heritage landscape in pulau pinnang has continued to be celebrated, alas!!! This has been without recourse to the history of earliest founding community who had built Tanjong and its proximities, before 1786. It must be remembered and be reminded   that the history of Pulau Pinang did not start from 1786. Our main contention lies in interrogating the forgotten Malay narrative in the GTF, and its overall consequence on Malaysian Historiography.

Eurocentric discourse in the social science has significantly conditioned the discursive representations of local histories. The GTF and its forgotten Malay narrative is seen in the light of the dominant Historiography that treat social evolutions within the prism of colonial lens, which undermines the pre-colonial narrative, and racialise the twin discourse of multiculturalism and development as consequence of modernity.

This article aims to examine how the study of local histories could provide a counter-hegemonic current to the Eurocentric historiography that undergirds the social sciences. Our notion of counter-hegemony stresses the valorisation of ideographic inquiry in the study of a local community in the social science (Firat, 1987). Idiographic approach sees the local community as the 'authentic interlocutors' of their history and their destiny Mafeji 1981 cited in (Nyoka, 2013). This unravels the significance of original and autonomous societal narrative emerging from sociologies at the periphery (Keim, 2011).

We contend that the power relations in the construction of knowledge about non-western societies is underpinned by the historical emergence of the social sciences from the west, which we dubbed as 'Northern Atlantic domination' and the particular way in which it approaches the study of non-western others defined as the 'orient' the 'last' the 'savage' and the 'uncultured'. These pejoratives triggered the postcolonial responses as a project with varying authorship across the length and breadth of the social sciences. Postcolonial responses were expressed under different headings such as; 'social science as imperialism ' (Ake, 1982), 'orientalism'(Said, 1979), and 'Eurocentrism'(Amin, 1989). These scholarships challenges the articulation of differences between the 'West' defined essentially as harbinger of progress and the 'non-west' portrayed as the subaltern.

The article demonstrates that study of local history provides an indispensable project for alternative discourses in the social science, and an enviable project of counter-hegemony. We see counter-hegemony as an avenue of provincialising the social sciences(Burawoy, 2005), and a discourse that present itself as alternative to theory regarded as orientalist or Eurocentric social science of the North in which the Southern Social sciences are depended (F. Alatas, 2006). The quest for alternative discourses railroads a research agenda for social science scholarship in non-western societies by articulating a Programme of dislocation from the western prism of knowing.

Therefore, our main contribution lies in bridging this analytical gap. We demonstrated how the study of local history in Malaysia could serve as a counter-hegemonic current and a Programme of dislocation from the Eurocentric mode of knowledge production. This perspective resonates with the discourse of 'academic dependency reversals' (S. F. Alatas, 2003), which connotes an appropriation of intellectual space by the intellectually dominated societies in the periphery that relied on ideas, institutions, and theories from the west. It also engenders a discourse of relevance. The article drew inspiration from several post-colonial literatures such as (Ahmad Murad, 2005; Ake, 1982; S. F. Alatas, 2003; Amin, 1989).

We seek to interrogate the following questions. Under what epistemological assumption the knowledge production about non-western societies' did takes place? What are the alternative responses to the Eurocentric perspective? What role could a local history play as a counter-hegemonic response to the Eurocentric historiography in the social sciences? What is the forgotten Malay narrative in the GTF?

The paper is organised in the following order. After the introduction, we examined the background to Eurocentric historiography in the social sciences. We linked the intellectual root of eurcentricism

to the enlightenment discourses and the rise of the idea of the West as an entity. We challenged the so called north/south divide articulated by orientalist discourse and argued that the non-western societies have histories and civilisations prior to the enlightenment. The third section dwells on the influence of Eurocentrism in the social sciences in developing countries. We demonstrated this influence in three areas; which includes the Malaysian media studies, Philosophy and International Relations. In the fourth section we moved from Eurocentric construction at academic cycle to popular milieu illustrating the case of GTF in Pulau Penang. Our contention is that Eurocentric historiography has denied the Malay narrative about the founding status of Pulau Penang on the one hand, and challenges the discourse that sees cosmopolitanism and development as a precursor of colonialism. We concluded with our main thesis stressing on building counter-hegemonic discourse in the social sciences based on the local histories. We indicated this within the premise of ideographic perspective which prioretises the study of locally relevant object as a basis of knowledge production.

## 2. **Enlightenment and the Construction of Eurocentricism in the Social Sciences:**

Enlightenment discourse  provides the building block of social science scholarship (Arowosegbe, 2014). It engenders discourses mostly  underpinned by features such as reason, rationality, science, modernity, liberty, freedom, and desacralisation of thoughts (Ahmad Murad, 2005; Arowosegbe, 2014).  These features watered the proliferation of Eurocentric culture in the intellectual history of the west, and the manner in which the knowledge about other societies are being constructed. Thus, Eurocentric culture in the social sciences arose in this context of a disparaging preconceptions, mistakes, and blunders in respect to other people  (Amin, 1989). It is noteworthy that enlightenment discourses are indispensable narratives that emerge alongside with the idea of the 'west'. It is predicated with key features that valorise empiricism, science, progress, individualism, tolerance, uniformity of human nature, secularism and universalism. These features are very much provincial to Europe and not universal to mankind (Ahmad Murad, 2005).  However, the discourse of the West in contradistinction with the 'East' or the orient has been widely criticised on the account mystification that portrays the west as an enviable agency of its own (Mamdani, 2005; Nair-Venugopal, 2012). The polemic of the west tends to project it as an imagined history and territory that is presumed to share common identity and civilisations reinforced by Christianity,  in contrast to variegated East disentangled along religious and political cleavages (Nair-Venugopal, 2012).

The main contention of the western discourse that undergird the social sciences lies in the inability to appreciate the exclusivity of Europe to other regions on the one hand, and the incompatibility of its values to the non-western world on the other. Thus, Universalization of European values is one of the key avatars of Eurocentrism undergirded by the enlightenment. Colonialism is prompted by this instinct through what they dubbed as a 'civilising mission' in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Essentially, value systems held at societal level in the early modern period prefigured scholarship in the social sciences. Most of these values emanates from the elites and became embedded in the academic environment. Thus, modern social sciences took its values from the particular moment of European history during the enlightenment epoch. The valorisation of modern secular values during the enlightenment and its appropriation in the social science scholarship was underscored for instance in the history of sociological thought, and discourse of progress and development, and most of the  ideas that inspired thinkers were influenced by the exigencies of the enlightenment experience. For example August Comte 1798-1857 heralded the positivist philosophy in the social science, like wise Karl Marx 1888-1883 popularises the idea of materialist interpretation of history.

The secular values of the twentieth century dominate what is being professed in the academic cycle. However, these values were very much provincial to Europe. Hence, these discourses defined the west as rational entity. It is this discourse of the West that prompted Nair-Venugopal to make the following interrogation; why is the west defined primarily as a rational entity in relation to a religiou-historical reality? Why is it presented in a chronological linear yet cumulatively traceable manner, while the east is described either in relation to the west, its geographical locality or in geo-historical terms within the context of its discovery by the west and its absence of history? (Nair-Venugopal, 2012)

The ascendency of western secular values following the collapse of the church, and the rise of pluralist values during the enlightenment conditioned the social science scholarship as a reflection of the exclusivity of the European society. There are growing pessimisms, darkness, confusion and anxiety. Religion is seen as a private sphere in the west, whereas, the societies outside the metropolitan west, religion is seen as a public sphere. For example, in Malaysia, article 160 of its Constitution defines Malay "as a person, who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to Malay custom".

The successive Post-enlightenment tradition is crucial in the discourse of the west. It is underscored by certain discourses centring around the following issues; European historiography, orientalism, Universalism, and the discourses on civilisation (Wallerstein, 1997). Thus, the European historiography for instance deliberately obliterates the contribution of the orient towards human history, especially during Hellenic taught, Hellenism is casually referred to, as European historiography deliberately disallowed history to dig beyond the Greek epoch(Amin, 1989).

Unpacking the enlightenment is crucial in the global historiography, specifically in understanding the way in which the societies outside the metropolis are being represented and portrayed. Enlightenment period and its literature are highly Eurocentric as it casually makes reference to scholarship, civilisations, innovations that predate the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries (Amin, 1989). Therefore, enlightenment and it secular values continued to shape global politics up to the present time. For example, in the early twentieth century, the idea of liberalism was firmly entrenched and several scholarships were embedded such as Stages of Economic growth. Thus, the enlightenment genesis of the social sciences is an important standpoint of understanding the history of Northern Atlantic domination of the epistemology of the social sciences and their methodologies.

Meanwhile, Orientalism as an avatar of Eurocentrism in the wake of enlightenment portrays a stylized and abstracted statements of the characteristics of non-western societies (Wallerstein, 1997). It underlies the idea of 'imagined geography' that divides the society into orient/occident. This artificial division has rendered a bifurcated social science tradition and social theory that ascribed befitting features to the Western world, and incriminatory attributes to the non-western others. Some of these bifurcated discourses were embedded in the 'culture talks'(Mamdani, 2005).

While Universalism on the other hand is ascribed to be the grand project of Eurocentrism, if positivism is the method then universalism is the project (Burawoy, 2005). Universalism presupposes that whatever happens in the Western Europe should be replicated across time and space. Universalism is aided by avalanche of theories often referred to as Whig interpretation of history that sees societies following a particular path in their social evolution. This form of Eurocentrism is manifested in stage theories such as Comte's law of human progress and Marx's historical materialism. Thus the so called universal ethos prophesised by these theories is itself a particularism, as European culture is provincial to its own settings (Amin, 1989; Burawoy, 2005).

There were quite range of debates around the universalism and particularism in social theory. These debates are between 'nomothetic' and 'ideographic' traditions in the social science. The former entails application of general laws in the study of society by foisting theories, while the latter tend to valorise the relevance of context in knowledge production where social scientist learned generates data from the society (Nyoka, 2013). Social sciences were classified around these debates, as sociology, political science and economics were assigned with nomothetic traditions, while history and anthropology were assigned with idiographic tradition (Wallerstein, 2011). However, this classification has been refuted on the account that political science and economics are more Eurocentric in the justification of the market economy, while sociology aligns with the civil society in its attempt to protect it from the assault of the state (Political science) and the Market (economics) (Burawoy, 2005).

Hence, Burawoy developed the idea of pubic sociology that sees sociology as part of the broader concept of the global protective movement against the assault of the state and the market.

## 3. Eurocentricism and Social Science Scholarship: The Case of Malaysian Media Studies, Teaching of Philosophy and International Relations Theory

Several quantitative studies have indicated the Northern Atlantic domination of the social sciences outside the metropolitan west (S. F. Alatas, 2003; Keim, 2008; Mosbah-Natanson & Gingras, 2014). However, these approaches were merely statistical and did not point to the genesis of the qualitative problem which lies within the entrenched culture of academic dependency. We contended that the theory of 'academic dependency' should be reconstituted within the general epistemological debate that heralded the development of the social sciences in the west. Given that social sciences emerged from Europe, loosely defined as western Europe and North America , its theoretical underpinnings, presuppositions,  methodologies reflects the environment in which it was born (Wallerstein, 1997). This epistemological problem had far reaching implication on the nature of scholarship and the dynamics that shapes knowledge production in the periphery, which ultimately stunted the growth of a relevant social science predicated on original approaches emanating from relevant local problems in the periphery (S. F. Alatas, 2001; Keim, 2011).

Given the academic dependency syndrome, we contended that the call for alternative discourse in the social sciences is an epistemological question, deeply  rooted in the question of the 'knowledge' not the 'knower' so as to avoid the trap of what Amin called 'anti-Eurocentric eurcentricism' connoting the corresponding presuppositions that non-western people hold with regard to westerners (Amin, 1989). Thus, beyond the polemical view that sees Eurocentrism as a European phenomenon, Eurocentrism could equally manifest itself in the periphery once the peripheral societies deployed the same perceptible lens in which the European perceived other people (Wallerstein, 1997).  Therefore, alternative discourse do not in any way implies rejection of the Western thought regarded as Eurocentric, rather it affirms the opening of other epistemic spaces as a 'knowing subject' enshrined by their philosophies, histories, and cultures as basis of knowledge production and theory building (de Gialdino Irene, 2011).  A critical way of engendering alternative social science tradition is identified based  on the  recognition of the non-western systems of thought to theories and ideas (F. Alatas, 2006).

Methodologically, the influence of Eurocentric approaches has inadvertently conditioned the conduct of social scientific research in the periphery. We observed that most graduate students and their supervisors were troubled with methods and methodologies during postgraduate programmes as an entrenched legacy of positivist social sciences.  The methodological lacuna of social sciences

in Malaysia has been deplored by the absence of meta-theoretical analysis(Ahmad Murad, 2005). This is mainly engendered by the preponderance of the technicist data collection social science that has an inherent disdain towards philosophy in the reconstruction of the corpus of the scholarships (Ahmad Murad, 2005; Sani & Othman, 1991). This has created an epistemological problem to knowledge production in the social sciences of the developing countries.

The case of communication scholarship in Malaysia was a plausible example of social science scholarship built on the image of communication scholarship in the West. Along this line, Merican disparagingly stated that communication scholarship in Malaysia is inexorably weak and back ward and lack in the instruments of theoretical debates in the scholarly production (Ahmad Murad, 2005). For example, a survey of social science scholarship in some Malaysian Universities indicates that research hardly goes beyond effect studies. This development prompted Merican to stress that:

> Studies of national communication systems in linking it to the theories of modernization and development have determine much of the thinking of Malaysian social sciences and communication scholars especially in the communications schools in the following Universities: Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTiM), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), University Malaysia SARAWAK (UNIMAS), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Communication and development and media effect has always been popular areas of study and research (Ahmad Murad, 2005, p. 14).

Thus, social science scholarship hardly goes beyond effect studies within the purview of the positivist American social sciences. This development can be conceived within the behavioralist revolution in the social sciences that beclouded the hitherto historical approaches in the social science. This intellectual shift has undermined the focus on the study of institutions, and the society to that of individual behavior. It is noteworthy that Studies of history, culture are important premises in understanding national cultures and the way they inform scholarship. Whereas, empirical studies study the present, the present cannot be quarantine from the past. Subsequent of the empirical social sciences, we do less thinking and less philosophizing in our study of the society.

Along this line, contended on the need to reconstitute the field of conventional media studies within philosophy. He advocated that 'what may emerge in its place may be identified as an epistemological synthesis locating communication, media and information in a wider study of history and civilisations; as well as perhaps more importantly, reestablishing the field in philosophy, or as philosophy itself; bearing in mind increasing concerns in communication and information as it relates to metaphysics and the sacred' (Ahmad Murad, 2005, p. 268).

Furthermore, the teaching of philosophy has a discerning Eurocentric influence in the social sciences. Murad made an interesting attempt to question how western philosophical thought dominates much of the discourse and teaching of philosophy in the Malaysian Universities associates the domain of philosophy with Aristotelian logic relegating non Aristotelian logic and philosophies as irrational or even omitting it altogether (Merican, 2012, p. 80). The author challenges the negligence of the non-western philosophies in the social science production in the despite classical works of erudition produced outside the west.

Similarly, the field of International Relations, especially international security studies has been analysed with American Hegemonic Pretention (Dufort, Anzueto, & Goulet-Cloutier, 2014). Dufort, Anzueto & Goulet-Cloutier Study titled Promoting Hegemonic paradigm: The case of the Journal International Security in the Discipline of International Relations, has assesed the

hegemony of the American epistemology in the way security studies is being theorised and argued. Their thesis borders on five elements identified by O'Meara (2010) which include (1) ethnocentrism, (2) epistemology and normative stance, (3) (4) ontology, theory, and (5) methodology/method. Cited in (Dufort et al., 2014, p. 5). The main conclusion of the study based on a longitudinal study of various articles published by the Journal, is that the Journal is ethnocentric in the sense that it features American interest, and epistemologically underpinned by positivism which treat the subject matter of the discipline based on strictures of science like natural sciences, and this has inhibit  non-empiricist epistemology. Similarly, the Journal is theoretically oriented towards liberal theories and marginalizes approaches that do not share positivist stance such as critical theory and post structuralism.

## 4. **Eurocentricism and Popular History in Malaysia: George Town Festival (GTF) and the Forgotten Malay Narrative**

Popular history especially history of nation states has been a hotspot of Eurocentric hegemony. It led to the emergence of various forms of history amidst its potential mis-representation of local narratives. The GTF and its narrative features prominently the Eurocentric narrative of Pulau pinnang in Malaysia, without a recourse to the Malay narrative which reveals the history and the cosmopolitanism in Pulau Pinang prior to 1786 which has been the popular narrative that accords to Eurasians the 'founding status' of the island.. As noted earlier, Eurocentric construction persists beyond academic spheres such as the social sciences.  It equally permeates popular milieu with a far-reaching consequence. The history and historiography in Malaysia and the Malay Archipelago provide rich examples on how local histories are being misconstrued by Eurocentric narrative.

The GTF is a classical illustration of the way and manner in which local histories are being represented at popular platforms.  We can see this quite frequently through popular, academic and policy discourses, much informing one another. One such incident is the story on the Eurasian community in Pulau Pinang (see "Mapping a colourful history," *New Sunday Times*, 16 August 2015). Written by Kerry-Ann Augustin, it said that the Eurasians are a founding community of Pulau Pinang, as per title of Eustiace Nonis's book The *Eurasians*: *A founding community of Penang* cited in the article.

The Eurasians, according to the article, were invited by Francis Light "to help the British administration work with the various local communities to build this new settlement." Subsequently it was said that the Eurasians representation was important in the George Town Festival's heritage features due to their "founding status" of the island. The article was written in conjunction with the month-long George Town Festival ending 31 August 2015.

Based on programs lined up under the festival in 2015, and since it first began in 2010, there have been representations by the various ethnic communities including the Peranakans, Hokkiens and the Indian Muslims.  By doing so, their place and narrative in the Pulau Pinang historical and heritage landscape continues to be perpetuated and celebrated. But the organizers of the Festival have forgotten the earliest founding community who had built Tanjong and its proximities, before 1786. It must be remembered and be reminded   that the history of Pulau Pinang did not start from 1786.

The collective memory and experiences of the Malays in Pulau Pinang have it otherwise. When Francis Light arrived, it is known that the island already has a population. The pioneer Malays on

the island already formed a community and a society. Pulau Pinang, and especially Batu Uban, was a vibrant place before Francis Light came. Was Light alone then? The organizers of the GTF cannot continue to be ignorant of the cosmopolitanism of pre-colonial Pulau Pinang through such figures as Nakhoda nan Intan (Haji Muhammad Salleh), Dato' Jenaton and Nakhoda Kechil (Ismail). It is not just P. Ramlee.

Francis Light's status was also a nakhoda[92] that of a merchant ship belonging to the Madras-based firm Jourdain, Sullivan and de Souza. He was never an employee of the English East India Company. Earlier, he had a brief stint with the Royal Navy as a midshipman.

While the *Seranis* [93] have appropriated Francis Light as one who invited the community to the island, GTF seems to develop a perennial amnesia for the original founding community – the community that gave the various names of places on the island long even before Light expressed his interest from Ujung Salang (Phuket) 1771.If at all the GTF aims at "preserving Penang and Malaysia's unique traditions and cultures for future generations," as stated by Joe Sidek in his message in the GTF program booklet, then the island's history and heritage must not be betrayed. It must be represented and narrated.

The early Malay pioneers formed settlements on the island decades before 1786. They were already in Tanjong then. In fact the years 1734 and 1749 are equally significant for these are connected to the personalities who, like Light, have a history, a genealogy and numerous descendants contributing to the history and development of the nation and the region. Many are not aware of the two dates and may not see the significance of events prior to 1786. It seems that we are all too enamored at celebrating a colonial past, at the expense of not representing the road to an earlier past on the history of Tanjong and George Town. The latter two years are recorded in the memory and experiences of the Malay story.

It is indeed strange that the narrative recognizes one but not the other. If Light made contacts with the two Sultans of Kedah then, the early Malays also made contact (with the Sultans of Kedah). It is also worthwhile referring to *Mencari Bako* (1983) by Abdul Aziz Ishak, and the latest book on the history of the Penang Malays titled *Batu Uban*: *Sejarah Awal Pulau Pinang* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015) by Prof. Ahmad Murad Merican.

The GTF must revisit oral histories of Tanjong and its proximities. Cosmopolitanism is not only a European and a Western phenomenon, the early Malays who settled on the island before 1786 were cosmopolitan and modern men, who plied across and along the Strait of Melaka. They created the original founding community in Pulau Pinang. And their descendants are now concentrated in such areas as Jelutong, Gelugor, Batu Uban, various parts of Kedah and Perak, the Klang Valley, and throughout Malaysia and parts of Southeast Asia and beyond. Some are beacons and leaders of the nation's political and intellectual life. They founded institutions that were to be integral to the nation's history. The GTF platform must commemorate that journey that began from Pulau Pinang. With no founding narrative, the history of George Town and Pulau Pinang would be meaningless.

## 5. Conclusion: Local History as Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in the Social Sciences:

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[92] Farsi word adopted in Bahasa Melayu which means captain.
[93] Malay name for Eurasians

Our notion of counter –hegemonic discourse in the social sciences is essentially concerned with appropriation and utilization of other ways of knowledge production overlooked by the dominant and conventional social sciences (Ahmad Murad, 2005). We argued in this essay that studying local histories and its popularization at popular, academic and policy cycle is an indispensable avenue of alternative discourse in the social sciences. We posited that understanding the intellectual history of the social sciences should be an important starting point of understanding their Eurocentric bias. A more elaborate historiographical approach will highlight the disruptions in the history of the various civilisations that defined the present world, from multi-polarity, to bipolarity to the present unipolar world order (Huntington, 1997).

Thus, social sciences were product of a single civilization; The Western Christian civilization. Appreciating this history, will be an enviable departure of any analysis of the dynamics that shapes knowledge production in the social sciences. We suggest that counter-hegemonic by weaving global histories from medieval period, through the renaissance that ushered in the so called modern time is a decisive project of building counter hegemony to the Eurocentric social sciences. Amin has chronicled these events in their successive forms, from Hellenistic, Eastern Christian, Islamic, and Western Christian periods, and one of the far reaching features of these civilisations is 'their intense exchange at the level of material and the level of ideas' (Amin, 1989, p. 24).

However, the dominant historiography, misconstrued this grand narrative by making the non-western societies as non-subject in civilization and development through various historical misrepresentations. An antipathy with this narrative informed our analysis of the historical misrepresentations of local histories such as that of Pulau Pinang as an illustration.

Consequently, studying local histories such as value systems, religious affinity, ethnic identities, and general consciousness of the society and the impact on national development, makes a relevant social science which speaks to the society in question. A relevant social science in Malaysia will be conscious of the Malaysian social evolution and factors that play pivotal role in the Malaysia trajectory of change. Muhammad Mahathir enunciated critical factors that influence Malays Society such as the role of the *Raja* (kings). To Malays, governance is a preserve of the kings being supreme especially in the feudal transformation, and this history informed the nobility of the Malay.

Similarly, the Arab spring that ushered in new democracies in the North Africa failed woefully, and degenerate into chaos due to its failure to appreciate the social and local histories that informs Arab social evolution. Hence, the role of local histories in knowledge production, as it engendered scholarly appropriation of societal narrative based on its shared pasts (Merican, 2015). Particularity of history is one of the indispensable features of historiography, as it privileges an understanding of society based on its on cannon, or what is being called 'ideographic inquiry' which entails a valorisation of specific over the general or induction over deduction (Firat, 1987), whereas, conventional social sciences were mostly nomothetic in their enquiries by imposing the general over the specific. We cannot for example study the Malaysian political thought outside the realm of Malaysian history or try to impose another history in understanding Malaysian society. Each historical period and context has its own account of the causes and reasons why events occurred (Firat, 1987).

This calls to question the *Whig interpretation of history* that sees societies developing within a particular development path, example Comte *Law of Human progress,* W.W Rowstow *stages of economic growth* or Marxist historical materialism. Local history is essential in bringing to the global glare the epistemology of the 'knowing subject' essentially defined as the orient. The

conventional narrative is dotted and spirited with the epistemology of the 'known subject' defined as the occident. These assumptions were constituted by the methods, assumptions and theories of the Western Europe generally defined as eurocentricism. This mode of knowledge production in the social sciences has hindered or rather altered the epistemologies of the 'knowing subject' being the 'authentic interlocutors'(de Gialdino Irene, 2011; Nyoka, 2013). An appropriation of local histories, and civilisations as epistemic spaces is an important departure from the Eurocentric historiography and its discursive representation of the non-western cultural milieu (Ahmad Murad, 2005; Wiarda, 1981). This informed our contribution of local history as a counter-hegemonic discourse in the social sciences.

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