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## Regional Cooperation: Malay World and the Formation of ASEAN Community

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# Regional Cooperation: Malay World and the Formation of ASEAN Community

Lukman Thaib<sup>α</sup> & Bharuddin Che Pa<sup>σ</sup>

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## I. INTRODUCTION

International trade activity is a major factor shaping the history of Southeast Asia and Malay world. Malay world is exposed to various external influences including Islamization process because its geographical position is surrounded by Indian Ocean and South China Sea which is the trading and shipping routes. Historical researchers also acknowledge the fact that trade is one of the main factors that have led the way and then accelerate the spread of Islam in the Malay world (Reid, A. 1985:14-15 dan Levtzion, N. 1979:15-16). Muslim traders originating from Arabia, Persia, India and China are the most important agents disseminate Islamic entry into the Malay world for the first time around the year 674 AD. Starting from the year of 878 AD Islam has been strong in the area and in the year of 1204 AD Islam had been accepted as a way of life by the Malays society (Fatimi. 1963: 69).

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Historical development of Islam in the Malay world clearly shows that the Muslim traders, kings, chiefs, warriors, scholars and missionaries play their respective roles in spreading of Islam. They all are important agents in the process of Islamization in the Malay world. Each has a strength, integrity and unique features in discharging their duties on the spreading of Islam. They complement each other and through this combination they have made the process of Islamization running in perfect harmony.

All this proves that the groups was initiating and accelerating the process of Islamization in the Malay world. The traders play their role as a pioneer who paved the way towards the advent of Islam (Auni.2001; 4-6). This can be seen in the early development of Islam in Southeast Asia (ASEAN). They open residence together with the scholars who boarded their ship and developing trading center and port city in this region. In addition, they also play a big role in the process of expanding urbanization as well as the teachings of Islam in the region.

The Muslim merchant is able to prove its leadership and their effective management in the course of business, leading the local community and promote business center in the area. This has become an attraction to the ruler and local people who still disbelieve to approach them and thus converted to Islam.

Economic strength and personal excellence of the Muslim merchant has emerged as a major influential political force in the local community until local dignitary like kings and local chiefs also get close to the traders with the aim of making them as business partners and help them in finding wealth which eventually becoming brothers and sisters.

Apart from economic motives, there are also political motives that influence local rulers to convert to Islam. This applies especially to the kings of the rural areas which left behind in terms of advancement and they feel challenged by the political influence of the Muslim merchant which dominates the port towns or coastal business center that is more advanced than them. We can see this clearly in the history of Islam in Giri, Banten, Kudus and Demark, all of which are coastal cities that greatly influenced the development of Islam in the remote islands of Java. Hence, the birth of what has been called as "Civilization Offshore" plays a large role in

the history of Islamization in Java Island (Pigeaud, TH.G.TH. 1967:6-7).

## II. CONCEPT OF MALAY WORLD

*Malay World or Malay realm* is a term that contains many meanings depending on its usage. In terms of language (linguistically) the term refers to an area or district whose people speak the Malay language in Southeast Asia which include Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore as well as Southern Thailand. In the geopolitical context, the term Malay World is a term often used interchangeably with the term of Archipelago or with colonial term which call as '*Malay Archipelago*' (Sweeney.2011: 295). Even more broadly the term Malay World also has been defined as an area (region), homeland of the Austronesian tribes that covers Easter Island in the east up to the Madagascar on the west side (Farrer. 2009: 26). However, the definition of Malay World which is very broad in nature has received criticism from some scholars since it only refers to the concept of Malay tribe.

In a cultural context (incultural sense), Malay world term is more accurately refers to as homeland for people of Malay descent historically led by the Malay Sultanate in South East Asia offshore. This area includes the peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra coast, Borneo and smaller islands between the territories (Milner. 2010: 42). However, UNESCO in the use of the term '*Dunia Melayu*' (Malay World) or '*Alam Melayu*' (Malay Archipelago) which also known as '*Nusantara*'. Malay World concept used by UNESCO refers to the countries of Southeast Asia such as islands of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in particular. In general it also took into the account of the whole Malay Polonesia; from Malagasy Island in the west and Easter Island in the east, Faramosa Island, Hawaii in the north and the islands of Indonesia and New Zealand in the south. (Wikipedia. 2008: 1, April 15).

In terms of the origins of Malay World term in the history of this region we can refer to the notes of Portuguese history expert in the 16th century AD, Emanuel Godinho de Eredia. According to him, the first of the term is due to the consolidation of the Malay Sea into the Malacca Sultanate around the 15th century AD (Andaya.2008:200). The reference area of Emanuel Godinho which known as "*Malayos Sea*" covering the north of the Andaman sea, the entire Strait of Malacca in the middle, some of the Sunda Strait in the southern part and western parts of the South China Sea. This area was considered to be Islamic trading centers in the international trading system where Malay language is used as a Linqua Franca (Mohamed A O. 2011:28-30). "... Starting point by the island of Pulo Catay in the region of Pattane (Pattani), situated in the east coast in 8 degrees of latitude, the pass round to the other or western coast of Ujontana (Malay Peninsula), to Taranda

and U Jong Calan situated in the same latitude in district of Queda (Kedah): this stretch of territory lies within the region of "Malayos" and the same language prevail throughout."(Mohamed AO. 2011: 30).

Emanuel Godinho mention that Malay Sea is a socio-cultural concept of religion (a geo religiosocio-cultural concept), a concept of geographical unity characterized by their common religious beliefs and cultural similarities (Mohamed A O.2011:31). It proved true when the vision of Malay and also the emergence of Malay identity on the basis of Islam take the form of a stronger in the reign of the Malacca Sultanate (Andaya. 1984:55, Timothy P. 2004:7, Mohd Fauzi Y.2009:16). As a result, the expansion of trade influence of Malacca and religious influencethat went beyond cultural boundaries eventually produce the beginning of the Malay process with the development of classical Malay language (Sneddon, Jmaes N. 2003:74), Islam (Milner. 2010: 47) and also Malay customs (Esposito. 1999). This assimilation process continues even after the fall of Malacca in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. While the Era after the greatness of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca, some Malay sultanate hasalso grown more widely in the region, starting with the small sultanate like Asahan, Deli, Langkat and Serdangin Indonesia to the larger and more powerful sultanate like Brunei, Johor and Pattani. The existence of these sultanates had resulted Malay cultural influence and a wider trade activities and consequently lead to the development of the Malay World (Mohamed AO. 2011: 31-34).

The absorption of Malay's culture and language that is strong in the area as viewed by scholars and researchers from Europe during the colonial period. This was the basis for the formation of some of the terms of anthropology, geography and linguistics (Ooi, K.G. 2009: 181). Among them is the concept of the Malays and Malay Archipelago and some linguistic terms such as Malay Polinisia and also languages akin to the Malay language. This zenism is very influential in shaping the modern notion of the vastness of the Malay world.

## III. CONCEPT OF ARCHIPELAGO (NUSANTARA) ACCORDING TO THE INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE

We do not deny that the word of '*Nusantara*' Is a compound word derived from two words of ancient avanese language which is '*nusa*' (island or nations) and '*antara*' (cluster and other). The use of this word was more accurate for archipelagic country like Indonesia that located between two oceans and other countries. The word '*Nusantara*' exists in Javanese language literature around the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 16th century as a national vision that is embraced by the King of Majapahitduring that time. We can value the point ourselves when Gajah Mada declared it in '*Palapa*

Oath'. "Sira Gajah Madapepatihamungkubumi tan ayun amunikapalapa, sira Gajah Mada: Lamunhuwuskalah Nusantara ingsunamuktupalapa, lamunkalah ring Gurun, ring Seram, Tanjungpura, ring Haru, ring Pahang, Dampo, ring Bali, Sunda, Palembang, Tumasik, samana ingsunamuktupalapa" which means "He, Gajah Mada Amangkubumi does not want to relinquish his power. He Gajah Mada; if I have defeat Nusantara, then I will relinquish power. If I have defeat Gurun, Seram, Tanjung Pura, Haru, Pahang, Dampo, Balinese, Sundanese, Palembang and Tumasik, thus only I release the power" (Juntus M. Van d.Kroef . 1951: 166-171).

Actually If we review the history of ancient Javanese, Gajah Mada was not the first to introduce the term 'Nusantara'. Instead the term had already been expressed by Kertanagara, Tumapel king, in the year 1275 by introducing a vision or concept "*Cakrawala Mandala Dwipantara*" (Juntus M. Van d. Kroef. 1951: 166-171). Dwipantara is a word in Sanskrit for "the islands between", which means the same with 'Nusantara' because 'Dwipa' is synonymous with "Nusa" which means island. King Tumapel, Kertanagara was a king who had a vision to create an association of governments of Southeast Asia under the authority of Tumapel government in its efforts to deal with the potential threat of Mongol invasion which is developing the Yuan Dynasty in Chinese (Tiongkok) at that time. Due to this reason Kartanegara start Expedition Pamalayu to build friendship and political alliance with the government of Malay Dharmasraya in Jambi by giving *Arca Amoghapasa* as a gift to please the ruler and Malay people in Riau sultanate. In return Riau's Malay King send his daughters to Java, Dara Jingga and Dara Petak to be married with Javanese ruler.

In the 1920's, Ki Hajar Dewantara and Dr. Setiabudi have suggested the term 'Nusantara' to replace the term used by Dutch colonists like Indie (Hindia) for Dutch Indies colonial areas (for Indonesia which was not around then). However the word 'Nusantara' was competing with the word '*Indonesia*' (Indies Islands) which was introduced by Eduard Douwes Dekker (Juntus M. Van de Kroef. 1951:166-171). Pemuda II Congress in 1928 had agreed to use the term '*Indonesia*' (which means islands of Indies) to be used by country that will be independent. However the term 'Nusantara' is still used as a synonym for '*Indonesia*'.

Due to the political dynamics after the Pacific War ended around the year 1945 has created Indonesia Raya region covering British Malaya (known as West Malaysia) and North Borneo (Tempo. August 15, 2005). The term 'Nusantara' became popular among the people of Peninsular Malaysia because there was a spirit of Malay background similarities among the islanders of Indonesia and Peninsular Malaysia. However, when Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the spirit of togetherness under the term 'Nusantara' was

replaced by political hostility Confrontation by Sukarno in Indonesia. When hostilities ended, the meaning of 'Nusantara' in Malaysia still brings the spirit of equality clumps. Since then, the meaning of 'Nusantara' overlaps with '*Malay Archipelago*'. If we review the Geographically anthropology or antropo-geographic (cultural geography), 'Nusantara' is a popular term in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as the very word match with the term Archipelago or Malay World.

#### IV. PLATFORM IN THE EXPANSION OF ISLAM IN THE MALAY WORLD

There are many factors other than trade in the Islamization of the Malay World. The factors that are Muslim missionary run, the role of Sufism, Islamic traders displaced due to the effects of crusades and also the attractiveness of the superiority of Islam itself. Conversion to Islam on a large scale occurred among the people because they were impressed with the superiority of Islam. This is an important factor in the history of Islamization in the Malay World. Privileges contained in the teachings of Islam have sparked "*revolution from within*" among locals after they were able to make a comparison with the teachings of Hinduism. They begin to see the weakness of Hinduism which is fantasy as well as emphasizing the differences among the people based on caste.

Modern sociologists explain that pro-Islamic sentiments among Muslims deep in this area, especially in urban areas which are influenced by strong anti caste system. The lower classes of society realize that their position has no value in the old community. Embrace Islam is an effective way to free them from the shackles of caste. Since Islamic teachings concerned about standard equation among human beings so it has become main factor in the conversion of the Malay World into Islam.

However, we cannot deny that the factors superiority of Islam cannot stand alone without the existence of trade channels as a vehicle to spread the teachings of Islam to the Malay world. Trade is not just a channel that accelerates the process of Islamization but also the main principles that are important in strengthen and sustain this process for several centuries. This occurs when trade is recognized as a source of strength that able to produce the power of political Islam in the Malay world.

In the history of politics and government of Malay world we can clearly see that most of the Malay sultanate became famous and well-known for the strength of trade-driven economy. In other words their power is determined by the influence of economic and trading in their grasp. This can be seen through the birth of Malacca, Aceh, Johor, Patani, Banten, Ternate, Makassar, Brunei and Sulu sultanate (Auni. 2001.12). All of these empires have emerged as a strong power when



they are able to promote and foster trade activities until it become the focus of the international traders.

It is not an exaggeration if we say that the entire powerful sultanate that had appeared in the Malay world after the advent of Islam known as a maritime power has economic influence because of their power over international trade traffic. All sultanates were built in coastal areas. We can see clearly the role of trade and shipping that is played by the Sultanate of Malacca, Aceh, Banten, Ternate, Brunei, Makassar, and Sulu. Malacca and Aceh control trade in the Straits of Malacca. Banten dominated trade across the Straits of Sunda and ports in northern Java. Brunei authorized on trade activities in northern Borneo. On the other hand, Ternate dominated trading activity around Maluku Islands and Makassar in the southern part of Celebes Islands. The only government in the interior that can appear to be strong is the Sultanate of Mataram in Java and can be done after dominated the main trading centers on the Java Island coast (Koentjaningrat. 1985:322-323).

With the details descriptions and pictures above, it appears that trading is an important platform with the aim to expand and build Islamic political power in the history of Islamization of the Malay world. Trade not only as a factor that introduced Islam but more importantly it plays a role in building and further strengthening the foundations of the religion. Trade plays their role from the early stages of Islam arrival until the religion emerged as a political force in the history of some empire in Malay worlds.

## V. THE TRANSFORMATION BROUGHT BY ISLAM UPON MALAY SOCIETY

Many western scholars thought that the arrival of Islam in the Malay world eventually does not bring significant changes in the lives of the Malay community. Among these western scholars are Landon, Winstedt and Van Leur (Hussain O. 2009: 68). Landon for example, described that the influence of Islam was only a "veneer" over the indigenous culture of the Malay society, and in another instance, Van Leur described the influence of Islam in this region as a "flanking glaze on the massive body of indigenous civilization" (Ismail Hamid. 1985: 22). Lombard (1998:3) drew the intention on the trend of marginalizing the Islamic period in Malay history among western scholars. For instance, he the book of W. Stohr and P. Zoetmulder, which written about the religions of Indonesia in which it dedicated only 30 out of 390 pages on Islam.

In another group, there were both local and foreign scholars, such as Hussein al-Attas, C.A. Majul, Van Nieuwenhuijzen and Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, who argued otherwise. For these latter scholars, the advent of Islam had indeed affected the whole structure of the Malay society (Ismail Hamid. 1985:23). In

a nutshell, the views from the former group were based on the wrong perspectives, such as by looking at the Malay Islamic world through the Indian and strict Javanese perspectives. The fact that the decline of Majapahit caused by the emergence of Malacca as a commercial and an Islamic center was often neglected by these scholars (Coedes. 1968: 24). Infact that there were many major transformations occurred around the Malay region due to the Islamization. It was worth to mention some of the transformations which did not exactly concern the Malay intellectual and historical thoughts but were still closely related.

*First*, it was through the Islamic understanding that enabled the Malays to redefine they "Malayness" and their core values. In terms of historical study this was a tremendous change that ever happened to the Malays (Hussin Motalib. 1990:12).

*Second*, in social and economic areas, Malay Muslims were able to expand their relationship with other outside communities, as Yegar (1979:21) remarked, "Strengthened their feelings of solidarity with the rest of the Islamic world, and sanctioned many of their basic social and economic codes". Al-Attas (1969:28) further remarked, "Through the regents' conversion to Islam, religion then became a new force in the process of social development".

*Third*, in politics and government, the substitution from the *devarajas* system into the *Sultanate* system, the identification of Malay Raja with the concept of "Khalifah (Caliph)", and the reorganization of the entire political system proved the influence of the Islamization in the Malay world.

*Fourth*, in terms of the rule of laws, there were tremendous changes when the ancient laws and rules were replaced by the Islamic laws as described by the zof the Malacca Digest, Pahang Digest and also the Terengganu inscription. Last but not least, if we go further, we will find that Islam had transformed almost the entire aspects of the Malays lives (Ismail Hamid, 1985: 23-28).

In a larger extent, the transformation brought about by the Islamization was on the intellectual impacts the Islamization in the Malay world. It is hope this elaboration will provide a firm conclusion on the development of the Malay historical thought. In one of his discussion Syed Naquib al-Attas (1969:3-4) saying that "Neither the Hindu-Malay nor the Buddhist-Malay, as far as we know, have produced any thinker or philosophers of note". In fact, for a long period of time especially from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sumatra according to Al-Attas (1969:3-4), "...seems to have been a great centre of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy. Yet the influence of the Buddhist clergy in Sumatra did not seem to have made itself felt in the realm of philosophy, but again in that of art". Comaraswamy (1985:198) was also clearly aware of the issue of the absence of Buddhist philosophy and art in Sumatra

when he said, "*Scarcely anything survives of the ancient art of Sumatra, unless we define the art of middle Java in the Sailendra period as such*". Al-Attas' statements sounded strange but historically they were true and nothing so far we knew about the great local philosophers and admirable scholars were produced during the period of *Indianization*. However, when Islam and Muslims began to dominate the intellectual domains of the Malays, several learning centers were established and flourished. Beginning with Samudra-Pasai (now Lhokseumawe in north Aceh)(1280-1400), followed by Malacca(1400-1511) and then Aceh(now Banda Aceh)(1511-1650) and finally Johore –Riau( now West Malaysia) (1650-1800), each of these centers had thereupon produce innumerable excellent scholars, thinkers and philosophers.

The intellectual interest of Pasai (now Lhokseumawe) was led by Malik al-Zahir, the king himself who was surrounded with several prominent scholars hailed from Persia and Isfahan of Iran(Ismail Hamid. 1985:18-22). In Malacca, the intellectual interest was pioneered by a number of scholars as mentioned in Malay Histiography (*Sejarah Melayu*) including Syed Abdul Aziz who was responsible for the conversion of the Malaccan King, Kadhi Yusof and Mawlana Abu Bakar (Brown.1952:102-103).

When Aceh (now Banda Aceh) became known as a learning center for the Malays and other international Islamic communities, it was discovered that many more scholars and intelligentsia emerged and the most excellent among them were Hamzah Fansuri, Shams al-Din al-Sumatrani, Nur al-Din al-Raniri and Abdul Rauf al-Singkili (Al-Attas.1963:22-29). There were also many scholars originated from Johore kingdom in Malaysia including Tun Seri Lanang, the author of the Malay Histiography (*Sejarah Melayu*). In the island of Riau-Sumatra-Indonesia, royal family was seen actively producing the Malay corpuses and the most excellent and most prominent among them was Raja Ali Haji (Siti Hawa.1994:32-34).

Furthermore, with the coming of Islam Malay language was established and flourished as an intellectual language as well as a lingua franca to the Malay region. Comparably similar to the Arabic language in pre-Islamic times. Malay language in ancient times and throughout the period of Hinduism and Buddhism was not regarded as an aesthetic religious and intellectual language. According to Moshe Yegar (1979: 7): "*with the introduction of Islam was a break from the complete Indian dominance of previous centuries. The Arabic alphabet replaced the Indian script, and liturgical Arabic entered the Malay language, dislodging Sanskrit in many cases*". Besides being tolerant to the Sanskrit words such as *puasa, neraka, agama* and *syurga*, Islam had also revolutionized the Malay language by enriching it with Arabic and Persian words and terminologies.

As late as 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Malay language attained its highest level as the language of literature and religion, overthrowing the Javanese language (Al-Attas. 1990:42 and Hashim Musa.1999: 29). Malay literature was then established especially through the writing activities pioneered mostly by the Malay Muslim scholars and court literati as Taib Osman (1985:46) remarked, "*The literary heritage of the Malays has been exclusively written in the Perso-Arabic script, including those literary works carried over from the Hindu period*". The development was very extensive as described by Riddle (2001:101), "*The Malay world witnessed a body of Islamic literature being grafted on to the literary expression of the existing Malay society. In the process, stories were adopted and extensively recast*". As the Malay language was increasingly being accepted as an intellectual language and as a medium of regional communication during the Islamic period, Malay scholars begin to utilize this language in producing the writing corpuses in various aspects of literature. It was through these writing that enabled the Malay intellectuals to flourish to the highest level ever which had never been achieved. Taib Osman (1985:46) further remarked. "*Of the cultural influence that Islam had brought to bear on the Malays, those in the field of literature have been the most profound*". Numerous forms of literature were produced by the Malay scholars, from the religious to the poetic treatises. In religious treatises for instance, a Malay translation of '*Aqa'id al-Nasafi*, written in 1590 was considered as the oldest know Malay manuscript (Al-Attas. 1988:6-8). However, this fact did not deny that prior to 1590, there were already numerous Malay textual works produced and scattered around the Malay courts.

#### a) *Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia.*

From what has been experienced by the Malay community in this region clearly shows that the cooperation between governments in this region has been practiced since the 13th century through the relationship between the kings (*Sultans*) of Malay Archipelago in Southeast Asia region. However, in the modern context, regional cooperation is regarded as an international political concept which involves cooperation among countries located geographically close to each other. In addition, regional cooperation also does not involve co-operation in the field of military, rather cooperation that focus more on socio-cultural, economic and political order to maintain regional peace and prosperity.

In the context of relations among Southeast Asia communities in the form of co-operation as an independent state (nation states) has been initiated since 1954 through the embodiment SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) which joined by Thailand and Philippines. After the late 1960s, regional cooperation began to develop through the establishment of the ASA

(Association of Southeast Asia) in 1961 followed by the establishment of MAPHILINDO (Malaysia-Filipina-Indonesia) in 1963. The highlight of this regional cooperation has been realized through the establishment of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in 1967 (Mauzy.1984: 1-8, Wanandi. 2001:25-34).

The establishment of ASEAN through Bangkok Declaration 1967 has opened a new chapter in regional cooperation for Southeast Asia. The main goals of the establishment of ASEAN are to accelerate growth of economic, social and regional cultural development. Participation in ASEAN expanded to other Southeast Asian countries such as Brunei, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Therefore we can say that ASEAN is a successful and effective regional cooperation organization in creating good relations between member countries to make the Southeast Asian region of peace and stability. We believe this success is due to the practice of peaceful coexistence policy has been practiced by the Malay rulers in the Malay world since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. At the time of the Malay sultanate, the mechanism for peace and recognition of the sovereignty of a country is through the delivery of gifts and exchange wedding among family members of Malay's kings in the Malay world. In modern times the practice of peaceful coexistence policy is through the willingness of each ASEAN member states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country and not interfere with the other ASEAN countries affairs.

Areas of cooperation have been initiated by ASEAN is very broad and not all areas have successfully pursued. Because the purpose of this article is not to explain each of the areas of cooperation, instead we will just record some areas to alert us on nostalgic collaborations that were initiated by the Malay community during their golden age. Among the fields of ASEAN cooperation that we will mention here is that cooperation in the fields of education and economy.

#### b) *Regional Cooperation in the Field of Education.*

It is very clear through regional cooperation that countries in the region can exchange knowledge especially in the areas of education and research. This has been done by the ASA through the exchange of academic staff between the University of Malaya and the University of the Philippines in 1965. This cooperation becomes closer under ASEAN with the establishment of the SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization) in November 1965 in Bangkok where the charter was signed in February 1968. Further to this the existence of SEAMEO, Indonesia sent 17 lecturers for the first session of National University of Malaysia (UKM) which opened in 1970. In recognition of Indonesia's efforts and contributions in the opening of UKM and implementation of national education policy in this country, two Malay nationalist leaders, Datuk Professor Zainal Abidin Wahid and Datuk Abdul Rahman Yaakup

stated that education and cultural cooperation between the two countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) will improve knowledge and understanding as well as helping teachers of both countries so that they can contribute to community development in their respective countries.

#### c) *Regional Cooperation in Economic Areas.*

ASEAN leaders believe that good economic growth will be able to reduce poverty gap among ASEAN community. To achieve this, ASEAN has introduced a number of cooperation mechanisms aimed at reducing poverty in the region. ASEAN has introduced several programs anchored economy by regions which are Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Filipina East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) and Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) (Christopher M.D. and Peter R. 2011: 29-55). The existence of such mechanisms in the economic restructuring of the region appears to have succeeded in creating the ASEAN region that is stable, prosperous and competitive. Besides that, it has able to reduce poverty and socio-economic disparities. Through this economic development accordance with areas, states member that are involved indirectly will foster cooperation among themselves and the success of this program relies heavily on the efforts among members of ASEAN itself. It has become common, a form of cooperation will embody a good relationship between the states member and deflect any schism.

Besides the concept of triangle, ASEAN also seeks to overcome regional economic problems by implementing some additional efforts. In order to increase trade between ASEAN countries, the Preferential Trading Agreement (PTA) was signed in 1977. We have able to see the results with the success of inserting 14,656 goods into PTA listing. Then in 1982 to encourage all ASEAN countries producing certain components in a large industry such as automobiles, ASEAN launched ASEAN Industrial Complementary Scheme (AIC) (Simon S.C, Jesus P.E, Hadi Soesanto. 2001: 3-309). In its efforts to create a free market among ASEAN countries by paving the way for all products produced by ASEAN countries to be able to penetrate the market among its members without any minimum tariff is by implementing Asean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA). This had been done through Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme (CEPT). CEPT have contributed quite significantly to the amount of trade among ASEAN countries with an increase of 34% from about 44 billion USD in 1993 to 59 billion USD in 1994 and has successfully eliminate tariffs on 11 key sectors.

#### d) *Discourse on the Formation of the Asean Community.*

Ideas and efforts to create a joint entity have existed since the 1960s and now it is moving towards the establishment of its own community that is strong



and mutually helps each other. With this, the theme of ASEAN 44th anniversary this year (2012) which is “*Unity in Diversity*” is considered unique and has a deep meaning. Every 10 ASEAN countries has its own characteristics and uniqueness but the disparity is a matter of common compared with the benefits to be acquired through the merger of the commitment of the countries in the entity has been established since the era of Malay sultanate and also through the creation of the ASEAN in 1967.

According to Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib in his statement on November 18, 2012 in Phnom Penh, that Asean leaders has decided that the ASEAN Community be established on December 31, 2015, when Malaysia takes over the chairmanship of the ASEAN Summit that year (Borneo Post, Nov19,2012). It is clear ASEAN is moving towards the creation of a strong community that mutually helps each other. According to Mohd Najib, the Asean Community will be based on three main pillars-Asean Political Security Community (APSC), Asean Economic Community (AEC) and Asean Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), which will be formed based on the region’s norms and values, creation of a single market with a 600 million population and freer flow of trade and investment. As new ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh in his first meeting with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to ASEAN on February 6, 2013 at the ASEAN headquarters in Jakarta, stated that although ASEAN has reaped remarkable achievements in recent years, there remains much to be done, including the enhancement of coordination and information exchanges between the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN member countries to further effectively implement three plans on building the ASEAN community three pillars by 2015. (Vietnam News Service, Feb 19, 2013). As the Secretary General also shared the view with the ASEAN’s CPR that the central role of ASEAN remains a key point in the ASEAN’s agenda, adding that narrowing the development gap in each ASEAN member state and among the states is one of the top priorities.

Recognizing the importance of the ASEAN to make changes from an institution or mechanism that domain is the 10 ASEAN member countries, Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, the President of Indonesian Republic, at ASEAN Summit in the last August of 2012 mention of the need to transform ASEAN into a community-based organization in South East Asia (Dewan Masyarakat. 2012:2-4). This is done with hope an ASEAN single market will exist. As the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mohd Najib added that the communication strategy should be focused also, so that the people understood the meaning of the Asean community. He also added that relationship that involves people to people, goods and services are also very important (Berita Harian, Ogos 4, 2010). Thus it is clear that the launch of the ASEAN charter at the end of

2006 is an initiative to create progressive and equitable communities in order to face current challenges of globalization. Of course to create community-based ASEAN and single ASEAN market, there are many challenges to be faced by societies in the region especially among ASEAN civil society that does not understand what is meant by the ASEAN economic community.

Obviously, the role of ASEAN as an umbrella to Southeast Asia harmony should be maintained because it is still relevant even if not able to par with the European Union which was established 24 years after the establishment of ASEAN. The whole world must accept that liberalism notion in ASEAN region in all its aspects needs to be done carefully in order not to drop eastern values upheld by all member states.

## VI. CONCLUSION

From a variety of meetings and declarations which have been made by ASEAN leaders yet to see a real effort and shape heading towards ASEAN community although it is exactly three years before 2015 where ASEAN Community was aspired to be realized. The decisions of leaders from member countries still in the concept level and only a few are accepted and followed by community from this region. Nevertheless, the ideal is not impossible to achieve. Together we hope that the ASEAN community is able to produce an identity for ASEAN citizens that in the end create a bond between the ASEAN countries and communities that are integrated as a single entity in international interactions.

Neighbors are the closest relatives. Although having wealthy and good family members but if they are far away from our home certainly it will be hard for them to help if we are facing any difficulty. Based on this rationality ASEAN community becomes a relevant matter to be expanded. Regardless of the technological advances that make distance trivial, regional community is very strategic to be developed in terms of security, economic, educational and cultural. A simple example of this is when forest fires in Sumatra and Kalimantan that led to protests in Singapore and Malaysia. However as neighboring country Malaysia still provide assistance to Indonesia.

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