

Religious Tolerance within Captivity: Exploring *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* as Heteroglot Travel Novels

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ABSTRACT

The travel novels, "Leo Africanus" by Amin Maalouf and "Panglima Awang" by Harun Aminurrashid share similarities as fictional narratives inspired by real sixteenth-century captives. Focusing on the experiences of the protagonists, Leo and Awang, who were taken captive by colonisers during the 16th century, the novels portray the role of religion as a pathway to freedom, personal growth, and spiritual enlightenment. Through the lens of Bakhtin's heteroglossia and dialogism theory, this study explores how religious discourses interact within the narratives, examining conflicts, harmonies, and transformations. The analysis reveals how "Leo Africanus" and "Panglima Awang" promote religious tolerance through religious diversity and religious concealment, thus challenging rigid beliefs. In conclusion, despite the theme of physical captivity, these travel novels convey a message of acceptance and understanding, showcasing the potential for harmony and mutual respect among different religious perspectives.

Keywords: religious tolerance; novel; comparative literature; travel narratives

INTRODUCTION

Amin Maalouf's travel novel *Leo Africanus* has emerged as a compelling work that navigates the complexities of identity and cultural encounters during a pivotal period in history. Translated by Peter Sluglett, the novel takes readers on a journey through the life of Hasan al-Wazzan, also known as Leo Africanus, a 16th-century Andalusian explorer. Maalouf weaves a narrative that intertwines history, geography, and travellers' tales, captivating the readers with the protagonist's experiences and the encounters between East and West. The second novel, *Panglima Awang*, was translated into English by David Nicholas Bakewell and published by the National Translation Institute of Malaysia (ITNM) in 2011. Awang is the main character in the story, which is told in the third-person omniscient perspective. After reading news headlines about a Malay hostage to Ferdinand Magellan being the unsung hero as the first person to traverse the globe, Harun was inspired to write the novel. Harun employs his imagination to construct an enthralling novel about a Malay imprisoned traveller who creates history by circumnavigating the globe on the basis of meagre facts. The novel explores the intricate relationship between physical captivity and individual liberty. Despite the theme of captivity and intertwining identities, paradoxically, the narrative presents a strong sense of religious tolerance, raising questions about the connection between the body and the mind in captivity. Does physical captivity necessarily lead to other captivity, such as religious fanaticism? Can literary work about captives advocate the notion of religious tolerance?

Religious tolerance has been a recurring subject in various literary works from different cultural and historical backgrounds, captivating scholars and readers alike. However, studies on the issue of religious tolerance in literary works are still lacking, although literature can be a powerful medium for contemplating the challenges and rewards of religious tolerance. For instance, Mardonova (2020) discusses the idea of religious tolerance in the philosophical literary heritage of Central Asian thinkers. The study finds that the authors outline the concept of tolerance in the philosophical literature of the region. On the other hand, Tarocco (2019) explores the concept of religious tolerance in China and finds that the notion of religious tolerance in literary works emerged in the 19th century and was influenced by the discursive construction of Judaism. Many creative narratives advocate the notion of religious tolerance, but regrettably, there remains a deficiency in studies concerning this matter. For example, Hermawan et al. (2019) discuss tolerance and multiculturalism in the *Yogyakarta* novel and *A Million Prayers for Gus Dur* by Damien Dematra and conclude that tolerance is reflected in the appreciation of the cultural plurality's reality in society and recognition of human dignity and human rights. Meanwhile, Canuel (2002) explores the theme of religious tolerance in British writing from 1790-1830, focusing on the works of Radcliffe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats. As a result, it highlights the importance of literature in shaping public opinion and promoting social change. In overall terms, religious tolerance is crucial for every country. Each nation's relative attitude should be soulful in generating a perception of a different religion. If there is no tolerance for religion, then the seeds of disaster and destruction will begin to sprout. As a result, negative attitudes such as bias, prejudice, suspicion, discrimination, and the like will emerge (Muhamad Amar Mahmad & Azman Md Zain., 2018).

Undeniably, literature plays an important role in fostering a more tolerant and inclusive world. However, the dearth of critical research on religious tolerance in literary works is strikingly evident. Therefore, this paper intends to analyse the notion of religious tolerance in two travel novels of captives, which intrigue curiosity due to their paradoxical situation. This paper aims to analyse the complex interplay of containment and freedom within both the body and the mind, shedding light on the existence of religious tolerance within captivity. To achieve this, two travel novels that share various similarities will be compared: the Malay novel *Panglima Awang* by Harun Aminurrashid and the Arab novel *Leo Africanus* by Amīn Maalouf. The protagonists, Leo and Awang, are both captured by colonisers in the 16th century, and the novels are grounded in real historical events and figures, using their names as a basis. This has led to both works being recognised and studied as historical novels due to their strong connections to actual incidents and individuals. However, captivity in the context of travel, with particular emphasis on religious tolerance, will be emphasised in this paper. When Muslim captives arrived in infidel regimes, they were often given the option of remaining faithful to their original faith or converting to Christianity. However, it is usually accompanied by pressure, and the effects vary from one territory to the next. Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, in particular for the issue of religion, provides observations on how religious discourses conflict, harmonise, or even retransform within the narratives. In relation to the religious issue, *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* dwell on the notions of captivity through two concepts: firstly, tolerance and, secondly, submission. By viewing the fiction as a heteroglot realm, we can see the presence of dialogical religious discourses inside the texts, notably between Islam and Christianity. Firstly, this paper will introduce the historical figures who inspire the protagonists of both travel novels and, secondly, present the travel novels briefly.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

LEO AFRICANUS, THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

Leo Africanus, also known as Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Fāsī, was a notable sixteenth-century traveller and writer. After his capture and subsequent baptism, he went by various names such as Giovanni Leone, Joannes Leo, Joannes Medici, and Yūḥannā al-Asad. However, he is most commonly known as Leo Africanus, a captive-turned-traveler who became renowned as the "most famous late medieval Muslim immigrant to Europe" (Catlos, 2014). Despite the scarcity of information about his personal life, Natalie Zemon Davis delves into his journey and provides a scholarly account of Leo's life in a chronological manner in her book *Trickster Travels*. Previous studies have often viewed Leo as a man caught between two worlds, possessing a dual audience, faith, insights, and exposure to different cultures as a result of his baptism during captivity (Davis, 2006). Notably, Leo is regarded as one of the last Arab scholars who drew inspiration from the rich Muslim civilisation in Spain and had connections with influential Christian monarchies. Muslim captives with exceptional knowledge or skills were highly valued, making Leo's background and education highly significant (Catlos, 2014).

According to Davis (2006), despite Leo Africanus's baptism and his life as a captive and traveller, she argues that he remained loyal to his original religion and harboured a longing to return to his homeland. This perspective is supported by Muṣṭafa Ṭāhir from the University of Fez, who suggests that Leo always identified as a Muslim. This is evidenced by Leo's practice of recording his previous Muslim name in his writings, his connection to his Muslim origins, and his use of the pronoun 'we' when referring to Muslims. According to Muṣṭafa Ṭāhir, Leo may have practised *taqīyah*, a religious concept that allows for the denial of faith in life-threatening situations (BBC Arabic, 2011). *Taqīyah* serves as a means of ultimate protection against apostasy, particularly under severe threats (Catlos, 2014).

After being given the opportunity to leave the dungeon, Leo Africanus was brought before the Pope, who was organising crusades at the time. Leo formed a close relationship with the Pope, underwent baptism, and successfully assimilated into his new religion, society, and culture. It is suggested that his ability to adapt to different cultures and religions may have been influenced by his parents. Leo's mother was Jewish and had converted to Islam, and it is possible that Leo inherited his mother's aptitude for adapting to various situations (BBC Arabic, 2011).

THE TRAVEL NOVEL LEO AFRICANUS BY AMIN MAALOUF

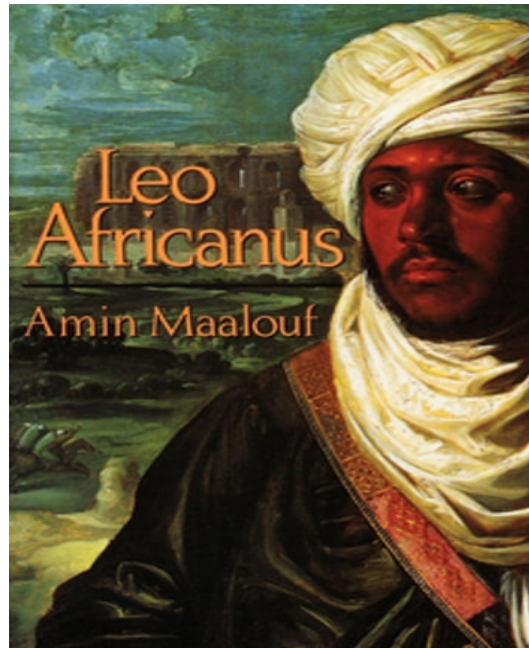


FIGURE 1. *Leo Africanus*, written by Amin Maalouf, translated by Peter Sluglett

Leo Africanus, translated into English by Peter Sluglett, was published as *Leo the African* for the UK edition in 1988 and *Leo Africanus* for the US edition in 1992. Although originally written in French, the gist of the travel novel is about Arab culture. Therefore, this novel is categorised under Arab literature for this study. The narrative structure of *Leo Africanus* consists of approximately 60% narrative and 40% dialogue (Mohamad Bohari, 2018). The story primarily unfolds through a first-person narrator, with Leo as the active participant, but there are instances where the narrator switches to a first-person observer in the dialogue. This shift in perspective can capture the reader's attention, although it may occasionally be confusing due to the changing perspectives.

Maalouf structured the novel *Leo Africanus* in a chronological manner, dividing its 40 sub-chapters into four main chapters that correspond to significant cities in Leo's life: "The Book of Granada," "The Book of Fez," "The Book of Cairo," and "The Book of Rome." The novel takes on a biographical tone as it begins with Leo's childhood in Granada, then follows his journey to Fez, his exile in Cairo, and finally, his captivity in Rome. In essence, the novel portrays the quest of a man who is constantly on the move but ultimately becomes a captive, always yearning to return to his roots. Throughout his travels, Leo undergoes personal growth and gains wisdom from his experiences. While Maalouf focuses primarily on Leo's time in Granada, Fez, and Cairo, the chapter set in Rome, despite being a smaller portion of the novel, serves as the climactic point where Leo's period of captivity plays a crucial role in his intellectual and emotional development. It is evident that the historical figure Leo Africanus and his book, *Description of Africa*, have received more extensive scholarly attention compared to the novel *Leo Africanus*. Various studies have explored different aspects of the novel, shedding light on its themes and concepts. For example, Johae (2001) examines the novel's motif of travel and explores binary themes such as home and destination. Doshi (2013) delves into the concept of the Mediterranean as depicted in

the novel, which aligns with the categorisation of the novel under Arab Literature despite it being written in French. In conclusion, Amin Maalouf's *Leo Africanus* stands as a rich tapestry of identity, cultural encounters, and historical imagination. Maalouf's masterful storytelling not only introduces readers to the enigmatic figure of Leo Africanus but also provokes contemplation on the fluid nature of identities and the profound impact of cross-cultural encounters in shaping the course of history.

PANGLIMA AWANG, THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

Panglima Awang, also known as Commander Awang, is a figure of ambiguity in Malay history during the sixteenth century. He is often associated with being the first world circumnavigator, a feat that is usually attributed to his owner, Ferdinand Magellan. It is believed that Magellan died on an island before completing the mission to prove the roundness of the world, and Awang continued the expedition, eventually returning to his homeland.

The first novel written about Panglima Awang portrays him under that name. However, his real name remains unknown, and he has been attributed to other names, such as Henry the Black and Enrique of Malacca, suggesting the possibility of his baptism. Due to the scarcity of historical records mentioning him, confirming the authenticity of this legendary figure becomes more challenging. Nevertheless, Panglima Awang has gained recognition and is widely known as such, particularly among Malaysians. While he did not leave behind any written works, there are references to him in historical documents, albeit with varying names. According to the housekeeper of what is believed to be Awang's house in Kuala Sungai Baru, Malacca, his grave is located in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan (Talib Samat, 2015a, 2015b). These details add to the enigmatic nature surrounding the figure of Panglima Awang.

It is interesting to note that there has been a growing interest in Panglima Awang among Malaysians, particularly in the 21st century. To commemorate his probable achievement and further explore his historical significance, the government of Malacca sponsored a research initiative conducted by a group of experts. The outcome of this research was the publication of a coffee table book in 2010, titled '*Panglima Awang/Enrique Melaka: Melayu Pertama Mengelilingi Dunia*' in Malay, which translates to '*Panglima Awang/Enrique of Malacca: The First Malay World Circumnavigator*' (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi et al., 2010). The book presents evidence from historical documents and events to support the theory surrounding Panglima Awang's accomplishments. However, despite these efforts, his recognition and acceptance as the first Malay world circumnavigator have not gained worldwide acknowledgement. The publication of the book demonstrates the continued interest and efforts to delve deeper into the story of Panglima Awang and shed light on his potential role in history. It serves as a significant contribution to the understanding and exploration of this enigmatic figure, specifically within the context of Malaysian history and cultural heritage.

It is fascinating to see the continuous interest and inspiration that Panglima Awang has evoked among Malaysian novelists and creative artists. The special seminar held at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in Malaysia in 2015 reflected the significance of Awang as both a historical figure and a character in novels. In conjunction with the seminar, a book was published that included reports of visits to Awang's assumed house, an analysis of related novels, and a collection of 158 poems dedicated to him.

Awang's legend and story have served as a source of inspiration for various novels written by Malaysian authors. Some notable works include "*Enrique Mengundang Jauh*" by H.M. Tuah Iskandar (2003), "*Aku Penyudah Tugas Kpt. F. Magellan dan Laksamana Hang Tuah*" by Zain

alJohan (2012), "*Panglima Awang Penguasa Lima Lautan*" by Rosli Mohd Sah (2014), and "*Awang Kembara Mengelilingi Dunia*" by Abdul Settar (2016). However, the most well-known and pioneering novel about Awang is "*Panglima Awang*" by Harun Aminurrashid, written in 1957. This novel has not only inspired other creative works but has also become an important reference for scholars in various fields. It even became a school textbook in Malaysia during the 1960s, highlighting its cultural significance.

The ongoing creative projects, such as the theatre performance held at Auditorium Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur in September 2016, demonstrate the enduring appeal and exploration of Awang's story in different artistic forms. These endeavours contribute to keeping the legend of Panglima Awang alive and further, deepen the understanding and appreciation of his historical and fictional representation in Malaysian culture.

THE TRAVEL NOVEL PANGLIMA AWANG BY HARUN AMINURRASHID

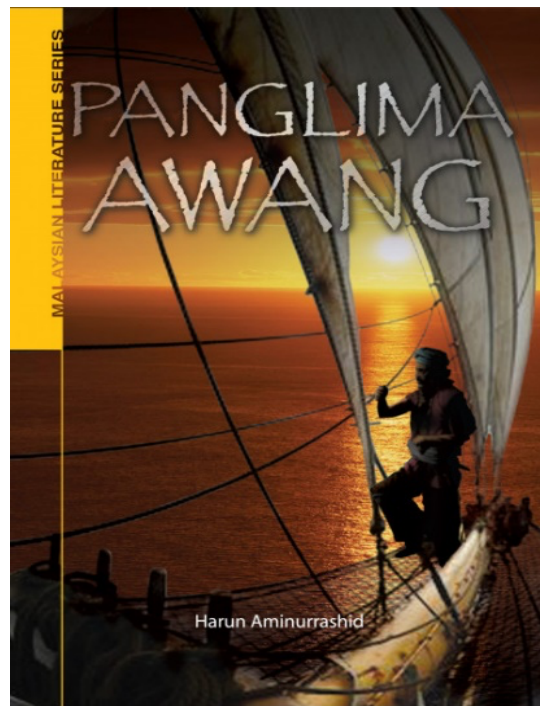


FIGURE 2. *Panglima Awang*, written by Harun Aminurrashid, translated by David Nicholas Bakwell

INTRODUCTION

The English translation of *Panglima Awang* by David Nicholas Bakwell in 2011, published by the Malaysian National Institute of Translation (ITNM), provides accessibility to a wider audience and facilitates the appreciation of Awang's story beyond the Malay-speaking readership. The novel is predominantly narrative-driven, comprising approximately 70% narrative and 30% dialogue (Mohamad Bohari, 2018). It employs a third-person omniscient perspective, focusing on Awang as the central character.

Harun Aminurrashid, the author of *Panglima Awang*, was inspired to write the novel after encountering news articles that suggested a Malay captive might have been the true first person to circumnavigate the globe, overshadowed by Ferdinand Magellan (Mohamad Bohari, 2018). With limited historical information available, Harun relied on his imagination to craft a captivating tale of a Malay captive traveller who achieves a remarkable feat in world exploration. Harun deliberately chose the name "Panglima Awang" for the protagonist, as it best captures the essence of a brave young Malay man and reflects the protagonist's Malay identity.

Through the novel, Harun aims to highlight the significance and potential contributions of Malaysians in world history while also emphasising the bravery and resilience of the Malay character. Panglima Awang stands as a symbol of exploration, determination, and the capability of individuals to transcend societal constraints and achieve greatness (Aminurrashid, 1958).

The *Panglima Awang* novel portrays the dramatic events that unfold during the Portuguese attack on Malacca. Awang, displaying his courage and loyalty, valiantly defends his homeland against the invaders. However, his efforts are eventually overcome, and he is captured by Alfonso de Albuquerque, a Portuguese commander. Awang's life takes a new turn when he is purchased by the gentler Portuguese officer, Magellan, who includes him as part of his crew for their upcoming voyages. Over time, the relationship between owner and captive evolves into a strong bond of brotherhood as Awang and Magellan navigate the challenges and dangers of their journeys together. The novel also explores the romantic elements of the story, with Awang's separation from his fiancée, Tun Gayah, adding emotional depth to his character. Additionally, an unexpected romance blossoms between Awang and Mariam, a Western lady, during his time as a captive. As the expedition to prove the world is round progresses, a tragic event occurs when Magellan is killed in a confrontation with the natives of Hambunan Island. This event leaves Awang with the responsibility of continuing the mission that Magellan had set out to accomplish. With determination and resilience, Awang completes the circumnavigation of the globe, returning triumphantly to his homeland. The novel concludes with Awang's joyous reunion with Tun Gayah, as they are finally able to marry and continue their joint effort to resist the colonisers, becoming a symbol of resilience and defiance against the oppressors. Overall, *Panglima Awang* offers a captivating narrative that combines historical events with personal journeys, love stories, and the spirit of resistance, showcasing the strength and determination of its characters in the face of adversity.

Researchers have approached the study of *Panglima Awang* from diverse angles, particularly with a historical focus. Shafei (2006) has examined the intertextuality of historical sources in the novel, suggesting that it offers a fresh viewpoint on the history of Malacca. In contrast, Hooker (1999) has analysed the literary and social transformations within *Panglima Awang*, interpreting it as a work that provides radical criticism applicable to contemporary society despite its 16th-century setting. On a related note, Koster (2009) has explored the theme of colonialism in the novel by investigating the concepts of citizenship, nationalism, and patriotism. Ultimately, the travel novels *Panglima Awang* and *Leo Africanus* share similarities, particularly in their portrayal of protagonists who are captive travellers in the sixteenth century. Despite their unique cultural contexts—Malay and Arab, respectively—both offer intriguing opportunities for comparing the theme of religious tolerance within captivity by applying Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and dialogism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism encompasses more than just literal dialogues; it extends to the inclusion of multiple voices and opinions within a narrative. This concept is not restricted to actual conversations but embraces the recognition and incorporation of diverse perspectives, meanings, and expressions. By acknowledging the presence of multiple voices and the interplay of heteroglossia, Bakhtin's theory allows for a deeper understanding of how narratives incorporate and represent a range of viewpoints.

According to Bakhtin (1981) in *The Dialogic Imagination*, heteroglossia, when integrated into a novel in various forms, represents the speech of one person in the language and voice of another, allowing the author to express their intentions indirectly. This type of discourse creates a unique double-voiced narrative, simultaneously serving the immediate intentions of the speaking character and the refracted intentions of the author. Within this discourse, two voices, meanings, and expressions coexist in a dialogical relationship, much like two participants in a conversation who are aware of each other. Double-voiced discourse is inherently dialogised, characterised by internal dialogue. Examples of this include comic, ironic, or parodic discourse, refracted discourse by a narrator, discourse refracted through a character's language, and even the discourse of an entire incorporated genre. These discourses are marked by a duality of voices and internal dialogue, representing a concentrated exchange between two perspectives, worldviews, and languages.

The recognition and exploration of heteroglossia and double-voicedness are essential in uncovering the overt and covert expressions that intersect among the author, the characters, and the intended audience within the narrative. These concepts serve as valuable tools in understanding the dynamic relationship between captivity and freedom, whether conveyed through the characters, narrative style, or tone. They enable the identification of how the layered voices engage in a dialogue pertaining to either captivity or freedom. Bakhtin suggests that dialogism manifests through hybridisations and the interplay of languages and genuine dialogues. This paper will examine the heteroglossia factors and elements that contribute to dialogism in relation to the notion of religious tolerance in captivity. If the dialogic process is disrupted by elements of monologism, it indicates a shift towards the opposing interpretation.

ANALYSIS

Upon reaching infidel territories, Muslim captives were often confronted with a decision: they could either adhere to their original faith or convert to Christianity. However, this choice was typically accompanied by pressure, and the outcomes varied depending on the specific region. In the context of religious matters, Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia offers insights into how conflicting and harmonious religious discourses interact and transform within the narratives. *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* explore the theme of religious tolerance within captivity through two central ideas: religious diversity and religious concealment. By considering these travel novels as heteroglot space, this study aims to demonstrate the existence of dialogical religious discourses within the texts, specifically between Islam and Christianity.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Since the early days of Islam, Muslim scholars have studied Judaism and Christianity, seeing commonalities between the two religions. Along with pre-Islamic polytheism, these religions were significant in Arabia's religious landscape. Muslims demonstrated mutual kindness, camaraderie, and a preference for reconciliation, peace, and amity during Prophet Muhammad's leadership. Freedom to practice one's faith, social justice, equality, fraternity, and human dignity became normative after the Prophet's installation (Muhammad Zia-Ul-Haq, 2010).

According to Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (2008), Islam is a unique universal religion that acknowledges the legitimacy of other religions, reflecting its worldview. Its interactions with other religions are based on its perspective of God, human reality, and world religious history. Muslims exhibit positive attitudes towards various religions when coexisting in common settings. Islam, like other major religions, is characterised by a historical and metahistorical aspect, as well as a surface and a depth dimension, and a religion's fundamental teachings can legitimately change in response to various historical situations (Syed Vahiduddin, 1990).

Both *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* advocate tolerance towards religious diversity, showcasing the frequent intertwining of religious beliefs and practices. Although the protagonists are initially Muslims, the novels exhibit a tolerant attitude towards Christianity throughout the plot, as evidenced by positive relationships with Christians, discussions about faith, and scenes set in churches. Notably, *Leo Africanus* delves even further into religious dialogism by incorporating elements of the Jewish faith alongside Islam and Christianity. It is important to note that this portrayal does not endorse abandoning one's personal religious choice but instead encourages openness towards other religions and discourages rigid fanaticism.

On the other hand, Koster (2009) holds a contrasting perspective regarding the dialogical engagement with Christianity in *Panglima Awang*, suggesting that it serves as a means to entice Malays away from Islam. According to Koster, this phenomenon represents a "danger of ethical colonialism" that poses a potential threat to the Muslim identity of Malays. One possible rationale for his argument is the portrayal of Christians exerting dominance over Muslims in the novel. Although this viewpoint may appear extreme, it is supported by compelling evidence, such as:

Albuquerque's second task after colonisation was to spread Christianity, and he did this on a grand scale by bringing in priests from Goa and building churches in Melaka. Captives were given two choices; those who were willing to embrace Christianity were freed and ordered to follow the instructions of the Portuguese priests, while the women who were not keen on religious practices were taken by the Portuguese as mistresses. Several mandatory laws were issued by the Portuguese, among them laws requiring forced labour. Any of the prisoners who were stubborn and refused to become Christian were forced to do heavy labour in the construction of a fortress, which the Portuguese were building on the coast near the town.

(Aminurrashid, 2011, pp. 41-42)

The aforementioned passage specifically highlights the active propagation of Christianity by the colonisers, employing various methods such as missionary work and constructing churches. As a result of physical captivity, Christianity appears to hold prominence through practices like forced baptism, prostitution, and labour. While this observation indeed supports the notion of Christianity's indoctrination through colonialism, it is not pervasive enough to pose a significant threat to other faiths. Although it is undeniable that Muslims are portrayed as being vulnerable, the protagonist, in contrast, remains unwavering in his own religious beliefs and is not easily swayed by alternative doctrines. Despite his unwavering loyalty, there is no harsh criticism of Christianity in the narrative; in fact, the story celebrates the diversity of religious perspectives. For instance:

Enrique's elderly friend, Philip, often taught Enrique how to read and write Portuguese, and sometimes he told stories from the Bible, though to Enrique, they were no more than fairy tales.

(Aminurrashid, 2011, p. 72)

In this instance, the dialogical engagement between different religious discourses is evident. Awang, also known as Enrique, displays tolerance towards Christianity by attentively listening to stories from the Bible and responding to them appropriately despite his adherence to Islam. This interaction showcases the presence of different religious voices within the narrative. Philip's religious discourse represents Christianity, while Enrique's response represents an alternate viewpoint from his Muslim perspective. This demonstrates the notion of religious tolerance in *Panglima Awang* that is reinforced by acts of respect towards religious diversity. For instance, when Awang is presented with a Bible as a gift, he does not dismiss it or show disregard:

He placed the Bible into a cloth bag since he was unable to read its fine lettering, let alone understand its high language. He was not sure what use the Bible was supposed to be to him, but he had often watched the old man reading it in his free time.

(Aminurrashid, 2011 p. 76)

Despite Awang's lack of familiarity with the Bible, his manner of handling it serves as an indication of his consideration for other faiths. Despite not adopting or discarding the Bible, Awang treats it with care and keeps it in a proper place. This act of respect reflects the idea of dialogism, where different religious discourses coexist and are acknowledged without the necessity of adopting or dismissing them. Awang's actions signify a tolerant attitude towards Christianity, promoting the idea of religious coexistence and understanding despite differences in beliefs and practices. This approach dispels any unwarranted concerns about the perceived threat of ethical colonialism, as the fiction clearly demonstrates religious devotion and respect. Koster's assertion can be seen as a form of paranoia towards other religions, which restricts the original purpose of religion, which is to foster peace and understanding among different belief systems. The inclusion of other religions in a narrative does not always imply hidden propaganda. Instead, it can be understood as a strategy to promote harmony and unity.

In opposition to the anticipated "danger" of interacting and coexisting with Christians, Awang exhibits a growing understanding and affection for his own religion. As he journeys alongside the Portuguese, Awang encounters numerous Moroccans, providing him with opportunities for interaction:

While he was there, Enrique made friends with several Moroccans. Once they discovered that he was not a Christian but a Muslim like they were, he was free to come and go and eat and drink in their homes. He also had the opportunity to study some of the deeper issues of Islam. Although he has called himself a Muslim since he was a child, he had not until now studied Islam properly. Enrique was thankful that he had a passable knowledge of Portuguese, and in Morocco, there were men who were fluent in the language, so it was easy to exchange ideas.

(Aminurrashid, 2011, pp. 77-78)

This quote illustrates religious dialogism through Awang's interactions with Moroccan Muslims who are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Awang's unfortunate experience of being physically imprisoned leads to his necessity to coexist with Christians. However, it is precisely this captivity that allows him to engage with individuals from diverse origins and backgrounds. By utilising the language he acquires from the Christians, he becomes

capable of bridging cultural gaps and accomplishes a deeper comprehension of his own religion. As his journey unfolds, he evolves into a passionate seeker of knowledge and a steadfast believer, illustrating the process of fortifying his faith.

It is important to recognise that *Panglima Awang* was deliberately written to commemorate Malaysia's Independence Day. As a result, the intended audience for the novel is not limited solely to the Malay community but also encompasses all Malaysian citizens who come from diverse racial backgrounds. Malaysia comprises three major ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians, each associated with different religious traditions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Therefore, perceiving the religious dialogism in *Panglima Awang* as a threat to readers would be irrelevant. Instead, it can be viewed as an encouragement to foster openness towards other religions. This resonates with the importance of religious tolerance as a significant factor in maintaining harmony among the diverse races during the early stages of Malaysian independence.

RELIGIOUS CONCEALMENT

Interestingly, both *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* utilise the sensitive topics of baptism and religious concealment during physical captivity as avenues for exploring and promoting religious tolerance. In *Panglima Awang*, the protagonist's conversion is not explicitly mentioned, but he is given a new name by Fernando or Enrique to masquerade as a Christian, thereby safeguarding himself from potential threats from his fellow shipmates. Although he is not coerced into conversion or compelled to engage in Christian practices, disguising his religious identity becomes an imposed necessity. On the other hand, in *Leo Africanus*, the protagonist faces baptism as a means of ensuring his safety, considering his vulnerable status as a captive who could be subjected to abuse, exile, or even execution. During the baptism ceremony, Leo grapples with an internal conflict, which is discernible in his introspective monologue:

Kneeling facing the altar, clad in a long white woollen cloak, I was bemused by the odour of incense and crushed by so many undeserved honours. None of the people assembled in this place were unaware that his 'Magian King' had been captured on a summer night by a pirate on a beach in Jerba and brought to Rome as a slave. Everything which was said about me and everything which was happening to me was so insane, immoderate, so grotesque! Wasn't I the victim of some bad dreams, some mirage? Wasn't I really in a mosque in Fez, Cairo or Timbuktu, as every Friday, my mind was affected by a long sleepless night? Suddenly, in the heart of my doubts, the voice of the Pope rose again, addressing me:

'And you, our well-beloved son John-Leo, whom Province has singled out among all men...'
John-Leo! Johannes Leo! Never had anyone in my family been called thus! Long after the end of the ceremony, I was still turning the letters and syllables over and over in my head and on my tongue, now in Latin, now in Italian. Leo. Leone. It is a curious habit which men have, thus, to give themselves the name of the wild beasts which terrify them, rarely those of the animals which are devoted to them. People want to be called wolves, but not dogs. Will it happen to me one day that I shall forget Hasan and look at myself in a mirror and say: 'Leo, you have shadows under your eyes?' To tame my new name, I soon arabized it; Johannes Leo became Yuhanna al-Asad. That is the signature which can be seen under the works which I have written at Rome and at Bologna. But regular visitors to the papal court, somewhat surprised by the belated birth of a brown and fuzzy Medici, immediately gave me the additional surname of Africanus, the African, to distinguish me from my saintly adoptive father.

(Maalouf, 1992, p. 297)

The protagonist's inner turmoil is vividly conveyed in the monologue despite the seemingly tranquil event of baptism. The descriptions employed, such as "bemused," "crushed," "insane," "immoderate," "grotesque," "bad dream," "mirage," and "doubts," are indicative of the conflicting

emotions experienced by the protagonist and are employed in dialogism to convey his silent rebellion. While the act of christening is typically regarded as an honour for a convert chosen by the Province, for Leo, it feels more like a sentence, leading to a loss of identity and a perpetual sense of otherness. The conversion deeply troubles his conscience and feels like a betrayal of his own integrity.

The act of abandoning Islam and embracing another religion, known as *murtad* in Arabic, is regarded as a grave sin in Islam. According to Islamic teachings, death is considered the punishment for apostasy, with few exceptions made for captives who are in peril, such as the protagonists in these narratives. The Holy Qur'an addresses this matter in Chapter al-Nahl, Verse 106, stating:

As for anyone who denies God after having once attained faith – and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but [only to] him who willingly opens up his heart to a denial of the truth-: upon all such [falls] God's condemnation, and tremendous suffering awaits them.

(Asad, 1984, p. 413)

This verse is relevant to captives who are compelled to adopt another religion due to the coercion of their captors. While genuine faith cannot be objectively assessed or measured, it is important not to hastily accuse or punish captives who have undergone conversion under such challenging circumstances as the Crypto-Muslims. Their situation is undeniably difficult, and it requires understanding and empathy rather than blind condemnation. Crypto-Muslims, also known as Crypto-Islam or secret Muslims, are individuals who outwardly adhere to a different religion or claim to have no religious affiliation while privately practising Islam in secrecy. This phenomenon has historically occurred in regions where Islam was suppressed or persecuted, for instance, the Moriscos who faced the dramatic struggle of conflicting identities both in Spain and in their adopted Islamic countries. They grappled with being Muslims while also considering themselves Spaniards, which became increasingly incompatible during the Renaissance era. Those who chose to remain in Spain had to integrate into a monolithic Catholic "Spanishness," suppressing their Islamic heritage (Lopez-Baralt, 1997).

Despite having to live a double life as both a Muslim and a Christian due to physical captivity, it is religion that aids the protagonist in preserving his sanity and resilience in life. For instance, during his initial experience as a prisoner in Rome, Leo articulates the sense of isolation that overwhelms him:

Since arriving in Rome, I often used to suffer from insomnia, and I eventually came to guess what it was that made the hours so oppressive; far worse than the absence of freedom or the absence of a woman was the absence of the muezzin. I had never previously lived thus, week after week, in a city where the call to prayer did not rise up, punctuating time, filling space, reassuring men and walls.

(Maalouf, 1992, p. 289)

As an individual with basic human needs such as sleep, mobility, and companionship, Leo Africanus demonstrates remarkable strength in coping with the limitations imposed during his imprisonment. However, the absence of the *adhan*, the Islamic call to worship, makes his captivity unbearable. In his most desperate moments, he must find alternative ways to preserve his sanity and maintain his rationality.

Darkness, cold, insomnia, despair, silence...In order not to succumb to madness, I resumed the habit of praying five times a day to the God of my childhood.

(Maalouf, 1992, p. 323)

Within the confines of his prison cell, Leo finds himself immersed in an atmosphere characterised by darkness, cold, insomnia, despair, and silence. These conditions, in a dialogical interplay, awaken within him a deep-seated yearning for the Divine. Leo, recognising his inherent dependence on God, rediscovers the practice of worship that had long been dormant. To stave off the looming threat of insanity brought on by the harshness of his imprisonment, he diligently performs the five daily prayers. In essence, religion becomes his anchor of survival and unwavering resolve, serving as a gateway to liberation despite the adversities he faces.

Another perspective to consider is that baptism and religious camouflage forcefully expose the protagonists to another religion, prompting them to become acquainted with, learn about, and be open to it. Interestingly, there may be only a slim or non-existent chance for religious receptiveness if they were to remain securely within the confines of their Muslim identity in their homeland. As characters who navigate a cross-religious identity, the protagonists of *Leo Africanus* and *Panglima Awang* offer compelling voices within the narrative, representing the perspectives of both an "insider" and an "outsider." In essence, the fictions appoint the captive travellers as agents tasked with breaking free from the confines of religious intolerance and fanaticism. They serve as catalysts for challenging the prison of rigid religious beliefs and promoting greater understanding and tolerance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both travel novels, *Leo Africanus* by Amin Maalouf and *Panglima Awang* by Harun Aminurrashid, depict religious tolerance in spite of the protagonists' captivity. Through the lens of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and dialogism, these novels showcase the coexistence and interaction of diverse religious discourses. *Leo Africanus* exemplifies religious dialogism by incorporating elements of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, promoting religious diversity and encouraging openness towards other faiths. Similarly, *Panglima Awang* portrays the protagonist's growing understanding and affection for Islam amidst interactions with Christians and fellow Muslim Moroccans, emphasising religious coexistence and respect.

Leo Africanus and *Panglima Awang* also explore and promote religious tolerance through the sensitive topics of baptism and religious concealment during physical captivity. In *Panglima Awang*, the protagonist disguises himself as a Christian to protect himself from potential threats, while in *Leo Africanus*, the protagonist faces baptism as a means of ensuring his safety as a captive. Both characters grapple with conflicting identities as Muslims living in a Christian-dominated society, leading to inner turmoil and a sense of otherness. Despite the challenges, their religious convictions remain strong, and they find solace in their faith during their difficult circumstances. In other words, religion becomes a healing platform in facing harsh circumstances. The narratives shed light on the complexities of religious coexistence and the importance of understanding and accepting different beliefs. By portraying the protagonists as agents of religious tolerance, the works challenge rigid religious beliefs and promote greater understanding and empathy.

The significance of studying religious tolerance in these novels lies in the exploration of how literature can foster understanding, respect, and harmony among diverse religious communities. Further research can delve deeper into the historical and cultural contexts of the novels to uncover how religious tolerance was perceived and practised during the respective time periods. Additionally, comparative analyses of other literary works from different regions and time periods could offer broader insights into the portrayal of religious tolerance across various cultures.

Furthermore, investigating the reception of these novels by contemporary readers and the impact of the themes of religious tolerance on their perceptions and attitudes towards religious diversity would be valuable. This research could shed light on how literature contributes to shaping societal attitudes and fostering interfaith understanding in the present day. Lastly, exploring the role of literature in promoting religious tolerance and dialogism in regions with contemporary religious conflicts or tensions could offer practical insights into how literature can serve as a tool for peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue. Understanding the potential impact of literary narratives on societal attitudes and policies towards religious diversity could lead to the development of more inclusive and harmonious societies.

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