Islamic Education in Malaysia

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1

INTRODUCTION

The millennial advent of a Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), pursued by the United States in the wake of devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 (hereafter referred to as "9/11"), cast gloom on the prospects of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue in an increasingly interdependent world. The United States' conduct of GWOT has been subjected to various censures by analysts for being over-militaristic, neglecting ideological warfare and uncritically aggregating disparate trends of terrorism.[1] However, in the latter years of George W. Bush's presidency (2001–2009), more enlightened policymakers and advisors have been able to recognize the utmost importance of winning the "battle of ideas" as an indispensable strategy towards achieving the aims of GWOT.[2] As a long-term measure, the sphere of education has emerged as the most crucial battleground in the endeavour to foster democratic development, political pluralism, religious tolerance and respect for human rights in the Muslim world. Newly elected President Barack Obama, appearing to reverse the alienating tendencies of his predecessor, has offered a helping hand in redressing the educational gap between the United States and Muslim societies.

> But all of us must recognise that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and in too many Muslim communities there remains underinvestment in these areas. I am emphasising such investments within my country. And while America in the past has focused on oil and gas in this part of the world, we now seek a broader engagement. On education, we will expand exchange programmes, and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America,

> while encouraging more Americans to study in Muslim communities. And we will match promising Muslim students with internships in America; invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world; and create a new online network, so a teenager in Kansas can communicate instantly with a teenager in Cairo.[3]

Many Western-based journalistic accounts locate the origins of the so-called Muslim insurgency against the West to the glaring disparity in material wealth, thus fuelling envy and discontent among frustrated urban Muslim youth who are vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist groups.[4] Within the Muslim world, Malaysia has often stood out as a bright spot amidst the generally dismal portrayal of the *ummah* (global Muslim community). For example, Singer mentions Malaysia's exceptional success "in embracing globalization",[5] and even President Obama acknowledges Kuala Lumpur's "astonishing progress".[6] Caution, however, has been drawn to the fact that Malaysians figure among the most wanted terrorists in Southeast Asia,[7] and that the Malaysian state's weak security controls has rendered it susceptible to exploitation by terrorist networks as a host for radical Islamist websites and front companies, a haven for regional terrorist suspects and a conduit for illegal trafficking of terrorist accoutrements.[8] Malaysia's embrace of modernization and an open economy has therefore also opened floodgates for the importation of transnational Islamist personnel and ideologies, including the radical variety even if they do not form the dominant strand.

In the long term, religious schools are said to play a major role in spreading Islamist ideology and maintaining radical nexuses. A study commissioned by the United States Air Force, noting the Malaysian government's concern that "Islamic schools have become a breeding ground for militant Islam", has urged the United States, other concerned countries and international institutions to advocate "reform of religious schools to ensure that these schools are able to provide a broad modern education" in the belief that such reform is "key to breaking the cycle of radicalized *madrassas* [sic] producing cannon fodder for radical and terrorist groups".[9] Although empirical studies of terrorists' educational backgrounds have cast doubt upon the veritability of the link between a specifically Islamic education and violent-prone religious extremism,

the case is peculiarly argued in the case of Southeast Asia, to the extent of pinpointing the so-called radical Islamic schools in Malaysia and Indonesia.[10] Recent reports produced by the International Crisis Group on southern Thailand and Indonesia also seemingly substantiate the proposition that secondary-level Islamic schools do provide a mainstay for militant Islamists.[11] In the case of Malaysia, disproportionate hue and cry has been raised over the role of two private religious schools, Al Tarbiyah Luqmanul Hakiem in Johore and Sekolah Menengah Arab Darul Anuar in Kelantan, both of which have been closed down, in serving as recruitment hubs for Jemaah Islamiah (JI, Islamic Congregation) and its alleged Malaysian proxy, the clandestine Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM, Mujahidin group of Malaysia).[12] The KMM, in turn, is said to harbour furtive connections with certain leaders of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS, Islamic Party of Malaysia),[13] a mainstream opposition party which today helms state governments of Kelantan and Kedah and holds executive council positions in Selangor through participation in the Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact) coalition.

The present author believes that there is inadequate literature on Islamic education in Malaysia written in the English language for international consumption, thus resulting in overblown accounts that are skewed towards security considerations. Unfortunately, these exaggerated accounts do carry weight within international policymaking circles, whose decisions may then impact on the national arena. Hence, when the Malaysian government in late 2002 announced the drastic withdrawal of automatic per capita grants to independent *sekolah agama rakyat* (SARs, or community religious schools), not a few from among PAS leaders and scholars related it to pressure exerted by the United States, Malaysia's largest trading partner.[14] The pretext given was the persistent failure of SARs to translate financial assistance into good examination results, which were in turn related to low-quality teachers, infrastructure and teachers. SARs were accused of benefiting from public coffers while steadfastly refusing to cede authority to the state. More important, however, were allegations that SARs had become a breeding ground for terrorism, as portrayed by the disproportionate numbers of SAR graduates among the leadership of recently unravelled militant cells. SAR teachers

were accused of encouraging hatred of the government and inculcating militant political tendencies among their students. The abrupt draining of funds severely affected SARs' already unstable finances, leading to closures and dwindling numbers of staff and students. As most SARs were believed to come under PAS's patronage, albeit unofficially through individual affiliation of SARs' headmasters and members of SARs' governing boards to PAS, the government clearly had a political motive in attempting to absorb them into the official Islamic education system or have them registered as full-blown *sekolah agama swasta* (SASs, or private religious schools) under the 1996 Education Act.[15]

This study is a modest attempt to redress the imbalance found in writings that deal with Islamic education in Malaysia in the GWOT era. It aims to shed light on the variety of forms, patterns and evolutionary trends of Islamic education since Islam set foot on Malaysian soil. As a measure of difference, it utilizes paradigms considered autochthonous to the Islamic intellectual tradition and vernacular sources that appeared to have eluded foreign-based studies of Islamic education in Southeast Asia. It seeks to provide an overview of Islamic education in Malaysia by dissecting the phenomenon into constituent parts without neglecting the existence since bygone days of threads that justify looking at it from an approach that emphasizes historical continuity. A more nuanced picture of Islamic education in Malaysia will hopefully emerge from the present research.

Notes

1. Cf. David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28(4), 597–617 (2005); Barry Desker and Arabinda Acharya, "Countering the Global Islamist Terrorist Threat", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, XVIII(1), 59–83 (2006).
2. Hady Amr and P. W. Singer, "To Win the 'War on Terror', We Must First Win the 'War of Ideas': Here's How", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618(1), 212–222 (2008).
3. Full text: Barack Obama's Cairo speech, accessed on 2 September 2009 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt (posted on 4 June 2009).

4. Cf. Andrew Johnston, "Disparities of Wealth Are Seen as Fuel for Terrorism", *International Herald Tribune*, 20 December 2001; Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: The Globalized World In The Twenty-First Century*, London: Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 479–490.
5. Peter Warren Singer, "America, Islam, and the 9/11 War", *Current History*, Vol. 105, Issue 695, pp. 415–422 (2006).
6. Full text: Barack Obama's Cairo speech, accessed on 2 September 2009 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt (posted on 4 June 2009).
7. A Malaysian, Noordin Mohammed Top, was thought to be responsible for a string of high-profile terrorist stunts including the July 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings before being gunned down in Solo in September 2009. His fellow Malaysian comrade, bomb maker Dr. Azahari Husin, was slain during a shootout with Indonesian security forces in East Java in November 2005. Both were allegedly linked to the regional Jemaah Islamiah (JI, Islamic Congregation) network.
8. Rohan Gunaratna, "Understanding Al Qaeda and its Network in Southeast Asia" in Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (Eds.), *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia,* Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and World Scientific, 2003, pp. 125–128; Zachary Abuza, "Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia: Exploring the Linkages" in Ramakrishna and Tan (Eds.), *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, pp. 135–143; Kumar Ramakrishna, "Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27(3), 349–354, 358–359 (2005).
9. Angel M. Rabasa, "Overview" in Angel M. Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Peter Chalk, C. Christine Fair, Theodore Karasik, Rollie Lal, Ian Lesser and David Thaler, *The Muslim World after 9/11,* Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004, p. 62.
10. S. Yunanto and Syahrul Hidayat, "Introduction, Problem Statement and Methodology" in S. Yunanto et al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia [Diversity, Problems and Strategy],* Jakarta: The RIDEP Institute–Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005, pp. 7–13; Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat", *The Washington Quarterly*, 29(2), 123 (2006); Justin Magouirk and Scott Atran, "Jemaah Islamiyah's radical madrassah networks", *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 1(1), 25–41 (2008).
11. *Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand*, Bangkok/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 22 June 2009; *Indonesia: Noordin Top's Support Base*, Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 27 August 2009, pp. 10–11.

12. Zachary Abuza, "Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia: Exploring the Linkages", pp. 136–137; Angel Rabasa, 'Islamic Education in Southeast Asia" in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani and Eric Brown (Eds.), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Volume 2*, Washington D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2005, pp. 103, 105.
13. Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Understanding and Responding to the Threats of Muslim Militant Groups in Malaysia" in Kamarulzaman Askandar (Ed.), *Understanding and Managing Militant Movements in Southeast Asia*, Penang: Southeast Asian Studies Conflict Network, 2005, pp. 39–42.
14. *MB dukacita cadangan ambil sekolah agama rakyat*, accessed on 4 September 2009 at http://www.tranungkite.net/lama/b07/harakah676.htm (posted on 3 July 2002); Wan Abdul Rahman Wan Ab. Latiff and Kamaruzzaman Yusoff, *Kontroversi Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR): Globalisasi, Sekularisasi dan Pendemokrasian Pendidikan*, paper presented at the Fourth International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC4), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia, 3–5 August 2004, pp. 3–5.
15. For several months in 2002–2003, the SAR issue received prominent and heated coverage in the mainstream media. See, for example, the official Minister of Education's explanation, "Jalan terbaik bagi SAR", *Utusan Malaysia*, 18 March 2003; former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's vituperative assault on SARs for propagating false Islamic teachings, as part of his speech to the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) General Assembly, "Mengenali ancaman terhadap bangsa, agama dan Negara", *Berita Harian*, 20 June 2003; Acting PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang's defence of SARs: "Hadi tolak tindakan banding SK dengan SAR", *Utusan Malaysia*, 18 March 2003; and reports of state absorption of SAR administration and students: "21,040 pelajar SAR sudah diserap ke sekolah kebangsaan", *Utusan Malaysia*, 29 April 2003; "SAR: Kerajaan tiada niat buruk", *Utusan Malaysia*, 25 November 2003.

2

ISLAMIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTORY FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

For analytical purposes, "Islamic education" in this study refers to an integrated process of imparting Islamic knowledge such that its recipients are equipped spiritually, intellectually and physically in order to execute their twin God-ordained roles, as His servants and vicegerents on earth.[1] The Arabic term *tarbiyyah* has been most commonly used to denote "education", but other terms such as *ta'lim* and *ta'dib* have also gained wide currency within Muslim educational circles.[2] *Ta'lim*, from the root word *'allama* (to teach), refers primarily to the teaching and learning process. *Tarbiyyah* connotes the processes of "bringing out", "developing", "nurturing", "fostering", "nourishing", "rearing" and "cherishing" as applied to objects under one's possession. Because of its generic qualities, argues renowned Malay-Muslim philosopher Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *tarbiyyah* is less preferable than *ta'dib* to elucidate an Islamic concept of education. To Al-Attas, education is "the instilling and inculcation of *adab* in man"; *adab* essentially indicating the disciplining of the mind and soul, acquisition of good qualities of the mind and soul, performance of correct as against erroneous and of right as against wrong action, and preservation from disgrace.[3] *Ta'dib*, therefore, reflects a moralistic outlook on life within a hierarchical structure of authority which recognizes the sublime position of God as "the Fountain of all true knowledge", to be followed by legitimate men of "intelligence, spiritual knowledge and virtue".[4] While *tarbiyyah* can be generalized to cover minerals, plants and animals, with the end of *tarbiyyah* being measurable in material and quantitative terms, *ta'dib* is specific to human, whose spiritual nature as made up of one's soul (*nafs*) and intellect (*aql*) are accountable for one's actions in fulfilling or neglecting one's individual

covenant with God.[5] As such accountability is valid throughout one's adult life so long as one is intellectually sound and physically mature. Islamic education is fundamentally a lifelong process in both formal and informal senses.[6]

Knowledge (*'ilm* in Arabic) itself is a sacred concept deriving from God, its Ultimate Giver. Epistemologically, knowledge has been defined as "arrival in/of the soul of/at the meaning of a thing or an object". "Meaning" (*ma'na* in Arabic) here refers to its authentic or correct version as "determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as projected by the Quranic conceptual system".[7] Hence, according to the Islamic worldview, the end of knowledge must necessarily be "the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence".[8] Since education necessarily involves the act of seeking knowledge, which makes up the content of education, the purpose of Islamic education can be summarized as "to produce a good man"; "good" here refers to the "justice" (*'adl* in Arabic) one accords oneself in acknowledging God as one's "Possessor, Creator, Sustainer, Cherisher, Provider".[9] "Knowledge" here is to be distinguished from "information", which may not necessarily be predicated on divinely ascertained truth and therefore incapable of raising its seeker to the level of a "good" man who benefits other mankind.[10] Al-Attas identifies "confusion and error in knowledge" as the "chief cause" of variegated dilemmas engulfing the *ummah*, giving rise to a leadership crisis in all Muslim nations.[11] As a result of Western-induced secularization of Muslim societies, Muslims have become bewildered as to the aim of education, which has assumed the secular role of merely producing "good citizens" for their nation-states.[12]

Beginning from informal transmission of material from the Quran, Islam's holy book, and *hadith*[13] collections—together constituting revealed knowledge, the Islamic educational process gradually expanded to encompass formal instruction of Quran- and *hadith*-derived branches of knowledge such as *tawhid* (unitarian theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tasawwuf* (sufism or spirituality), *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), *mustalah al-hadith* (*hadith* methodology), *tajwid* (science of Quranic recitation), and different aspects of Arabic grammar such as *nahu*, *saraf* and *balaghah*. These subjects constitute the traditional Islamic sciences, with *tawhid*,

fiqh and *tasawwuf* forming a tripartite *fard 'ain*[14] syllabus. As the body of knowledge further expanded, Muslim scholars mastered the worldly sciences, and religious instruction was broadened to incorporate *fard kifayah*[15] subjects such as *al-hisab* (mathematics), *al-handasah* (geometry), *mantiq* (logic), *al-tib* (medicine), *al-jighrafia* (geography), *al-badi'* (metaphor) and *al-bayan* (rhetoric). The classification of knowledge above is generally credited to the Persian scholar Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), whose religious thought has had tremendous impact in the Malay-Muslim world. The medieval sociologist Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) classified knowledge into *'ulum naqlyyiah* (revealed sciences) and *'ulum aqliyyah* (rational sciences), which correspond to the "perennial knowledge" and "acquired knowledge" categories proposed by Hasan Langgulung (d. 2008), an Indonesian educationist long based at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur. Ibn Khaldun included *ilmu kalam* (theology), *fiqh*, the Quran and *hadith* as *'ulum naqliyyah*, to which Langgulung adds *tasawwuf*, and subsumed mathematics, logic and language under *'ulum aqliyyah*, to which Langgulung adds engineering, medicine, agriculture and other disciplines which we identify today as modern sciences.[16] Among Muslim scholars, there is broad consensus that in any educational system which professes to be Islamic, it is knowledge of the *fard 'ain* and *'ulum naqliyyah* type that should be prioritized as forming the core of the curriculum.[17]

Islamic education started off via informal channels connecting the Prophet Muhammad with a close circle of relatives and companions in the holy city of Mecca. Since 610 AD, the Prophet had received divine revelations, which were relayed to this circle and later spread to the whole Arab Peninsula through trade networks. The methods utilized by the Prophet to disseminate his teachings included lecturing (*kulliyyah*), memorization, discussion (*muhadathah*), dialogue, debating (*mujadalah*), experiencing, travelling (*rihlah*) and study circle (*halaqah*).[18] As the Prophet was *ummiy* (unlettered), he conducted oral lessons of verses that were later compiled into the Quran, first from his home, then the house of Al-Arqam ibn Al-Arqam, then the *Masjid Nabawi* (Mosque of the Prophet) upon his migration to Medina in 622. Later, an adjacent veranda known as *al-Suffah* was constructed to host

formal lessons for delegations that visited the Prophet from the rest of the Arab Peninsula.[19] Writers and teachers were appointed from among the Prophet's companions to further disseminate the message. After the Prophet passed away, the first primary schools of Quranic teaching by the name of *kuttab* or *maktab* emerged, with Christians and Jews forming a high percentage of staff. Most early *kuttabs* were built near mosques, but as the number of pupils expanded, *kuttabs* were constructed inside the houses of teachers and later even in palaces of caliphs and homes of their ministers. Upon completion of lessons in the *kuttab*, the students proceeded to the mosque for secondary education.[20] Only during the period of Seljuk rule in Baghdad (1055–1194) was the first *madrasah* (school) built by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092). *Madrasahs* proliferated in Egypt under the rule of the legendary Saladin (d. 1193), who had earlier defeated the Fatimids, original founder of the famous Al-Azhar mosque-cum-university in 975. Later, *madrasahs* were to host complete educational complexes comprising mosques, libraries, hostels, lecture theatres, and housing quarters for teachers and other staff members.[21] Henceforth began formal Islamic education, which was not only state-subsidized but also granted *ijazah*—a certificate attesting the proficiency of a student in a particular discipline. This *ijazah* is essentially the precursor to the degree granted by the tertiary-level modern university, whose origins can be located to the Islamic *jami'ah*, in much the same way as the medieval European college was modelled on the Islamic *madrasah*.[22]

Notes

1. M. Kamal Hassan, "Some Dimensions of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia" in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (Eds.), *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986, p. 40; Zawawi Hj. Ahmad, "Pendidikan Islam: Ditinjau Daripada Sudut Prinsip, Konsep dan Matlamatnya" in Abd. Halim El-Muhammady (Ed.), *Pendidikan Islam: Peranannya Dalam Pembangunan Ummah*, Bangi: Persatuan Bekas Mahasiswa Islam Timur Tengah, 1994, pp. 13–34.
2. Cf. Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady, *Islam: Peribadi Tarbiah dan Institusi*, Kota Bharu: Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan, 1987, pp. 123–124; Anne Sofie Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and*

Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia, Lund: Lund Studies in History of Religions, 1994, p. 14; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995, pp. 5–8; Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2002, pp. 27–29; J. Mark Halstead, "An Islamic concept of education", *Comparative Education*, 40(4), 522 (2004).

3. Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education" in Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas (Ed.), *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton for King Abdulaziz University, 1979, pp. 36–37.
4. Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas, "Introduction' in Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas (Ed.), *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, p. 3.
5. Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", pp. 24–25; Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education,* Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1991, pp. 29–32.
6. Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, p. 34.
7. Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 17–18.
8. Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, p. 19.
9. Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, p. 23.
10. Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, *Budaya Ilmu: Konsep, Prasyarat dan Pelaksanaan di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Nurin Enterprise, 1989, pp. 3–4.
11. Al-Attas, "Introduction", pp. 2–3; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 34–35.
12. Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", pp. 32–33.
13. A *hadith* refers to a saying or action of the Prophet Muhammad as reported by any of his Companions or wives, and passed through successive Muslim generations until ultimately compiled by specialist scholars called *muhaddithin*. In orthodox Sunni Islam, the most authoritative books of *hadith* are the compilations of Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875), and followed by those of Abu Dawud (d. 888), Tirmidhi (d. 888), Nasa'i (d. 913) and Ibn Majah (d. 886). The *Sunnah*, a more wide-ranging term literally meaning "the Prophet's trodden path", is made up of

the *hadith*, the Prophet's practice emulated by his Companions and the Prophet's approval of the Companions' deeds.

14. *Fard 'ain* refers to doctrinal and ritual obligations which must be testified to and practised by every adult Muslim male and female in order to legitimize his or her Islamic faith.
15. *Fard kifayah* refers to collective obligations i.e. duties that must be observed by at least one unit of a group of believers so as to exempt the others.
16. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 45.
17. Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", pp. 40–42; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 40–42; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 47–48.
18. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 68.
19. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 26–27; Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 54–55.
20. M. A. Rauf, "Islamic Education", *Intisari*, 2(1), 14 (1965); Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 56–62.
21. Rauf, "Islamic Education", p. 15; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 33–34.
22. Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", p. 38; Syed Farid Alatas, *An Islamic Perspective on the Commitment to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies, 2008, pp. 28–32.

3

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Although the arrival of Islam on Malaysian shores predated the thirteenth-century milestone preferred by most historians,[1] Islamic education in Malaysia began in earnest during period of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca (1414–1511). As reported in the Malay Annals, Malacca ruler Parameswara's conversion to Islam under the name of Megat Iskandar Syah and subsequent marriage to the daughter of the Sultan of Pasai in 1414, had unleashed enthusiasm for Islamic learning among all sections of society.[2] Within a matter of few decades, Malacca outshone Samudra-Pasai as the hub of Islamic education in the Malay Archipelago. Sultans Mansur Syah (reigned 1456–1477) and Mahmud Syah (reigned 1488–1511) were known to have developed a penchant for sufi theosophy and great respect for the *ulama* (religious scholars, singular *'alim*), whom they frequently consulted either through envoys or direct visits to their homes.[3] As a measure of Malacca's significance, it has been said that the conversion of Java happened in Malacca, as two of the illustrious *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) deemed responsible for Islamizing Java, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri, were educated in Malacca under the tutelage of the Jeddah-hailed Sheikh Wali Lanang.[4] The Pulau Upih institution at which both saints studied is regarded as the prototype of the *pondok*[5] boarding schools that were to sprout across the archipelago in the coming centuries, known by various appellations such as the Persian-derived *langgar*, *pesantren* in Java, *penjentren* in Madura, *surau* in Minangkabau, and *meunasah*, *rangkang* and *balee* in Acheh. After the defeat of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511, the Acheh kingdom (1496–1650) took over Malacca's mantle as the regional centre of Islamic education. As far as the Malay states are concerned, *pondok* schools made

a comeback only in the early nineteenth century, i.e. after the downfall of Acheh, through the efforts of *ulama* from Patani in southern Thailand, although links with northern Sumatra were never severed.[6] Hence, the legacy of *pondok*-style education is mostly found in the northern states bordering Thailand, viz. Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu.

Until the Second World War, the *pondok* institution was the quintessence of Islamic education in Malaysia. *Pondoks* were established in all Malay states except Johore and the Straits Settlements.[7] The master or *tok guru* had *carte blanche* over his particular *pondok*, but similarities could be detected. *Pondok* schools were funded by the surrounding community and imposed no fees, but many students developed self-sufficiency out of their vocational and agricultural activities. Their length of stay varied according to the number of *kitabs* (religious books) they were mastering at the hands of the *tok guru*, assisted by mature students known as *Kepala Tala'ah* (perusal heads/tutors). Some students moved from *pondok* to *pondok*, depending on the list of *kitabs* on offer on a particular *pondok*'s syllabus and the fame of a *tok guru*, such that the duration of their education might extend to 10 years or even longer. The teaching and learning process was practically a whole day affair, with intermittent recesses devoted to co-curricular training such as farming and calligraphy. The pedagogy employed by *pondoks* was the *tadah kitab* or *buka kitab* (opening the book) method, by which a *tok guru* would sit at the centre of a semi-circle *halaqah* formed by his students when delivering lessons, all of them referring simultaneously to the same *kitab*. Memorization of lessons was strictly emphasized. The overall system was *umumi* (unstructured/general), in that students were neither divided according to age group nor was their progress monitored through examinations; rather, it was the *tok guru* who graduated his students, by way of a simple testimonial, upon satisfaction that he had mastered a subject. At their height, famous *pondoks* attracted students from as far as Sumatra and Cambodia.[8]

For *pondok* graduates who wished to pursue higher education in furtherance of their ambitions to become *ulama*, Mecca was their natural destination. Mecca at the end of the nineteenth century had a thriving Malay diaspora known as the *Jawi* community, boasting prolific

authors of household *kitabs* such as Daud Abdullah Al-Fatani (d. 1847), Nawawi Al-Bantani (d. 1897), Wan Ahmad Muhammad Zain Mustafa Al-Fatani (d. 1908), Muhammad Arshad Al-Banjari (d. 1912) and Ahmad Khatib Abdul Latif Al-Minangkabawi (d. 1916), the first non-Arab to be appointed *imam* (prayer leader) at *Masjid al-Haram* (Grand Mosque) on behalf of the Shafi'e school of *fiqh*. At *Masjid al-Haram*, teaching was conducted via the same *halaqah* system as in *pondoks*. So close was the relationship between Mecca and Malaya that contemporary travelling accounts unofficially designated Kelantan, the state with perhaps the strongest *pondok* tradition, as *Serambi Makkah* (forecourt of Mecca), a nomenclature hitherto applied only to Acheh. Many of these prominent Mecca-based *ulama* played the role of sufi sheikhs (spiritual mentors) as well. They would bequeath the *ijazah* (right) to teach their particular *tariqahs* (sufi orders) to favoured *Jawi* students, who would then spread such spiritual teachings in Malaya in their simultaneous capacities as *khalifah* (vice-gerent) of a *tariqah* and *ulama* who founded *pondoks* which functioned also as sufi *zawwiyyahs* or *khanqahs* (hospices or hermitages).[9]

It was only in the 1920s that the flow of Malay students shifted in large numbers to Al-Azhar in Cairo, influenced by two developments: first, the advent of the steamship as a mode of transportation plying the Suez Canal route; and second, uncertainties created by the *Wahhabi* ascendancy in Mecca following its capture by Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud in 1924 and its subsequent absorption into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, proclaimed in 1932.[10] Although Saudi dominion was generally received with equanimity, the militant excesses displayed by *Wahhabi* warriors in endeavouring to cleanse the Islamic faith, for example by levelling the gravestones of deceased Prophet Muhammad's family members and companions, did alienate the more educated sections of the Malay community in Hijaz.[11]

Al-Azhar played a leading role in Malay students' political socialization and informal education, such that Malay rulers expressed anxiety over the students' exposure to radical nationalist ideas as a consequence of mingling with other nationalities.[12] As a contemporary student famously remarked, "In Mecca one could study religion only; in Cairo,

politics as well."[13] Malay and Indonesian students never saw themselves as belonging to separate ethnic nationalities, and organized themselves into a single association.[14] Collaborating with Indonesian anti-colonial activists such as Djanan Thaib, Muchtar Lutfi, Iljas Ja'kub and Mahmud Junus, the Malay students launched two politically aggressive journals, *Seruan Azhar* (Call of Al-Azhar) (1925–28) and *Pilehan Timor* (Choice of the East) (1927–28). Free from censorship regulations, these periodicals freely indulged in topics that were taboo in Malaya, focusing on Pan-Islamism, Pan-Malayism (*Indonesia-Raya/Melayu-Raya*) and anti-colonial nationalism.[15] Despite recurrent financial constraints, both *Seruan Azhar* and *Pilehan Timor* enjoyed wide subscriptions and unrestricted circulation throughout Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies.[16]

Upon returning to Malaya, this new generation of Middle Eastern graduates joined forces with the *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) movement helmed by the Arab-Malay community. Through intermarriage, business enterprise, charitable deeds and the command of Arabic and religious knowledge, these Arabs had gained *entrée* into Malay society and won admiration from local Malays.[17] Together with the *Jawi Peranakan*—locally born Indian Muslims—they started a flurry of publications that highlighted the material backwardness of the Malays in their homeland. Common religious affiliation enabled these Arabs and *Jawi Peranakan* to write as Malays and identify themselves with Malay problems.[18] Operating mainly from the Straits Settlements of Penang and Singapore, their works escaped the censorship imposed in the Malay states by the Islamic officialdom under British auspices. Through their journalistic efforts, the reformist ethos penetrated Malay society. Four *Kaum Muda* proponents were especially prominent, viz. Sayyid Sheikh Ahmad Al-Hadi (d. 1934), Sheikh Mohd. Tahir Jalaluddin Al-Azhari (d. 1956), Haji Abbas Mohd. Taha (d. 1946) and Sheikh Mohd. Salim Al-Kalali.[19] All had been influenced by, and were in close contact with, the *Al-Manar* (The Beacon) circle in Cairo,[20] and through the periodical *Al-Imam* (1906–08), modelled on the Arabic newspapers *Al-Manar* and *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* (*The Indissoluble Link*), they disseminated their ideas.[21] Instead of calling for a political overthrow of the colonial government, the *Kaum Muda*'s

prescribed panacea was education, not traditional *pondok* education but a modern *madrasah* system, which combined both instructions in the fundamentals of Islam and Western-influenced educational methods and technology.[22] *Kaum Muda* was a largely urban phenomenon; it suffered from lack of appeal among the rural Malay masses. Under pressure from circumscription imposed by the *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction)-controlled religious bureaucracy, the *Kaum Muda* movement was left politically moribund by the 1940s.[23]

While its political reverberations were short-lived, the *Kaum Muda*'s educational impact was perennial. *Kaum Muda*'s expose of the woes engulfing the Malays awakened societal elites as to the urgency of reform so as not to be surpassed economically and politically in their own homeland. *Pondoks*, whose leaderships were gradually taken over by the returning Middle Eastern graduates, responded to the new reformist wave by converting their *umumi* institutions into *madrasahs* adopting the *nizami* (structured) system, whereby students were demarcated according to proper classrooms based on age-groups, taught curricula which incorporated modern sciences alongside the traditional revealed sciences, and subjected to written examinations.[24] Enrolment was gradually opened to female students. Many of these *madrasahs* fiercely guarded their independence and were the alma mater of many anti-colonial fighters belonging to the leftist stream, which saw a peculiar intertwining between Islamic and Malay nationalist ideals. It is not surprising if some of them became havens for fugitives escaping the security crackdown on Islamic reformists in 1948, eventuating in the disbandment of the *Hizb al-Muslimin* (HM, Party of Muslims), the precursor of PAS, which arose out of a breakaway conference of UMNO *ulama* in 1951.[25] These independent *madrasahs* survived post-independence centralization of Malaysia's educational system by evolving into the SARs whose contentious position in recent years has been noted earlier. Malays were proud to have undergone independent education. As Osman Bakar testifies:

> Generally before the Second World War, the government school system was detached from the value system held by Malay society. The *pondok*, mosque and *surau* were the institutions which gave fulfilment to their lives, in all aspects of which Islam was dominant.[26]

Ironically, the apogee of the dearly held *pondok* system coincided with the British "forward movement" in the Malay states, which was closely related to the mid-century economic boom generated by a large-scale increase in tin mining. Differential education formed a cornerstone of British colonial policy. Capitalist penetration heralded secularization of the social order and stratification of Malay society. A landmark was achieved with the signing of the 1874 Anglo-Perak Pangkor Treaty—a model for subsequent British treaties with other Malay states, which specified that a British Resident's advice "must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom".[27] On the one hand, the British were content to leave the Islamically-oriented *pondok* education unimpaired. On the other hand, the British promoted Malay vernacular education. The Malays deeply distrusted the British intentions in founding Malay schools, which had dispensed with Islamic lessons and which they suspected were used as a front for propagating Christianity; besides, the real need of the Malay peasant was the labour of his children in the fields.[28] The British then realized that some form of Islamic education had to be somehow incorporated into the Malay school curriculum for it to attract Malay parents. They thus converted the scattered Quranic schools into elementary Malay schools, but Islamic elements were officially discriminated against and gradually weakened. For example, teachers of "academic" subjects were put on state payroll, but those of Islamic subjects were forced to rely on parental sponsorship.[29] On the counsel of colonial educationists,[30] Quranic lessons were relegated to the afternoon sessions, giving rise to the term *sekolah petang* (evening school).[31] In the teaching of the Malay language, the Roman alphabet (*rumi*) replaced the Arabic script (*jawi*).[32] Such measures effectively introduced educational dualism dividing the secular and religious streams, which was alien to the Malay-Muslim mindset. So recalcitrant were the Malay masses to the call to send their children to Malay schools that in some states, for instance Selangor in 1891, Malay parents had to be compelled by law.[33]

On the whole, the colonial trajectory of Malay education was extremely unambitious: to train "the sons of Malay fishermen to become better fishermen and the sons of Malay farmers better farmers".[34] British

colonial educationists never intended that Malay education be a vehicle for the inculcation of reformist ideas, which might predictably pose problems for future intellectual subjugation; hence, the emphasis on "practical" aspects of education.[35] Notwithstanding the benefits to be gained by Malay students in terms of improving literacy and arithmetic skills, Malay vernacular curriculum, by perpetuating colonial-defined categories and knowledge paradigms, served as a tool of indoctrination. For instance, in transmitting knowledge of Malaysian history and geography through textbooks authored by British colonial administrators, the colonial authorities had depicted Islam as far from having a definitive role in moulding the Malays as a distinctive ethnic group and nation.[36] What took place in fact was a colonial invasion of local epistemological space via a set of "investigative modalities", to use Shamsul's terms,[37] with such devastating impact that it is still felt today in both the scholarly realm and practical politics. The present author cannot but disagree with Yegar's insistence that the British "stimulated and strengthened" religious education, and with his ascription of Malay educational backwardness to their "indifference to government-sponsored secular schools".[38] For Malays who adamantly chose to remain in the religious stream of education, protecting the Islamic identity and worldview of their progeny was of greater value than any of the benefits colonial education could seemingly offer.

It had always been official policy that Malay-medium education be of lower quality than English-medium education, which was afforded only to the offspring of the Malay royalty and aristocracy, and symbolized at the highest level by the establishment in 1905 of the Eton-like Malay College of Kuala Kangsar (MCKK). The purpose of MCKK was to essentially prepare upper-class Malays for loyal service in the colonial administration, and enrolment was later opened for Malays of "lesser birth".[39] For these privileged scions of Malay nobility, acceptance of the British as a benevolent protector of the Malays as indigenous peoples of Malaya was more forthcoming. This was amply demonstrated during the First World War. When Britain and Turkey fought on opposing sides, the Malay ruling establishment expressed open support for the British, to the extent of organizing public prayers to aid its war effort.[40] As the

country moved towards independence, UMNO, the party of British-educated Malay ruling elites, obtained the leadership of the Malay community by default, or more precisely, by a tacit collusion with the British authorities,[41] who embarked on a witch-hunt of Malay nationalists of leftist and Islamic persuasions. Intellectually and politically, this was to the grave disadvantage of Malay society, for, as Khoo Kay Kim concludes:

> … throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, the dynamic elements in the Malay society were to be found not so much among the English-educated intelligentsia but among the products of religious schools, Malay private schools and even Government Malay schools.[42]

Notes

1. Cf. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Impact of Sufism on Muslims in Precolonial Malaysia: An Overview of Interpretations", *Islamic Studies*, 41(3), 469 (2002).
2. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 122, 127.
3. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 128–129.
4. Osman Bakar, "Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, London: SCM Press, 1991, pp. 266–267.
5. Derived from the Arabic *funduq*, meaning "a place of temporary residence". In Malay language, *pondok* literally means "hut". Traditional *pondok* schools conventionally had student boarding houses resembling huts built around or near the residence of the *tuan guru* or *tok guru*, as the master is known. See William R. Roff, "*Pondoks*, *Madrasahs* and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia", *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 11(1), 7 (2004).
6. Abdullah Ishak, "Pengajian Pondok dan Kesannya Terhadap Masyarakat di Malaysia" in Abd. Halim El-Muhammady (Ed.), *Pendidikan Islam: Peranannya Dalam Pembangunan Ummah*, pp. 159–160; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 189–191; Roff, "*Pondoks*, *Madrasahs* and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia", pp. 6–7.
7. Rauf, "Islamic Education", p. 22.

8. For details on the *pondok* educational system, see Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, "The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan" in *Tamadun Islam di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980, pp. 192–194; Abdullah Ishak, "Pengajian Pondok dan Kesannya Terhadap Masyarakat di Malaysia", pp. 161–167; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 197–218; Roff, "*Pondoks*, *Madrasahs* and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia", pp. 7–9.
9. For information on the Malaya-Mecca nexus during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Mohammad Redzuan Othman, "The Role of Makka-educated Malays in the Development of Early Islamic Scholarship and Education in Malaya", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9(2), 146–157 (1998); Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak and Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *The Malays in the Middle East: With a Bibliography of Malay Printed Works Published in the Middle East*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2000, chapters 1–2; Anthony H. Johns, "Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism", *Southeast Asian Studies*, 31(1), 53–59 (1993).
10. *Wahhabism* originated from the puritanical teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), who struck a strategic alliance with a tribal leader, Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765), in 1744. It is notorious for its *la mazhabi* (anti-sectarian) doctrine enjoining repudiation of the four Sunni schools of *fiqh*, viz. Shafi'e, Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali; its excommunication of heretical Muslims; its zealous combat against purportedly idolatrous and innovative practices that had beset Muslims, many of whom were believed to have come under the undesirable influence of popular sufism. See Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*, London: Faber and Faber, 1982, pp. 159–169; K. H. Sirajuddin Abbas, *I'itiqad Ahlussunnah Wal-jamaah*, Kota Bharu: Pustaka Aman Press, 1978, pp. 309–332.
11. Literally meaning "the barrier", Hijaz encompasses the vast lengthy region area on the western coast of the Arab peninsula stretching south from the Gulf of Aqaba, separated from the African continent by the Red Sea. Its major cities are Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and Taif. Its forcible merger with Nejd by Ibn Saud in 1926 paved the way for the inauguration of the Saudi Arabian state. On the Malay reaction to the triumph of *Wahhabism*, see Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak and Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *The Malays in the Middle East*, pp. 6, 48.
12. William R. Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's", *Indonesia*, vol. 9 (1970), pp. 74–75, fn. 5.

13. Quoted in Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's", p. 74.
14. Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's", p. 73; Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak and Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *The Malays in the Middle East*, pp. 48–49.
15. Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1896–1941", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 1(1), 8–10 (1960); William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, pp. 87–89.
16. Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak and Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *The Malays in the Middle East*, pp. 64–66.
17. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 40–43.
18. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 47–49; Khoo Kay Kim, "Sino-Malaya Relations in Peninsular Malaysia before 1942", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 12(1), 95–96 (1981).
19. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 59–65.
20. The Egyptian Al-Manar circle was led by Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), former Rector of Al-Azhar University and Grand *Mufti* of Egypt, and his disciple Rashid Rida (d. 1935), both of whom were deeply influenced by the pan-Islamic ideals of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (d. 1897). In Malaya, the *Al-Manar* strand was to have the greatest and longest-lasting impact among contemporary reformist impulses; see Fred R. von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam: Interaction between Southeast Asia and the Middle East*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993, pp. 13–14; Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of *al-Manar*'s Reformism to the Malay Indonesian World: The Cases of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*", *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, 6(3), 79–81 (1999).
21. Azra, "The Transmission of *al-Manar*'s Reformism to the Malay Indonesian World", pp. 82–92; Anthony C. Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 137–145.
22. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 75–77.
23. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 79–81.
24. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 196; Roff, "*Pondoks*, *Madrasahs* and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia", pp. 10–13.
25. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Malay Anti-Colonialism in British Malaya: A Re-appraisal of Independence Fighters of Peninsular Malaysia", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 42(5), 382–391 (2007).

26. Quoted in Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 196.
27. Quoted in Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 155.
28. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 231; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 137.
29. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 138.
30. Some of the noteworthy figures were A. M. Skinner, first Inspector of Schools appointed in 1871; his successor R. J. Wilkinson, appointed in 1903; and R. O. Winstedt, Assistant Director of Education (Malay) 1916–21 and Director of Education in 1924–31.
31. Rauf, "Islamic Education", p. 20; Moshe Yegar, "The Development of Islamic Institutional Structure in Malaya, 1874–1941" in Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns (Eds.), *Islam in Asia (Vol. II: Southeast and East Asia)*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984, pp. 196–197.
32. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 231–232.
33. M. A. Rauf, *A Brief History of Islam With Special Reference to Malaya*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 97–98; Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society 1874–1920s", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 5(2), 184–185 (1974).
34. Quoted in Rauf, *A Brief History of Islam With Special Reference to Malaya*, p. 97; see also Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 141.
35. Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society 1874–1920s", p. 180.
36. Among the textbooks are R. J. Wilkinson's *A History of the Peninsular Malays, with Chapters on Perak and Selangor*; R. O. Winstedt's *Kitab Tawarikh Melayu* (A Book of Malay History) and *Ilmu Alam Melayu* (Geography of the Malay World); and Abdul Hadi Haji Hasan's *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (History of the Malay World). For an in-depth analysis of all four sources, see Soda Naoki, "The Malay World in Textbooks: The Transmission of Colonial Knowledge in British Malaya", *Southeast Asian Studies*, 39(2), 188–234 (2001).
37. Shamsul, A. B., "A History of an Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of 'Malayness' in Malaysia Reconsidered", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32(3), 359–361 (2001).
38. Yegar, "The Development of Islamic Institutional Structure in Malaya, 1874–1941", pp. 196–197.

39. Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 229.
40. von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam*, pp. 7–8.
41. Cf. T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 353.
42. Khoo Kay Kim, "Malay Society 1874–1920s", p. 197.

4

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

THE INDEPENDENCE AND POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

The position of Islam and the relative rights of non-Muslims were contentious issues during protracted constitutional negotiations involving the Reid Commission, the Malay sultans and UMNO-Malayan Chinese Association (MCA)-Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) Alliance, which had secured an overwhelming victory in the 1955 general elections.[1] The resultant Federal Constitution, unveiled upon the proclamation of independence on 31 August 1957, was a masterful compromise. The position of Islamic education is arguably safeguarded by Article 3(1): "Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation."[2] As the basic clause on religious freedom, Article 11 confers on every individual the right to profess, practise and propagate his religion, but the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among Muslims may be controlled or restricted by state law, or in respect of the Federal Territory, by federal law.[3] Thus, not only are non-Muslim missionary activities subject to strict regulation or even prohibition in the states, but Muslim missionaries must also obtain a *tauliah* (letter of authority) from state religious departments. Article 11 also authorizes all religious groups to manage their own religious affairs, to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes and to acquire, possess, hold and administer property in accordance with the law. Article 12 extends such religious freedom to the purview of education, but specifies only Islamic institutions as lawful for the Federation or state to establish, maintain and assist in establishing or maintaining.[4] The Federation or a state is also empowered to provide, or assist in providing, Islamic religious instruction and incur expenditure as may be necessary for the purpose.

Although education is placed under federal jurisdiction in its Ninth Schedule, the technical administration of Islam falls under the jurisdiction of states.[5] State rulers retain their positions as heads of the Islamic religion in their respective states, while the *Yang di Pertuan Agong* (monarch), elected as Head of Federation from among the nine state sultans every five years, continues to become head of Islam in his own state and assumes a similar role in Malacca and Penang, and later by a constitutional amendment, in the Federal Territory, Sabah and Sarawak. Ironically, the Federal Constitution does not oblige the various states to proclaim Islam as their official religion. Through a series of Administration of Muslim Law Enactments, the various states have instituted Councils of the Islamic Religion (Majlis Agama Islam) to aid and advise the sultans in their capacity as heads of the Islamic religion, Departments of Islamic Religious Affairs (Jabatan Agama Islam) to handle daily affairs of Muslims and *shari'ah* courts to adjudicate in Muslim matters.[6] On the whole, claims a legal expert, "the provision that Islam is the religion of the Federation has little significance".[7]

Constitutionally, Islam also plays a vital ethno-cultural function as a determinant of Malayness. Article 160(2) defines a "Malay", the prime indigenous group who benefits from their "special position" as entrenched in Article 153,[8] as "a person who professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom".[9] Such privileges include measures to accelerate Malay economic and educational progress, protection of Malay land reservations and preference in the recruitment for public service. Under the so-called "Bargain of 1957" or "social contract", the aforesaid privileges, together with provisions to ensure the positions of Islam as the official religion, of Malay sultans as heads of the various states and of Malay as the national language, were quid pro quos for non-Malay demands for relaxed conditions for citizenship, the continued use of the English language in official matters for 10 years and the preservation of the free market economy.[10]

On the eve of independence, the seminal Razak Report of 1956 recommended that religious instructions be provided at public expense in any school with no fewer than 15 Muslim pupils. Lessons in other religions were proposed as additional subjects, so long as the state was not finan-

cially liable for them, and no compulsion was exerted on pupils without the express permission from their parents. The Razak Report's proposals found concrete form in the 1957 Education Ordinance, which allotted two hours per week for Islamic lessons, which were to be delivered by teachers approved by the various states' religious authorities.[11] Although the 1957 Ordinance was a marked improvement from a previous 1952 Education Ordinance, in which only a cursory mention of religious lessons is found, it still failed to fully incorporate Islamic religious knowledge into the mainstream curriculum of government schools.[12] It was only with the publicizing of the Rahman Talib Report of 1960 and the consequent Education Act of 1961 that meaningful integration of Islamic education with the national educational system was tabled and accomplished. Thereafter, Islamic religious lessons were made a core part of the syllabi in both government primary and secondary schools.[13] Religious teachers were inducted into the educational administrative service. State governments and the Ministry of Education were assigned responsibilities for recruitment of the teachers in primary schools and secondary school respectively.[14] That the 1961 Education Act was a hallmark achievement in crystallizing the position of Islamic education in Malaysian schools is undeniable, but it also led to a parallel decline in enrolment in both state and private Islamic schools.[15] Malay parents obviously sought to derive maximum benefits from a national educational system that equipped their children with adequate qualifications and skills to compete in the expanding labour market, without necessarily discarding the obligation to prepare them with rudimentary Islamic knowledge necessary for them to lead the lives of good Muslims. The 1961 Act also brought about concomitant changes in the curricula of private *madrasahs* which, having apparently lost their raison d'être, were literally fighting for their survival. The time allocation for revealed religious sciences was reduced to make way for more slots for rational sciences often-termed "secular". Malay language replaced Arabic as the medium of instruction in all subjects except Arabic itself. Despite the widening of the *madrasahs*' syllabi, their constrained budget meant they were on the losing side vis-à-vis government schools as far as attracting highly qualified teachers and providing instructional facilities were concerned.[16]

The policy of gradual absorption of Islamic educational institutions and practice into a broad national educational system is consistent with the goals of Malaysia's educational policies, viz. to assist economic development, to achieve national unity and to foster ethnic integration by bridging the economic gap between different communal groups—a target accentuated by the May 1969 racial riots and the consequent enunciation of the affirmative action-oriented New Economic Policy (NEP, Dasar Ekonomi Baru) in 1971.[17] The NEP created an environment in which Islam was given greater prominence in the Malay community's rediscovery of their identity following persistent challenges to their cherished special position as enshrined in the Federal Constitution. Thus for example, the first-ever National Cultural Congress convened in 1971 accepted that as an integral component of Malay culture, Islam would automatically be an important element in shaping a Malaysian national culture, which was to be based upon indigenous culture but open to ancillary elements from other cultures.[18] In 1972, Prime Minister Tun Razak declared that fresh government actions in both domestic and international affairs had been guided by Islam, and that the NEP itself found guidance from the Quran.[19] Within the context of the Middle Eastern oil boom of the 1970s and ensuing rise of the political clout of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC),[20] Malaysia became a major recipient of oil-related aid distributed under the aegis of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB).[21] Improved bilateral ties resulted in the outpouring of investment into government-related Islamic projects from development funds of such countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya. Among the primary financial beneficiaries were government-sanctioned bodies such as the Islamic Welfare Association of Malaysia (PERKIM, or Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaysia) and the Regional Islamic Dakwah Council for Southeast Asia and Pacific (RISEAP)—both initiated by former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman.[22] However, funding for Islamic educational initiatives was especially conspicuous, culminating in the joint-sponsorship by Muslim countries of the IIUM, founded in 1983 and using English and Arabic as official languages of instruction. As an epitome of higher Islamic education, IIUM's "philosophy of unity of knowledge and integration of Islamic religious values in all branches

of knowledge" represented, according to its former rector, "a sharp break from the practice of dualism of 'religious' and 'secular' subjects".[23]

Given the co-terminal nature of Malayness and Islam within the framework of post-NEP reconstruction policies, it was perhaps inevitable that Islamic education would assume increasing importance as a gesture of the government's new resolve in affirming Malay hegemony. To coordinate federal efforts at systematizing Islamic education, a separate Religious Education Division (Bahagian Pelajaran Agama) was established within the Ministry of Education in 1973. In 1983, it was renamed the Islamic Education Division (BPI, or Bahagian Pendidikan Islam). In 1995, upon assuming the further responsibility of handling moral education in schools, BPI was upgraded into the Islamic and Moral Education Division (BPIM, or Bahagian Pendidikan Islam dan Moral). However, recent restructuring has seen the division reverting to its original position and name as BPI. In its various configurations over the years, BPI has spearheaded endeavours to exalt Islamic education to a respectable status within the broad spectrum of educational policy in Malaysia. At present, it is entrusted with the management of the Islamic educational policy and curriculum, the Arabic language policy and curriculum, the recruitment and in-service training of Islamic education and Arabic language teachers, *dakwah*[24] and leadership training for Islamic education staff and students, and with aiding and raising the standards of both national secondary religious schools (SMKA, or Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama) and government-assisted religious schools (SABK, or Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan).[25]

Overall, BPI is entrusted with the responsibility to monitor the integration of religious schools with the national educational system. A landmark achievement towards this aim was the federal government's taking over of 13 state secondary religious schools (SMAN, or *sekolah menengah agama negeri*) and SARs, all of which were duly converted into SMKAs which used a uniform syllabus called the Higher Islamic Knowledge Syllabus (Sukatan Pelajaran Pengetahuan Agama Islam Tinggi).[26] Until now, there are 55 SMKAs scattered throughout the country, including in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, with a total student enrolment of 38,394 (16,309 boys and 22,085 girls) studying in 1,384

classes.[27] SMKA students can presently choose to specialize in either one of the three available streams, viz. humanities/arts and religion, science and religion, and technical-vocational education and religion. All streams provide the choice of such core religious subjects as Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah education, Islamic *Shari'ah* education and Higher Arabic language.[28] These core subjects are also elective subjects in mainstream secondary education, which operates its own religious stream (*kelas aliran agama*) at selected schools.[29] In both kinds of government-sponsored religious education, the choice of subjects is deemed to be not exclusively religious and broad enough so as to equip students with adequate knowledge and confidence to face the occupational world while upholding Islamic values. Since 2000, students with potential for excellence in religious subjects are allowed to proceed to higher education via the Higher Religious Certificate of Malaysia (STAM, Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia), whose Arabic-medium curriculum has been streamlined with Ma'had Bu'uth al-Islamiah of Al Azhar University, Cairo. STAM offers a pathway to tertiary education in Islamic studies faculties in universities in Malaysia and abroad. STAM is also offered to students of SARs and SMANs, who are in the process of streamlining their syllabi to be in sync with STAM instead of the Malay-medium Higher Religious Certificate (STA, Sjil Tinggi Agama) examinations.[30]

Within mainstream primary and secondary education in national and vernacular national-type schools, Islamic subjects are featured as part of the curriculum on moral-cum-values education. It is claimed that their inclusion into the main curriculum reflects the colonial tradition of dichotomizing between secular and religious education; the latter manifesting itself in the form of lessons on "scripture" and "ethics" for Christian and non-Christian pupils respectively. Islamic religious knowledge was thus at the beginning known as the subject *Agama* (Religion) as taught to Muslim students, while civics as a subject was made mandatory upon their non-Muslim counterparts.[31] In the 1960s, the *Agama* syllabus for primary schools contained lessons in *aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), history of the Messengers of God, *akhlaq / budipekerti* (morals) and recitation of the Quran. At secondary schools, Muslim students were given classes on *fiqh*, *tawhid*, Islamic history, the Quran and *hadith*.[32]

For six years at primary level and five years at secondary level, Muslim pupils were given such doses of Islamic knowledge for two hours per week. From being an originally elective subject at secondary level, greater weightage was later given to *Agama* as a subject whose grade was considered for aggregation at the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM/MCE, Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) level[33] and also counted towards entry into teachers' training colleges.[34]

By the 1970s, there arose genuine concern among policymakers that the didactic and doctrinal approach employed in transmitting *Agama* lessons was producing students who relied on rote memorization to pass examinations but failed to truly understand and internalize the teachings.[35] The 1970s thus witnessed a shift from the content-based to a more practical approach of conducting the religious classes. In 1974, the transfer of authority over primary Islamic education from state governments to the federal government was virtually completed.[36] In 1976 the Ministry of Education directed headmasters of primary and fully aided secondary schools to provide prayer facilities within the school premises. They were also instructed to intensify Islamic co-curricular activities such as Islamic student societies, Quran recital classes, *nasyeed* (Islamic hymn) troupes and Islamic oratory competitions. In 1978, the Ministry established a *dakwah* unit whose officials were placed in all state education departments. Their task was to coordinate religious activities among school headmasters, religious teachers, Parent and Teachers Associations (PTAs) and Islamic student societies.[37] The *Agama* subject was subsequently renamed *Pendidikan Islam* (Islamic Education) to reflect the widening of its scope.[38] Training of Islamic education teachers was given a new lease of life by the founding of an Islamic Teachers Training College (MPI, or Maktab Perguruan Islam) in 1977, after a few months of embryonic existence as an Islamic education unit at the Special Knowledge Teachers Training College (Maktab Perguruan Ilmu Khas). The formation of MPI launched the momentum for the absorption of religious teachers into the federal administrative scheme—a process that culminated with the passing of a 1991 Education Act legitimizing the transfer of religious educators hitherto regulated by various states' Majlis Agama Islam.[39] In 2006, MPI was renamed the Islamic Teachers

Training Institute of Selangor (IPIS, or Institut Perguruan Islam Selangor), and later upgraded into the degree-granting Islamic Campus of the Institute of Teachers' Education of Malaysia (IPGM-KAMPIS, or Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Pendidikan Islam Selangor).[40]

Islamic education arrived at a watershed following the Cabinet Committee Report on Educational Policy of 1979. The Report criticized the lack of practical aspects in the delivery of Islamic lessons, the methodical weaknesses of Islamic educators, and the lack of supervision over the Islamic education subject.[41] The outcome of the committee's deliberations was a revamping of the curriculum, giving rise to the New Primary School Curriculum (KBSR1, or Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah, 1982), the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM, or Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, 1988) and the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (KBSR2, or Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah, 1994). KBSR2 was in essence an improved version of KBSR1, which had stressed the acquisition of three basic skills, viz. reading, writing and arithmetic within the context a child-centred curriculum.[42] KBSM is said to have been guided by resolutions of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977. KBSM seeks to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills and moral values.[43] Such a values-oriented education is supposed to run across the curriculum, being integrated into the teaching of all subjects. It endeavours to inculcate in the students' personality 16 core moral values, viz. cleanliness of body and mind, compassion and tolerance, cooperation, courage, moderation, diligence, freedom, gratitude, honesty, humility and modesty, justice, rationality, self-reliance, love, respect and public spiritedness. Under KBSM, all teachers became de facto moral education teachers.[44] Apart from this holistic emphasis, a new Moral Education subject for non-Muslim pupils was introduced to run parallel with the Islamic education subject taught to Muslim students. KBSM even attempted to dispense with the compartmentalization of knowledge based upon arts and science subjects, but, in 1993, reverted to offering science as a distinct discipline from primary level after a massive drop in the ratio of students opting for the sciences to those choosing non-science subjects for SPM examinations.[45] At present, at lower secondary level—for students aged 13 to 15—students may

choose Islamic education or Moral Education as one of their electives; the core subjects being Malay language, English language, Science, History, Geography and Mathematics. However, at higher secondary level—for students aged 16 to 17—Islamic education or Moral Education forms one of the compulsory subjects, besides Malay language, English language, Mathematics and History. In addition, the *Agama* stream is accepted as one of the three specialized streams in secondary education, the other two being the academic stream (science or arts) and the technical and vocational stream.[46] Since the 1980s, additional core subjects have been introduced to bolster secondary level Islamic education as a whole. Four of them, viz. Higher Arabic language, *Tasawwur* Islam, Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah education and Islamic *Shari'ah* education—all introduced in 1992—also serve as electives for students of the two non-*Agama* streams.[47]

On the one hand, the above concessions to Islamic education represented a concerted effort to transform the conception of Islamic education in Malaysia from being a mere subject within a generally secular curriculum to being the definitive philosophy undergirding the entire educational system. The point of reference for the former is the Malaysian nation-state, while for the latter, it should be the *ummah*.[48] The ambitions of the latter educational scheme are universal, as has been conceptualized by such scholars as Abul A'la al-Mawdudi (d. 1979) and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (d. 1986), whose "Islamization of knowledge" programme endeavoured a synthesis between the vast body of Islamic epistemological tradition and Western humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.[49] From within Malaysia, the strongest voice calling for an all-encompassing educational reform emanated from the distinguished professor Syed Naguib Al-Attas, a key speaker at the 1977 First World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca. This conference reflected the *ummah*'s earnest concern for "a return to the concept of integrative Islamic education as an alternative to secular education" that had beset post-colonial Muslim societies.[50] But for such a grandiose scheme to take effect, it had to penetrate political structures and interests of powers that be. The penetration took the form of adoption of such educational reforms as a cardinal plank of a broader Islamization agenda initiated by

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian Prime Minister (1981–2003). As Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir had previously helmed the 1979 Cabinet Committee Report on Educational Policy. The linkage between theoretical discourse and practical policy is here provided in the person of Anwar Ibrahim, former President of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia) who was co-opted into UMNO and the government in 1982, became Minister of Education in 1987 and Deputy Prime Minister in 1994, before being unceremoniously dismissed from all ruling party and government posts in 1998 after a dramatic fallout with Dr. Mahathir.[51]

Many observers have acknowledged the crucial role played by Anwar Ibrahim and ABIM, which he led from 1974 to 1982, in successfully pressuring, by way of official demands and exemplary initiatives, for formal educational reforms in a more Islamic direction during Dr. Mahathir's premiership.[52] As Education Minister in 1975, Dr. Mahathir had warmly accepted ABIM's memorandum on education for perusal by the cabinet committee entrusted with the task of reviewing the national education policy. According to one-time head of ABIM's bureau of education, Osman Bakar, a lot of the ideas underscoring the memorandum had been inspired by the thoughts of Syed Naguib Al-Attas.[53] Upon his ascendancy to the influential post of Minister of Education in 1987, Anwar Ibrahim embarked on an ambitious path of *reformasi pendidikan* (educational reformation). His programme revolved around seven issues, viz. the coining of a national philosophy of education, the role of the Malay language as the medium for acquiring knowledge at all levels, the emphasis on national unity, human resource development, democratization of access to quality education, the goal of a continual supply of productive labour to run alongside the National Agricultural Policy and the Main Industrial Plan, and the replacement of narrow-mindedness with intellectual tolerance or "globalization".[54] In the opinion of ABIM-affiliated educationist Sidek Baba, Anwar's educational reformation was the alter ego of the National Development Policy (NDP, or Dasar Pembangunan Nasional), which was enunciated in 1991 to replace the NEP towards accomplishing Dr. Mahathir's vision of transforming Malaysia into a "fully developed country along all the dimensions: economically, politi-

cally, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and culturally", albeit in its own mould, by the year 2020.[55] The most profound imprint left by Anwar was a National Philosophy of Education (FPN, or Falsafah Pendidikan Negara). Promulgated in 1988, the FPN formed the preamble to the 1996 Education Act and is still in use today. Pronounced by Osman Bakar as "in line with Islamic teachings" and "can no longer be treated as secular",[56] the FPN proclaims:

> Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of society and the nation at large.[57]

While the underlying philosophy behind the FPN is arguably Islamic, clear-cut mention of or reference to Islamic sources and categories was avoided so as to raise its general acceptance and applicability among Malaysia's multi-cultural, multi-religious society. A philosophical statement expounding a distinctively Islamic form of education was therefore released to bolster the position of Islamic education within the paradigm of the national educational system. The Ministry of Education-announced Islamic Philosophy of Education (FPI, Falsafah Pendidikan Islam) reads:

> Islamic Education is a continuous effort to deliver knowledge, skill and emotional experience based on al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah in order to build behaviour, skill, personality and a view of life as the servant of Allah, responsible for self development, the community, the environment and the nation for the sake of prosperity and salvation in this world and the hereafter.[58]

The aim of such Islamic education has been specified as "to produce Muslims who are knowledgeable, devoted, pious, well-mannered and who also have virtuous characteristics based on al-Qur'an and

al-Sunnah".[59] Within the conceptual structure of KBSM, the desired end-product of Islamic education has been spelt out as follows: "After learning Islamic Education in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools, the students should have excellent *akhlaq* and be able to practise noble values as the foundation of a good nation."[60] A perennial concern of policymakers has therefore been the perceived ineffectiveness of such curricula reforms, apparently designed with Islamic motives and targets, to engineer behavioural transformation of Muslim students, as evidenced by ever-rising social ailments among Muslim youth, including drug abuse, corruption, child abuse, prostitution, incest, *lepak* (loitering) culture, sexual permissiveness and heavy crime.[61] Ironically, the publication of news exposing the disproportionate number of Muslim youths indulging in such vices has been one of the factors maintaining the popularity of Islamic schools, whether run by the government or private individuals or organizations. Malay-Muslim parents generally believe that providing their children with an Islamic education within an integrative framework will do well to shield them from undesirable influences in an increasingly hedonistic and materialistic world, while at the same time providing a pathway towards modern qualifications, not necessarily in the religious stream. Some realize their own deficiencies in Islamic knowledge but wish that their progeny be acquainted with knowledge of at least the fundamentals of Islam and not lead wayward lives. They have been socialized by the *dakwah* wave or Islamic revival from the 1970s to 1980s to firmly believe in the utility and promising aspects of Islamic education in Malaysia. They remain undeterred by the various criticisms that have been levelled against the state of Islamic schools,[62] whose weaknesses they are prepared to tolerate so long as their offspring are afforded an education that teaches them the essence of humanity rather than just preparing them for a place in the alienated environment of a capitalistic labour market.[63]

Notes

1. Cf. M. Suffian Hashim, "The Relationship between Islam and the State in Malaya", *Intisari*, 1(1), 7–21 (1962); Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam

in the Constitution of Malaysia" in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique and Yasmin Hussain (Eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985, pp. 213–220; Joseph M. Fernando, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37(2), 249–266 (2006).

2. *Federal Constitution With Index*, Kuala Lumpur: MDC Publishers Printers, 1998, p. 1. For such an argument relating Article 3(1) to the protection of Islamic education, see Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia Wilayah Persekutuan, 1989, pp. 5–7.
3. *Federal Constitution With Index*, pp. 6–7.
4. *Federal Constitution With Index*, p. 7.
5. *Federal Constitution With Index*, pp. 156–157.
6. Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia", p. 216.
7. Ahmad Ibrahim, "Law and Religion – The Malaysian Experience", *Islam and the Modern Age*, 5(3), 6–7 (1974).
8. Gordon P. Means, "Public Policy Toward Religion in Malaysia", *Pacific Affairs*, 51(3), 393–394 (1978), Gordon P. Means, "Malaysia: Islam in a Pluralistic Society" in Carlo Caldarola (Ed.), *Religions and Societies: Asia and the Middle East*, London: Mouton Publishers, 1982, pp. 473–474; *Federal Constitution With Index*, p. 107.
9. *Federal Constitution With Index*, p. 113.
10. R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1978, pp. 38–39; R. S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysia: Tradition, Modernity and Islam*, Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1986, pp. 28–30.
11. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 152.
12. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 154–155.
13. Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, "Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu" in Abd. Halim El-Muhammady (Ed.), *Pendidikan Islam: Peranannya Dalam Pembangunan Ummah*, p. 106.
14. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 155–157.
15. Joan M. Nelson, "Malaysia's Education Policies: Balancing Multiple Goals and Global Pressures" in Joan M. Nelson, Jacob Meerman and Abdul

Rahman Embong (Eds.), *Globalization and National Autonomy: The Experience of Malaysia*, Singapore and Bangi: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, 2008, p. 209.

16. Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, "Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia", *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 30(1), 11–12 (2008).
17. Lee Hock Guan, "Globalisation and Ethnic Integration in Malaysian Education" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006, p. 230; Nelson, "Malaysia's Education Policies: Balancing Multiple Goals and Global Pressures", p. 190.
18. Sumit K. Mandal, "The National Culture Policy and Contestation Over Malaysian Identity" in Nelson, Meerman and Abdul Rahman Embong (Eds.), *Globalization and National Autonomy*, p. 278.
19. Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 66.
20. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Geopolitics of Oil in the Twentieth Century and its Impact on Muslim Societies, States and Development", *IKIM Journal*, 8(1), 13–20 (2000).
21. Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 62.
22. Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, p. 93; Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 105.
23. M. Kamal Hassan, "Some Dimensions of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia", p. 57. On the university's origins, see Mokhtar A. Kadir, *Keamanan Sejagat: Peranan Malaysia Dalam Politik Antarabangsa*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991, pp. 105–108.
24. Literally meaning "propagation", as derived from the Arabic term *da'wah*, *dakwah* originally referred to the proselytising activities of Muslims upon non-Muslims, but in the lexicon of contemporary Islam, *dakwah* connotes spreading the message of Islam as *din al-hayah* (The Way of Life) to born Muslims. For discussions of *dakwah*'s multiple manifestations, see for example, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Formative Years of The *Dakwah* Movement: Origins, Causes and Manifestations of Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia", *IKIM Journal*, 10(2), 87–90, 105–110 (2002); Sharifah Zaleha binti Syed Hassan, "Negotiating Islamism: The Experiences of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia", *Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 29 (2009), p. 65.

25. See the Division's profile, accessed on 14 September 2009 at http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=45&act=division&cat=JAPIM.
26. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 162.
27. "SMKA", accessed on 15 September 2009 at http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=128&lang=my; "Jadual 7: Enrolmen dan Kelas Sekolah Menengah Mengikut Negeri, Jenis Sekolah dan Jantina", accessed on 15 September 2009 at http://apps.moe.gov.my/emis/emis2/emisportal2/doc/fckeditor/File/Map_Jan_09/Jadual07.pdf?PHPSESSID=9f8adcf520c8b2ae35d325bf21870f68. Both.
28. Adnan Yusopp, "Dasar Pendidikan Islam Negara: Pelaksanaan dan Keberkesanan Sistem Pendidikan di Sekolah-sekolah Kerajaan" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2003, p. 36.
29. *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Pendidikan Islam, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2009, pp. 71–72. A draft copy of this coffee table book was obtained from a member of the Ministry of Education-commissioned panel of authors, Dr. Ishak Saat of the History section, School of Distance Education (SDE), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang.
30. Adnan Yusopp, "Dasar Pendidikan Islam Negara: Pelaksanaan dan Keberkesanan Sistem Pendidikan di Sekolah-sekolah Kerajaan", p. 37; Abdul Monir Yaacob, "Kurikulum Pendidikan di Sekolah-sekolah Agama Negeri di Malaysia" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 92–95; *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 87–91; "Students with STAM can now apply at 20 public varsities", *The Star*, 16 September 2009.
31. Rahimah Haji Ahmad, "Educational development and reformation in Malaysia: Past, present and future", *Journal of Educational Administration*, 36(5), 462, 466 (1998).
32. *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, p. 26.
33. The SPM level was equivalent to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level in the British secondary education system until the late 1980s, when Ordinary Level examinations were replaced by new General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications. In Britain, fifteen-year-old pupils sit for GCSE examinations, but in Malaysia, SPM papers are conventionally taken by seventeen-year-old students.
34. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 161, 165.

35. Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, "Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu", pp. 106–107.
36. Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, p. 11.
37. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 163.
38. Rahimah Haji Ahmad, "Educational development and reformation in Malaysia: Past, present and future", p. 466.
39. Abdul Hamid bin Othman, "Maktab Perguruan Islam: Dahulu, Masa Kini dan Akan Datang" in Khailani Abdul Jalil and Ishak Ali Shah (Eds.), *Pendidikan Islam Era 2020: Tasawur dan Strategi*, Bangi: Jabatan Pendidikan MPI, 1993, pp. 60–62.
40. "Pengenalan", accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://www.ipislam.edu.my/index.php/page/pengenalan/15/latar-belakang; "Sejarah", accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://www.ipislam.edu.my/index.php/page/pengenalan/91/sejarah.
41. Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, "Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu"", pp. 107–108.
42. Molly N. N. Lee, "Education in Malaysia: Towards Vision 2020", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 10(1), 90 (1999). For details on the KBSRs, see "2.0 Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR)", http://kdckdpm06.bravehost.com/kbsr.htm, accessed on 16 September 2009.
43. Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, "Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia", pp. 12–13.
44. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, "The Influence of Islam on Education and Family in Malaysia" in Syed Othman AlHabshi and Syed Omar Syed Agil (Eds.), *The Role and Influence of Religion in Society*, Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 1994, p. 129; Rahimah Haji Ahmad, "Educational development and reformation in Malaysia: Past, present and future", pp. 468–469, 474–475.
45. Lee, "Education in Malaysia: Towards Vision 2020", p. 91. The Moral Education syllabus currently in use for secondary education may be perused at *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah: Sukatan Pelajaran Pendidikan Moral*, Kuala Lumpur: Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2000, accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://sekolah.edu.my/kurikulum/sekolah-menengah/bidang-sains-sosial/pendidikan-moral/sukatan-pelajaran-kurikulum-bersepadu-

sekolah-menengah/. For the primary level syllabus, see *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah: Sukatan Pelajaran Pendidikan Moral* (Kuala Lumpur: Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2000), accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://sekolah.edu.my/kurikulum/sekolah-rendah/bidang-sains-sosial/pendidikan-moral/sukatan-pelajaran-kurikulum-bersepadu-sekolah-rendah/.

46. "Pengenalan", accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=120&lang=my.
47. *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, p. 51; "Mata Pelajaran Menengah, accessed on 16 September 2009 at http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=125&lang=my.
48. Cf. Oddbjorn Leirvik, "Religious education, communal identity and national politics in the Muslim world", *British Journal of Religious Education*, 26(3), 224 (2004).
49. Abdul Rashid Moten, "Islamic Thought in Contemporary Pakistan: The Legacy of 'Allama Mawdudi'" in Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 190–191.
50. M. Kamal Hassan, "Some Dimensions of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia", pp. 40–41.
51. Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, p. 227; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia during the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence", *Southeast Asian Studies*, 44(4), 455–459 (2007).
52. Cf. Abdul Halim El-Muhammady, "Pendidikan Islam Era 2020: Satu Penghayatan Menyeluruh" in Khailani Abdul Jalil and Ishak Ali Shah (Eds.), *Pendidikan Islam Era 2020: Tasawur dan Strategi*, p. 19; Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, pp. 298–306; Lee Hock Guan, "Globalisation and Ethnic Integration in Malaysian Education", p. 251.
53. Osman Bakar, "Implikasi Gerakan Dakwah Ke Atas Sistem Pendidikan Kebangsaan" in *Gerakan Dakwah dan Orde Islam di Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1993, p. 49.
54. Anwar Ibrahim, *Menangani Perubahan*, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1989, pp. 63–75; Wan Zahid Mohd. Noordin, "Reformasi Pendidikan dan Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah: Strategi, Cabaran dan Harapan" in *Gerakan Dakwah dan Orde Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 60–66.

55. Mahathir Mohamad, *Malaysia: The Way Forward*, Kuala Lumpur: Biro Tatanegara Jabatan Perdana Menteri Malaysia, 1991, p. 21; Sidek Baba, "Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Islam Era 2020: Ke Arah Kecemerlangan Generasi Pelajar" in Khailani Abdul Jalil and Ishak Ali Shah (Eds.), *Pendidikan Islam Era 2020: Tasawur dan Strategi*, p. 27. For a summary of the new dimensions introduced by the DPN vis-a-vis the DEB, see Junaidy Abu Bakar, "Teori Masyarakat Industri" in Ghazali Mayudin (Ed.), *Politik Malaysia: Perspektif Teori dan Praktik*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002, pp. 285–286.
56. Osman Bakar, "Implikasi Gerakan Dakwah Ke Atas Sistem Pendidikan Kebangsaan", p. 51.
57. Quoted in its original translation from the Ministry of Education official documents, in Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, p. 234; Ab. Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the teaching of *akhlaq* in Malaysian secondary schools", *Journal of Moral Education*, 36(3), 371–372 (2007). For an explication of the FPN in its original Malay language and its relevance to Islamic education, see Wan Mohd. Zahid bin Mohd. Noordin, "Peranan Pendidikan Islam Dalam Falsafah Pendidikan Negara" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 15–29.
58. Quoted in its original translation from a Ministry of Education official document, in Ab. Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the teaching of *akhlaq* in Malaysian secondary schools", p. 373. For further explanation of the FPI in its original Malay language, see Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, "Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu", pp. 110–111.
59. Quoted in Ab. Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the teaching of *akhlaq* in Malaysian secondary schools", p. 373; see also Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, "Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu", p. 112.
60. Quoted in Ab. Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the teaching of *akhlaq* in Malaysian secondary schools", p. 373.
61. Cf. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, "The Influence of Islam on Education and Family in Malaysia", pp. 137–142, 146–154; Awang Had Salleh, "Masyarakat Melayu Dalam Pendidikan Dan Sosiobudaya", *Pemikir*, no. 5 (1996), pp. 30–32.
62. For such a stinging criticism, see for example M. Bakri Musa, "MEANWHILE: Religious schools hinder progress in Malaysia", accessed

on 17 September 2009 at http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/24/opinion/24iht-edmusa_ed2_.html, posted 24 April 2001.

63. For the various reasons cited by Malay-Muslim parents for preferring a private SAR education for their children, see Zainal Azam bin Abd. Rahman, "Prospek dan Masa Hadapan Sekolah Agama Rakyat" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 280–284; Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, "Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia", p. 14. On parents' satisfaction of and hence their decision to send their children to government religious schools, see Adnan Yusopp, "Dasar Pendidikan Islam Negara: Pelaksanaan dan Keberkesanan Sistem Pendidikan di Sekolah-sekolah Kerajaan", p. 38; Abdul Monir Yaacob, "Kurikulum Pendidikan di Sekolah-sekolah Agama Negeri di Malaysia", p. 81.

5

THE CONTEMPORARY SETTING

WHICH ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA?

From our foregoing account of Islamic education in Malaysia, we find that it can be found in several forms and configurations. In our taxonomy, we focus on secondary-level education as we regard it to be the most eloquent representation of Islamic education in Malaysia, and the venue of heated political contestations regarding control and influence wielded its practice. It concerns the most formative period of a pupil's development, marking the transitional period from childhood to adulthood—the stage known as "adolescence". In Islam, the secondary-level age group—13 to 17 year olds—corresponds to the phase during which one attains the condition of maturity termed *aqil baligh*. In such a state, one not only reaches puberty, but is also deemed to be intellectually mature enough so as to be fully responsible for one's actions in terms of reward gained for good deeds and sins accrued for bad deeds. In traditional Islamic education, *aqil baligh* represents the critical limit by which time one should have acquired essential familiarity with *fard 'ain* knowledge, on which one would be individually accountable to God.

Our primary categorization is between state-sponsored Islamic education and privately funded Islamic education. Under the former category, on the one hand, we have Islamic education that takes place in national schools via the Islamic education subject, the religious stream in selected schools and a value-based curriculum that transcends the different modern arts and sciences subjects. On the other hand, Islamic education also transpires in religious schools that employ an overtly Islamic-based curriculum. They are of two types, viz. national secondary religious schools (SMKA, or *sekolah menengah kebangsaan agama*), federal secondary religious schools (SMAP, or *sekolah menengah agama*

persekutuan) and state secondary religious schools (SMAN, or *sekolah menengah agama negeri*). SMKAs and SMAPs differ only in history in that SMKAs were originally SMANs and community secondary religious schools (SMAR, or *sekolah menengah agama rakyat*) were taken over by the federal government, while SMAPs were purposely built, financed and controlled by the federal government. Since SMKA and SMAP schools are essentially similar in organization and policy, being both run via the Islamic Education Division (BPI, or Bahagian Pendidikan Islam), Ministry of Education, for the purpose of analysis, it is reasonable to treat them as belonging to one category.[1] SMANs, however, are administered by the various state governments through their respective *Majlis Agama Islam*, who may entrust the responsibility to a state-monitored educational foundation such as the well-known Islamic Foundation of Kelantan (YIK, or Yayasan Islam Kelantan).[2] States with a strong heritage in Islamic education such as Kelantan and Kedah will usually normally cherish this proud tradition of institutional autonomy, which they carry over from the *pondok* era and is arguably guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

The latter category of privately funded Islamic education is represented by the SMAR and private secondary religious schools (SMAS, or *sekolah menengah agama swasta*). An SMAR is governed by an independent board that is not beholden to any political authority. Its finances come mostly from relatively low student fees and private contributions from sympathetic individuals and corporations. However, due to financial problems that stem in part from less than efficient management techniques, many SMARs have resorted to the state for their upkeep, becoming practically semi-independent government-assisted religious schools.[3] As mentioned in the introductory section of this study, the pressure on SMARs to conform to the politico-religious authorities has multiplied since 9/11 and the consequent withdrawal of per capita grants to such state-registered SMARs. In recent years, many SMARs have effectively foregone their independence in exchange for the status of fully aided government religious schools (SABK, or *sekolah agama bantuan kerajaan*).[4] Their position straddles between that of the independent SMAR and SMAN-SMKA, but their trajectory is decidedly in favour of eventual co-option by the federal government. In return for their surrender of

authority, staff members are offered attractive terms of service and school administrators are provided with generous grants which enable them to vastly improve infrastructural facilities such as science laboratories which were previously beyond their means.[5] While SMARs are registered with state governments, SMASs are registered with the Ministry of Education under the 1996 Education Act, which liberalized private education. Different from the rural-based SMARs, many SMASs are situated in urban areas and have become the choice of Islamically conscious middle-class parents. SMASs may be founded by individuals, companies or Islamic organizations, and conventionally impose fees which are higher than one has to pay in other types of schools. Most SMASs are financially sound and offer high quality educational infrastructure.[6]

The trajectory of formal Islamic education has been defined by the obsession to centralize, under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, the administration and curricula of all schools that offer some kind of Islamic education. This homogenization of Islamic education can be traced as far back as 1974, when the ministry established a textbook bureau that controlled the content and discourse of Islamic education by ensuring that schools use only specially approved textbooks written by Ministry-commissioned authors.[7] Under the 1996 Education Act, the Textbook Division is empowered to institute procedures and regulations governing the publishing of textbooks for all primary and secondary schools, such that what constitutes "official knowledge" in Malaysia is practically defined by the state.[8] Graham Brown, upon scrutinizing the official Moral Education syllabus, describes its overall slant as constituting subtle "political indoctrination", secondary level students having to undertake "patriotic' activities which discuss "ways of showing gratitude to the government for its efforts to develop the nation and the people".[9] There is no a priori reason to think that the Islamic education syllabus will be any different than its alter ego—Moral Education—in emphasizing the production of "good" and "obedient" citizens. With the extension of the official curriculum to cover SMANs, SMARs and SMASs and their registration under the Ministry of Education forming a major prong of government policy with respect to Islamic education under the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–2010),[10] the path towards a homogeneous inter-

pretation of Islam in Malaysia in future years has been forged.

Centralization has indeed been identified by educationists as a bane for curriculum development in Malaysian education as a whole.[11] Nonetheless, Islamic education needs special mention as a favourite area for centralization as it tallies with the long-term interests of Muslim ruling elites in UMNO. For example, the vital role played by the *pondok* institution and its organizational successor, the SMAR, in maintaining grassroots support for PAS in Kelantan, which it ruled in 1959–1978 and has been controlling since 1990 has long been recognized.[12] Without breaking the stranglehold that PAS has over SMARs in Kelantan, developed through many decades of networking between the PAS *ulama* and the rural masses, it is virtually impossible for UMNO and the ruling National Front (BN, or Barisan Nasional) to wrest the state government from PAS. The strategy of UMNO politicians has therefore been to use institutions of the state to subsume autonomous Islamic categories and institutions by applying both the carrot and the stick. The most attractive rewards for graduates of state-conditioned Islamic education were wide opportunities for tertiary education at home and abroad and eventual employment as officials in the federal and state religious bureaucracies. These two goals of official Islamic education were clearly mentioned in then Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam's announcement of the establishment of an Advisory Council for the Coordination of Islamic Education (Lembaga Penasihat Penyelarasan Pelajaran dan Pendidikan Islam) in September 1983. The Council's functions were specified as "to concoct a syllabus and curriculum for religious education, to determine textbooks to be used, to arrange and control examinations and issue certificates for passing examinations in state and community religious schools".[13]

Indeed, the establishment of most if not all of state-controlled Islamic educational institutions has been tailored very much towards the purpose of producing officials in the ever-burgeoning Islamic officialdom. Whereas most of the *pondok* and SMAR graduates were proud to be self-employed and independent educators, the post-independence generation of SMAN and SMKA graduates rose up the social ladder primarily as salaried religious professionals dependent on state payroll.[14] The creation

of colleges and university faculties offering tertiary Islamic education served as these students' channels to obtain the necessary qualifications so as to be "eligible for appointments in the public service".[15] For example, in the Al-Azhar University Committee Report on the founding of the Muslim College of Malaya in Kelang in 1955, the College's aim is expressly stated as "to impart and spread the teaching of Islam in Arabic and Malay and to train students for becoming Religious Teachers, Religious Adviser [sic], Kadhis, Muftis and others …" while its end-product is the procurement of "trained officers in charge of religious affairs".[16] In furtherance of this goal, the Muslim College acted in concert with the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, formed in 1959. This state of affairs persisted until 1970, when the Muslim College was absorbed into the newly established National University of Malaysia (UKM, or Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) to form its faculty of Islamic Studies.[17] Further spurring the production of new cohorts of *shari'ah*-based lawyers, consultants, economists, judges and religious functionaries to fill posts in the expanding structure of Islamic administration and widening network of state-sanctioned Islamic financial institutions[18] were the transmutation of the Higher Education Foundation of Kelantan (YPTIK, or Yayasan Pengajian Tinggi Islam Kelantan) into the Islamic Academy, University of Malaya in 1981 and the founding of IIUM in 1983.[19]

The bureaucratization of Islam runs deep in Malaysian society and traces its history way back to the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, after which a Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu (Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Customs), was established in the various Malay states to oversee Islamic and Malay affairs, supposedly under the jurisdiction of the sultans. The *Majlis*, in turn, supervised a Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Agama Islam (Department of Islamic Religious Affairs).[20] In time, the *Majlis*, by monopolizing the right to issue *fatwa* (legal edict) and *tauliah* (letter of authority) to qualified religious teachers, and by having its members drawn from a sultan's list of favoured *ulama* and disproportionately from the aristocratic classes, the *Majlis* personified a novel alliance between a nascent religious establishment and a traditional elite linked to colonial officialdom.[21] In its early existence, the *Majlis* was willing to accommodate *pondok* graduates with acknowledged expertise in fields of Islamic

knowledge, but later, as *madrasahs* proliferated, recruitment for *Majlis*-affiliated employment became restricted to the circle of *ulama* that possessed paper qualifications certified by the religious authorities.[22]

To all intents and purposes, the role and function of the colonial-era *Majlis* and Jabatan Agama have been inherited by their present-day eponymous reincarnations, with not too much difference in style. Hence, it is not uncommon to hear outpouring of dissatisfaction against religious officials' condescending attitudes. For instance, wanton abuse of powers committed by Jabatan Agama enforcement officers has become regular news. In raids conducted against Muslim couples suspected of *khalwat*,[23] religious officials in Penang have been reportedly filming on videotape the undressed conditions of disgraced couples, arguing for the need of such circumstantial evidence to incriminate the suspects in court. Worse, some of these sexually compromising images were leaked to the tabloid press and circulated via the Internet by none other than the officials themselves.[24] In a raid to detain and charge the hosts and guests of a company function allegedly organized to revive the banned Darul Arqam movement, Penang's religious officials rode roughshod over the accused perpetrators, constantly and mercilessly violating not only their fundamental human liberties but also their Islamic rights to proper conditions of ritual worship.[25] Penang's Majlis Agama, which defended the reprehensible actions of its Jabatan Agama employees, is headed by Shabudin Yahaya, an Al-Azhar graduate who is an UMNO state assemblyman for Permatang Berangan in mainland Penang. In spite of the ouster of Penang's BN government in the March 2008 general elections, Shabudin has maintained his ground by insisting that he is a personal appointee of the Yang di Pertuan Agong, the constitutional monarch-cum-Penang's head of the Islamic religion, and cannot therefore be forced to resign until his contractual term expires.[26]

The publicity over the obnoxious behaviour of religious officials educated in state-funded schools partly explains the adamance of some Malay-Muslim parents in wanting a SAR education for their offspring. Many are willing to send their children to SARs on a part-time basis even if this means less leisure time and more work for their kids. Statistics indicate that at the time Dr. Mahathir launched his campaign against

SARs, student enrolment in SARs was at an all-time high of 126,000 in 2003, as compared with 68,785 in 1977, 44,500 in 1986, 60,136 in 1992, and recovering to the 70,000 mark by 1998.[27] Enrolment in SMKAs at first registered similar rises, from 13,310 in 1986 and 20,492 in 1992 to approximately 45,000 in 2001 but is currently dipping at 38,394.[28] This unfavourable trend against federal-sponsored Islamic education had to be arrested, but Dr. Mahathir's coercive actions were in danger of inviting backlash from the Malay-Muslim ground. However, good fortunes returned to UMNO and BN with the assumption to power of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on 31 October 2003. An Islamic studies graduate who traces his religious pedigree to a respectable lineage of UMNO-based *ulama*, Abdullah staked claim to religious leadership by, for example, leading public prayer sessions attended by UMNO ministers and rank and file.[29] In practical policy, Islam was officially crystallized as a bedrock of Abdullah's administration via his proclamation of 10 fundamental principles of *Islam Hadhari* (civilizational Islam), viz. faith and piety in God, a just and trustworthy government, free and independent people, a vigorous mastery of knowledge, a balanced and comprehensive economic development, a good quality of life, protection of the rights of minority groups and women, cultural and moral integrity, conservation of the environment and strong defence capabilities.[30] *Islam Hadhari* was later mentioned twice as integral to Abdullah's professed National Mission to build a national civilization based on sublime universal principles.[31]

Relenting to grassroots Muslims' protests, Abdullah partially reversed the denial of grants to SARs, and instead sought to woo Muslims back into the mainstream educational system by strengthening the Islamic curriculum in national schools.[32] The most comprehensive effort to date in this direction has been the introduction of the J-QAF programme in primary schools. An acronym for "Jawi, Quran, Arabic and *Fard 'Ain*", J-QAF employs five teaching models towards achieving the target of fundamental mastery of the four aforesaid subjects by the end of a Muslim pupil's primary education.[33] While additional teachers have been recruited to implement J-QAF, such quantitative increase is potentially meaningless if not accompanied by a commensurate qualitative increase in teaching performance and dedication. Past failure of

students in national schools to internalize the Islamic lessons they received has been ascribed partly to the failure of the teachers, many of whom had themselves been trained within secular educational structures and processes, to live up to expectations as role models for students.[34] Research has also shown that Islamic education has had to encounter myriad problems in infusing students with effective moral education due largely to uncontrollable factors such as peer pressure, influence of the mass media, family environment, negative socialization in the surrounding community and the attraction of immediate pleasures of life such as job opportunities.[35]

In January 2007, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi launched the national Master Plan for Educational Development 2006–2010 (PIPP, or Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan 2006–2010), which was meant to serve as a mainstay towards the realization of both Mahathir's Vision 2020 and Abdullah's National Mission. PIPP is based on six core strategies, viz. building the nation-state, developing human resource, empowering national schools, closing the gap between rural and urban educational infrastructure, ennobling the teaching profession and spurring the excellence of Malaysian educational institutions to the international level.[36] Although the role of Islamic education was nowhere mentioned as a specific agenda of PIPP, by having been conceived in line with the *Islam Hadhari* approach, PIPP was ipso facto arguably Islamic. In toto, PIPP was indeed broad-based enough to concur with Islamically conceived aims such as the holistic expansion of individual potential towards the creation of humans with balanced physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual faculties. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's oft-repeated emphasis on the creation of first class minds which were capable of "thinking out of the box" while adhering to high ethical values were heartening enough to any advocate of Islamic education.[37] Under PIPP's first core strategy of nation building, among activities slated for a more meaningful implementation of *Islam Hadhari* were a variety of seminars, talks, courses and publications.[38] But as far as the infusion of the *Islam Hadhari* approach into the actual curriculum is concerned, the foregrounding of themes connected with streamlining, coordination, uniformity and unilateral recognition of qualifications did not match the fiery of the broad-based

official rhetoric.[39] With regard to Islamic education as a subject per se, the emphasis remained homogenization rather than pluralism, uniformity rather than diversity, in both religious thought and practice.

At present, despite the changeover of the stewardship of government from the Islamic-educated Abdullah Badawi to the Western-educated Najib Razak in April 2009, there seems to be no indication that the centripetal drive of officially defined Islamic education would recede. In fact, in a recent meeting between Deputy Prime Minister-cum-Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, Higher Education Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom and officials from the Department of Advancement of Islam of Malaysia (JAKIM, or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia), it was decided that "a special committee with representatives from several agencies would be set up to streamline Islamic Studies and review several areas, including its curriculum, teachers and their qualifications".[40] The ideal form and practice of an Islamic curriculum, as conceived for instance by Syed Naguib Al-Attas,[41] remains far-fetched in state-sanctioned Islamic education in Malaysia. The outcome in terms of enforcement of narrowly interpreted religious law against Muslim non-conformists is all too obvious in Malaysia. Whereas Al-Attas' scheme was broad enough to accommodate even Shi'a interpretations of the revealed sciences,[42] Malaysia has been fastidious in instituting pre-emptive action against and punishment of Malay-Muslims who profess the Shi'a variant of Islamic faith deemed to have deviated from the path of Sunni orthodoxy.[43]

Notes

1. Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 199–203.
2. Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, "The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan", p. 207; Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, p. 76; Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", p. 203.

3. Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", pp. 204–205; Muhammad Uthman el-Muhammady, "Masa Hadapan Pendidikan di Sekolah Agama Rakyat" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 291–292.
4. "119 SAR sudah berdaftar", *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 September 2007; "20 SAR kini Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan', *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 August 2008.
5. "Jangan bermain 'tarik tali' serah Sekolah Agama Rakyat", *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 August 2007; "Teachers in religious schools to get more perks", *The Star*, 30 December 2008.
6. Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", pp. 205–206.
7. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 179.
8. Mus Chairil Samani, 'Islamic Knowledge Textbook in Malaysian Primary Schools: Control and Conformity', paper presented at the Thirteenth Malaysia Society of Australia Colloquium, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, Australia, 26–27 November 2004, p. 9.
9. Graham Brown, *Making ethnic citizens: The politics and practice of education in Malaysia*, CRISE Working Paper No. 23 (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Queen Elizabeth House, 2005), p. 10.
10. *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 103, 110.
11. Lee, 'Education in Malaysia: Towards Vision 2020', p. 92.
12. Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, 'The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan', p. 195; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 234.
13. Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, p. 10.
14. Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, 'The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan', p. 195, 205.
15. Rauf, *A Brief History of Islam With Special Reference to Malaya*, p. 99.
16. Quoted in Zainudin Jaffar, "Matlamat dan Fungsi Penubuhan Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Islam" in Suzalie Mohamad (Ed.), *Memahami Isu-isu Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 149–150.

17. Rauf, "Islamic Education", pp. 24–25; Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, pp. 19–20.
18. William R. Roff, "Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s–1990s: Exemplars, Institutions, and Vectors", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9(2), 221–224 (1998).
19. Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, p. 22; Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", pp. 207, 210.
20. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 73–74; Roff, "*Pondoks*, *Madrasahs* and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia", pp. 13–14.
21. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 74; William R. Roff, "The Origin and Early Years of the *Majlis Ugama*" in William R. Roff (Ed.), *Kelantan: Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 132–134, 140–141; Clive S. Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1838–1969*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978, pp. 52–61.
22. Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 247.
23. The act of being in close proximity with a marriageable member of the opposite sex in a secluded place, such that might arouse suspicions of an intended carnal relationship.
24. See "Hentikan rakaman pasangan berkhalwat", accessed on 14 January 2009 at http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/berita/komen_undang-undang/hentikan_rakaman_pasangan_berkhalwat.html, posted on 27 March 2007, for reports of the public outcry against such an operation in Penang in March 2007, and the erroneous justification given by Faizal Ibrahim, head of the operations unit of Penang's Department of Islamic Religious Affairs (JAIPP, *Jabatan Agama Islam Pulau Pinang*).
25. As disclosed by a victim of the operation in Detainee, "Treated as deviant even before court hearing", *Aliran Monthly*, 27(9), 32–36 (2007).
26. "Shabudin sedia lepas jawatan ikut prosedur", *Berita Harian*, 25 March 2008; "Saya diminta terus terajui MAIPP – Shabudin", *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 May 2008.
27. Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", p. 204; Pritam Singh, *Framing Islamic Education in Malaysia: Transnationalism, Educational Politics, and Affirmative Action*, ISEAS Working Paper Social and Cultural Issues No. 3, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007, p. 7.

28. Muhammad Syukri Salleh and Nailul Murad Mohd Nor, "Kemasukan Pelajar-pelajar Aliran Agama ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam dan Prospek Masa Hadapan", p. 202; Singh, *Framing Islamic Education in Malaysia: Transnationalism, Educational Politics, and Affirmative Action*, p. 7; "Jadual 7: Enrolmen dan Kelas Sekolah Menengah Mengikut Negeri, Jenis Sekolah dan Jantina", accessed on 15 September 2009 at http://apps.moe.gov.my/emis/emis2/emisportal2/doc/fckeditor/File/Map_Jan_09/Jadual07.pdf?PHPSESSID=9f8adcf520c8b2ae35d325bf21870f68.
29. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, p. 114.
30. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari: A Model Approach For Development And Progress*, Petaling Jaya: MPH Group Publishing, 2006, p. 4.
31. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Rancangan Malaysia Kesembilan: Ucapan YAB Perdana Menteri di Dewan Rakyat 31 Mac 2006,* Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Nasional Malaysia Berhad, 2006, pp. 9, 31.
32. Singh, *Framing Islamic Education in Malaysia: Transnationalism, Educational Politics, and Affirmative Action*, p. 13.
33. Farid Mat Zain and Ibrahim Abu Bakar, "The Islamic Education and the J-QAF Program in Malaysia, paper presented at the International Workshop on Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia, held at Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand on 24–25 February 2007; *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 113–118°.
34. Roald, *Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, p. 235.
35. Ab. Halim Tamuri, "Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the teaching of *akhlaq* in Malaysian secondary schools", p. 382–383.
36. Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan (PIPP) 2006–2010 (RMK-9), accessed on 28 September 2009 at http://www.kmph.matrik.edu.my/PIPP/moe_pipp_00.pdf.
37. "Berfikir di luar kotak: PM", *Berita Harian*, 17 January 2007; Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan (PIPP) 2006–2010 (RMK-9), accessed on 28 September 2009 at http://www.kmph.matrik.edu.my/PIPP/moe_pipp_00.pdf.
38. "Teras 1: Membentuk bangsa berorientasi glokal", *Berita Harian*, 17 January 2007.
39. *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia*, pp. 122–123.

40. "Students with STAM can now apply at 20 public varsities", *The Star*, 16 September 2009.
41. Al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", pp. 41–45; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 42–45.
42. Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, p. 42.
43. Christoph Marcinkowski, "Aspects of Shi'ism in Contemporary Southeast Asia", *The Muslim World*, 98(1), 41–47 (2008). On Sunnism and Shi'ism within Southeast Asian Islam, see Azyumardi Azra, "Islamic Thought: Theory, Concepts and Doctrines in the Context of Southeast Asian Islam" in K. S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005, pp. 4–13.

6

THE DARUL ARQAM—RUFAQA'—GLOBAL IKHWAN ALTERNATIVE

With bureaucratic centralization being the name of the game with regard to Islamic education in Malaysia, and administrative streamlining having accelerated since 9/11, the stakes are up against any endeavour to uphold an Islamic education system that seeks to preserve the pristine precepts of Islamic education by operating outside the ambit of the state's monitoring and patronage system. A formidable challenge is thus posed to the efforts of the various *dakwah* or Islamist movements, which sprouted following the Islamic revival wave which swept through Malaysia in the 1970s and 1980s, in maintaining independent Islamic educational institutions which remained steadfast to the sacred aims and objectives of Islamic education, without rejecting the necessity of producing graduates who are comfortable with mastery of branches of *fard kifayah* knowledge that would enable them to excel in different technocratic occupational fields. Such concerns have coloured recent discussions on the extent of the economic utility of Islamic education and the alleged unemployability of Islamic studies graduates.[1]

One particularly gallant effort to preserve an authentic form of independently managed Islamic education had been waged by the Darul Arqam movement (1968–1994), and continued since 1997 and 2008 by its de facto successor companies, Rufaqa' Corporation and Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB) respectively. Darul Arqam began in 1968 as a study group led by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, a government religious teacher, in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur. Darul Arqam grew after the founding of its model Islamic village in Sungai Penchala in 1973, and the initiation of self-sustaining economic projects in 1977. By the time of its proscription by official *fatwa* in 1994, Darul Arqam had

burgeoned into a self-styled economic empire whose success, achieved beyond the protruding clutches of the NEP, was commended by local and foreign observers alike.[2] Unfortunately, Darul Arqam got entangled into recriminative conflict with the state, which accused it of espousing and spreading heterodox Islamic teachings deemed deviationist, and of harbouring clandestine designs to take over political power by force. Darul Arqam leaders were eventually detained without trial under the Internal Security Act (1SA) in two crackdowns in 1994 and 1996. It was only in late October 2004 that Ustaz Ashaari and his immediate family finally obtained freedom from the restriction orders imposed upon them following the ISA, thus also ending their banishment to Labuan Island, off the coast of the Bornean state of Sabah, since February 2002. Diverse aspects of the "Darul Arqam versus the state" saga, in both its local and international dimensions, have been dealt with by the present author and others in numerous other studies.[3]

Darul Arqam started to develop an Islamic educational system in 1975, when, under Yayasan Al Arqam (Al Arqam Foundation), a school with 12 pioneering students and one teacher was set up. As Yayasan Al Arqam was established under the Mosque and *Surau* Act, schools operated by Darul Arqam were free from the Ministry of Education's control. By 1993, Darul Arqam was running 257 educational institutions, comprising kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in which 9,541 students were taught by 696 self-trained teachers. Abroad, Darul Arqam established international schools in Phuket, Thailand and Pekan Baru, Sumatra, Indonesia. Students who excelled were sponsored for higher education in Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Jordan and Uzbekistan, majoring not only in the revealed sciences but also in technocratic fields. Through its Qismu Dakwah wal Qiadah (Missionary and Leadership Section) and Qismu Maharah (Vocational Section), Darul Arqam's educational system accommodated students who had undergone state education up to secondary level. Darul Arqam claimed to have not only sustained full employment for its internal graduates, but it has also been able to provide full-time occupation for a significant number of local and foreign university graduates who had joined Darul Arqam during their student days.[4] For its over 2,000 internal graduates, employment within

Darul Arqam's system as administrators, missionaries and entrepreneurs became a priority.[5]

The success of Darul Arqam was owed to a culture of entrepreneurship, economic independence and activism, which were instilled via a distinctive educational curriculum which uniquely integrated traditionally religious with modern subjects.[6] The educational system was designed towards realizing the twin roles of humans as God's servant and vicegerent, which correspond to the processes of spiritual development and material development respectively. In incorporating both *fard 'ain* and *fard kifayah* domains of knowledge within its curriculum, Darul Arqam's schools healthily balanced between *hablumminallah* (human-Creator "vertical" relationship) and *hablumminannas* (human-human "horizontal" relationship).[7] However, the religious education did not rely solely upon classical books as taught in *pondoks*, but were rather adjusted according to reformist interpretations given by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, through his numerous books, treatises, poems and recorded public lectures.[8] The techniques of imparting knowledge also departed from tradition: firstly, informal guidance such as during co-curricular activity was stressed over formal transmission; secondly, the application of knowledge was emphasized over learning without practice; thirdly, a close relationship between the teacher as a role model and the student as his or her own virtual child was crucial; and lastly, recognition was given not on the basis of a student's academic capacity per se but on his or her religious observances and indications of fear of God.[9] Darul Arqam claimed to base their methods upon the examples of the Prophet Muhammad, whose simple techniques were founded on five principles. First, seeking knowledge is obligatory for all, whether male or female, old or young. Secondly, the educational process takes place continuously i.e. a 24-hour process, regardless of time and place. Thirdly, the syllabus is not restricted to a particular branch of knowledge. Fourth, anybody can deliver knowledge. Finally, the transmission of knowledge is not limited to formal functions and venues.[10] The scope and methods of Darul Arqam's educational system was summarized by Ustaz Ashaari in a poem entitled "*Pendidikan Arqam*" (Arqam's Education).[11] Notwithstanding weaknesses regarding its implementation, Darul Arqam's educational

system had been commended by analysts, especially with respect to its comprehensive informal component.[12]

The ban of Darul Arqam in August 1994, followed by the protracted detentions of its leaders and dissolution of the movement and its businesses, shattered Darul Arqam's educational system. Darul Arqam graduates and full-time staff were compelled, after many years of unwavering devotion to Darul Arqam's self-sustaining system, to seek livelihood within Malaysia's mainstream liberal-capitalist system. An estimated 10,000 former students of Darul Arqam schools were gradually, after an initially poor response, channeled into national schools.[13] Their former teachers, many of whom had professional qualifications but had terminated their service upon joining Darul Arqam, were offered the option of being reinstated in national schools.[14] This state of affairs persisted until July 1999, when Rufaqa' Corporation—registered in April 1997 as a private limited company owned by Ustaz Ashaari—sponsored the establishment of At-Tahalli secondary school in Bandar Country Homes, Rawang in the state of Selangor. Operating on a temporary permit from the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (JAIS, or Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor), the school targeted students among offspring of former Darul Arqam parents, who hitherto had to send their children to state schools against their own will. As an incentive to them, At-Tahalli offered free education for children of Rufaqa' employees and the poor.[15] While the system used by At-Tahalli was reminiscent of Darul Arqam schools, At-Tahalli was located in an urban-industrial area, in contrast with the rural settings of Darul Arqam schools. This was in tandem with the swift expansion of Rufaqa' into a Malay-Muslim conglomerate operating over 40 different types of small and medium industries (SMIs) and 250 business networks spanning parts of Southeast Asia and the Middle East.[16] Such growth was peculiar, happening at a time when many Malay-Muslim businesses were experiencing the worst of the recession which had cast a dark shadow over Malaysia's economy since the Southeast Asian currency crisis of 1997–98.

To the authorities, the founding of At-Tahalli school, albeit under the watchful eye of JAIS, indicated Rufaqa's adamant resistance against full integration into the mainstream national educational system. At a wider

level, the state questioned the level of the former Darul Arqam members' rehabilitation. At-Tahalli did not have to wait long before getting into trouble with the authorities for allegedly being a vehicle to inculcate Darul Arqam teachings among its students, thereby planting seeds for a future revival.[17] Such an impression was evident from the emergence of *nasyeed* groups whose membership consisted of At-Tahalli students.[18] The chief *nasyeed* group, *Qathrunnada*, quickly gained popularity by producing albums and performing in major Islamic concerts around Malaysia, bringing back memories of stylish Darul Arqam cultural performances a decade earlier.[19] Denials by the At-Tahalli school management of any association with Darul Arqam were unconvincing to JAIS, and from December 2000, the temporary operational licence was revoked and police help was sought to ensure the school closed down.[20] With the closing down of At-Tahalli, Rufaqa' officially bowed to the authorities' demands to operate all of its activities legally. Following Ustaz Ashaari's banishment to Labuan in February 2002, remaining attempts by former Darul Arqam members to educate their children outside the mainstream educational system were foiled.[21] The state's action was consistent with its policy of tightening its stranglehold over private religious education, as reflected in its withdrawal of grants to SARs in 2002.

Faced with incessant challenges from an all-powerful state ever determined to compel aspiring autonomous Islamic educationists into submission to the national educational system, Rufaqa' resorted to ingenious methods to circumvent state-imposed restrictions. Rufaqa' registered its secondary education not under the Ministry of Education or the various states' Islamic Affairs Departments, but with the Ministry of Human Resources under its National Council of Vocational Training (MLVK, or Majlis Latihan Vokasional Kebangsaan) programme. Under the aegis of the Welfare and Medical Services Foundation of Malaysia (YKPPM, or Yayasan Kebajikan dan Perkhidmatan Perubatan Malaysia), a once-moribund non-governmental organization revived and controlled by Rufaqa's Welfare Bureau, Rufaqa' established Institut Teknologi Spectral (ITS, Spectral Technological Institute) with 275 pioneering students as its legally registered educational institution in October 2002. Since October 2003, ITS has been certified as an official course manager

of MLVK training programmes.[22] Courses offered under the empirical science category are sufficiently standardized so as to qualify trainees for accreditation according to MLVK's National Occupational Skill Standard (NOSS).[23]

The whole set-up above corresponded with Rufaqa's official status as a business corporation. Trainees, most of whom are the offspring of Rufaqa' employees, are charged a minimal fee which is automatically deducted from the accounts of projects in which their parents are employed. Trainees whose parents work outside Rufaqa' pay higher, but not exorbitant, fees. In fact, Rufaqa's Education Bureau, which oversaw the functioning of the whole system, practised much tolerance in terms of the paying of fees. The feasibility of the whole educational system depended on cross-subsidization from profitable projects managed by other bureaus in Rufaqa' and on voluntary contributions from well-off parents and donors sympathetic towards independent Islamic education. The viability of such a system rested upon the adequacy and diversity of projects to maintain trainees, who may or may not continue to work in Rufaqa's myriad business enterprises upon graduation. Rufaqa's position as an all-encompassing Islamic movement boasting business interests spanning Southeast Asia and the Middle East was an economic bulwark against potential and attempted interference by the state. Without a cunningly devised self-financing mechanism, an Islamic educational institution would have barely survived, relying on the conventional means of private donations and meagre state grants.

The ITS main branch was situated within the vicinity of the central "Rufaqa' township" in Bandar Country Homes, Rawang, Selangor. "Rufaqa' townships", termed as such by the Rufaqa' leadership, referred to an industrial vicinity where juxtaposed business premises were rented or bought en bloc by Rufaqa' and given a flavour of Rufaqa' via conspicuous signboards and continuous presence of company personnel. The major projects forming Rufaqa' townships were usually a supermarket, a restaurant, a bakery and a boutique-cum-tailor shop. Rufaqa' townships were made merrier with the presence of youth hostels, guesthouses and staff residence within its vicinity. The ITS main campus was obviously more wide-ranging in terms of subjects offered, by virtue of the greater number

and the variety of projects that exist within the largest Rufaqa' township in Rawang. But the ITS system could be seen operating in all its branch campuses where there were Rufaqa' townships, for example, in Bandar Baru PERDA, Bukit Mertajam, Penang; Bandar Darulaman, Jitra, Kedah; Seremban 2, Negeri Sembilan and Bukit Beruntung, Selangor.[24] In fact, the wider Rufaqa' businesses were in a particular self-styled township, the bigger and more comprehensive its corresponding ITS branch. However, students were all centrally registered by the Education Bureau, which then distributed them to ITS branches in different states as "trainees". Legalization of the vocational side of the educational system effectively acted as a front to enable it to offer *fard 'ain* and spiritual science education as well, with both forming the essence of Islamic education that Rufaqa' wanted to protect from state intervention.

In 2006–2007, Rufaqa' came under sustained pressure from the religio-political authorities following attempts by some of its leaders to publicly resurrect the sufi-millenarian doctrines which had once made Darul Arqam a national taboo. Rufaqa's purported heterodoxy was pronounced in official *fatwas* passed by the various state governments. Membership, abetment and replication of Rufaqa' and its activities were criminalized under the states' *Shari'ah* Criminal Enactment (EJS, or Enakmen Jenayah Syariah).[25] As a consequence, religious officials sporadically raided Rufaqa's business premises all over the country, confiscated paraphernalia that allegedly proved ominous intentions to revive Darul Arqam, arrested alleged ringleaders and charged them in the *shari'ah* court for subscribing to and propagating false Islamic doctrines.[26] Rufaqa' directors reacted by de-registering their company and founding an apparently new entity called Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad (GISB).[27] Notwithstanding its new appellation, GISB hardly differs from Rufaqa' in its concerns, activities and relational networks. The educational initiatives pioneered by Rufaqa' in its endeavour to preserve the Islamic ideals inherited from Darul Arqam are bequeathed to GISB, albeit still through YKPPM with which it has interlocking directorships and overlapping memberships. However, ceaseless monitoring by the authorities has taught them to be more versatile. The latest incarnation of the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB educational system is a host of welfare

homes operating under the label Wisma or Rumah Anak-anak Kesayanganku (RAK). While offering education for orphans, children of the poor and neglected children, the many RAKs that have sprouted throughout the country undertake the opportunity to extend the transmission of knowledge to selected offspring from the wider GISB family, focusing especially on *fard 'ain* and spiritual science subjects which they regard as having been neglected in mainstream national schools.[28] Surprisingly, in a short space of time, GISB-affiliated RAKs have received recognition from respectable sections of society, judging from its many joint functions held with private organizations and graced by public figures of unquestionable integrity.[29]

The state-imposed control and regulatory measures have not been regarded by practitioners of the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB educational system as impediments to its long-term aspirations. In their understanding, regardless of the extent of state surveillance over their activities, the key to resilience and ultimate perseverance of their movement lies in its educational scheme, whose longevity in turn lies in how well it manages to perpetuate its principles and beliefs in its younger generation of activists whose focus of loyalty is not the Malaysian nation-state as such, but God and His Messenger as externalized in the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB leadership. Hence, since 2006, the organization has come up with a set of educational precepts based upon Ustaz Ashaari's lectures delivered to executive committee members of Rufaqa's Education Bureau in May 2003. The foundational principles of the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB educational system may be summarized as follows:[30]

1. Of all human needs, education is the most important. Education forms the pulse of a nation, determining its identity, integrity and future direction. Education cannot therefore be conducted on a trial-and-error basis, as failure would render great human costs that are irreversible for generations.
2. Knowledge may be categorized into material knowledge and knowledge of humans i.e. human science.
3. Material knowledge—obtainable via effort and thinking, may be further sub-divided into philosophical/theoretical/mental

knowledge and practical knowledge. Philosophical knowledge may drive one into deviationism if it contradicts *aqidah* (faith). For human civilization to develop, they must apply practical knowledge such as agriculture, commerce, engineering, medicine and others. Problems arise within contemporary Islamic education because philosophical knowledge is not integrated with practical knowledge. The products of such education are passive theorists and/or narrow-minded technocrats.

4. Human science can truly be understood only by God's Messengers, whose roles are then assumed by centennial *mujaddids* (reformers) whose coming had been foretold in a Prophet Muhammad's *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurairah and found in Abu Dawud's collection: "Allah will raise, at the head of each century, such people for this Ummah as will revive its Religion for it."
5. The fundamentals of imparting human science are contained in the Quranic verse: "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom, and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (XVI: 125). The basic tenets of calling humankind towards God are therefore, the use of wisdom, beautiful preaching and convincing argumentation.
6. Human science focuses on understanding four constituent elements of humankind, viz. *aql* (intellect), *roh* (spirit), *nafs* (the base self) and the physique. Greater concern should be attached to the education of the *aql*, *roh* and *nafs*, and not so much on the physique, without denying the importance of health and physical education.
7. Understanding the *aql* involves transmitting knowledge according to six different levels of intelligence, viz. the genius IQ, the smart IQ, the clever IQ, the normal IQ possessed by the average human, the weak IQ and the dumb IQ.
8. Comprehending the *roh* or heart involves recognizing its four categories, viz. the illuminated heart, the enlightened heart, the dim heart and the dark heart. These correspond respectively to the souls of the prophets and saints, of the righteous Muslims, of the wicked Muslims and of the unbelievers.

9. Taking cognizance of the *nafs* entails the process of *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-purification), which involves three stages, viz. *takhalli* (divesting the heart of *mazmumah*—evil attributes), *tahalli* (filling the heart with *mahmudah*—virtuous attributes) and *tajalli* (instantaneous peace of the heart deriving from unceasing devotion to God). The *nafs* is spiritually upgraded according to its seven levels, viz. *ammarah* (the vicious), *lauwamah* (the defective), *mulhamah* (the guided), *mutmainnah* (the serene), *radhiah* (the surrendered), *mardhiah* (the accepted) and *kamilah* (the perfect). Only the *mutmainnah*, *radhiah*, *mardhiah* and *kamilah* attain Eternal Salvation.
10. As a mechanism of disseminating knowledge, "beautiful preaching" necessitates that a teacher becomes a role model to his students by practising what he or she preaches. A teacher spreads good news (*tabsyir*) to encourage students to perform good deeds, and tells of frightening news (*tanzir*) to install fear of committing evil deeds. In doing so, he or she refers to the history of righteous peoples and of transgressors of the religion. He or she encourages students to ponder over the might of God and give them practical training as caring and responsible members of society via community service.
11. Utilizing convincing argumentation necessitates the mastering of various branches of knowledge of human society, such as politics, economics, sociology, psychology, cultural studies and current affairs. It is imperative that a teacher absorbs "inner" knowledge of humans before mastering any kind of "outer" knowledge of humans.
12. A practical educational system balances the development of one's *aql*, *roh*, *nafs* and the physique so as to create mature human beings at a relatively early age of adulthood, corresponding to the Islamic concept of *baligh*. As one approaches the age of *baligh*—normally estimated at 15 years old but may vary according to one's physical circumstances, one experiences a balanced growth of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical ability.

The 12 foundations above have been concretized into five principles of the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB educational policy, viz. a 24-hour and lifelong learning process, synergy between material knowledge and human science, a caring and entertaining environment conducive to learning, priority to practical education, and a close relationship between teacher and student.[31] In practical terms, these foundations and principles are reified into a curriculum which encompasses five basic courses, viz. human science (*sains insaniah*) which consists of *fard 'ain* knowledge and spiritual science (*sains rohaniah*), basic vocational science (*sains kemahiran hidup asas*) and empirical science (*sains khibrah*). Empirical science, in turn, is made up of life and technological science (*sains kehidupan dan teknologi*), cultural and mass media science (*sains budaya dan media massa*), and business and management science (*sains perniagaan dan pengurusan*).[32]

Course delivery methods vary: on the one hand, *fard 'ain* and spiritual science subjects are delivered via formal lessons in classrooms or lecture halls. The subjects are *tawhid*, *fiqh*, *tasawwuf*, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *sirah* and history, *tajwid*, *minda* of Ustaz Ashaari and the thoughts of renowned Islamic scholars. Formal lessons consist of not only one-way and/or interactive classes that start after *fajr* (dawn) prayers, but also exposure to current affairs, poem recitals, news reading-cum-reporting training, public speaking, debate training, singing lessons and a question-and-answer form of *minda* test. Subjects are thereby discussed not in rigid reference to textbooks, but rather given social and global interpretations appropriate to modern life. Assessment takes place on a daily basis based on oral tests and close monitoring of student progress and behaviour by teachers and tutors.[33]

For basic vocational science and empirical science subjects, training and assignments are given directly within premises of relevant projects either run directly by Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB, or enterprises whose management has reached an understanding with Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB regarding the placement of its students as industrial apprentices. Exposure to community service and public participation is done through fieldwork known as Social Science Dakwah Operation (OSSD, or Operasi Sains Sosial Dakwah). Basic vocational sciences cover such wide-ranging

subjects as cooking, laundry washing, tailoring, first aid, electronics, construction, computing, agriculture, business management, nursing and vehicle maintenance.[34] As one progresses in his education, one advances into specialized fields within the three empirical sciences. Each science is composed of a range of elective subjects; students may wish to specialize in one or more of the electives. Under life and technological science, subjects offered are restaurant/catering management, bakery operation, motor vehicle workshop, mechanical engineering, textile and garment industry, electrical engineering, building construction, agriculture, carpentry and furniture, audio-visual electronics and health management. Cultural and mass media science covers such diverse subjects as studio artist and multimedia education, calligraphy and writing, performance arts (singing, acting, poem recital, talk-show hosting), language (Malay, English, Arabic) and arts and advertising (technical drawing, graphics, billboard and signboard design). Subjects under business and management science include information and communication technology (ICT), business and finance, and tourism. For all of the afore-mentioned sciences, the path of one's education according to age is never severed from instructions in *fard 'ain* and spiritual science—the bedrock of the system.[35] Should one demonstrate the potential and interest in mastering *fard 'ain* and spiritual science subjects, one can proceed for undergraduate education at any university offering Islamic studies degrees. However, due to lack of recognition of its system by the Malaysian authorities, graduates of the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB educational system have been known to pursue higher education elsewhere, in universities in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Syria. For graduates not wishing to become *ulama*, their technical knowledge is considered sufficient for them to become technocrats within the Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB economic set-up or to pursue the path of self-employment as entrepreneurs and industrialists who are not alienated from the fruits of their own labour.

Notes

1. Singh, *Framing Islamic Education in Malaysia: Transnationalism, Educational Politics, and Affirmative Action*, pp. 15–21.

2. Cf. Judith A. Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and Their Roots*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984, pp. 107, 113.
3. Cf. Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "An Ethical Approach to Development: The Arqam Philosophy and Achievements", *Humanomics*, 10(1), 25–60 (1994); Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Islamic Change in Malaysia: The Politics of Unfavourable Responses" in Jean Debernadi, Gregory Forth and Sandra Niessen (Eds.), *Managing Change in Southeast Asia: Local Identities, Global Connections*, Edmonton: Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995, pp. 227–243; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimensions of Religious Conflict in Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 28(80), 32–65 (2000); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Pemerintah dan Gerakan Islam di Malaysia", *Pemikir*, no. 23 (2001), pp. 111–158; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia: Response to the State Clampdown on Darul Arqam in 1994", *Asian Studies Review*, 27(3), 361–387 (2003); Judith Nagata, "Alternative Models of Islamic Governance in Southeast Asia: Neo-Sufism and the Arqam Experiment in Malaysia", *Global Change, Peace and Security*, 16(2), 99–114 (2004); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 39(1), 87–128 (2005); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Southeast Asian Response to the Clampdown on the Darul Arqam Movement in Malaysia, 1994–2000", *Islamic Studies*, 45(1), 83–119 (2006).
4. Muhammad Syukri Salleh, *An Islamic Approach to Rural Development – The Arqam Way*, London: Asoib International Ltd, 1992, pp. 120, 208–209.
5. For statistical details on Darul Arqam's educational achievements as outlined in this paragraph, see Darul Arqam, *25 Tahun Perjuangan Abuya Syeikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad At Tamimi: 25 Years of the Struggle of Abuya Syeikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad At Tamimi*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Abuya, 1993, pp. 185–187; Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "An Ethical Approach to Development: The Arqam Philosophy and Achievements", pp. 35–37.
6. Appendices A, B and C.
7. Ashaari Muhammad, *Worship in Islam* (translated by Abdul Khaleq Jaafar), Kuala Lumpur: Penerangan Al Arqam, 1989, pp. 17–20. These terms draw upon the Quranic verse: "Shame is pitched over them wherever they are found except under a Covenant from Allah (hablumminallah) and from men (hablumminannas) ..." (III: 112).

8. At the time of Darul Arqam's disbandment in October 1994, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had written 62 books, and had hundreds of his speeches, lectures and dialogues recorded on cassettes and videotapes. His books covered such diverse topics as basic Islamic teachings, techniques and tribulations of the Islamic struggle, Islamic spirituality and contemporary issues. Many of his published poems and sayings were later converted into *nasyeeds* sung by Darul Arqam's artists and sold in cassette form. Darul Arqam members and students were required to imbibe, comprehend, digest and, if possible, preach to others the contents of these numerous works, which together constituted what was popularly termed as the *minda* of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad.
9. Darul Arqam, *Generasi Pembina Empayar*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Hikmah, 1993, *passim*.
10. Ashaari Muhammad, *Pendidikan Rasulullah*, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Syeikhul Arqam, 1990, chapter 3.
11. Appendix D.
12. Roald, Tarbiya, *Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia*, p. 269; Ann Wan Seng, *Al-Arqam di Sebalik Tabir*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005, pp. 63–70.
13. "Semua sekolah Al-Arqam akan diambil alih", *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 November 1994; "10,000 murid Arqam diproses masuk sekolah", *Utusan Malaysia*, 10 December 1994; "Jaminan bersekolah anak bekas pengikut Arqam", *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 January 1995; "D-G: Emphasis is on Islamic and moral education", *New Sunday Times*, 22 January 1995; "Rehab courses for children of former Arqam members", *New Straits Times*, 24 January 1995; Sistem Pendidikan Kebangsaan menyeronokkan murid Arqam", *Utusan Malaysia*, 31 January 1995; "1,649 ex-Arqam pupils now in ordinary schools', *New Straits Times*, 1 February 1995.
14. "Bekas guru Arqam berpeluang sambung tugas", *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 February 1995.
15. "Rufaqa' tawar pendidikan percuma kepada pelajar miskin", *Mangga*, no. 62, May 2000.
16. Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Perniagaan Gerakan-gerakan Islam di Malaysia", *Pemikir*, no. 31 (2003), pp. 156–176; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The *Taqwa* versus *Quwwah* Dichotomy: An Islamic Critique of Development via the Malaysian *Bumiputera* Policy", *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies*, XXI(1–2), 146–150 (2003).

17. "Pemilik Sekolah At Tahalli nafi terbabit pertubuhan haram", *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 July 2000.
18. There is wide acceptance that Darul Arqam, via its main *nasyeed* groups *Nada Murni* and *The Zikr*, was chiefly responsible for popularizing *nasyeed* as a modern musical genre in Malaysia since the mid 1980s. Darul Arqam cultural performances were distinctive for integrating contemporary musical elements, such as the use of percussion and modern instruments, with the classical *nasyeed* melody as inherited from its sufi origins. All three most popular *nasyeed* groups in contemporary Malaysia, viz. *Raihan*, *Rabbani* and *Hijjaz*, trace their origins to Darul Arqam's cultural troupes. See for instance, "Raihan, Rabbani dan Hijaz berakar umbi dari al-Arqam ...", accessed on 29 September 2009 at http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/93319 (posted on 18 November 2008).
19. "Qathrunnada dilarang baca surat cinta", *Pancaindera (Mingguan Malaysia)*, 14 May 2000; "4 anak Ustaz As'aari jadi penyanyi", *Mangga*, no. 62, May 2000; "MAS sambut Maal Hijrah membawa mesej 'Cinta Agung'", *Buletin Utama*, 8–14 May 2000; "Lebih 5000 penonton menitis airmata semasa konsert teater muzikal Islam di UKM", *Buletin Utama*, 4–10 September 2000.
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23. Appendix E. YKPPM's official website, at http://ykppm.org/wisma_didik.html, enumerates 11 secondary level subjects, viz. welding, silk screen and printing, tailoring, bakery, computing, Islamic arts and culture, writing, medicine, food catering, tourism and hotel management.
24. Cf. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Contestations and Peace Building Between The State and Autonomous Islam" in Francis Loh Kok Wah (Ed.), *Building Bridges, Crossing Boundaries: Everyday Forms of Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in Malaysia*, Kajang: Ford Foundation and Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia, 2010, pp. 72–73.

25. Cf. Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang, *Fatwa Mengenai Pengharaman Usaha-usaha Menghidupkan Semula Arqam Melalui Syarikat Rufaqa' Corporation Sdn. Bhd. (SRC) dan Rangkaian Syarikat Gabungannya, Enakmen Pentadbiran Agama Islam* (Negeri Pulau Pinang) 2004, vol. 51, no. 5 (1 March 2007), accessed on 30 September 2009 at http://mufti.penang.gov.my/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Document1.pdf.
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27. "Rufaqa tukar nama kepada Global Ikhwan", *Utusan Malaysia*, 6 July 2008; "Bekas pengikut al-Arqam guna syarikat baru ganti Rufaqa", *Berita Harian*, 24 November 2008.
28. For a list of RAKs, see *Profail Kelab Poligami Ikhwan*, Rawang: Global Ikhwan, 2009, p. 11.
29. See for example the profile of RAK Bukit Beruntung, Selangor—arguably the most successful RAK, at http://anakkesayanganku.blogspot.com/, accessed on 30 September 2009.
30. For a more comprehensive elaboration of these precepts, see Ashaari Muhammad, *Buah Fikiran Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad Siri 2*, Rawang: Penerbitan Minda Ikhwan, 2006, pp. 276–344.
31. Rufaqa' Corporation, *Kurikulum & Silibus Institut Model*, Rawang: Biro Pendidikan Rufaqa', 2003, pp. 5–6.
32. Appendix E.
33. Appendix E.
34. Appendix E.
35. Appendix F.

7

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

International interest in Islamic education has surged since the onset of the U.S.-marshalled GWOT, but perhaps for all the wrong reasons. Undue attention has been given to institutions which claim or are portrayed to provide some form of Islamic education, without proper examination to determine whether these institutions' guiding ethos and practices conform to the genuine foundations of Islamic education as found in its long and distinguished history. In many cases, Islamic education has been confused with Islamist education—"Islamist" here being adjectival to "Islamism" instead of "Islam". While Islam refers to a religion or comprehensive way of life in which a Muslim in both the individual and social sense submits to God spiritually, intellectually and physically, "Islamism" is ideologically biased towards political action designed to establish Islam as the supreme creed of a polity and social order.[1] The former has as its aim *mardatillah* (God's Pleasure), which would secure salvation for a soul in the Hereafter and encourage moral goodness towards fellow humans on earth, whereas the latter's path is overwhelmingly defined by its professed goal of an "Islamic state" on earth. Often times, for the Islamist, the Machiavellian principle of "the ends justify the means" take precedence over *ummatic* tumult, which is regarded as a necessary evil and temporary sacrifice towards securing his worldly target of a *shari'ah*-based rulership on earth. His object of adulation becomes the *dawlah* (state)—essentially a nomocracy whose frame of reference is not the people but the *shari'ah*, perceived as immutable, rather than God.[2] In this, the Islamist has unwittingly or not secularized the Islamic faith, whose concern for the welfare of the *ummah* is paramount. The difference between the two categories often

eludes the Islamist: while the *ummah* is "centred on unity in moral values and faith", the so-called "Islamic state" negotiates its political and legal dimensions through contestations in matters of territoriality, citizenry and governance.[3] In the history of human civilization, various forms of injustice and violence have been erroneously legitimized in the defence of selfish interests related to these political categories.

Islamists have done a great disservice to Islam by over-emphasizing its political and governmental aspects and concomitantly denigrating the more cardinal aspects of individual and moral regeneration that constitutes the true essence of Islamic education.[4] In the aftermath of colonization, many of them have been brought up according to Western secular traditions, even if externally they display Muslim attributes and live in Muslim societies. The Western onslaught on their epistemological order has been far more critical than Western political domination, the spectre of which has re-surfaced following 9/11 and GWOT. Islamists' secularized worldview beckons them to seek solutions to Muslim problems in short-term tangible forces as determined by scientific principles of causality, not in the metaphysical domain of scriptural guidance that can be procured only through a life-long devotion to Islamic education. In its authentic form, Islamic education is necessarily God-centric and *ummah*-centric, and will not condone unjust actions and methods undertaken in the name of religion. Although Syed Naguib al-Attas has a point in berating Western civilization for succumbing to secularization, as seen from the "westernization' of Christianity and the consequent triumph of positive science over revealed religion, hence ushering its foremost crisis ever,[5] Muslim societies and Islamists have not been immune either to the secular juggernaut. Thus, in spite of the enthusiasm shown for the establishment of Islamic schools, colleges and universities throughout the *ummah*, such endeavours are seldom undertaken with a view to addressing the epistemological and philosophical deficiencies of the modern educational system, but represent rather desperate attempts to preserve one's Islamic or Muslim identity, even if in rudiments only.[6] A revamp of the educational systems prevailing in Muslim countries, while having been constantly on the agenda of Muslim scholars, leaders, politicians and activists alike, is indeed a tall order which calls for *ummatic*

participation not bound by national intricacies and complexities.

In Malaysia, the entire landscape of formal education is coloured by politics. Over the years, many studies that inextricably link the development of education in Malaysia with imperatives of post-independence ethnic, nationalist and linguistic politics have emerged.[7] A number of recent works have taken the position that Islamic education, as has been re-invigorated by the Islamic revival of the 1970s–1980s, has had a corrosive effect on ethnic integration, decidedly one of the major goals of the national education system. For instance, based on his observation of enrolment trends in religious schools, national schools and national-type schools, Lee Hock Guan claims, "The growth of Islamic educational programs and institutions has further expanded the ethnic segmentation of education in Malaysia."[8] Joan M. Nelson goes further in conjecturing, despite admission of the lack of reliable information, that "it seems highly likely that a fair proportion of religious classes and religiously-oriented schools promote intolerance and some degree of Malay chauvinism".[9] While this may be true on the surface, the present author is inclined to restructure the causality of the argument; that the admissible fact of worsening ethnic fragmentation in the educational sphere is not due to Islamic education per se, but rather to state manipulation of variables and institutions involved in the politics and practice of educational policy in Malaysia. Administrative centralization and rigid control of curricula have been justified in the name of patriotism and national unity. The overall policy admittedly gives official pandering to ethno-religious pluralism and tolerance. However, the knowledge is presented in such a way as to be invariably representative of and inevitably linked to the political discourse of UMNO and BN component parties. While this tendency cuts across the entire curricula, the problem is particularly acute in the subjects of Moral Education, Local Studies (Kajian Tempatan) and History.[10]

It is quite untenable to argue that ethnic integration can be promoted by paying it lip-service at the micro level, when the whole orientation of educational policy is itself conditioned by ethno-religious considerations as perpetuated by the politics of UMNO and the ruling BN regime. Racial politics has been and continues to be the raison d'être of

BN, whose politicians are fast becoming anachronistic in the wake of the 2008 general elections. The elections saw BN losing its two-thirds parliamentary majority, the opposition PR forming governments in five states and unprecedented voting patterns cutting across racial boundaries. As demonstrated by UMNO protests against former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Zaid Ibrahim's censure of *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay supremacy) as a failed doctrine,[11] it is inherently difficult for UMNO, given its history as rooted in the championing of exclusive Malay rights which it readily translates as Muslim rights, to extricate itself from racialist underpinnings. For a growing number of thinking Malays and non-Malays, UMNO politicians' efforts to defend Islam appear nothing more than part of the overall UMNO-sponsored package to re-assert *Ketuanan Melayu*.[12] Given the legally coterminous position between Islam and Malayness in Malaysia, it is hardly surprising that politicians of all divides have manipulated Islam as a political tool to realize their racial agendas. It would be unreasonably presumptuous to ascribe rising ethnocentrism in post-NEP Malaysia as arising from Islam per se even if Islam has indeed been legitimized as a marker of Malay identity. Rather, such increasing chauvinism has been due to the racialization of Islam or Islam in a peculiarly racialized form as defined by the BN political establishment.

By stripping Islamic education of its pristine ideals, noble purposes and praiseworthy practices, the Malay-Muslim ruling establishment has transformed it into yet another area vulnerably bound to its largesse and patronage, which would ultimately be translated into political influence and support for UMNO and BN. Political considerations explain the express prohibition of pluralism within Malaysian Islam. Any sign of dissent from official Islamic orthodoxy is frowned upon as reflective of deviance that is liable to prosecution in religious courts. Yet, this homogenization of Islam runs against the grain of Islamic history, which is rich with contestations between sects, schools of thought and factions. The sufi and Shi'a provenances of Malaysian Islam, as recognized by prominent Malay nationalist Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy,[13] have not been fully acknowledged in Malaysia's official Islamic discourse as it does not tally with the ruling elites' hegemonic agenda based on a carefully con-

stricted version of Malay-Muslim unity. Thus, Malay Shi'as and sufis have been foremost at the receiving end of government heavy-handedness ostensibly based on the concern to maintain the purity of Islamic faith. Paradoxically, it is within such a repressive environment that some of the most creative alternatives have emerged in the Islamic world. Anyone familiar with medieval Islamic history will be able to recount the many instances when venerable *ulama* were confronted and shunned by the state, as ruled by a dynastic caliph. Some had to endure beatings and incarceration. Yet, the veritable *ulama* of olden days were uncompromisingly insistent on maintaining their independence and refusing co-optation. This started to change with the onset of colonialism and the ensuing bureacratization of religious affairs. The history of Islamic education in independent Malaysia has been one of steady absorption of autonomous units and categories into the politically conditioned national educational system.

As shown by the case of the maverick Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB alternative model, only those with intellectual and spiritual fortitude, economic independence and international networking can survive the enormous pressure to abide by the terms of the nation-state. In the case of Syed Naguib Al-Attas, scholarly reputation, international acclaim and concern for a genuinely Islamic educational paradigm were not enough to contain the challenge of the nation-state. Owing largely to his close relationship with then Education Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Professor Al-Attas was initially given carte blanche over his brainchild, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), established in 1987 as a research institute affiliated to the IIUM, of whom Anwar was President for over 10 years (1988–1999). Upon Anwar's fallout with Dr. Mahathir in 1998, ISTAC lost its autonomy and was fully assumed under the IIUM structure by 2002 amidst accusations of its being a "den of deviationists".[14] It is very likely that in the long term, history will be fairer to these unorthodox and arguably purer manifestations of Islam. With regard to education from a global view, maverick models that appear once in a while in defence of the purity of Islam can be compared with anti-establishment movements among such radical Western educationists as Ivan Illich and David F. Noble, who have vehemently protested

against the defiling of educational institutions as tools of socio-political indoctrination and the decline of educational ideals as embodied in the worldwide business of distance-cum-online education and the ensuing commodification of knowledge.[15]

Notes

1. Cf. Norani Othman, "Globalization, Islamic Resurgence, and State Autonomy: The Response of the Malaysian State to 'Islamic Globalization'" in Nelson, Meerman and Abdul Rahman Embong (Eds.), *Globalization and National Autonomy*, p. 265.
2. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Characteristics of the Islamic State*, Islamic Studies Occasional Papers 3, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1993, pp. 21–22.
3. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Characteristics of the Islamic State*, p. 8.
4. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Islamic State: Origins, Definition and Salient Attributes" in Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, p. 292.
5. Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Delhi: Hindustan Publications, 1984, pp. 1–26.
6. Halstead, "An Islamic concept of education", pp. 519–520.
7. Cf. Ibrahim Saad, *Pendidikan dan Politik di Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981; Brown, *Making ethnic citizens: The politics and practice of education in Malaysia*; Lee Hock Guan, "Globalisation and Ethnic Integration in Malaysian Education", pp. 230–259.
8. Lee Hock Guan, *Education and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia*, ISEAS Working Paper Social and Cultural Issues No. 1, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008, p. 17.
9. Nelson, "Malaysia's Education Policies: Balancing Multiple Goals and Global Pressures", p. 210.
10. Brown, *Making ethnic citizens: The politics and practice of education in Malaysia*, pp. 9–15.
11. "Zaid: Malay supremacy concept has failed", *The Star*, 1 November 2008; "Zaid hits back at critics", *The Star*, 4 November 2008; "Hisham slams Zaid for criticising racial concept", *The Star*, 5 November 2008.

12. Cf. Zaid Ibrahim, "Malaysia – A lost democracy", *Aliran Monthly*, 28(11–12), 33 (2008); Tricia Yeoh, "Identity crisis of race and religion", accessed on 9 January 2009 at http://www.thenutgraph.com/identity-crisis-of-race-and-religion (posted 1 October 2008).
13. Burhanuddin Al-Helmi, *Simposium Tasawuf dan Tarikat*, Ipoh: Pustaka Muda, 2005, p. 35.
14. Farish A. Noor, "The Localization of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS" in Virginia Hooker and Norani Othman (Eds.), *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008, pp. 200–201; Marcinkowski, "Aspects of Shi'ism in Contemporary Southeast Asia", p. 44.
15. Cf. David F. Noble, *Digital Diploma Mills: Technology and the Business Takeover of Higher Education*, Penang: Citizens International, 2002; Ivan Illich, *Redefining Education: Why We Must Disestablish School*, Penang: Citizens International, 2003.

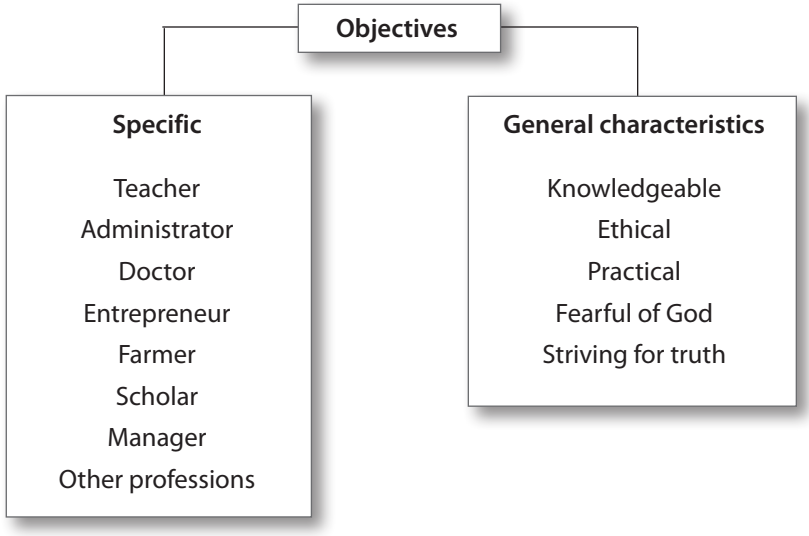
APPENDIXES

Appendix A

The twin objectives of Darul Arqam's education system

1. To produce Islamic scholars of high integrity based on the Quran and *Sunnah*, and who lead society towards truth.
2. To produce technocrats possessing high integrity based on the Quran and *Sunnah* and who can develop all aspects of life in Islam.

Diagram 1



Adapted from: Ashaari Muhammad, "*Kaedah Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Berteraskan Islam: Pendekatan Darul Arqam*" in Muhammad Syukri Salleh (Ed.), *Konsep dan Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Berteraskan Islam* (Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1990), p. 144.

Appendix B

The curriculum of Darul Arqam's educational system

Fundamentals

1. Authoritatively derived from the Quran, *Sunnah*, *ijma'* (scholarly consensus) and *qiyas* (analogical deduction).
2. Continuous teaching-learning process within a fully residential environment.
3. Separation between male and female students.
4. Familial training towards mutual cooperation and camaraderie.

Types of syllabus

Type	Level	Age/Duration
1. Religious stream	Kindergarten	4–6 years
	Ibtida'iah (Primary)	5 years
	Intiqaliah (Transitional)	1 year
	I'dadiah (Lower secondary)	3 years
	Sanawiah (Upper secondary)	2 years
	Sanawi Aliah (matriculation)	2 years
	Jamiah (higher education)	4 years
2. Missionary and leadership training	Intensive religious course for school leavers with 'O' Levels	3 years
3. Mua'llaf	Basic religious course for converts	2 years
4. *Tahfiz* al-Quran	Post-*Sanawiah* Course on memorisation of the Quran	4 years
5. Academic stream	Forms 1–6 for lower certificate (LCE), 'O' Level and 'A' Level qualifications	

Adapted from: Ashaari Muhammad, "*Kaedah Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Berteraskan Islam: Pendekatan Darul Arqam*", p. 145.

Appendix C

Subjects taught in Darul Arqam's schools within the religious stream

Primary level	*Tawhid* (Theology) *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) *Ahklaq* (Morality) *Tafsir* (Quranic exegesis) *Hadith* Arabic	*Sirah* (Life of the Prophet) English Malay General science Health education	Civics Geography
Secondary level	*Tawhid* *Fiqh* *Ahklaq* *Tafsir* *Hadith* Arabic language	Sirah *Nahu* (Grammar) Saraf Balaghah Tajwid *Khat* (Calligraphy)	Mathematics Malay English
Higher education	*Tawhid* *Fiqh* *Ayat al-ahkam* *Hadith al-ahkam* *Ulum hadith* *Nahu/saraf*		Management English General knowledge Scientific philosophy Islamic thought

Adapted from: Ashaari Muhammad, "*Kaedah Pelaksanaan Pembangunan Berteraskan Islam: Pendekatan Darul Arqam*", p. 146.

Appendix D

Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's poem, completed 10.45 p.m., 28 February 1984, in Darud-Diafah, Kuwait

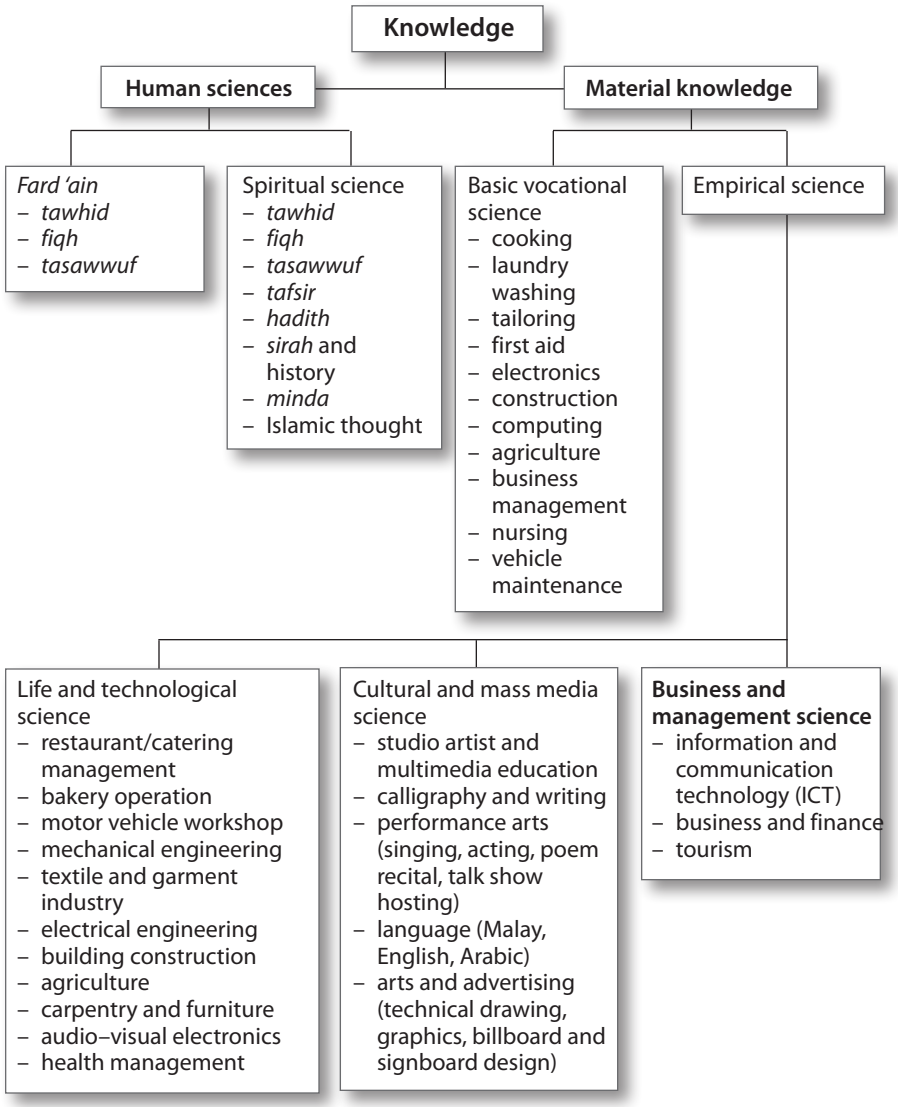
Pendidikan Arqam

Pendidikan Arqam tersendiri
Unik dan berlainan sekali
La syarfi ha wala gharbiyah
Tali Islamiah insya-Allah sunnah Nabi
Pergaulan lelaki dan wanita terbatas sekali
Bukan untuk makan gaji
Bukan untuk degree
Tapi untuk berdikari
Untuk menjadi abid pemuja Allah
Menjadi hamba yang jauh sekali
Untuk menyambung lidah jemaah sendiri
Bila terpisah dari madrasah
Untuk mengembang sayap jemaah
Agar terbang merata negeri
Untuk menyambung lidah Nabi
Sebagai mujahid pengikut Nabi
Bagi mendaulatkan kalimah Allah
Agar menjadi orang bertaqwa
Melatih pelajar-pelajar laksana anak
Guru-guru dan pemimpin laksana ayah
Satu sama lain terjalin kasih saying
Untuk melahirkan jemaah Islamiah
Yang masing-masing ada peranannya
Mengikut kebolehan, watak dan bakatnya.

Source: Ashaari Muhammad, *Kesedaran* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerangan Al Arqam, 1985), p. 105.

Appendix E

Categorization of knowledge, courses and respective subjects offered in Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB's educational system



Adapted from: Rufaqa' Corporation, Kurikulum & Silibus Institut Model, pp. 3–14.

Appendix F

Levels, age range, course duration and choice of subjects of a student in Darul Arqam-Rufaqa'-GISB's educational system

Level	Age (in years)	Course duration in semesters	*Fard 'ain* and spiritual science	Basic vocational science	Life and technological science	Cultural and mass media science	Business and management science
Transitional	12–13	2	All subjects	All subjects			
Early	13–14	2	All subjects	All subjects			
Junior	14–15	2	All subjects		One or more subjects	One or more subjects	One or more subjects
Senior	15–16	2–3	All subjects		*One or more subjects in any one or more of the elective sciences*		
High level	16–17	2–3	All subjects		*One or more subjects in any one or more of the elective sciences*		
Undergraduate	18 and over	2–3	All subjects		*One or more subjects in any one or more of the elective sciences*		

Adapted from: Rufaqa' Corporation, Kurikulum & Silibus Institut Model, p. 7.

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Note

Quranic references are from *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali,* Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, n.d. (first edition, 1934). The relevant chapter numbers in Roman alphabets, followed by the verse number, are given, for example, "Shame is pitched over them wherever they are found except under a Covenant from Allah (*hablumminallah*) and from men (*hablumminannas*)" (III: 112).

Malaysia's increasingly pronounced Islamic posture has elicited concern from Western strategists, who fear unforeseen changes in its geopolitical trajectory. Among societal activities impacted by Islamic resurgence, Malaysia's educational sector attracts considerable interest. This monograph sheds light on the various forms, patterns and evolutionary trends of Islamic education in Malaysia, utilising paradigms considered autochthonous to the Islamic intellectual tradition. While aims of state-managed and independently-operated Islamic education are theoretically similar, autonomous initiatives of Islamic education in Malaysia have struggled to survive, having to compete with a state that jealously guards its rights over what is deemed to be legitimate in Islam.

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