

# GLOBALISATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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by

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## 1. Introduction

The millennial advent of a Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), pursued by the United States of America (USA) in the wake of devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11), cast gloom on the prospects of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue in an increasingly interdependent world. The USA's 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.<sup>1</sup> However, in the latter years of George W. Bush's presidency (2001-09), more enlightened policy-makers and advisors have been able to recognise the utmost importance of winning the 'battle of ideas' as an indispensable strategy towards achieving the aims of GWOT.<sup>2</sup>

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. Many Western-based accounts attribute a vital role to religious schools in spreading Islamist ideology and maintaining radical nexuses. A study commissioned by the USA Air Force, noting the Malaysian government's concern that "*Islamic schools have become a breeding ground for militant Islam,*" has urged the USA, 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.*"<sup>3</sup> 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 pin-pointing the so-called radical Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. David J. Kilcullen, 'Countering Global Insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2005), pp. 597-617; Barry Desker and Arabinda Acharya, 'Countering the Global Islamist Terrorist Threat', *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (2006), pp. 59-83.

<sup>2</sup> 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*, vol. 618, no. 1 (2008), pp. 212-222.

<sup>3</sup> Angel M. Rabasa, 'Overview' in Angel M. Rabasa et. al, *The Muslim World after 9/11* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), p. 62.

schools in Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

To many international observers, Malaysia has often stood out as a bright spot amidst the generally dismal portrayal of the *ummah* (global Muslim community). Singer mentions Malaysia's exceptional success "in embracing globalization,"<sup>6</sup> and even newly elected USA President Obama acknowledges Kuala Lumpur's "astonishing progress."<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, Malaysia's embrace of modernisation and an open economy is said to have opened floodgates for the importation of transnational Islamist personnel and ideologies, including the radical variety. Caution has been drawn to the fact that Malaysians figure among the most wanted terrorists in Southeast Asia,<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> For example, 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2006), p. 123; Justin Magouirk and Scott Atran, 'Jemaah Islamiyah's radical madrassah networks', *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), pp. 25-41.

<sup>5</sup> *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.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Warren Singer, 'America, Islam, and the 9/11 War', *Current History*, vol. 105, issue 695 (2006), pp. 415-422.

<sup>7</sup> 'Full text: Barack Obama's Cairo speech', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt>, posted 4 June 2009 (accessed 13 November 2009).

<sup>8</sup> 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 Islamiyah* (JI: Islamic Congregation) network.

<sup>9</sup> 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*, pp. 135-143; Kumar Ramakrishna, 'Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2005), pp. 349-354, 358-359.

for the *Jemaah Islamiah* (JI: Islamic Congregation) network and its alleged Malaysian proxy, the clandestine *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM: Mujahidin Group of Malaysia).<sup>10</sup> The KMM, in turn, is said to harbour furtive connections with certain leaders of *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS: Islamic Party of Malaysia),<sup>11</sup> a mainstream opposition party which today helms state governments of Kelantan and Kedah, holds executive council positions in Selangor through participation in the *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR: People's Pact) coalition. Both KMM and PAS boast outstanding transnational connections of their own.<sup>12</sup>

The present study is a modest attempt to redress the jaundiced perspectives found in writings which deal with Islamic education in Southeast Asia in the GWOT era. In arriving at a conceptual understanding of Islamic education, the author utilises paradigms considered autochthonous to the Islamic intellectual tradition and vernacular sources which appeared to have eluded foreign-based studies of Islamic education in Southeast Asia. A more nuanced picture of Islamic education in Southeast Asia will hopefully emerge from the present undertaking.

## 2. Globalisation and Contemporary Southeast Asian Islam

In the 1990s, the term 'globalisation' gained wide currency as a description of the centripetal shrinking of national borders into a 'global village' where technologically-driven homogenising processes of economic, social, cultural, political and even intellectual resources take place wittingly or unwittingly. Globalisation can thus be perceived as a standardising mechanism at multiple levels of analytical units, each level reaching uniformity at different stages. Liberal-capitalist ideologues attach deterministic

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<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Transnational Islam in Malaysia' in Peter Mandaville et. al., *Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia: Movements, Networks, and Conflict Dynamics* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009), pp. 150-153, 161-162.

qualities to globalisation, often relating it to the concurrent processes of modernisation and secularisation. The emergence of Islam as a salient mobilising factor in world politics in the 1970s and 1980s, emanating from mainly the Middle East, was theoretically problematic as the influence of religion was thought to be inversely related to the above processes. The declining importance of primordial factors such as ethnicity and religion was held to be a *fait accompli* in sync with modernisation and later, globalisation.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding the many facets of globalisation one may conceive, its economic dimension, as predicated by the market-driven capitalism of hegemonic Western entities, has received widest prominence in both policy-making and academic circles.<sup>14</sup> Muslims' bitter experiences with earlier phases of globalisation, such as the encounters with medieval Crusades and colonialism, has elicited widespread concern that globalisation results in nothing less than a perpetuation of the *ummah's* humiliation at the hands of Western powers.<sup>15</sup> The wide gulf between the prosperous West and the downtrodden *ummah*, as measured by tangible economic indicators, drags the *ummah* into a vicious circle of urban poverty, deprivation of education and alienation among Muslim youths consequently driven to extremist interpretations of Islam.<sup>16</sup> In their search for solutions, Muslim elites and intellectuals in their newly independent nation states unleashed a distinct but parallel process of globalisation emphasising Islam's universal ideals. As the argument goes, with the prevalence of transnational economic structures spelling the practical end of the nation-state, the *ummatic* character of Islamic unity offers for Muslims the best interface in their unavoidable engagement with a foreign-imposed

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Fox, 'Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations', *International Studies Review*, vol. 3, issue 3 (2001), pp. 53-59; Mustapha Kamal Pasha and Ahmed I. Samatar (1996), 'The Resurgence of Islam' in James H. Mittelman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 191-192.

<sup>14</sup> Pasha and Samatar, 'The Resurgence of Islam', pp. 189-191.

<sup>15</sup> Abdul Rashid Moten, 'Modernization and the Process of Globalization: The Muslim Experience and Responses' in K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), pp. 236-246.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Johnston, 'Disparities of Wealth Are Seen as Fuel for Terrorism', *International Herald Tribune*, 20 December 2001. In a recent interview with *Time* magazine, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono identified "*lack of education, poverty, marginalization and pockets of radicalism*" as some of the roots and causes of terrorism in Indonesia; see 'Q&A: We Want to Harness the Forces of Moderation.', *Time*, 16 November 2009.

quagmire of a liberal-capitalist 'global village'.<sup>17</sup> One manifestation of such Islamic globalisation, or rather counter-globalisation, the increasing significance attached to the role of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in charting the course of recent Muslim states' foreign policies.<sup>18</sup> As a rapidly developing region, Southeast Asia is susceptible to the two distinct, yet similarly even if unequally, powerful forces of globalisation.<sup>19</sup> Both have influenced the region's recent upsurge of political Islam, with Southeast Asia conventionally being considered to be at the receiving end of both global nexuses. In both sets of relationships, the rich characteristics which have marked out Southeast Asian Islam as *sui generis* have often been overlooked or given perfunctory mention.

Yet, if we were to map the driving factors behind contemporary political Islam in Southeast Asia, it would be difficult to draw a clear line separating global and local factors. More often than not, global and local factors have interacted in such a way that regional variables acquire dynamics of their own. While this has been the case in all Southeast Asian states, it is arguably more pronounced in the Muslim-majority states of Malaysia and Indonesia. Both countries were affected by the wave of Islamism that reached Southeast Asia in the 1980s from not only from the Middle East but also from Islamist diasporas in the West.<sup>20</sup> Whereas the Malaysian state responded accommodatively, Indonesia resorted to repression of political Islamists, hence the higher receptiveness of Islamist elements to radical tendencies which dominated the socio-political scene in the first few years following the downfall of Suharto's New Order regime in 1998.<sup>21</sup> Turning to the plight of aggrieved Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia, scholars have emphasised their 'fundamental grievances' such as prolonged socio-

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<sup>17</sup> Pasha and Samatar, 'The Resurgence of Islam', p. 196; Moten, 'Modernization and the Process of Globalization', p. 249.

<sup>18</sup> Jeff Haynes, 'Transnational religious actors and international politics', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2001), pp. 152-156.

<sup>19</sup> Johan H. Meuleman, 'The History of Islam in Southeast Asia: Some Questions and Debates' in Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 35; Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, 'The Impact of September 11 on Islam in Southeast Asia' in Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 331.

<sup>20</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, 'Global and Local in Indonesian Islam', *Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2 (1999), pp. 169-170; Azyumardi Azra, 'Bali and Southeast Asian Islam: Debunking the Myths' in Ramakrishna and Tan (eds.), *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> Rizal Sukma, 'Indonesia and the Challenge of Radical Islam After October 12' in Ramakrishna and Tan (eds.), *After Bali*, pp. 344-350; Noorhaidi Hasan, 'September 11 and Islamic Militancy in Post-New Order Indonesia' in Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia*, pp. 305-308.

economic dislocation and systematic denial of indigenous identities as underlying causes of dissatisfaction which eventually erupted into sporadic insurrection.<sup>22</sup> Without discounting international religious solidarity as a contributory factor in the rebellions of Muslim minorities of southern Thailand and southern Philippines, national political considerations have been more important in conditioning the nature and extent of political Islam in both territories.<sup>23</sup> As far links with international militant Islamist networks are concerned, they simply tap upon these root causes, supplying the necessary training and infrastructural know-how in order to instigate terrorist feats. The much-touted Al Qaeda network, rather than being the focus of allegiance from Southeast Asian Islamist militants, was more likely a source of inspiration whose foray into Southeast Asia utilised local insurgents whose domestic agenda and concerns preceded and outweighed those of global pan-Islamism.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Islamic Education: Its Concept and Genesis

For analytical purposes, 'Islamic education' in this paper 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> *Ta'lim*, from the root word '*allama*

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Andrew Tan, 'Southeast Asia as the 'Second Front' in the War Against Terrorism: Evaluating Threats and Responses', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2003), pp. 134-135.

<sup>23</sup> R.J. May, 'The Religious Factor in Three Minority Movements: The Moro of the Philippines, the Malays of Thailand, and Indonesia's West Papuans', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1992), pp. 409-411.

<sup>24</sup> Barry Desker, 'Islam in Southeast Asia: The Challenge of Radical Interpretations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2003), p. 421.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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:*

(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 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 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.<sup>27</sup> *Ta'dib*, therefore, reflects a moralistic outlook on life within a hierarchical structure of authority which recognises the sublime position of God as "*the Fountain of all true knowledge,*" to be followed by legitimate men of "*intelligence, spiritual knowledge and virtue.*"<sup>28</sup> While *tarbiyyah* can be generalised 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

Knowledge (Arabic: *'ilm*) is a sacred concept derived 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' (Arabic: *ma'na*) here referring to its authentic or correct version as "*determined by the Islamic vision of reality and truth as*

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*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*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2004), p. 522.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas, 'Introduction' in Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas (ed.), *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, p. 34.



projected by the *Quranic conceptual system*.<sup>31</sup> 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*.”<sup>32</sup> Since education necessarily involves the act of seeking knowledge, which makes up the content of education, the purpose of Islamic education can be summarised as “*to produce a good man*,” ‘good’ here referring to the ‘justice’ (Arabic: ‘*adl*’) one accords oneself in acknowledging God as one’s “*Possessor, Creator, Sustainer, Cherisher, Provider*.”<sup>33</sup> ‘Knowledge’ is here 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> As a result of Western-induced secularisation of Muslim societies, Muslims have become disorientated as to the aim of education, which has assumed the secular role of merely producing ‘good citizens’ for their nation-states.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning from informal transmission of material from the Quran, Islam’s holy book, and *hadith*<sup>37</sup> 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*

<sup>31</sup> Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, *Budaya Ilmu: Konsep, Prasyarat dan Pelaksanaan di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Nurin Enterprise, 1989), pp. 3-4.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Attas, ‘Introduction’, pp. 2-3; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Attas, ‘Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education’, pp. 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

'*ain*<sup>38</sup> syllabus. As the body of knowledge further expanded, Muslim scholars mastered the worldly sciences, and religious instruction was broadened to incorporate *fard kifayah*<sup>39</sup> subjects such as *al-hisab* (mathematics), *al-handasah* (geometry), *mantiq* (logic), *al-tib* (medicine), *al-jighrafiya* (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 Southeast Asia. The medieval sociologist Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) classified knowledge into '*ulum naqliyyah* (revealed sciences) and '*ulum aqliyyah* (rational sciences), which correspond to the 'perennial knowledge' and 'acquired knowledge' categories proposed by the 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.<sup>40</sup> 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 prioritised as forming the core of the curriculum.<sup>41</sup>

Islamic education started off via informal channels connecting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with a close circle of relatives and companions in the holy city of Mecca. Since 610 AD., the Prophet received divine revelations which were relayed to this circle and later spread to the whole Arab Peninsula through trade networks. The methods utilised by Prophet to disseminate his teachings included lecturing (*kulliyah*), memorisation, discussion (*muhadathah*), dialogue, debating (*mujadalah*), experiencing, travelling (*rihlah*) and study circle (*halaqah*).<sup>42</sup> As the Prophet was *ummiy* (unlettered), he conducted oral lessons of verses which were later

<sup>38</sup> *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 legitimise his or her Islamic faith.

<sup>39</sup> *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.

<sup>40</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 45.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 68.

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 verandah known as *al-Suffah* was constructed to host formal lessons for delegations who visited the Prophet from the rest of the Arab Peninsula.<sup>43</sup> 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*, secondary education of the students proceeded to the mosque.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> Henceforth began formal Islamic education which was not only state-subsidised 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*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 26-27; Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>44</sup> M.A. Rauf, 'Islamic Education', *Intisari*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1965), p. 14; Mohd. Yusuf Ahmad, *Falsafah dan Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, pp. 56-62.

<sup>45</sup> Rauf, 'Islamic Education', p. 15; Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

#### 4. Globalisation of Islamic Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial Southeast Asia

As a faith with an inherent missionary impulse transcending ethno-cultural and national considerations, Islam's vitality as a globalising force has always been beyond doubt. Ever since Islam established a foothold in Southeast Asia in the thirteenth century via the efforts of sufi missionaries,<sup>47</sup> its Muslims, most of whom were from the indigenous Malay ethnic group, have maintained transnational contacts with peoples of Middle Eastern, Chinese, Indian and European origins. One of the earliest centres of Islamic education in Southeast Asia was Malay Sultanate of Malacca (1414-1511). Its ruler Parameswara's conversion to Islam upon marriage to the daughter of the Sultan of Pasai in 1414, unleashed enthusiasm for Islamic learning among all sections of Malaccan society.<sup>48</sup> 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: sing. '*alim*'), whom they frequently consulted either through envoys or direct visits to their homes.<sup>49</sup> As a measure of Malacca's global significance, it has been related that the conversion of Java was fore-ordained in Malacca, as two of the illustrious *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) deemed responsible for Islamising Java, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri, were educated in Malacca under the tutelage of the Jeddah-hailed Sheikh Wali Lanang.<sup>50</sup> The Pulau Upih institution at which both saints studied is regarded as the prototype of the *pondok*<sup>51</sup> 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 Aceh. After the defeat of Malacca

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'The Impact of Sufism on Muslims in Pre-colonial Malaysia: An Overview of Interpretations', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2002), p. 469.

<sup>48</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 122, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>50</sup> Osman Bakar, 'Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World' in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations* (London: SCM Press, 1991) pp. 266-267.

<sup>51</sup> 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*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2004), p. 7.

to the Portuguese in 1511, the Aceh kingdom (1496-1650) took over Malacca's mantle as the regional centre of Islamic education. *Pondok* schools made a comeback in colonial Southeast Asia in the early nineteenth century i.e. after the downfall of Aceh, through the efforts of *ulama* from Patani in southern Thailand, although links with northern Sumatra were never severed.<sup>52</sup>

Until the Second World War, the *pondok* or *pesantren* institution was the quintessence of Islamic education in Southeast Asia. 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 *kitab*s (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 *kitab*s 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 ten 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*. Memorisation of lessons was strictly emphasised. 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. As testament to their transnational reputation within the region, famous *pondoks* in Malaya and Patani in southern Thailand attracted students from as far as Sumatra and Cambodia.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 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.

<sup>53</sup> For details on the *pondok* educational system and its global outreach, see Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, 'The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan' in *Tamadun Islam di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur:

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-Muslim diaspora known as the *Jawi* community, boasting prolific authors of household *kitab*s 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 Southeast Asia that contemporary travelling accounts unofficially designated Aceh and Kelantan as *Serambi Makkah* (forecourt of Mecca). Many of these prominent Meccan-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 Southeast Asia in their simultaneous capacities as *khalifah* (vicegerent) of a *tariqah* and *ulama* who founded *pondoks* which functioned also as sufi *zawwiyahs* or *khanqahs* (hospices or hermitages).<sup>54</sup> Many historical accounts of the colonial period indicate that both the British and Dutch colonial governments were perturbed by the subversive implications of excessive contacts between the Malay-Muslims and their Middle Eastern brethren through the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>55</sup>

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Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980), pp. 192-194; Taufik Abdullah, 'The Pesantren in Historical Perspective' in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (eds.), *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 80-107; 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; Hasan Madmarn, 'The Strategy of Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia: Thailand Experience' in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 225-237.

<sup>54</sup> Mohammad Redzuan Othman, 'The Role of Makka-educated Malays in the Development of Early Islamic Scholarship and Education in Malaya', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1998), pp. 146-157; 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*, vol. 31, no. 1 (1993), pp. 53-59; Hasan Madmarn, 'The Strategy of Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia: Thailand Experience', pp. 232-235.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 40-43; Anthony Reid, 'Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia', *Journal of Asian Studies* 26 (1967), pp. 270-271; Abdul Kadir Haji Din, 'Economic Implications of Moslem Pilgrimage from Malaysia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 4, no. 1 (1982), pp. 60-63; William R. Roff, 'The Meccan

In the 1920s, the flow of Malay students shifted in large numbers to Al-Azhar University in Cairo, influenced by two developments. First, the advent of the steamship as a mode of transportation plying the Suez Canal route. 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.<sup>56</sup> 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 staunchly *Sunni* Malay-Indonesian community in Hijaz.<sup>57</sup> Thereafter, Al-Azhar played a leading role in Malay students' political socialisation 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.<sup>58</sup> As a contemporary student famously remarked, "In Mecca one could study religion only; in Cairo, politics as well."<sup>59</sup> Malay-Indonesian students never saw themselves as belonging to separate ethnic nationalities, and organised themselves into a single association.<sup>60</sup> Collaborating with Indonesian anti-colonial activists such as Djanan Thaib, Muchtar Lutfi, Iljas Ja'kub and Mahmud Junus, Malayan students launched two politically aggressive journals, *Seruan Azhar* (Call of Al-

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Pilgrimage: Its Meaning for Southeast Asian Islam' in Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns (eds.), *Islam in Asia: (vol. II: Southeast and East Asia)* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), p. 239; Fred R. von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam: Interaction between Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), pp. 4, 10, 15.

<sup>56</sup> *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'tiqad Ahlussunnah Wal-jamaah* (Kota Bharu: Pustaka Aman Press, 1978), pp. 309-332.

<sup>57</sup> 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.

<sup>58</sup> William R. Roff, 'Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's', *Indonesia*, vol. 9 (1970), pp. 74-75, fn. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Roff, 'Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's', p. 74.

<sup>60</sup> 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.

Azhar) (1925-28) and *Pilehan Timor* (Choice of the East) (1927-28). Free from censorship regulations, these periodicals freely indulged in topics which were taboo in Malaya, focusing on Pan-Islamism, Pan-Malayism and anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>61</sup> Despite recurrent financial constraints, both *Seruan Azhar* and *Pilehan Timor* enjoyed wide subscriptions and unrestricted circulation throughout Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>62</sup>

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 inter-marriage, business enterprise, charitable deeds and the command of Arabic and religious knowledge, these Arabs had gained *entrée* into and won admiration from Malay-Muslim society.<sup>63</sup> Together with the *Jawi Peranakan* - locally born Indian Muslims, they started a flurry of publications which 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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> All had been influenced by, and were in close contact with, the *Al-Manar* (The Beacon) circle in Cairo,<sup>66</sup> and through the periodical *Al-Imam* (1906-08), modelled on the Arabic

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<sup>61</sup> Radin Soenarno, 'Malay Nationalism, 1896-1941', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1960), pp. 8-10; William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>62</sup> Md. Sidin Ahmad Ishak and Mohammad Redzuan Othman, *The Malays in the Middle East*, pp. 64-66.

<sup>63</sup> Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>64</sup> 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*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1981), pp. 95-96.

<sup>65</sup> Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 59-65.

<sup>66</sup> 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). While Abduh is widely regarded as the father of Islamic modernism, Rashid Rida's synthesis of Abduh's thoughts heralded the *salafi* school of Islamic reform which stresses on emulating the practises of pious predecessors within the first three centuries of the Prophet Muhammad's demise. In Malaya, the *Al-Manar* strand was to have the greatest and longest-lasting impact amongst contemporary reformist impulses; see Fred R. von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam: Interaction between Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (Gainesville: University



newspapers *Al-Manar* and *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* (The Indissoluble Link), they disseminated their ideas.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> *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, *Kaum Muda* movement was left politically moribund by the 1940s.<sup>69</sup>

While its political reverberations were short-lived, the *Kaum Muda*'s educational impact was perennial. *Kaum Muda*'s expose of the woes engulfing the Malay-Muslims awakened societal elites as to the urgency of reform so as not 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.<sup>70</sup> Beginning with the pioneering move of Madrasah Al-Ma'arif, founded in Singapore in 1936 by the sufi-oriented yet reformist-inclined Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi (d. 1964), to open enrolment to female students,<sup>71</sup> *madrasahs* gradually assumed co-educational status. Many of these *madrasahs* fiercely guarded their independence and were the alma mater of many anti-colonial fighters belonging to the

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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*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1999), pp. 79-81.

<sup>67</sup> 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.

<sup>68</sup> Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>69</sup> Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>70</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 196; Roff, 'Pondoks, Madrasahs and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia', pp. 10-13.

<sup>71</sup> Ni'mah bt Hj Ismail Umar, *Fadhlullah Suhaimi* (Ulu Kelang: Progressive Publishing House, 1998), p. 62; Syed Muhd Khairudin AlJunied and Dayang Istiaisyah Hussin, 'Estranged from the Ideal Past: Historical Evolution of Madrasahs in Singapore', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2005), p. 253.

leftist stream, which saw a peculiar intertwining between Islamic and Malay-Indonesian nationalist ideals. Pan-Islamist sentiments combined forces with Indonesian-imported anti-colonialism to produce the first stirrings of Malay nationalism, conceptualised around the ideals of a Greater Malaya (*Melayu-Raya*) and Greater Indonesia (*Indonesia-Raya*).<sup>72</sup>

## 5. Globalisation of Islamic Education in Post-Colonial Southeast Asia: Thailand, Indonesian and Malaysian Cases Compared

Post-Second World War decolonisation and independence brought about new dilemmas for Southeast Asian Muslims, especially with reference to the implementation of Islam in their daily lives, of which education was a cardinal part. Generally, Muslims found themselves at the crossroads between loyalty to the nation state and allegiance to ideals of Islam, which had figured amongst significant forces propelling the fight towards political independence. On one side of the coin, some Muslims became minorities who were denied recognition of their political and legal rights, thus fuelling irredentist demands and separatist movements which have gained sympathy from the *ummah* but conversely have been at the receiving end of assimilationist policies and repression perpetrated by their own governments. The most prominent cases have been the struggles of the Malay-Muslims of Thailand's southernmost provinces of Patani, Yala and Narathiwat, and the Moro-Muslims of southern Philippines. In addition, Singaporean Muslims were instantly transformed from a numerical majority to minority when Singapore left the Federation of Malaysia on 9 August 1965. In all three countries, Muslims have been involved in a perennial tussle with their sovereign governments in their efforts to preserve the independence and integrity of a genuine Islamic education. The task has been made especially difficult with the stigma attached to independent Islamic schools and colleges as dens of potential insurrectionists who have allegedly been indoctrinated, through divisive curricula and educational methods, to fight their infidel

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<sup>72</sup> Radin Soenarno, 'Malay Nationalism, 1896-1941', pp. 8-10; Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 87-89.

governments. In showing how Islamic education has been globalised within a Muslim-minority political milieu, Thailand has been chosen as an example.

In southern Thailand, education has been a long-standing bone of contention between the central government in Bangkok and Malay-Muslims who have persistently resisted attempts to dilute their Islamicity, which they deem as inextricably tied to their Malay identity. Since the 1930s, successive Thai governments have endeavoured to coerce the Malay-Muslims into dropping Malay and Arabic in favour of the Thai language as their medium of education, and to absorb *pondoks* into the national education system by transforming them into private Islamic schools eligible for state financial and manpower support but at the expense of stricter regulation. In 1970-71, legal registration of *pondoks* was enforced and no new ones was allowed to open. In 1982, officially registered *pondoks* acquired the status of private Islamic schools by law, with a discernible change in curriculum content meant to inculcate 'Thainess' as part of the Muslims' national identity.<sup>73</sup> Within Thailand's assimilationist model of national integration, dual ethno-national identities were not recognised. Education became a major tool of the Thai state to effect the transformation of Patani Malay-Muslims into 'Thai Muslims', with a corresponding shift in their focus of loyalty from the historic Malay sultanate of Patani to the present Thai state and monarchy.<sup>74</sup>

Nonetheless, Thailand's coercive educational policies merely globalised the practitioners of Islamic education by driving them to pursue higher studies abroad. Ironically, policies designed to stem domestic insurgency had the long term unintended effect of introducing Thai Muslim youth to variegated and perhaps even radical strands of Islamic activism imported from South Asia and the Middle East, their two most favoured destinations for Islamic qualifications.<sup>75</sup> Alumni linkages lead to informal memoranda of understanding and the founding of sister institutions or branch campuses in Thailand. Hence the Islamic educational terrain of Thailand today has been convoluted by not only the official private Islamic schools, but also by the stubborn presence of unregistered

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<sup>73</sup> Hasan Madmarn, 'The Strategy of Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia: Thailand Experience', pp. 237-238; *Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Patrick Jory, 'From *Melayu Patani* to Thai Muslim: The spectre of ethnic identity in southern Thailand', *South East Asia Research*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2007), pp. 260-263, 275.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Liow, 'The Pondok Schools of Southern Thailand: Bastion of Islamic Education or Hotbed of Militancy', *IDSS Commentaries 32/2004* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2004), p. 2; *Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand*, p. 2.

*pondoks* and the establishments of schools affiliated with foreign-based Islamist movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Jamaat Tabligh from South Asia, the sufi-inclined Darul Arqam from Malaysia and most recently, the Muhammadiyah from Indonesia.<sup>76</sup> At the official level, Wahhabi-Salafi reformism has penetrated Thailand's Islamic educational sphere through the efforts of Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, the Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud University alumnus who has successfully harnessed his wide Middle Eastern contacts towards supporting the founding of the state-approved Yala Islamic University. Amidst rumours that Dr. Ismail was involved in spreading Ji wings in Thailand, plus financial difficulties arising from the post-9/11 moratorium placed on Saudi Arabia-derived funds, he has dexterously aligned himself with state-sanctioned Islamic causes, which included stints in the National Reconciliation Commission, the Senate and as advisor to the *Chularatmontri* or *Sheikh al-Islam*.<sup>77</sup>

Fixation among policy-making circles that there must have been foreign hands involved in the new cycle of violence since January 2004, showcasing unprecedented levels of sophistication and coordination,<sup>78</sup> probably influenced the state's hardline policies which had *pondoks* and their teachers as favourite targets for unwarranted searches, interrogation and even abduction.<sup>79</sup> This only aggravated the situation by instigating Muslim retaliatory incursions which witnessed daring arson attacks against state schools, the most potent symbol of persecution of Muslims in Thailand.<sup>80</sup> In actual fact, there is sparse evidence to implicate the global outreach of Islamic educational schemes in southern Thailand with the drastic escalation of religious violence there.<sup>81</sup> The violence has incurred the displeasure of international Muslim NGOs and dented

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<sup>76</sup> Alexander Horstmann, 'The Revitalization of Islam in Southeast Asia: The Cases of Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh', *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2006), pp. 73-74; Muhammadiyah Offers Thai South Help', [http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article\\_C&cid=1188043914166&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1188043914166&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout), posted 27 August 2007 (accessed 14 November 2009); Joseph Liow, 'Local Networks and Transnational Islam in Thailand (with emphasis on the southernmost provinces)' in Peter Mandaville et. al., *Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia*, p. 197.

<sup>77</sup> Liow, 'Local Networks and Transnational Islam in Thailand (with emphasis on the southernmost provinces)', pp. 200-204.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph Liow, 'The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 27 (2004), p. 536.

<sup>79</sup> Liow, 'The Pondok Schools of Southern Thailand: Bastion of Islamic Education or Hotbed of Militancy', p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Liow, 'The Security Situation in Southern Thailand', p. 531.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Liow, 'International Jihad and Muslim Radicalism in Thailand? Toward an Alternative Interpretation', *Asia Policy*, no. 2 (2006), pp. 95-97.

Thailand's image within the *umma*.<sup>82</sup> The more accommodative policies of governments following the ouster of Thaksin Shinawatra in September 2006, have sought to locate Islamic education as a solution rather than the crux of the southern Thailand problem. For example, in 2007, exchange visits between delegations of the education ministries of Thailand and Malaysia took place in an effort to come up with proposals to reform Islamic education in southern Thailand;<sup>83</sup> a rare acknowledgement of how pivotal is the role of Islamic developments in Malaysia in determining the path undertaken by its Malay-Muslim brethren of Thailand.<sup>84</sup> Paradoxically, even if such reforms were undertaken, it is not necessarily a harbinger of peace, for recruitment of insurgents in southern Thailand schools works through informal educational channels rather than resulting from skewed interpretations of materials in formal curricula.<sup>85</sup>

On other side of the coin, the Muslim-majority countries of Indonesia and Malaysia undertook distinct paths towards globalisation of Islamic education. The 1945 Indonesian Constitution is essentially a secular document which paves the way for the republic to be governed without recourse to principles of any religion. Embedded into the preamble of the Constitution is the Five Principles (*Pancasila*) which form the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian nation-state, viz. belief in the one and only God, a just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives, and social justice for the whole people of Indonesia.<sup>86</sup> In the face of opposition from non-Muslim leaders and secular-nationalists, Islamists had to drop the original 'seven words' of the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter), which would have added the obligation "to implement the *shari'ah*" as among Muslims' constitutional responsibilities. In 1959, calls for *Piagam Jakarta* were finally suppressed by Sukarno's presidential decree. Following the downfall of President Soeharto, who had systematically depoliticised Islam and enforced

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. 'Groups team up to send open letter calling for peace in southern Thailand', *The Star*, 29 June 2009.

<sup>83</sup> *50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Pendidikan Islam, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2009), pp. 81-82, 134.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Jory, 'From *Melayu Patani* to Thai Muslim', pp. 263-268.

<sup>85</sup> *Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand*, pp. 6-10.

<sup>86</sup> M.B. Hooker, 'Perspectives on *Shari'a* and the State' in Virginia Hooker and Amin Saikal (eds.), *Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 203.

*Pancasila* as the sole ideological basis of lawful organizations, however, a handful of Islamist parties have resurrected demands for *Piagam Jakarta*.<sup>87</sup>

Ironically, the long-time divorce between Islam and the state throughout both Sukarno and Soeharto's protracted administrations (1945-65, 1967-98) allowed Islamic education in Indonesia to flourish at the hands of independent civic organisations such as the modernist Muhammadiyah and the traditionalist *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU: Renaissance of *Ulama*), founded in 1912 and 1926 respectively. Throughout this lengthy duration, the progress of Islamic education was overseen by the *Departemen Agama* (Department of Religion) rather than the Ministry of Education. But outright intervention in affairs of *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* was precluded by government self-restraint, ever mindful of the longer history and greater hold on society possessed by the civic organisations. Early attempts in 1950-51 to lower religious content in their curricula failed, as *pesantren* masters were reluctant to accept reforms imposed from a government seen to have come under communist influence.<sup>88</sup> An ardent admirer of Turkish-imported Kemalist secularism and an exemplar of the inclination among post-colonial Muslim leaders towards ideological hybridism, President Sukarno proudly professed a simultaneous devotion to non-institutionalised religion and Marxism, seeing no contradiction between the former's theism and the latter's atheism.<sup>89</sup>

In 1972, Soeharto issued a presidential decree to unite non-religious and religious educational streams under the Ministry of Education, but with futile results. Only with the spawning of the *Departemen Agama*-backed *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN: State Institute of Islamic Studies), which offered an avenue to thousands of *pesantren* graduates to pursue tertiary education and gain qualifications comparable to those obtained by their state school counterparts, did the *pesantrens* warm to the government's integrative efforts. The creation of IAINs was bolstered by several crucial appointments of *pesantren* graduates who had successfully ascended the modern educational ladder, in particular that of Professors A. Mukti Ali and Munawir Sjadzali to the position of

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<sup>87</sup> Azyumardi Azra 'Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia' in Virginia Hooker and Amin Saikal (eds.), *Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium*, pp. 137-140, 145-146.

<sup>88</sup> Farish A Noor, *Thinking the Unthinkable: The Modernization and Reform of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia*, RSIS Working paper no. 152 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 85-87.

Minister of Religious Affairs in 1971 and 1983 respectively.<sup>90</sup> What emerged from the appointment of scholars to ministerial portfolios responsible for Islam was a research-based emphasis in Islamic education, as amply demonstrated by the less than dogmatic approach adopted by many IAINs which later were elevated to the status *Universitas Islam Negeri* (UIN: State Islamic Universities). UINs have proven to be bastions against Islamist radicalism, which elicits more support from Muslim students who underwent modern education at so-called 'secular' universities.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1980s, the Indonesian government began sponsoring state *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* whose curriculum content emphasised modern rather than traditional religious subjects. This move could have been a precursor to the next failed attempt to absorb all religious schools under the Ministry of Education, via a Revised Draft Law on National Education tabled in 1988. Overwhelmed by protests from independent Islamic groups, the final outcome, Law No. 2/1989, maintained non-state operators' rights to provide Islamic education.<sup>92</sup> As a result of the dominance of the 'civic religion' form of Islamic discourse in the Soeharto era, Islam became a very important driver for socio-educational change without being overtly political. As confirmed by results of opinion surveys and general elections, enthusiasm for Islam has not translated into an outburst of support for Islamist political parties, whose scripturalist projection of Islam as necessarily involving imposition of *shari'ah* (Islamic law) is not necessarily attuned with a general understanding of Islam as primarily a socio-cultural and educational phenomenon.<sup>93</sup> Globalisation of Islamic education took the form of engendering innovative thought and practice which have made their mark, albeit amidst controversies, in the *ummah*. Within Southeast Asia, the position of Indonesia as a beehive of novel Islamic thought is undisputed. The hope Bassam Tibi gives to "*Southeast Asian Muslims*" to ease "*the desperate situation of Islamic civilization*," is pertinent especially to Indonesian intellectuals.<sup>94</sup> With reference to the quality of neo-modernist Islamic thought and scholarship as developed by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid in Indonesia,

<sup>90</sup> Farish A Noor, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 17, 20.

<sup>91</sup> Farish A Noor, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 23-24, 27-30.

<sup>92</sup> Farish A Noor, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> Azra 'Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia', p. 143; Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle, 'Politics, Islam, and Public Opinion', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2004), pp. 110-123.

<sup>94</sup> Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. xiv.

Greg Barton is firm that “Indonesia can no longer objectively be said to be of peripheral importance to the Islamic world.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Nurcholish’s ideas influenced not only Soeharto, who eventually made overtures to Islamic civic activism in 1990 through his patronage of the Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI: *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*), but also made a profound impact on Malaysia’s Islamist icon Anwar Ibrahim, as embodied in his own concoction of *Islam Madani* (Civil Islam) which he propagated during his tenure as Deputy Prime Minister (1994-98).<sup>96</sup>

In the post-Soeharto era, despite rising concern over the global terrorist threat, the fourteen thousand or so *pesantrens* have largely maintained their independence. The National Education Act No. 20/2003 recognises three outlets through which Islamic education may be legally transmitted, viz. the formal, non-formal and informal channels; the latter two thereby subsuming *pesantren* and *madrasah* education into the national education system. Only about twenty percent of privately educated Muslim *santris* (religious stream students) study using a fully government-instituted curriculum.<sup>97</sup> However, research on different varieties of independent *pesantrens* conducted by Jakarta-based RIDEP (Research Institute for Education and Peace) field researchers in 2005, covering West Java, Central Java, East Java and Makassar, reveals that a large number of established independent *pesantrens* had willingly accepted curricula offered by the *Departemen Agama* and the Ministry of National Education. Although such accommodation may have been piecemeal and ambivalent, the urge among *pesantren* masters to adopt modernising reforms in management, pedagogy and acquisition of worldly knowledge among *santris* is encouraging.<sup>98</sup> *Pesantrens* are not hotbeds of militancy, dogmatism and educational backwardness as often assumed by their detractors.

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<sup>95</sup> Greg Barton, ‘Indonesia’s Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual *ulama*: the meeting of Islamic traditionalism and Modernism in neo-Modernist Thought’, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1997), p. 323.

<sup>96</sup> Barton, ‘Indonesia’s Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual *ulama*’, pp. 331, 340-341; Farish A Noor, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 22.

<sup>97</sup> S. Yunanto, Syahrul Hidayat, Abdul Wasik and Sri Nuryanti, ‘Pesantren: The Roots of Modernism, Government Policy and Social Change’ in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>98</sup> Badrudin Harun, ‘NU Pesantren: Majority With Minimum Vision’ in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 59-82; Syahrul Hidayat and Abdul Wasik, ‘Muhammadiyah, PERSIS and LDII Pesantrens: A Failed Development and Marginal Radicalism’ in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 83-108; Sri Nuryanti and Farhan Effendi, ‘Non Affiliation Pesantrens: Slow Modernization in Following the Government Curriculum’ in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 109-136.



Staggeringly, such an observation even applies to the so-called 'movement pesantrens' whose roots can be traced back to S.M. Kartosuwirjo's Darul Islam rebellion against Sukarno's secular state. As far as the surmise that many of them supply foot soldiers for the array of post-Soeharto radical Islamist groups that has emerged,<sup>99</sup> this is possible only when taking into account the pesantrens' informal curricula and alumni network, which are not necessarily intertwined with their official authorities.<sup>100</sup>

Lastly, we turn to Malaysia, which enjoys the reputation of being one of the most advanced Islamic nation states in not only Asia but also the world. Here, 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.*"<sup>101</sup> Although education is placed under federal jurisdiction in its Ninth Schedule, the technical administration of Islam falls under the jurisdiction of the various states which make up the Federation of Malaysia.<sup>102</sup> As such, states have traditionally wielded considerable authority and autonomy over Islamic education, as manifested most clearly in the running of religious schools. However, over the years, this clout has been significantly reduced as the central government tightens its grip over Islamic affairs. The Education Act of 1961 set off a process absorbing Islamic education under the national educational system. Islamic religious lessons were made a core part of the syllabi in both government primary and secondary schools.<sup>103</sup> State governments and the Ministry of Education were assigned responsibilities for recruitment of the teachers in primary schools and secondary school respectively.<sup>104</sup> Thereafter, both state and private Islamic schools registered parallel declines in enrolment.<sup>105</sup> The time allocation for revealed

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Zachary Abuza, 'Muslims, Politics, and Violence in Indonesia: An Emerging Jihadist-Islamist Nexus?', *NBR Analysis*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2004), pp. 25-41.

<sup>100</sup> S. Yunanto, 'Movement Pesantren: Modern Radicalism' in S. Yunanto, et. al, *Islamic Education in South and Southeast Asia*, pp. 137-160.

<sup>101</sup> *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.

<sup>102</sup> *Federal Constitution With Index*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>103</sup> 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* (Bangi: Persatuan Bekas Mahasiswa Islam Timur Tengah, 1994), p. 106.

<sup>104</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 155-157.

<sup>105</sup> 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*

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.<sup>106</sup>

In 1974, the transfer of authority over primary Islamic education from state governments to the federal government was virtually completed.<sup>107</sup> The Ministry of Education subsequently established a Textbook Bureau which controlled the content and discourse of Islamic education by ensuring that schools use only specially approved textbooks written by Ministry-commissioned authors.<sup>108</sup> The founding of an Islamic Teachers Training College (MPI: *Maktab Perguruan Islam*) in 1977 launched the momentum for the full absorption of religious teachers into the federal administrative scheme, culminating with the passing of a 1991 Education Act legitimising the transfer of religious educators hitherto regulated by various states' religious councils (*Majlis Agama Islam*).<sup>109</sup> Following the Cabinet Committee Report on Educational Policy of 1979, which criticised the lack of practical aspects in the delivery of Islamic lessons and the methodical weaknesses of Islamic educators,<sup>110</sup> an Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM: *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*) was launched. Seeking to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills and moral values, KBSM was purportedly guided by resolutions of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977.<sup>111</sup> Since the 1980s, additional core subjects have been introduced to bolster secondary-level Islamic education as a whole. Four of them, viz. Higher Arabic

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

<sup>106</sup> Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, 'Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia', *Bulletin of Education and Research*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2008), pp. 11-12.

<sup>107</sup> Abdul Halim Hj. Mat Diah, *Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran*, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Abdullah Ishak, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pengaruhnya di Malaysia*, p. 179.

<sup>109</sup> 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.

<sup>110</sup> Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, 'Ke Arah Amalan dan Penghayatan Nilai Islam: Satu Pendekatan Bersepadu', pp. 107-108.

<sup>111</sup> Che Noraini Hashim and Hasan Langgulung, 'Islamic Religious Curriculum in Muslim Countries: The Experiences of Indonesia and Malaysia', p. 13.

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-religious streams.<sup>112</sup>

The death knell of independent Islamic education in Malaysia was sounded by the Malaysian government's decision in late 2002 to withdraw automatic per capita grants to private *Sekolahs Agama Rakyat* (SARs: Community Religious Schools), successors of the *pondok* tradition. Not a few from among opposition party leaders and scholars related the move to post- 9/11 pressure exerted by the USA, Malaysia's largest trading partner.<sup>113</sup> Statistics indicate that at the time Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir launched his campaign against SARs, student enrolment in SARs was at an all-time high of 126,000 in 2003.<sup>114</sup> Relenting to grassroots Muslims' protests, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister 2003-09, 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.<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> Under intense financial pressure, many SARs have

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<sup>112</sup> 50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia, p. 51; 'Mata Pelajaran Menengah', <http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=125&lang=my> (accessed 15 November 2009).

<sup>113</sup> 'MB dukacita cadangan ambil sekolah agama rakyat', <http://www.tranungkite.net/lama/b07/harakah676.htm>, posted 3 July 2002 (accessed 16 November 2009); 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.

<sup>114</sup> 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* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2003), 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.

<sup>115</sup> Singh, *Framing Islamic Education in Malaysia: Transnationalism, Educational Politics, and Affirmative Action*, p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> 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, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand, 24-25 February 2007; 50 Tahun Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia, pp. 113-119.

effectively foregone their independence in exchange for the status of fully aided government religious schools (SABK: *Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan*).<sup>117</sup>

The changeover of the stewardship of government from the Islamic-educated Abdullah Badawi to the Western-educated Najib Razak in April 2009 has given no signal 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: *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."<sup>118</sup> The ideal form and practice of an Islamic curriculum, as conceived for instance by Syed Naguib Al-Attas,<sup>119</sup> remains far-fetched in state-sanctioned Islamic education in Malaysia. Whatever form of globalisation that is supposed to take place with respect to Islamic education in Malaysia, will continually be mediated by the state. The outcome in terms of enforcement of a homogenised form of Islamic orthodoxy, deviancy from which is criminalised by states' religious laws, is all too obvious in Malaysia.

Islamic education in Malaysia has lost much of its globalising potential by making its point of reference the Malaysian nation-state rather than the *ummah*. Policies pertaining to Islamic education were undertaken based upon political interests. Without breaking the stranglehold that PAS has over SARs in Kelantan, which it ruled in 1959-78 and has been controlling since 1990, developed through many decades of networking between the PAS *ulama* and the rural masses, it is virtually impossible for the ruling National Front (BN: *Barisan Nasional*) government to wrest the state from PAS. State-imposed Islamic education has been tailored towards producing compliant *ulama* and religious officials who would then staff the burgeoning Islamic bureaucracy and institutions. The creation of colleges and university faculties offering tertiary Islamic

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<sup>117</sup> '119 SAR sudah berdaftar', *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 September 2007; '20 SAR kini Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan', *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 August 2008.

<sup>118</sup> 'Students with STAM can now apply at 20 public varsities', *The Star*, 16 September 2009.

<sup>119</sup> 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.

education served as these students' channels to obtain the necessary qualifications so as to be "eligible for appointments in the public service."<sup>120</sup> Landmarks in 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,<sup>121</sup> were the establishments of the Islamic Academy, University of Malaya in 1981 and the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983.<sup>122</sup> The IIUM, in being jointly sponsored by Muslim countries and using English and Arabic as official languages of instruction, was of course an accomplishment of sorts by the government in the area of globalisation.

In 1999, the Malaysian government founded its second full-fledged Islamic tertiary educational institution, the Islamic University College of Malaysia (KUIM: *Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia*), which has since been upgraded to the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM: *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia*). Global recognition for a novel form of Islamic education "not just confined to subjects that are typically associated with Islamic studies" has been identified as one of USIM's achievements in its first decade. USIM prides itself in the fact that forty percent of its postgraduate students are foreign nationals, a significant number of whom are first language Arabic-speakers from countries of the Middle Eastern Islamic heartlands.<sup>123</sup> In fact, since 9/11, many more of such cohorts of students have chosen Malaysia as their destination for higher studies not only in religious sciences but also in scientific, technological and other professional disciplines.<sup>124</sup> In its promotion of Malaysia as an international education hub,<sup>125</sup> the Malaysian government has contributed towards reversing historical anomalies,

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<sup>120</sup> M.A. Rauf, *A Brief History of Islam With Special Reference to Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 99.

<sup>121</sup> William R. Roff, 'Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s – 1990s: Exemplars, Institutions, and Vectors', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1998), pp. 221-224.

<sup>122</sup> 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.

<sup>123</sup> Najua Ismail, 'USIM: Spearheading Islamic Education', *Prospect: Malaysia's Premier Higher Education Magazine*, issue 010 (2009), pp. 7-11.

<sup>124</sup> Morshidi Sirat, 'The Impact of September 11 on International Student Flow into Malaysia: Lessons Learned', *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2008), pp. 79-95.

<sup>125</sup> As outlined in the *National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010* (Putrajaya: Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2007), pp. 25, 35.

developed through centuries of inequitable interaction and exacerbated by the dearth of research institutes in the Middle East devoted to the study of Asia and Asians, of a centre – periphery relationship that views Islam in Southeast Asia condescendingly as laden with popular indigenous accretions, in contrast with the scriptural and ‘authentic’ Islam of the Arabs.<sup>126</sup>

## 6. Concluding Remarks

International interest in Islamic education has surged since the onset of the USA-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 whether these institutions’ guiding ethos and practices conform or not 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 religious faith 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.<sup>127</sup> 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’ takes 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

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<sup>126</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, ‘Islamic Resurgence: An Overview of Causal Factors, A Review of “Ummatic” Linkages’, *IKIM Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2001), pp. 33-38; Mona Abaza, ‘More on the Shifting Worlds of Islam. The Middle East and Southeast Asia: A Troubled Relationship?’, *The Muslim World*, vol. 97, no. 3 (2007), pp. 419-436.

<sup>127</sup> 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.

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.<sup>128</sup> In this, the Islamist has unwittingly or not secularised 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.<sup>129</sup> In the history of human civilisation, various forms of injustice and violence have been erroneously legitimised in the defence of selfish interests related to such political categories.

Islamists have done a great disservice to Islam by over-emphasising its political and governmental aspects and concomitantly denigrating the more cardinal aspects of individual and moral regeneration which constitutes the true essence of Islamic education.<sup>130</sup> 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. Yet, 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. Instead, they represent rather desperate attempts to preserve one’s Islamic or Muslim identity, even if in rudiments only.<sup>131</sup> 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, calling for *ummatic* participation not bound by national intricacies and complexities. The complexity of this task is borne out by the myriad ways and patterns in which globalisation of Islamic education has been attempted and experienced by Muslim individuals, organisations and governments in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>128</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Characteristics of the Islamic State*, Islamic Studies Occasional Papers 3 (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1993), pp. 21-22.

<sup>129</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Characteristics of the Islamic State*, p. 8.

<sup>130</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 292.

<sup>131</sup> Halstead, ‘An Islamic concept of education’, pp. 519-520.