ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude is first to my father, Md Osman Sultan Ibrahim who guided me to this path of knowledge. My appreciation to my mother, Jainab Naina Sahib whose undying love was important in this pursuit. I would like to express my thanks to all those who helped me materially and academically to accomplish this study. Firstly, I would like to record my many thanks to my supervisor Assoc Prof Timothy Barnard who gave me a lot of advice about organising this research and was kind enough to entertain the many calls and visits that I gave him. I would like to also thank Dr. Suzaina whose advice had been crucial in the many decisions I had taken during my time as an undergraduate and for opening up the horizons in my search for knowledge. My deep gratitude to Kelvin Lawrence for his insights on my writing. I thank all the interviewees, Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Hadi Awang, Nasharuddin Mat Isa, Harun Taib, Hassan Shukri, Ghani Shamsuddin, Azamuddin Taib, Ahmad Awang, Halim Kader, Osman Awang, Datuk Wira Hj. Rashid Redza, Razali Shahabuddin Mona Abaza, Qazi Hussein Ahmad, Syed Munawar Hassan, Dato’s Harunssani, Sheikh Johari Bux and Azra Banu for taking time from their extremely busy schedule to grant me the interviews. My special appreciation to Fadli Ghani and Ustaz Hassan Shukri for all the support that they gave me in the entire course of writing this thesis. May the friendship we have built continue to flourish. My gratitude to my father-in-law Mohandas Kamath for spending many gruelling days proof-reading the thesis. My sincere thanks and love to my beloved wife, Pritiya, who is always behind me in my academic pursuits. The thesis has been a true manifestation of her enduring love. Most importantly, I express gratitude to God for blessing me with the strength to undertake this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Towards a History of Malaysian Ulama</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ulama’s Reconstruction of Tradition</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic State and Ulama</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 4:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of Religio-Political Activism of Ulama on Contemporary Malaysia</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 5:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Appendix 1</strong></td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

The thesis examines the transformation in the role of ulama in modern Malaysia and its impact on the state and society. The focus is primarily on the religious scholars of British Malaya (and subsequently Malaysia) during late twentieth century. The key argument is that ulama have mobilized and reconstructed Islamic tradition to define issues of religious identity and authority in the public sphere and to articulate a changing and more important role for themselves in contemporary Muslim politics.

The first chapter will attempt to define the term ulama and examine their role and function in Muslim societies throughout the world. For most of Islamic history ulama have positioned themselves to defend their authority and the institutions, which support it. The chapter will also provide a broad historical survey of the religio-political activism of ulama in Malaysia from the early history of the region to the 1980s.

The second chapter will examine factors that prompted a reconstruction of tradition by ulama in an attempt to seek greater religious and political authority in the 1980s. The reconstruction was influenced by several factors, such as the linkages and exchange of ideas between the religious scholars of Malaysia and the Middle East. Other factors, such as the international and domestic political developments and the Malaysian government’s contradictory position on Islam, prompted ulama to define issues of religious authority in the public sphere and to articulate a changing and more important role for themselves in the realm of Islamic politics.

The third chapter focuses on how ulama reconstructed tradition to gain political authority by examining their call for an Islamic state as a way to further increase their authority within the political structure of the state. Ulama in both government and the
Islamic party of Malaysia (PAS) have proposed the formation of an Islamic state and the introduction of stricter Islamic laws. While these ulama introduced what seemed like contending models of an Islamic state in the 1990s, in reality these models did not differ much in content and substance.

The fourth chapter examines the impact of ulama’s increasing religio-political authority on the religious and political nature of Malaysian society. It will be argued that ulama successfully enhanced their position and authority through engaging the Malaysian government in various issues pertaining to Islam from within and without. The government’s dependence on ulama to counter the threat of PAS had resulted in ulama being able to promote an agenda of Islamisation of Malaysian society. Increasingly the government had conceded to the demands of ulama for the introduction of stricter Islamic laws. The transformation of ulama also altered the shape of Malaysian society, as the nature of political Islam in Malaysia changed sharply. While the current model of understanding this phenomenon through the UMNO-PAS divide remains relevant, debates over Islamic matters have increasingly situated ulama from both the government and PAS against liberal Muslim groups and Non-Governmental Organizations. At the same time, it will be shown that the position of non-Muslims in Malaysia had changed due to the Islamisation agenda of ulama.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adab: Good manners. Often used in dealing with somebody who is higher in authority within Sufi tradition.

Akhlaq: Maintenance of Good Personal Conduct.

Aqidah: Islamic theology.

Assabiyah: Extreme Nationalism.

Bumiputra: Sons of the Soil. Usually used to describe the special position ascribe to the Malays in Malaysia.

Dawah: Making a call to Islam. Often used to describe Islamic revivalist groups in Malaysia.

Fakir: A poor person or a Sufi who leads a simple life.

Fardhu Kifayah: An obligation on the Muslim community as a whole.

Fatwa: Islamic verdict pronounced by the Mufti of the area in tackling Islamic issues.

Fiqh: Muslim Jurisprudence. The study that makes someone an alim in the historical experience of most Muslim societies.

Hadith: Refers to the sayings and doings of Prophet Muhammad.

Halal: What is permissible in Islam.

Hudud: Part of Islamic criminal law. The punishments for offences in hudud like theft, robbery, fornication, intoxication and apostasy are prescribed in the Koran.

Ijithad: Use of rationality in coming to religious decisions.

Ikhwanul Muslimin: Muslim Brotherhood. Islamic political party active in the Middle East.

Iman: Personal faith.

Jahili: Ignorant and evil society. Often used to refer to the Arabia society prior to the coming of Islam.

Jamaat-i-Islami: Party of Islam. Islamic party formed in pre-partition India. Found predominantly in South Asian countries.
Jihad: A struggle sometimes used to describe a Holy War.

Kadi: Muslim judge.

Kaum Muda: Reformist ulama who were active in the 1920s and 1930s mainly in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Kaum Tua: Traditional ulama who practice syncretic Islam and were considered by reformists to be “backward” in their thinking and normally work within the structures of the Malay kingship or in the local villages.

Kenduri: A feast to celebrate days of religious or social significance such as on the prophet’s birthday and or the birth of a child.

Kerajaan: Malay conception of kingship.

Khalifah: Caliph.

Khalwat: To be in close proximity with members of the opposite sex.

Khulafa Rashidin: This refers to the period of rule by the first four Caliphs, Abu Bakar, Umar, Othman and Ali who were seen as devout rulers who had been close to the Prophet.

Madrasah: A madrasah as the word is understood today is an institution geared to the preservation and teaching of Islamic scholarly tradition.

Melayu Raya: Melayu Raya was a political idea of the KMM in the 1940s and 1950s to form a Malay state which comprising Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines.

Maulid: Supplications read in honour of the prophet and his companions during a special occasion such as after the birth of a child or on the birthday of the Prophet.

Mazhab: Refers to the four schools of jurisprudence in Islam. The four schools are the Hanafi, Shafie, Maliki and Hanbali schools. Each of these schools is named after its founder.

Moulana: Title given to South Asian ulama.

Mufti: Highest ranking religious official in a country or state.

Muhammadiyah: Muslim Organisation in Indonesia and Singapore which advocates a puritan interpretation of Islam.

Pesantren: Islamic seminary in the Malay Archipelago.
Pondok: Traditional Islamic Schools found within the Archipelago.

Qisas: Part of Islamic criminal law normally involving murder cases. Various punishments are prescribed in the Qur’an for the offence and the judge have to decide on one of this punishment.

Ramadan: The month in which Muslims observe the obligatory fast for the whole month.

Selendang: Thin, transparent cloth worn by Malay women as a head gear.

Shariah: Islamic law.

Shaykh-al-Azhar: One of the highest authorities in the Sunni Muslim world who is the Reactor of the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt.

Surau: A prayer hall.

Sufi: A person observing a lifestyle similar to that of the Prophet which involves the saying of special supplications, prayers and imbibing elements of Islamic mysticism.

Sunni: One of the two major sects of Islam. The other being the Shiite. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis. The divide between the two sects is a political one. The Shiite believe that Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet was the successor of the Prophet and believe that the first three Caliphs, Abu Bakar, Umar and Osman had usurped power from Ali. The Sunnis believe that the first three Caliphs are among the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.

Tadaruj: Doing something in stages, often use in to describe implementation of Islamic laws.

Tahlil: Special prayers and supplications observed on Thursday nights and during Islamic holy days by the Sufis.

Taqlid: Practice of referring to past Islamic judgements on an Islamic issue. Often described by reformists as ‘blind faith’.

Tariqah: Sufi brotherhoods.

Tassawuf: Study of Sufism.

Tauhid: First strand of Islam, which requires the belief in One God.

Ta’zir: Ta’zir is a punishment that its degree and type is not been specified in the Shari’a and it is up to the decision of the judge. Ta’azir can be in the form of imprisonment, fines, or flogging.
Ummah: Global Muslim community.

Ustaz: Title given to Malay ulama.

Wahdat-Al-Wujud: Unity of the real.

Wahhabi: Radical sect of Islam which subscribes to the doctrine propagated by Muhammad ibn Wahhab in the 18th century. The Wahhabis are against all Sufistic practises and are often adherents of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. Ibn Wahhab had formed an alliance with the Ibn Saud family in their fervour to spread this belief throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Through a series of successful military campaigns, they managed to gain a foothold and control over what is now Saudi Arabia.

Waqaf: Literally means detention in Arabic but its legal meaning is the dedication of a property or giving it away in charity for religious use.

Zakat: Compulsory alms that all Muslims must give to the poor and needy if they can afford it.

Zikr: Supplications recited by Sufis. Zikrs are seen to be “unIslamic” by Wahhabi Muslims.
## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABIM</td>
<td>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Assembly of Malaysian Muslim Youth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Action Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM</td>
<td>Hizbul Muslimin (Party of Muslim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Independence of Malaya Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAKIM</td>
<td>Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Religious Department)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAWI</td>
<td>Jabatan Agama Wilayah Persekutuan (Federal Territory Islamic Department)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMM</td>
<td>Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malay Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATA</td>
<td>Majlis Agama Tertinggi (Religious High Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKI</td>
<td>Majlis Kebangsaan Islam (Malaysian National Committee for Islamic Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPF</td>
<td>Muslim Professional Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>United Malay National Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERGAS</td>
<td>Singapore Religious Scholars and Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKMM</td>
<td>Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUM</td>
<td>Persatuan Ulama Malaysia (Malaysian Ulama Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Sisters in Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERAS</td>
<td>Teras Pengupayaan Melayu (Strengthening of Malay Capability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAMY</td>
<td>World Assembly of Muslim Youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Towards a History of Malaysian Ulama

Ulama And Their Role in the Muslim World

As scholars of Islamic law and the hadith, as exegetes of the Qur’an and religious guides, ulama have shaped the dominant religious discourses in Muslim societies throughout most of Islamic history. Despite their important role in Muslim societies, debates continue to spark among Muslims over a basic definition of ulama. The term ulama is mentioned only twice in the Qur’an. In addition, the Qur’anic term referring to ulama does not limit its use only to those with religious education but includes anyone who is knowledgeable. Modern scholars such as Muhammad Kamal Hassan argue that an alim is someone who has iman, possesses useful knowledge, does good deeds and has a good character.\(^1\) However, for most of Muslim history, an alim refers to only those who are knowledgeable in the religious sciences and more specifically to those who are familiar with Islamic jurisprudence. Another important determinant of an alim is the recognition that a person receives within the fraternity of ulama as well as that from the Muslim community.\(^2\) Ulama are distinguished by virtue of their learning and scholarship, but there is no formal procedure for ordination or investiture. Ulama are not thought to embody the Divine Will nor treated as the exclusive representatives of God’s law. The authority a particular jurist might enjoy is a function of his formal and informal education, and his social and scholastic popularity. In classical Islamic theory, jurists are

---


supposed to play an advisory and consultative role, and to assume judicial positions in the administration of justice.³

Ulama draw their authority in several ways. Firstly, many ulama reserve the right to interpret and comment on the Qur’an and Hadith in a process called *ijtihad*. The Qur’an and Hadith provide guidelines on many issues concerning Islam. As such, there is a need for a process of juristic reasoning employed to determine the permissibility of an action, *ijtihad* when the Qur’an, Hadith and earlier scholars have not ruled on the matter.⁴ The product of this *ijtihad*, *Fiqh* is the set of laws that govern the everyday life of Muslim. *Shariah* is not sterile and dormant but is constantly evolving to suit the needs and challenges of modern life; as such, the *ijtihad* of ulama can differ and change over time. *Ijtihad* are often expressed in ulama’s commentaries on the Qur’an and Hadith. To ulama, *Shariah* and other Islamic institutions such as mosque and *madrasah* are part of Islamic tradition. At the same time they draw their authority from these traditions. Thus, it is of little surprise that ulama are the most fervent defenders and advocates of these traditions. They often hinge their existence on the preservation and enhancement of these traditions. Over time, ulama have tried to enhance their authority by introducing new ideas of what accounts for Islamic tradition. For instance while *Shariah* traditionally encompasses issues related to Muslim personal lives, such as in the rituals, inheritance and marriage, ulama have in recent times strengthened the less important aspects of *Shariah*, such as Islamic criminal law, into what accounts for important aspect of the *Shariah* to ensure that their authority is maintained.

---
Ulama also played an important role in the realm of political and socio-economic development in the Muslim world. However, scholars tend to underestimate their importance in this area. As a result, it was only after the 1970s that sufficient appreciation has been shown for their role in the Muslim society in various scholastic works. It is also in recent years that interest has been shown in the study of ulama in South and Southeast Asia. An important work that has been written about the ulama is Muhammad Qasim Zaman’s *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*, which examines the transformation that ulama had undergone to revive Islam among Muslims in their own community in the late twentieth century. Taking the cue from Zaman’s work, this thesis will explore the transformation in the role of ulama in Malaysia during the late twentieth century, and the links that this transformation has had with the changing face of Islam and society in Malaysia.

**Typologising Islam in Southeast Asia**

Tradition is often referred to as an inheritance of the past, which had to be discarded to make way for something modern in a society’s attempt to be part of the modern world. However, such a viewpoint is problematic as what accounts for tradition is continuously changing with the society. All traditions are created through shared practices and they can be profoundly and consciously modified and manipulated under

---


the guise of a return to a more legitimate earlier practice.\textsuperscript{7} By juxtaposing these concepts in the Muslim World, the tendency to refer to Islamic political groups as modernist is inaccurate. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr has argued, the so-called modernist Islamic movements are in fact arguing for a truncated form of traditional Islam in opposition to many aspects of the Islamic tradition but still orthodox in maintaining these traditions.\textsuperscript{8}

In writings focused on Southeast Asia, various attempts have been made to typologize Islam. In his pioneering work on Malay nationalism, William Roff argued that early Malay nationalists could be identified as Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda.\textsuperscript{9} Following this monumental work, observers such as Deliar Noer and Farish Noor went on to describe the Kaum Tua as being traditionalist and the Kaum Muda as being modernist.\textsuperscript{10} The use of these terms is simplistic however, and ultimately fails in its attempt to understand tradition and modernity. The Kaum Muda themselves never claimed that they were trying to modernize Islam. Many Kaum Muda called on Muslims to revert back to pure Islamic tradition as represented by the Qur’an, Hadith and basic texts produced by the earlier scholars of Islam, while at the same time urging Muslims to discard what they deem as traditional Malay practices.\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, ulama are neither frozen in the mold of the Islamic religious tradition nor do they reject Islamic tradition. Often their positioning involves the use of a tradition, which has been constantly, imagined, reconstructed and modified and often in doing so they maintain and enhance their position within Muslim society as will be argued in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{10} Deliar Noer, \textit{The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Farish Noor, \textit{Islam Embedded}.
\textsuperscript{11} Roff, \textit{Origins of Malay Nationalism}, p. 58.
Positioning Islam In Southeast Asia

Another issue that persists in the writing on Islam in Southeast Asia is the tendency to refer to Islam in Southeast Asia as being a peripheral form of Islam vis-à-vis Middle Eastern Islam. Scholars tend to dichotomize Middle Eastern Islam and Southeast Asian Islam from the perspective that the former is the original and pristine form of Islam while the latter is a nominal and syncretic due to the strong influence of Sufism.  

Such views are problematic in various ways. First, they fail to acknowledge that Islam as a religion is not static. It is constantly undergoing a process of continuous development. As such, Muslim efforts at spreading the message of Islam have always combined local laws and practices with the religious teachings of Islam. Thus, one can find elements of culture in the practice of Islam and Islamic law throughout the entire Islamic World including in places deemed as the center of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula. As such, there is no real center or periphery in the Islamic World as different groups of Muslims practice certain aspects of their religion differently. Secondly, the dichotomy between Sufism and orthodox Islam is a false one. A. L. Tibawi has argued that three strands of education have developed within Islamic tradition, namely, the

---

12 Nikki Keddie, “Islam and Society in Minangkabau and in the Middle East: Comparative Reflections,” Sojourn, 2, 1, (1987), pp. 3-4. This view continues to persist when Muslim leadership in the region blames the advent of terrorism conducted in the name of Islam as a transportation of extreme ideas from the Middle East.

13 The practice of female circumcision had become part of the accepted Islamic practice in Egypt and Gulf States despite the fact that this practice is derived from a pre-Islamic culture. Muslim Women’s League, Position Paper on Female Genital Mutilation (Los Angeles: MWL, 1999). Ulama in these countries have accepted the practice in line with the principle of urf fi’li, which is the acceptance of local customs as part of the Shariat; Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, Islamic Jurisprudence (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2003), p. 259.
philosophical, theological and the mystical aspects of knowledge. Al-Ghazali rehabilitated the mystical with the theological and ruled out the philosophical. In doing so, he recast the whole Islamic tradition in a synthesis of dogma, ritual and ethics all at once, thus, integrating the laws, theology and mystic. Lastly, such views fail to acknowledge that differing political stands exist in most Muslim societies. A comparison of Egyptian and Indonesian Islamic groups will reveal the existence of similar Islamic groups in both countries. Therefore, in discussing the changes in the thinking and positioning of ulama in Malaysia, there has been an ideological shift among the ulama contrary to current assertions of an attempt to bring a purified form of Islam from the Middle East into Malaysia.

An important theme that has been largely ignored in the writing of Islam in Southeast Asia is the trans-national linkages among Muslims. It is only in recent times that attempts have been made to study such networks as depicted in Azyumardi Azra’s pioneering work on religious scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Azra’s work provides us with a useful understanding of how interactions between different groups of scholars have shaped the nature of Islam in Southeast Asia. Mona Abaza’s study on the ideational flow between the Al-Azhar University in Egypt and Indonesian students is useful in understanding interactions among religious students in Indonesia and

15 Both Egypt and Indonesia have Muslims adhering to radical Islamic ideology such as in the case of Takfīr Wal Hijrah in Egypt and the Front Pembela Islam in Indonesia. At the same time, one can see the liberal trend in both countries. In Egypt this trend is advocated by Islamic leaders such as Hassan Hanafi and in Indonesia they are represented by Liberal Islam Network.
Egypt and how these interactions have shifted over time. At the same time, Abaza highlights how these interactions shape the religious thinking of religious elites in Indonesia. Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the study of these networks as no study was done to examine the ideational flows between ulama in the Middle East with contemporary ulama in the region.

**Reassessing Muslim Politics in Malaysia**

Another area this thesis seeks to address is the writings on political Islam in Malaysia. These writings have focused heavily on the religio-political impact of the various *dawah* movements such as ABIM and Darul Arqam, as well as the PAS-United Malay National Organization’s (UMNO) competition for Muslim votes. This approach of understanding Malaysian Islam however has become less relevant in light of developments such as the decline of *dawah* movements and changes within UMNO and PAS. Among contemporary studies on Malaysian Islam are Farish Noor’s voluminous works on PAS and Joseph Liow’s article on political Islam in Malaysia. Both scholars have argued that since the 1980s there has been an increase in the Islamization of Malaysian society and have attempted to study how and why this has occurred. However, despite the importance of their contributions to the field, various cleavages exist in their studies. The bibliographies of both scholars’ works reveals a high reliance on secondary documents with little or no reference to any primary work. As such,

---

important details have been overlooked in their research. For instance, while Farish Noor alludes to the impact of the Iranian Revolution and the Salafi-Wahhabi movement in shaping the religio-political thinking of the PAS leadership, he failed to provide evidence of linkages between PAS and the Iranian government or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{19} Another case in point is Joseph Liow’s claim that the UMNO’s ulama ideological predilections often echo those of the Islamic opposition.\textsuperscript{20} Unfortunately, he does not show how the religious and political thinking of UMNO ulama are similar to those in PAS. In addition, there has been little attempt made at writing about the religious and political thinking of ulama outside PAS (those in UMNO and government religious institutions) and their impact on Malaysian society.

\textbf{Methodology of Study}

In light of the gaps in the current literature of the subject matter, I have tried to use as many primary sources as possible in this thesis. These sources allow for a more-documented consideration of the issues raised in the thesis. These sources include minutes of meetings, official speeches and annual reports of PAS, PAS Youth and that of the government. Interviews were also conducted with ulama in PAS, Malaysian Ulama Association (PUM) and UMNO.\textsuperscript{21} Several state muftis and religious officials in religious institutions of the Federal Territory, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Selangor Terengganu, Kelantan and Perak were also interviewed. Most of the interviews were conducted during field trips to Malaysia on various occasions between Nov 2005 to June 2006. I have also

\begin{thebibliography}{9}

\bibitem{FieldTrips} See Appendix 1 for more on these interviews
\end{thebibliography}
used excerpts from interviews in 2003 conducted with Ahmad Sonhadji, a major religious
title in Singapore. Similarly, I utilized interviews conducted leaders of the Jamaat-i-
Islami party of Pakistan in 2004 to draw on linkages between the Jamaat and PAS. In
addition, I interviewed Mona Abaza during her visit to Singapore in October 2005 and
several members of the Muslim Professional Forum (MPF) in December 2005. During
his visit to Singapore in June 2006, I met the Mufti of Perak to discuss developments
within Malaysian Islam and politics. This thesis employs a fusion of the thematic and
chronological approach. The first chapter is a chronological study of ulama in Malaysia
as well as their role and influence in Malay society. The remaining chapters examine
several themes mentioned earlier.

With the aim of explaining the transformation of the ulama in modern Malaysia
and the impact of this transformation on Malaysian society, the thesis will focus on
revivalist ulama. The term revivalist is used as this is how these ulama have described
their position. In the late nineteenth century, these ulama were referred to as Kaum
Muda. The earlier ideas of this group culminated to the formation of groups such as the
Hizbul Muslimin (HM) and its successor group, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS). In
more recent times, they could be found in groups such as PAS and even within the

---

22 A major problem that is encountered in the cause of researching the topic is the request of many of the
interviewees to remain anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the topics that were discussed. As such
there are instances in the paper whereby a general reference of “interview with ulama” will be use. It was
also extremely difficult to set up interviews with ulama are serving as ministers in the government such as
Dr Mashitah Ibrahim and Dato’ Zin Abdullah as they were either too busy or not willing to grant
interviews. Another problem encountered is that some of the books or articles use as sources, especially
those written in Malay were written by a member of PAS or UMNO. These books include, Hussain Yaakub,
UMNO Tidak Relevan: Hadapi Reformasi Abad 21 (Kuala Lumpur: Mariah Jaafar, 2000); Ibnu Hasyim,
Both writers are PAS members. Nakhaie Ahmad’s book on PAS has a strong anti-PAS bias, as he is a
member of UMNO. See Nakhaie Ahmad, PAS: Satu Pandangan Kritis (Kuala Lumpur: Biro Hal Ehwal
Islam UMNO Malaysia, 2002).

23 Interviews with Ulama.
government institutions such as Malaysian Islamic Religious Department (JAKIM) and the offices of the state muftis. Another strand of ulama in Malaysia is the Kaum Tua, which can be deemed as traditionalist ulama. Kaum Tua tends to be more accommodating to the status quo. However, the Kaum Tua ulama decreased significantly by the late 1960s as Kaum Muda’s reforms were gradually accepted by many Kaum Tua ulama.\footnote{Othman Ishak, Fatwa dalam Perundangan Islam (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1981) p. 90.}

This does not mean that all ulama in Malaysia are of the revivalist type. There remain many ulama that are not of this strand in Malaysia. However they have not played an important role in the recent development of Islam in Malaysia. The next section will assess the role and influence of ulama in Islamic history

**Ulama And Political Power In Islamic History**

In a popular hadith Prophet Muhammad is quoted as saying that “religious scholars are the heirs of the prophets.”\footnote{The hadith is related in the following sources. Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Al-Musnad, (Beirut: al-Maktab al Islamī, 1985), p.5. and Ibn Abd al-Barr, Jami Bayan al-Ilm, (Beirut: Dar al Kutub al Islamiyya, 1970), p.77.}

With the ending of the Khulafa’ Rashidin, the Muslim community was seen to be moving away from the world of the Prophet and was in danger of losing its raison d’être.\footnote{Khulafa Rashidin refers to the period of rule from 632 to 661 by the first four Caliphs, Abu Bakar, Umar, Othman and Ali who were seen as devout rulers who had been close to the Prophet. Hugh Kennedy, The Court of the Caliphs: The Rise and fall of Islam’s Greatest Dynasty, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004); Karen Armstrong, Islam: A Short History (New York: Modern Library 2001), p. 37.}

Many Muslims thus looked upon ulama as protectors of the word of God, the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet.\footnote{Chandra Muzaffar, Reformation of Shari’a or Contesting the Historical Role of the Ulama in Noraini Osman’s (ed), Shari’a Law and the Modern Nation-State: A Malaysian Symposium (Kuala Lumpur: Sisters in Islam Forum Berhad, 1994), p. 23.} A firm and extensive knowledge of the religious sciences in particular provided ulama with a crucial area of expertise and thus authority. Their piety also enhanced their standing within the

---

26 Khulafa Rashidin refers to the period of rule from 632 to 661 by the first four Caliphs, Abu Bakar, Umar, Othman and Ali who were seen as devout rulers who had been close to the Prophet. Hugh Kennedy, The Court of the Caliphs: The Rise and fall of Islam’s Greatest Dynasty, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004); Karen Armstrong, Islam: A Short History (New York: Modern Library 2001), p. 37.
Muslim community. The fact that many early ulama were companions of the Prophet also provided a continuing reverence for the institution of ulama.

Ulama’s position on political power varied throughout Islamic history. Al-Ghazali in his *Nasihat al-muluk* wrote that the Sultan is ‘God’s Shadow on Earth’, and is the Lord’s delegate over his creatures and must therefore be held with esteem. Al-Ghazali also stigmatized any revolt, even against an oppressive and evil monarch. For Ghazali, Muslims can only reform their hearts and thus be good Muslims if there is social peace and harmony in the outside world. Thus, war and violence should be avoided at all cost even if it means that this silence must be paid with an autocratic rule. This view could be motivated by the fact that he himself was a courtier appointed by the Nizam al-Mulk to be a teacher of the Shafei jurisprudence in the Madrasah Nizamiyah of Baghdad.

However other ulama, such as Ibn Tamiyyah, have argued that there is a need for a government based on the Shariah and the ideal Islamic state was to be run solely under the ulama’s guidance. Ibn Taimiyah advocated this perspective in the post-Mongol world in which Muslims suffered tremendously due to atrocities conducted by Mongols against them. He believed that the rulers had failed in their duty to protect the Muslim populace and that only ulama could secure the political future of Muslims. His political activism thus embodied a new concept of state and society in which ulama rather than the Caliphs became the principal actors. He also urged ulama to reject official positions and

---

28 Al-Ghazali was an Islamic jurist, theologian and mystical thinker. He was born in Iran in 1058. His ideas on Sufism and Politics influence many jurists and Muslims throughout the Muslim World. F.R. Bagley, *Ghazali’s Book of Counsel for King* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 72.


30 Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328) is an alim of Damascus of the Hanbali Mazhab. He is often seen to be the first ideologue of literal Islam, which was subsequently advocated by the Wahhabi and Salafi movements. Ibn Taimiyah, *Kitab Al-Siyasa Al-Sharia*, (Cairo: Ilmu Il Kitab, 1951), pp. 9-10.
However, Ibn Taymiyyah’s ideas were peripheral to mainstream Islam and he was not successful in influencing other ulama or the Muslim populace.

In most Muslim societies, ulama have often maintained a close and symbiotic relationship with the government. Ulama preached the legitimacy of the established regime and looked upon the state as indispensable to Islam. Besides advocating for the loyalty of Muslims to the Caliph, Al-Ghazali went one step further to impress the Caliph by declaring that only an Abassid can be a Caliph. This was a clear stance of preaching the legitimacy of both the Caliph and his family. At the same time, Ghazali also wrote a treatise in response to a request by the Caliph Al-Mustazhir to refute the teachings of the Ismaili sect, which was opposed to the rule of the Abbasids and was trying to overthrow it. This points to his willingness to collaborate with the government. Muslims rulers also supported the various institutions related to ulama, as they formed local administrative and social elites whose authority was based upon religion. Often, this means that ulama were given power and riches, as could be seen from the example of the Farangi Mahal, which produced families of ulama to serve in the government under the Mughal Emperors.

34 Kennedy, Courts of Caliph, p. 364.
35 Mehmet Erpsili, The Ottoman Ulama (Manchester: FSTC Limited, 2004); Francis Robinson, The Ulama of Farangi Mahal and Islamic Culture in South Asia (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).
Ulama and Islamization in the Malay World

The role of ulama in the process of Islamization in the Malay World contributed to their authority and influence in the region. The Islamization of the Malay World has given birth to a multitude of different theories that focus on the origin of those who led the conversion process.\(^{36}\) A common thread that runs through all these theories is that Islam spread into the region as Muslim traders moved along established maritime trade routes.\(^{37}\) These traders often doubled up as ulama and were responsible for teaching Islam and establishing *suraus* and mosques as in the case of Melaka. In other cases, the traders sponsored ulama from the Middle East or India to come to teach and propagate Islam in the region.\(^{38}\)

The spiritual and value system of ulama made their interaction with the local populace easier. The accommodation between Islam, the earlier animists and Hindu-Buddhist elements in Malay culture was also facilitated by Sufi mystics, who preached the doctrine that God is transcendent; that He manifests his power in all things, animate and inanimate; and that the devout believer can know God through mystical communion and can transmit that knowledge to others.

---


Before the coming of Islam, Malays perceived their political condition in terms of the divine kingship, that is, they considered themselves to be living in a community oriented around a raja who was not only the focus of political life but also the endowment of religious and psychological significance. The king as the head of the kingdom was protected by a supernatural force conferred upon him by the virtue of his kingship. This force surrounded him with an aura of sanctity or sacredness as well as bestowed on him supreme temporaral authority. The coming of Islam led to the kerajaan being the focus of political life. Islam did not alter the idea of the king’s divinity but it was enhanced by the addition of various prayers being recited by the ruler during ceremonies. This gave the ruler an added sacredness as he could now assure his subject that God will bless them for their loyalty to his leadership.

In dealing with rulers in the region, many ulama adopted the Ghazalian approach. An examination of seventeenth century treatises on statecraft developed by Southeast Asian ulama such as, Taj-Us-Salatin and Bustanun Salatin, reveal strong Ghazalian traits. In Taj-Us-Salatin, the author al-Bukhari, who wrote it for the court of Aceh, argued that it is the duty of the people to be loyal to the king. The text also deplored the use of violence or revolution to overthrow a ruler. In another text on kingship, Nuruddin Ar-Raniri urged people to be loyal to the king and not to commit treason, which he described

41 Milner, Kerajaan, p. 108.
as an act against God. Early ulama were careful to ensure that a symbiotic relationship developed between the king and ulama by making sure that the ruler’s authority superseded their own authority in the public realm. However, ulama continued to exercise control over religious matters. In addition, ulama acted as religious teachers to the king. The *Sejarah Melayu* reported that Sultan Mansur Syah studied with Maulana Abu Bakar and Sultan Mahmud Syah studied with Kadi Yusuf. Excerpts from the *Sejarah Melayu* also show examples of how ulama were revered by the Malay kings. By the eighteenth century, this symbiosis was manifested in the many cities of the archipelago where the principal mosque often abutted the palace.

By the nineteenth century, ulama were playing more important roles within state structures and were instrumental in the formulation of laws in many Malay states. A case in point is the nineteenth-century mufti of Kedah, Shaykh Abd-al Jalil, who was responsible for formulating Islamic regulations for the sultan and his officials. In many instances, they were also given position of power and enjoyed the economic privileges of the elite class. The growing importance of ulama corresponded with the development of colonialism in the region. As such it is not surprising that ulama were in the forefront of many conflicts between the rulers and the British and Dutch.

---

44 W. C. Shellabear (ed), *Sejarah Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1978), p. 240. This could be seen from the conduct of Sultan Mahmud in which he referred to himself as “fakir Mahmud.” Fakir refers to an extremely poor person. Ibid.
45 Luis Filipe Ferreira Reis Thomaz, “The Malay Sultanate of Melaka,” in Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power and Belief* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 82. Other linkages through marriage also enhance relations between ulama and ruler. Judith Nagata, “Islamic Revival and the Problem of Legitimacy Among Rural Religious Elites in Malaysia, *Man*, 17, 1, (Mar 1982), pp. 42-57. However there are also examples from the Sejarah Melayu in which the king criticize ulama for their conservatism but such criticism is less pronounced.
Ulama and British Colonial Authority

As early as 1791, the Sultan of Kedah, supported by ulama within the palace, declared a *jihad* against the British after the loss of Penang to them. In 1821, Shaykh Jalil declared another *jihad* when the Thais invaded Kedah.\(^{47}\) In Terengganu, Haji Abdul Rahman, a local alim, led a rebellion in defense of the ruler and against the British, rallying Muslims behind the cry of a holy war to remove the infidel European power.\(^{48}\) Although the British successfully quelled these instances of unrest, they reflected an active role for ulama with regard to colonial authority.

Despite such examples of rebellion, the British did not interfere in religious affairs, ostensibly leaving it within the purview of ulama.\(^{49}\) This approach was formalized in the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 signed by Sultan Abdullah of Perak, which led to the systematic division between religion and state in the Malay Peninsula.\(^{50}\) In practice, the British did initiate changes within the Malay states to regulate matters relating to religion. This was due to the complexities that had arisen due to incompatibilities between the implementation of Islamic laws and the state structure the British had established. Intervention in Islamic affairs was also prompted by prejudices that some British officers had against Islam.\(^{51}\)

---


\(^{49}\) Efforts made to clamp on the ulama had resulted in ulama led rebellion in these places; refer to Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Part 3.


After the Pangkor Treaty, ulama found that they could entrench themselves and consolidate their influence by working with the British. This change in attitude was due to the setting up of various institutions such as the mosques, pondok, state religious councils and religious courts, which were under their purview. In addition, the British, learning from the reform of madrasahs in India, avoided the temptation to reform these institutions in the Malay Peninsula. This reduced a possible source of conflict as an important component of ulama’s authority was left unchallenged. Various institutions were also formed to codify and implement Islamic laws. In 1915 an Islamic Religious Council (Majlis) led by an ulama council, which was a sub-body within the institution was formed. The Majlis was responsible for the appointment of religious officials and qadis. Kadis had the power to punish offenders who broke Islamic laws such as not paying the zakat. The implementation of Qur’anic education in English and Malay schools also helped provide jobs for village ulama and increased their influence within secular schools. It is also important to acknowledge that British policy did attempt to hamper the development of Islam and Islamic law. For instance, while kadis were given official power under the new laws, they limited the maximum penalty that could be imposed. Likewise, Islamic Courts were made secondary to civil courts.

British legislative activities and policies led to the unintended consequences of endowing increasing authority and power to ulama in Malaya. Although the position of

---

52 British attempts to reform madrasahs had led to widespread agitation against the British led by ulama; Yoginder Sikand, Bastions Of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005).
53 Mutalib, Islam, p. 17.
55 Ahmad Ibrahim, Developments in Marriage Laws in Singapore since 1959 (Singapore: Malayan Law Journal, 1979). It must be noted however that the secondary nature of Islamic law did not just happen during colonial era but occurred in some of the Malay states whereby adat (local) laws were superior to Shariah laws.
the *Shariah* was supreme in many Malay states, the laws were never cast in stone and were flexible in their implementation. The British insistence on a uniform legal system resulted in a more legalistic interpretation of the *Shariah* resulting in an increased dependence on ulama to interpret the laws.\(^{56}\) Another indirect consequence of the British intervention in the politics of the Malay states was the rulers’ loss of power, as they were left with only religious and customary matters within their authority. This led to a renewed focus on the part of the rulers to strengthen Malay society by elevating the position of the *Shariah* to a higher level.\(^{57}\) An example of this is the attempt of some sultans to make the drinking of intoxicants illegal among Muslims. In general, while some British policies did limit the influence of Islam, they did little to alter the authority of ulama.

The period of colonial rule also showed that ulama were willing to work with any government that did not challenge their legitimacy or authority. The initial resistance was due to their trepidation that the British would undermine their authority. Ulama who decided to work within the system saw an opportunity to consolidate their authority within the new institutions created by the British, such as in the state religious councils and Islamic education departments in secular schools. While the British tried to remain neutral with regard to Islam in Malay society, many of the policies that they initiated led to an unintended effect of strengthening ulama’s position and authority. However, the greatest challenge for ulama came not from the British but from a group of ulama with a different interpretation of Islam.


Battle For The Authority Of Islam

Conflicts amongst ulama in the Malay World have often been referred to as the Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda conflict. William Roff has argued that the conflict was between the traditional elites of the society, which included the ulama within the establishment as well as the ulama in the rural areas, and a more modernist group of ulama.  

A closer scrutiny of Kaum Muda reveals that they are traditional in their belief as well. The Kaum Muda held that it was obligatory for Muslims to believe in the Qur’an and Hadith, but not the classical texts written by medieval ulama. This indicates that they believed that there was a need to return to the traditional sources of Islam.

The key difference between the two groups lay in their interpretation of tradition. One distinguishing feature of the Kaum Tua is their Sufi orientation. As Sufis, they were tolerant of local practices in the Malay World such as the celebrations of kenduri, zikir and maulid. The Kaum Tua believed that these practices had become part of the Islamic tradition. They also believed that the truth expressed in the teachings of Islamic scholars such as Ghazali and the imams of the madzhab did not need to be disputed since it was not altered by the change in time and conditions. For these ulama, the re-examination of the Qur’an and Hadith was not only unnecessary but also dangerous since this could lead to misinterpretation and error. The Kaum Muda advocated the need to cleanse the teaching of Islam from what they believed to be innovations brought about by

---

58 Roff, Origins, p. 85.
59 Ibid, p. 78.
the influence of Sufism, which they abhorred. They looked at authentic tradition in terms of only the Qur’an and Hadith.

The Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda conflict can also be seen as a battle for the authority of Islam in the Malay states. On many occasions, the Kaum Muda tried to wrest control of several institutions from the Kaum Tua. Key leaders of the Kaum Muda took up positions as religious officials. For instance, Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin took up the position of Mufti of Perak and Haji Abbas that of a kadi in Singapore. Their involvement in state religious institutions was in line with their attempts to change the system from within. However, when the opposition against them was too strong, they left these institutions.

The formation of separate madrasahs by the Kaum Muda ulama with their own curriculum was another attempt to challenge the authority of the Kaum Tua ulama. For example, the Iqbal Islamic School in Singapore was launched in 1908 as an attempt to promote the revival of knowledge through a new system of education. The Kaum Muda also formed other madrasahs such as the Madrasah al-Hadi in Melaka and Madrasah al-Mashoor in Penang. It was clear that the Kaum Muda hoped that these madrasahs would serve as a new reference point to all other madrasahs and would subsequently replace the old system of education in the Malay states.

The conflict between ulama dominated much of the religious discussions in the early twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, the discussions and debates had dissipated and the Kaum Muda had failed in their attempt to challenge established

---

62 Hamzah, Al-Imam, p. 43.
63 Ibid, p. 51.
64 Roff, Origins, p. 75
65 Hamzah, Al-Imam, p. 45.
authority. However, in the long term, the Kaum Mudas’ impact on Malay society was felt in both the religious and political spheres. Kaum Muda activism planted the seeds for the growth of a Malay-Muslim intelligentsia who tried to analyze and diagnose the circumstances that arose among Malays due to colonialism. This led to rising awareness among Malays of the importance of education.\(^{66}\) While the Kaum Muda themselves were less politically active, their successors utilized the revivalist spirit to form political organizations such as HM, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) and PAS.

**Ulama during the Japanese Occupation and Early Independence Movement**

The Japanese Occupation was to change the political position of the ulama tremendously. It brought about a common political outlook between the Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda. The Japanese organized the Pan-Malayan Religious Council as part of their attempt to control the Kaum Tua ulama in Malay states and bring them under Japanese patronage. They were also utilized to spread Japanese propaganda in the mosques.\(^{67}\) Japanese propaganda against the colonial powers as being the enemy of Islam did influence these ulama, who then saw that their authority was likely to be better protected in an independent country or one that was controlled by the Japanese.\(^{68}\)

Kaum Muda ulama were not only collaborators but also among the staunchest supporters of the Japanese. As highlighted above, the Kaum Muda ulama formed the KMM to express their political position. They disseminated anti-British propaganda and

---


\(^{68}\) Interview with Hassan Shukri.
propagated the idea of *Melayu Raya*. While many observers noted the leftist tendencies of the PKMM leadership, the leadership of the group also comprised Kaum Muda ulama such as Abu Bakar Baqir. The PKMM leadership was also made up of many others who were educated in religion. Islam remained an important political principle for these figures and many saw the concept of *Melayu Raya* as an attempt to unify Muslims in the region under the banner of Islam, and many Kaum Muda ulama saw independence as the only way for ulama to maintain their position and authority. The political outlook of both Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua ulama was largely shaped by their experiences during the period of the Japanese Occupation.

The period prior to independence marked a new beginning for ulama in Malaysia. Many of the Kaum Tua ulama had been in the forefront of many Malay political gatherings, which were held against the British “Malayan Union” proposal. They also took a lead in the formation of UMNO and many of the ulama took up positions within the new party where they were placed in the UMNO Religious Affairs Bureau. This action was clearly taken to protect their position and authority within the society.

Meanwhile, some Kaum Muda ulama, particularly Dr Burhanuddin and Abu Bakar Baqir, organized themselves under the Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM) and formed the Religious High Council (MATA), which was PKMM’s religious wing, since

---

71 Interview with Fadli Ghani and Hassan Shukri.
72 The Bureau was set up in 1946 by UMNO under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Pahim, a prominent ulama and grandfather of the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi; Alias Mohamed, *PAS Platform: Development and Change 1951-1986* (Shah Alam: Gateway, 1994), pp. 24-5.
March 1947. Many Kaum Muda ulama joined the PKMM as they saw the struggle against the British as an Islamic duty and the PKMM was the only credible organization doing so. Maulana Abdullah Noh, a Kelantanese ulama, even went, as far as to say that PKMM’s struggle against the British colonial authorities was part of a compulsory *jihad* against the infidel oppressors. Subsequently, this wing broke away from PKMM and became the Hizbul Muslimin (HM) party. The HM stated its aim as ridding Malaya of British rule. They also utilized Islam as a vital instrument in order to create an Islamic state. However, their definition of an Islamic state differed from that envisioned by most Muslim revivalists groups. The state here simply referred to a country in which Muslims have the political authority to rule. At the same time, Islam remained a concept that was encapsulated within their notion of Malay nationalism that they envisioned.

By 1951, both Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda ulama decided to combine their resources as a result of various factors. HM was banned by the British colonial authorities as it was accused of communist activities. The British in dealing with opposition to colonial rule had conveniently lumped both Islamist and socialist groups as leftist. The Kaum Muda ulama found themselves greatly weakened and decided to use the UMNO

---

73 Burhanuddin Al-Helmy was a Malay nationalist and reformist. He was involved in various political movements against colonialism. He became the chairman of the KMM and subsequently was involve with the PKMM. He was instrumental in the formation of HM. For more on Burhanuddin, Ramlah Adam, *Burhanuddin Al-Helmy: Satu Kemelut Politik* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996).


77 The notion of “leftist” here refers more to groups that opposed their rule rather then those who really subscribed to communist ideas. Interview with Hassan Shukri
Religious Bureau as a vehicle to achieve their objectives. The first sign of rapprochement between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua ulama was at the First Ulama Convention sponsored by UMNO in 1951. HM leaders were invited to attend the conference by Haji Ahmad Fuad, a former student of the El-Ehya and a prominent Kaum Tua figure. Haji Fuad was educated in the Madrasah Al-Ehya, which was a prominent KM religious institution. However, he continued his education in Mecca where he studied with several Kaum Tua ulama who influence him to adopt the Kaum Tua ideology. Interview with Hassan Shukri

Kaum Tua ulama were also worried that UMNO would be banned as it was then aggressively fighting for independence and thus there was a need to form a separate organization to prepare for this possibility. Despite differences in religious ideology, both groups of ulama held similar political views and agreed to form an ulama union, which was to be independent of any political party or organization and was eventually named PAS. The formation of the union did not mark ulama’s break from UMNO. The leadership of PAS were active members of UMNO and many still saw UMNO as the key vehicle to achieving independence.

By 1953, development in Malay politics had a significant impact in pushing ulama to function separately from other political parties. Problems within UMNO simmered, leading to a fracture within the ranks of UMNO leaders. The proposal of Dato’ Onn Jaafar, founder and first President of UMNO, to open up the party to non-Malays led to open dissention against his leadership. This led to his resignation from the party culminating in the formation of a multi-racial party, the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). This decision had a direct impact on PAS. Ahmad Fuad, the President of PAS and a close associate of Dato’ Onn, tried to sway PAS leaders to attend the National Convention organized by IMP but members opted to attend the National Conference of

UMNO.\textsuperscript{80} The decision to support the National Conference led to the resignation of Ahmad Fuad as President of PAS and he subsequently joined the IMP.\textsuperscript{81} Together with Ahmad Fuad, several ulama in PAS left the party. Subsequently, Dr Abbas Elias, a medical doctor who had been the Deputy President of PAS, filled the position of Party President. The PAS leadership used the situation to reassert their position as an independent political party and strengthened their power base.

The decision was motivated by several factors. Firstly, ulama within UMNO were not happy with the appointment of Tunku Abdul Rahman as the new leader of UMNO and were contemptuous of his penchant for sport cars, dancing and alcohol. Secondly, they were against as UMNO’s sanctioned activities such as lotteries and fun-fairs which they believed is un-Islamic. Thirdly, PAS leadership felt that UMNO was compromising the interest of the Malays at the expense of the non-Malays and felt the need to protect Malay interests through electoral politics.\textsuperscript{82} A complete break from UMNO was made in 1954 at the PAS annual meeting. This break was initiated by Amaluddin Darus’ a prominent PAS member.\textsuperscript{83} He urged ulama to ensure that PAS executive committee members are not allied to any other political parties. A resolution was passed disallowing PAS executive committee members from holding positions in other political parties.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{80} PAS Annual Report, 1953-1954, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{81} ibid, pp. 16-9. The two gatherings were important as it was seen by UMNO and IMP as a show of strength and support for their respective parties.
\textsuperscript{83} Amaluddin Darus is a revolutionary figure in PAS being responsible for major changes that occurred in the party. He left the party in 1970 due to disagreement with the then leadership and subsequently rejoined the party in the late 1970s. He even wrote a book to express his disillusionment with PAS; see Amaluddin Darus, Kenapa Saya Tinggalkan PAS, (Kuala Lumpur: Harimau Press, 1977).
\textsuperscript{84} PAS Third Annual General Meeting on the 12, 13 and 14 of August 1954, pp. 6-7. A further move was made in 1955 to completely dissociate from UMNO. PAS members were not allowed to hold membership with any other party.
This was a clear move to distance itself from UMNO and form a separate identity for itself.

**Fusing Islam and Malay Nationalism**

In 1955, PAS contested the general elections winning one lone seat. Despite this dismal performance, the party did not crumble. Dr Abbas Elias decided to step aside and he scouted for a new leader for the party. PAS leaders decided to approach Dr Burhanuddin and Zulkifli Mohamed to lead the party, believing that the inclusion of Malay nationalist figures would rejuvenate the party’s image.85 Both these leaders agreed to join PAS and Dr Burhanuddin was appointed party president and Zulkifli was appointed party deputy president during the fifth PAS Annual Meeting held in December 1956.86

Under Burhanuddin’s leadership, the membership of PAS soared due to the influx of Malay nationalists. He also expanded the network of party branches by co-opting ulama at the village level into the party. These ulama were crucial in setting up branches of PAS throughout the country. By the end of 1959, PAS had successfully opened up branches in all states in the Malay Peninsula, including Johor, the heartland of Malay conservatism and the birthplace of UMNO.87

To temper the image of PAS as a religious party, strict guidelines were laid for all PAS members. They were not only told to entrench themselves within the local communities, where they served, but also to show good examples of piety and yet remain

---

85 In the post-mortem of the election, it was discovered that the Malay public had seen the party to be too orthodox and to be a party for the religious. Interview with Hassan Shukri.
86 PAS Fifth Annual Meeting held on the 23, 24 and 25 December 1956, p. 1.
approachable and friendly. The program led to PAS making considerable inroads into UMNO’s support base which translated to votes in the 1959 elections that led to PAS’ control of the states of Kelantan and Terengganu. During this period most of the top echelon of the leaders were Malay nationalists rather then ulama. While one cannot discount the importance of the role played by the ulama especially in Kelantan and Terengganu, it mus be realized that they did not hold many key positions in the party. PAS also did not initiate any overtly Islamic policies. Rather, in line with its nationalist pursuits, PAS ensured that more positions in the state government in Terengganu and Kelantan were filled by bumiputras.

Despite this initial success, the post-1959 era marks a continuous decline for PAS. Internal fractures between the different components of the party, especially between the Malay nationalists and ulama, led to the downfall of the Terengganu government. The arrest in 1965 of Burhanuddin led to the appointment of Dato’ Asri Muda as the Acting President of the party. His presidency was confirmed upon the demise of Burhanuddin in 1969. Asri’s leadership saw PAS adopting a more nationalistic stance. The political atmosphere of his leadership was one marred by the racial riots between Malays and Chinese, which occurred in the aftermath of the 1969 elections in which UMNO suffered a large setback in the polls. It began with a victory procession held after the elections by the largely Chinese opposition, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Gerakan. This resulted in a counter-processions held by UMNO Youth leaders leading to the May 13 racial riots. Asri decided that PAS should support UMNO to ensure that Malays were

---

united against what he saw as a threat from the Chinese community. This threat led to an emerging congruence between UMNO and PAS culminating in an alliance between the two parties in 1973.

Ulama in PAS were divided in their support for Asri’s move, resulting in loss of support from many PAS members including several prominent ulama, such as Amaluddin Darus. At the same time, however, ulama in PAS Youth and PAS Ulama Council supported the move in the hope that they could Islamise the system from within. During the course of the alliance, these ulama successfully initiated several moves such as the banning of liquor at official government functions, the closing of the Parliament’s bar and increased airtime given to Islamic programs on radio and television. Predictably, the alliance proved short-lived, and a rancorous separation ensued. Ulama in PAS felt that the government was not sincere in the implementation of Islam in the country. Ulama in PAS also questioned Asri’s religious credentials when Abu Bakar Hamzah argued that Asri did not understand the Qur’an and thus was not qualified to lead the party. Pressures from within PAS resulted in the dissolution of the alliance. The break-up led to an internal dissension between supporters of Asri and the ulama. The ulama began to prepare their moves to remove Asri from the helm of PAS leadership and to take powers into their own hands. This “coup” occurred during the 1982 PAS Annual Meeting resulting in the rise of the ulama faction in PAS. The rise of the ulama faction in PAS resulted in a major change in the ideology of PAS and the shape of Malaysian politics.

---

90 Minutes of Meeting of PAS Working Committee on 20th July 1969, pp. 2-3.
Ulama Outside PAS Between 1940-1980

The importance of ulama in PAS should not be overestimated in understanding the religio-political activism of ulama in Malaysia. Many ulama were not involved or linked to PAS in any way. As mentioned earlier, several ulama left PAS in 1953. Ahmad Fuad joined the IMP and several others, such as Ahmad Badawi and Ahmad Maliki, left the party to rejoin UMNO, where they did not play a major role in its political developments. In describing the UMNO leadership, Anthony Milner has argued that the British encouraged the growth of a secular nationalist movement. The movement leaders propagated notions of the state and law, which challenged not only the kerajaan but also the ideal of a society based on God’s law. Many ulama in UMNO joined the state religious departments and other religious institutions as advisors. There were a few ulama who were also appointed to government positions, such as Syed Jaafar Albar and Wan Abdul Kadir Ismail who were made deputy ministers in Tunku’s cabinet. Others such as Hassan Yunus was appointed Chief Minister of Johor in 1957. However, these ulama were the exception to the norm. One can thus conclude that the UMNO Religious Bureau remained an unimportant bureau which did not have much political power or influence. Its role was to represent segments of ulama and add emphasis to the pledges put in the UMNO constitution to safeguard Islam in Malaysia.

96 Hussain Yaakub, UMNO Tidak Relevan, p. 256.
Another important group of ulama, which probably accounted for the majority were those without political affiliations. They were working as religious teachers or religious officers at the state religious institutions prior to independence and remained in their positions after independence. The period between the 1940s and the early 1950s saw the expansion of Islamic religious education. After independence, job prospects for ulama grew. While the number of students in religious schools had declined, new jobs awaited ulama when the government introduced Islamic education as part of the national curriculum. All schools, including Christian-aided government schools, were required to provide compulsory Islamic religious instruction to Muslims if there were more than fifteen Muslim students attending the school.  

Ulama from madrasahs were lured to work with the government, as the prospects and pay were better. Institutions of higher learning of Islam were also established in Malaysia. In 1958, the Department for Islamic Studies in the Arts Faculty of the University of Malaya was created. This was an important step because for the first time Islamic Studies graduates could obtain a bachelor’s degree in Malaysia. Graduates from this institution were also accepted in the Al-Azhar University. The academics appointed in these institutions were likewise from within the fraternity of ulama. The expansion of Islamic religious education not only provided an important source of income for ulama but also created a new role for them within the national education system as the custodians of Islam.

Islamic institutions and departments were expanded after independence. Between 1947 and 1971, the number of salaried employees of the state religious departments had more then doubled and spendings on these departments had increased by 50 times over

---

99 Ibid, p. 35.
the same period. In 1968, the Council of Kings formed the Malaysian National Committee For Islamic Affairs (MKI), which was entrusted with many issues relating to Islam and played a major role in ensuring that state policies were in line with the Shariah. MKI also enacted new initiatives to expand the role of Islam in Malaysia. As part of their duties, the religious departments were given the authority to exercise greater control of mosques, which traditionally had been in the care of the local community. Another important area which saw the expansion in the powers and authority of ulama is in the realm of law. Various Islamic laws were modified upon independence as in the case of zakat, which was made compulsory for all Muslims. New laws, such as those relating to khalwat, were formulated to prosecute Muslims who were in close proximity with members of the opposite sex. It must be noted that these laws were often not strictly enforced as could be seen by the small number of people prosecuted under these laws. Nevertheless, it gave ulama working for the Shariah courts jurisdiction over a wider scope of Islamic law.

Most ulama outside PAS did not actively oppose UMNO since they felt that political powers should be in the hands of Malays. UMNO successfully convinced the vast network of ulama, perhaps with the exception of ulama in Kelantan and Terengganu, to adopt its nationalistic goals or at the very least to stay out of political matters.

---

100 The numbers had increased from 424 to 982.
101 JAKIM, Sambutan 35 Tahun JAKIM (Kuala Lumpur: Matang Cipta Sdn Bhd, 2003), p. 23. Some of its initiative includes formation of various institutions such as the Religious Teachers College.
102 Ibid.
103 Zakat is alms-giving which is part of the five pillars of Islam. Khalwat is being in close proximity with members of the opposite sex; Ahmad Ibrahim, Islamic Law in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2000), p. 323. As few as 350 khalwat cases were reported in 1970. David John Baker, “Local Muslim Organizations and National Politics in Malaysia” (Unpublished Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, 1973), p. 141.
104 This is not to say that ulama never opposed the authorities. Ulama within the government institutions had opposed the government family planning policies. Many government ulama oppose the family
During this period, this policy appears to have met with some success. The apolitical position of these ulama can be understood by the fact that ulama as a whole had an increasingly secure institutional base of their own in the government financed religious sector. Likewise, the authority of ulama and the importance of institutions linked to ulama such as the *Shariah* laws were also maintained. Despite the secular nature of the government, ulama of this generation felt that there was a need to maintain the hegemony of UMNO for the greater good of Islam and the Malay community, especially in light of what they perceived as threats from non-Muslim population.\textsuperscript{105} Lastly, and most importantly, many ulama still upheld the Al-Ghazalian approach to authority. While not all elements of Sufism were accepted by this time, since Kaum Muda thinkers influenced many ulama, they observed the maintenance of *akhlaq* and *adab*.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, ulama were careful not to transgress the above, especially in dealing with authorities. They tended to adopt a softer and more accommodating approach in solving problems relating to Islam. This accommodation also meant that ulama were not obsessed about the implementation of the *Shariah*.

It may seem rather contradictory that despite the more accommodating position of ulama during this period, segments within them continued to oppose the UMNO government. There are two main reasons for this. Prior to the 1980s, PAS was a right-wing Malay nationalist party, which gave strong emphasis to Islam; however Malay nationalism remained its key ideology.\textsuperscript{107} PAS’ critique of UMNO centred on the issue of planning schemes introduced by the government; Abu Bakar Hamzah, *Peranchang Keluarga* (Kota Bahru: Pustaka Aman, 1970) for more on this issue.\textsuperscript{105} David, *Muslim Organization*, p. 175.\textsuperscript{106} Abdul Rahman Abdullah, *Pemikiran Islam di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Aliran* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1998), p. 60.\textsuperscript{107} Wan Abdul Rahman Wan Abdul Latif, *PAS 1951-1991: Cabaran Pemantapan dan Misi* (Kuala Lumpur, Jabatan Penerangan PAS, 1991), p. 16.
Malay rights. PAS felt that UMNO had conceded too much to the demands of the non-Malays and sacrificed Malay rights by forming political alliances with the other races.\(^{108}\) Religion was a less important issue as far as all groups of ulama were concerned. The ulama in PAS and UMNO felt that their party could best serve the interest of the Malays. While ulama outside these parties remained apolitical since they did not like the duties and exertions that came with political involvement.\(^{109}\) In addition, ulama in PAS saw the need to oppose UMNO due to its overtly secular leadership. Drinking, womanizing and gambling—traits, which were abhorred even by Malay cultural standards—were common amongst the leaders of UMNO. As far as ulama in PAS were concerned, they saw the need for the leadership to be reformed and thus involved themselves in politics.

This chapter has highlighted the importance of authority to ulama. From the early Islamic history to the Japanese Occupation, ulama have usually worked with any power willing to secure their authority and their influence. At the same time, in the context of Malaya, their obsession with authority resulted in the Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda conflict. This conflict and the Japanese Occupation subsequently led to the birth of various ulama groups aiming to overthrow British rule, which had been a threat to their authority. The Kaum Muda utilised the PKMM and HM as a vehicle to achieve their objectives while the Kaum Tua utilised UMNO to do so. The fear of losing power also led them to form PAS as a vehicle to defend their authority. Ulama in PAS, UMNO and in the religious bureaucracy continued to strive to defend their authority within the structure of the state.

From the above, one can deduce several conclusions. Prior to the 1980s, the ulama within Islamic tradition were willing to play secondary roles to the rulers as long as their

---


\(^{109}\) Interview with Hassan Shukri.
authority was preserved. At the same time, ulama tended to be less legalistic due to the influence of Sufism and were thus more focused on the ethical values of Islam rather than the *Shariah*. While they placed great importance on the *Shariah*, this *Shariah* was limited to the laws regulating personal life of Muslims such as the *zakat* and *khalwat* laws. Various developments in the 1970s and 1980s, however, prompted ulama to reconstruct Islamic tradition so as to carve a larger political space and authority for themselves.
Chapter 2: Ulama’s Reconstruction of Tradition

For most of Malay (and Malaysian) history, ulama have usually strongly defended their position by working and collaborating with political authority. Events in the 1970s and 1980s, however, changed this dynamic significantly. Several domestic and international developments prompted ulama to adopt a more offensive position of creating new areas of authority for themselves through the reconstruction and mobilisation of Islamic tradition. In doing so they tried to carve a larger space for themselves in Malaysian politics in the 1980s and 1990s. In broad terms, three sets of factors can be identified which encourage this new positioning. These factors include challenges from other Islamist groups for the authority of Islam, international links between ulama in Malaysia and other parts of the Muslim world, and a paradoxical Islamization policy initiated by the Malaysian government in the 1980s.

Islamic Revivalism and the Challenge of the Daawah Movements

It is difficult to identify a specific year or time to mark the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia, as it has been an ongoing process, which has undergone various developments since the late 1960s.1 Earlier observers of the phenomenon attributed it to the class divide between the different strata of society and strains and stresses of Malay political culture. Other observers noted an ethnic dimension to the phenomenon.2 By the late 1990s, the renewed search for spiritual meaning in religion as

1 Islamic revivalism is the phenomenon of the Muslim community trying to revive the teachings of the Koran, Hadith and the bulk of medieval Islamic law; Nasim Javed, Islam’s Political Culture: Religion and Politics in Pre-divided Pakistan, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 55.
well as the demand for greater political liberties began to replace these earlier assertions. This could be seen from the divide within the Muslim community that was reflected in the election results of the 1999 Malaysian general elections.

Despite the changing factors motivating Islamic revivalism, some salient characteristics can be used to describe it. Firstly, there has been a greater confidence in understanding Islam as a comprehensive way of life that is integral to politics and society.\(^3\) Seen from this overarching perspective, Islam has been viewed by revivalists as being able to guide Muslims in all situations as long as they abide by its tenets. Secondly, the expressions of *daawah* changed the political identity of Malays and redefined the social and political life of all Malaysians and their party affiliations.\(^4\) Thirdly, there has been a sense of assertiveness, which translates to the revivalist pushing for Islamic-based or stauncher Islamic policies to be implemented. Finally, there has been the establishment of a multiplicity of organizations, which focus on Muslim society.

In the Malaysian context, movements such as the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), *Darul Arqam* and the *Tablighi Jamaat* began to emerge as the key voices representing Islam by the mid-1970s.\(^5\) These groups came to be popularly known

---


\(^5\) Darul Arqam was founded in 1968 by Ashaari Muhammad, a former member of PAS who had started the organization to propagate Islam and emulate the ways of the Prophet and his companions. It grew to become a major organization with millions of dollars in investment and had started an Arqam community in Sungai Penchala. The group was subsequently banned in 1994 allegedly over its deviationist teachings. For more on Arqam, Zabidi Mohamed, *Tersungkur di Pintu 'Syurga': The Untold Truth and Inside Story of Al-Arqam and I.S.A.*, (Kuala Lumpur: Zabidi Publications, 1998). The Tabligh movement was started in the Indian subcontinent by an alim, Maulana Ilyas. He asked Muslims to spend their time and money in spiritual journeys to seek religious knowledge and promote the faith. They also believe in the six common tenets which guides the members of the organization. For more on the Tablighi, see Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of Tablighi Jamaat as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal* (Boston: Brill, 2000).
as daawah movements. Malay hostility against prevailing political groups contributed significantly to the popularity of these movements. Among the daawah movements, ABIM had the greatest impact, as both PAS and the Malaysian government were affected by its emergence.

ABIM was founded and launched in 1971 during the Tenth General Meeting of the National Union of Malaysian Muslim student (PKPIM). The leaders of ABIM were both ulama and professionals. It was initially formed as a platform for Muslim students to continue in their religious activism upon graduation. They also increasingly called for the implementation of Shariah laws and the formation of an Islamic state. They were especially critical of the government, which they condemned as being un-Islamic.

Ulama in the government were seen to be tools of the system who did not dare challenge the inherently un-Islamic practices and policies of their employer. ABIM leaders felt that PAS as an Islamic party had sold out by joining an insufficiently Islamic UMNO-led government. Some of the younger members of PAS, disillusioned with the party’s decision to join the government, joined ABIM and used it as a platform to propagate their views.

By 1981, confronted by the challenge from the ABIM, some ulama in PAS decided to react. These ulama were aware that ABIM was slowly eroding support for the party as PAS under the leadership of Dato Asri did little to counter the challenge. At the same time, PAS’ ulama saw natural allies in the ABIM leaders who could help return them to power in PAS and revitalize the party. Younger ulama in PAS Youth began an

---

7 Interview with Hadi Awang.
initial process of uniting Islamist groups under their umbrella leadership by successfully
inducting many ulama from ABIM, such as Fadhil Noor and Hadi Awang.\(^9\) Together
with the newer group of ulama, older ulama in PAS such as Yusuf Rawa and Nik Aziz
began to seek primacy of ulama’s role in society by introducing a new concept of
leadership termed as “Leadership of Ulama.”\(^10\) At the same time, ulama began to adopt
ABIM’s slogans such as the formation of Islamic state and the adoption of *Shariah* laws.
This concept was put into practice when the ulama successfully ousted Asri in 1982.

The impact of ABIM was also felt among ulama within government institutions.
These ulama were key targets of the *daawah* movement’s criticism of the government as
they were seen to be ineffective in introducing and promulgating Islamic laws in the
system, as well as correcting un-Islamic practices in the government.\(^11\) In response to
these challenges, ulama together with the government began to initiate various moves to
take a more active role in the promotion and development of Islam. The Islamic Daawah
Foundation Malaysia (YADIM) led by government ulama was founded in 1974. Its
primary role was to coordinate the activities of the different *daawah* bodies.\(^12\) This was
done in the hope that the *daawah* movement would eventually come under the influence
and patronage of YADIM. At the same time, ulama successfully lobbied for the National
Council of Islamic Affairs (earlier MKI) to become a full division of the Prime Minister’s


\(^10\) More will be discuss about this idea in the next chapter.


\(^12\) Interview with Nakhaie Ahmad.
office. This was to mark the beginning of a significant expansion of religious bureaucracy in Malaysia.

Ulama within UMNO were also beginning to call for action to be taken against revivalist groups while at the same time urging the government to expand the role of Islam. In dealing with the problem of Islamic revivalism, ulama and government leaders in UMNO initiated various moves in co-opting ABIM leaders into UMNO and the religious bureaucracy. The most important co-option was that of its leader Anwar Ibrahim. While not an alim himself, Anwar brought with him many supporters who were ulama and placed them in various important positions within the religious bureaucracy. This move marked the beginning of the reshaping and the reorientation of the bureaucracy into a more rigid Islamic infrastructure.

### Influence of Salafi Movements

Perhaps the most important factor for the reconstruction of Islamic traditions over the past twenty years for ulama has been the influence of Salafi movements. While adherents of the Salafi movement often trace their origins to Prophet Muhammad, in reality it originated with two important Muslim revivalists, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. Both these figures called on Muslims to reassert Islamic identity.
and to turn to Islam to solve problems facing Muslims. Afghani called for the reformation of Islam to make it relevant to intellectual and political life. He saw the need to restore Muslim political independence and past glory.\textsuperscript{17} Convinced that the transformation of Muslim society should come through social and educational reforms, Abduh echoed Afghani’s call for the reinterpretation of Islam.\textsuperscript{18} The message of the early Salafis was crafted for a Muslim audience, who were dominated by Western colonial powers. At the same time, Muslims were seen to be backward in all spheres of life. Thus, their political message of anti-colonialism and call for the reinterpretation of Islam were seen as important rallying cries for Muslims to unite and act in concert.

Several groups succeeded and took off from Abduh and Afghani ideas. They can be broadly categorized into two groups, namely the moderate Salafis and the radical Salafis.\textsuperscript{19} The most important figures among the radical Salafis are Hassan Al-Banna and Moulana Maududi.\textsuperscript{20} Al-Banna formed the influential Islamic movement, the al-Ikhwan-
al-Muslimin, which has been at the forefront of the revivalist activities in the Middle East. The Ikhwan played a major role in radicalizing Muslims, especially in influencing them to revive the fundamental precepts of Islam as an ideological movement, that advocates an Islamic state, which is committed to applying the Shariah in public affairs. ¹¹ Similarly, Maududi and his Jamaat-I-Islami called for devout Muslims to sustain for a struggle to enforce Islamic laws and form an Islamic state. ²² The main thrust of Maududi’s ideology was his espousal of the thinking that Muslims should develop a new order based on the Koran and Hadith.

While radical Salafis are committed to the idea of Islamic reformation, the theme that they focus on is the political aspect of this reformation. Their radical message can be attributed to the political context of the time. The ethos of radical Salafis has its roots at the turn of the twentieth century, against a backdrop of what was seen as years of humiliating subjugation of the Muslim world by Western powers. The actions of radical Salafis have also been a response of the Muslim intelligentsia to the trends of Westernization, secularization and materialism in their own countries, which they believe
were the products of secular-oriented ruling elites. These elites are exemplified by the Wafd Party in Egypt and the Muslim League in India. The situation necessitated, from a radical Salafi’s perspective, an alternative Islamic leadership to represent the interest of Muslims.

The radical Salafi boasted other important figures such as Sayyid Qutb, who is often cited as the ideologue of militant Islam. He was responsible for putting the Ikhwan on a radical path, which often involves violence. In his most famous treatise, Milestones, Qutb declared that a Muslim who did not uphold the Shariah becomes an infidel, could be killed and his property destroyed.\(^{23}\) He was later executed by the Egyptian government on charges of treason and became a martyr for radical Muslims.\(^{24}\) In trying to grapple with elements of modernity, such as the Western conception of a modern state and its legal system, radical Salafis were forced to modify and refashion Islamic traditions to suit these modern conditions. These attempts include calls for the establishment of an Islamic state, which combined the Western ideas of state and traditional Islamic laws. These modifications of Islamic tradition could also be seen in the case of ulama in Malaysia due to the close interactions that the radical Salafis had with them.

An examination of primary documents in the PAS archives reveals that Salafi movements had a great impact in shaping the religio-political outlook of its ulama. Contacts between ulama in PAS and the Salafi movement were first established in the 1950s, as ulama such as Zulkifli Md and Yusuf Rawa were exposed to the ideas of the movement during their stay in the Middle East. Zulkifli Md received religious training

\(^{24}\) Consequently, he is the source of inspiration for radical Muslims such as Osama Bin Laden; Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, (New York: Berkeley Books, 2003), p. 17.
directly from figures such as Hassan Al-Banna; Yusuf Rawa became acquainted with the ideas of the Ikhwan through his reading of the books written by Ikhwan in Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{25} Upon returning to Malaysia, these ulama tried to initiate changes within the party by advocating a puritan Islamic law. In 1963, ten students from PAS were sent to study in Iraq in an agreement with the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{26} They received direct training from the activists of the Ikhwan such as Dr Abdul Karim Zaidan. The political climate in Iraq at that time was hostile to the Ikhwan’s ideology.\textsuperscript{27} The Ikhwan decided to focus on education, organization and recruitment instead of direct political action. The experience that these students underwent in Iraq was put into practice when many of the students became leaders of PAS in the 1980s, such as when the Usul Dakwah text written by Dr Karim became a basic text for PAS members.

The transmission of ideas between the Ikhwan and PAS also included the writings of PAS ulama such as Hadi Awang, who had earlier studied with major figures such as Said Hawwa while doing his degree in the University of Madinah.\textsuperscript{28} The stylistic approach and content of the writing of Qutb can be clearly seen in his own writing such as the Muqadimmah Aqidah Muslimin. In both Qutb’s Milestones and Hadi Awang’s Muqadimmah, attempts were made to characterize a Muslim who is an infidel. Qutb’s book was written in 1954 after he and fellow members of the Brotherhood were arrested and subsequently tortured by the regime of Gamal Abdul Nasser, then President of Egypt.

\textsuperscript{26} PAS Annual Report 1963-1964; Interview with Hassan Shukri.
\textsuperscript{28} Said Hawwa (1935-1987) was a major Ikhwan figure who led the movement in Syria for several years. He taught for several years in the University of Madinah. Interview with Hadi Awang.
The book was, in effect, a response to Nasser’s betrayal of the Ikhwan. Qutb re-analyzed the Quran to find a new ideology. He looked at the course of action Prophet Muhammad took in the face of a jahili (ignorant and evil) society. He drew on the Koran to make a case that the Egyptian society is jahili and needed to be reformed to become a truly Islamic society.\textsuperscript{29} In a style similar to Qutb, Hadi Awang reinterpreted the Koran to outline factors that resulted in a Muslim becoming an infidel. The book was first printed in the late 1970s and seems to be targeted against the supporters of UMNO. However, contrary to many assertions that Hadi Awang had declared UMNO members as infidel, he did not declare this openly in his book and denied ever making such a declaration.\textsuperscript{30}

The impact of Maududi and the Jamaat on the religio-political thoughts of ulama in PAS should not also be underrated. Contacts were made between PAS and the Jamaat in the 1950s when PAS won elections in Kelantan and Terengganu. The electoral success created euphoria in the Muslim World as a little known Islamic party had won significant power in Malaysia. This prompted the Jamaat to establish contact with PAS, which was seen as an emerging political force.\textsuperscript{31} However, in terms of political ideas, the influence of Maududi came through ABIM ulama who joined PAS in the late 1970s.

Members of ABIM were introduced to Maududi through their interaction with international youth groups such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth and began to speak in Maududi’s language calling on Malays to see Islam as a way of life and to


\textsuperscript{30} Several works on PAS had highlighted the issue of declaring a Muslim as an infidel or takfir. Noor, \textit{Embedded}, pp. 329-449 and Alias, \textit{PAS’ Platform}, pp. 182-7. Hadi Awang denied this accusation in my interview with him.

\textsuperscript{31} Contacts between the two parties remain intact. Leaders of both parties constantly attend each other’s annual gathering. Both parties are also actively involve in the formation of the Joint Action Front for Islamist Groups base in London in 1994 and continuously work together on issues facing the Muslim World such as the Gulf War in 1991, the Balkan Crisis in 1995 and more recently in the controversy surrounding cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammad in a derogatory manner. PAS Annual Report 1990-1996; Interview with Nasharuddin Mat Isa and Qazi Hussein Ahmad.
imbibe the idea of an Islamic state. ABIM also included Maududi’s *The Meaning of the Qur‘ân* as one of the basic texts during their study circles during this period. According to Safie Ibrahim, several works of ulama in PAS reveal such a strong influence. For example, Budiman Rati’s *Tata Negara Islam* (Islamic Political Science) is very much influenced by Maududi’s *First Principles of the Islamic State*, which also had a strong impact on Budiman Rati’s elaboration on the relationship between the executive, judiciary and legislature in an Islamic state.  

Another important ulama and Central Executive Council member of PAS, Baharuddin Abdul Latif, in his article on the Islamic Welfare State, propagated a form of economic system applied to an Islamic state which is tantamount to a welfare state which Maududi advocated.

The impact of the Salafi movement can also be seen amongst ulama in the government religious bureaucracy. Many of these ulama were exposed to the ideas of the *Ikhwan* while pursuing their tertiary education in the Middle East. Certain programs in local Islamic tertiary institutions, such as the International Islamic University and the National University of Malaysia, also refer extensively to books by Salafi thinkers as part of their teachings. Interviews with these ulama reveal that most of them had also read books by Maududi, Al-Banna and Qutb. One alim was quoted as saying that Maududi presented Islam in a convincing way and established by rational argument that Islam is a perfect religion and a complete way of life. Many ulama today also agree and believe in the need for Muslims to strive for the establishment of an Islamic order such as the

---

34 Interview with Othman Mustapha and Razali Shahbuddin.
35 Interview with Ulama.
establishment of an Islamic state and the promulgation of the hudud laws in Malaysia.\textsuperscript{36} Many of these ulama were also greatly influenced by the ideas of a contemporary Muslim thinker with Ikhwan links, Syeikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawi.

An examination of works written by government ulama over the past 20 years reflects a strong influence of the Salafi thinkers. In an important work on Islam, \textit{Di Bawah Naungan Islam}, Nakhaie Ahmad quoted extensively from the Salafi thinkers over a range of different issues such as Islam as a system of life and Islamic law.\textsuperscript{37} For instance, drawing on Maududi’s ideas, he urged Muslims to see Islam as a comprehensive way of life.\textsuperscript{38} The above example clearly shows that Salafi movements had a large impact in the intellectual and political development of ulama in Malaysia. Many accepted Salafi ideas, such as the need to establish an Islamic state and the implementation of stricter Islamic laws such as the hudud laws. Drawing inspiration from Salafi movements, ulama began a process of reconstruction of Islamic tradition to carve a more important niche for themselves in the Malaysian political scene. Nevertheless, Salafi movements were not the only source of knowledge and inspiration to ulama. Other developments in the Muslim World had a large impact on the thinking of ulama. Among the most important was the Iranian Revolution.

**The Iranian Revolution**

The 1979 Iranian Revolution enthused many Muslims throughout the world. The Revolution seemed to indicate that Islam could offer a real alternative to capitalism and communism. The success of the revolution also inspired ulama that a country can be

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Among the people he quoted include Al-Banna, Moududi, Qutb, Zaidan and Qardhawi.
\textsuperscript{38} Nakhaie Ahmad, \textit{Di Bawah Naungan Islam} (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Muamalat Islam Malaysia, 1998).
ruled under the leadership of their own kind. The different ulama factions within PAS
drew inspiration from the example set by Iran. In November 1981, ulama from PAS
Youth went to Iran to support the success of the Iranian revolution and the ulama
leadership in the country.39 During the meeting, the PAS Youth Council came to the
conclusion that only ulama have the strength to lead the Muslim community and that the
leadership of PAS must be led by ulama.40 A direct link could also be drawn between the
Iranians and the change of PAS leadership to the hands of ulama. In 1982, an Iranian
member of parliament, Fakhur Razzi, was invited to give a speech at the PAS Youth
Council Annual Meeting. He urged PAS to emulate Iran by setting up the leadership of
the ulama in the party. At that meeting, with the support of the Iranians, the PAS Youth
Council approved the recommendation for an ulama leadership for the party and the
establishment of Ulama Council within PAS.41 Yusuf Rawa also saw the revival of the
ulama institution as a way of solving the numerous problems faced by Muslims. By 1983
he called for the elevation of the ulama as leaders and guardians of the society, as the
uniqueness of the Iranian Revolution lies in the fact that ulama guided the Revolution.42

The impact of the Iranian Revolution was muted for ulama in government
institutions. Many ulama were wary of the Iranians, as they were *Shiite*, leading some to
pronounce that Iranians are not even Muslims.43 At the same time, in 1996, the
Malaysian National Fatwa Council declared that *Shiism* was a deviationist group and
short of banning the sect had decided to prevent any Muslims from converting to the

39 Among those who went were Abu Bakar Chik and Mustafa Ali. PAS Youth Annual Report, 1981-1982, p.6
40 Interview with Fadli Ghani.
41 Interview with Hassan Shukri.
43 This was confirmed by several books written by ulama in JAKIM declaring that Shiite teachings have
strayed from mainstream Islam. An example of this is Wan Alias Abdullah, *Aliran Syiah*, (Kuala Lumpur:
Bahagian Agama, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1982). Interview with Ulama.
Beyond the sectarian differences, although ulama may be reticent in acknowledging any influence from Iran, these did exist. For instance, several ulama openly showed their acceptance of the concept of an Islamic state ruled by ulama. Others expressed their belief that ulama should be given a greater political role or at the very least a greater advisory role to enable them to screen un-Islamic policies of the government. The more negative attitudes of government ulama have to do with their involvement with the government which made them less inclined to want to take a revolutionary position.

Ulama, especially those in PAS, drew extensively from the case of Iranian ulama, to begin advocating their own concept of an Islamic state, ruled under the leadership of ulama. Iranians had been directly involved in such a move during their participation in PAS meetings. While ulama in the government tended to distance themselves from the Iranian case due to the aversion to the Shiite teachings, one could see that their own thoughts on the role of ulama in society resembled the Iranian model. Besides the above motivations for ulama’s reinterpretation of tradition, changes in their educational background had a profound impact on their thinking and political ideas.

**Changing Educational Background Of Ulama**

Ulama in Malaysia have undergone major changes in their religio-political outlook in the past 20 years. From the 1940s till the mid-1960s, they usually received their education in pondoks and madrasahs around the region, such as in Singapore and Aceh. Several went to traditional centers of Islamic learning such as in Deoband, India.

---

45 Interview with Ulama
46 Interview with Dato’ Harunssani
and Al-Azhar University in Egypt. As alluded to in the last chapter, ulama in the region were followers of the Shafie School of law and were adherents of traditional fiqh. Two elements of this traditional fiqh are its abhorrence of politics and the accommodation towards local customs and practices. Generally ulama were prevented from meddling in politics and there was thus an emphasis on loyalty to the leadership to avoid divisions as much as possible.\(^{47}\) This accommodation also meant that the ulama were not obsessed with the implementation of the *Shariah* except in matters that were deemed as serious offences in the Qur’an such as drinking and womanizing. These ulama adhered to a form of Islam that sought to actualize universalism and egalitarianism associated with the *Shariah* and Sufi teachings. However, ulama who studied in Egypt and India were more legalistic in their approach. Many also happened to be members of PAS, such as Zulkifli Mohamed and Nik Aziz. Nevertheless, they accounted for a small minority of ulama during that period.

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a sharp jump in the numbers of students who went to Al-Azhar, due to the relaxation of language competency as an entry requirement for students from the non-Arab speaking world.\(^{48}\) The political context of Al-Azhar at that time was one of Islamic revivalism. While it was illegal for students and teachers to engage in any political activities, the *Ikhwan* was at the height of its popularity among the student community.\(^{49}\) Despite the reform of Al-Azhar, which was carried out by Nasser in 1961, ulama in the institution remained legalistic in their approach to religion and held


similar views on religion with the *Ikhwan*.

Malaysian students were known to have direct contact with the *Ikhwan* and were involved in *Ikhwan* organized study circles on campus. The ideological rigidity of the *Shaykh al-Azhar* and other senior ulama was evident on issues such as their view of polygamy as a religious obligation and human need, a stance, which irritated elements in the Egyptian government.

Such legalistic approaches to Islam trickled down to many students who were influenced by the ideas of their teachers at Al-Azhar. The religious students of this era brought back with them outlooks nurtured by a different social, intellectual, political and cultural context during their stay in Egypt. They began to see Islam as a complete way of life and emphasized the need for Muslims to return to Islam holistically. These future ulama were essentially more rigid in seeking to implement the *Shariah* law and were less willing to contextualise Islamic law. Many took up teaching careers either in schools or in tertiary institutions. They were to play an important role in shaping the minds and religious thinking of future ulama who became their students in the local universities in Malaysia. Many also became actively involved in PAS. Some of these ulama include Hadi Awang and Nakhaie Ahmad.

A new type of ulama began to emerge after the 1970s. The increasing influence of *Wahhabism* contributed significantly to this development. The *Wahhabi* movement is an eighteenth-century reviverist movement. Similar to the *Salafis*, the founder of the movement, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, called for the eradication of Sufi practices,

---

51 Both Nik Aziz and Hadi Awang who studied in Al-Azhar confirmed this. Interview with Nik Aziz and Hadi Awang
or what he termed as pre-Islamic practices that had crept into Islam, and for the
reformation of Islam. Their iconoclastic zeal against Sufi practices resulted in the
destruction of sacred tombs of the prophet and his companions.\textsuperscript{54} Their political stance
was one motivated by a desire to return to past practices, which included the application
of puritan Islamic laws such as the \textit{hudud}.\textsuperscript{55}

The \textit{Wahhabis} are best known for their control of the governments in Saudi
Arabia and other Gulf Arab states. Trying to spread their ideology, \textit{Wahhabis} had
distributed money from petro-dollar surpluses to other Muslim countries. Often financial
support was provided to \textit{madrasahs} and higher institutions of Islamic learning with these
surpluses, with the aim of indoctrinating students to be adherents of \textit{Wahhabism}.
Financial support was also given to individual students in the form of bursaries and
scholarships. It must be borne in mind that the Saudis were also known to give support to
the \textit{Ikhwan}.\textsuperscript{56} While \textit{Ikhwan}’s ideology is not exactly the same as the \textit{Wahhabi}’s, they
share many common ideals such as a desire to introduce strict Islamic laws and establish
an Islamic state.

By the early 1980s, the Saudi government provided funds to \textit{Al-Azhar}.\textsuperscript{57} These
often came with expectations for \textit{Al-Azhar} to accommodate \textit{Wahhabi} scholars and to

\textsuperscript{55} The writing of Islam in Southeast Asia tends to also use the terms \textit{Salafism} and \textit{Wahhabism}
interchangeably. While both these ideologies are extremely similar, to equate both concepts would be
problematic. The key difference between radical \textit{Salafis} and \textit{Wahhabi} is the historical context from which
they emerge. \textit{Wahhabism} emerge in Saudi Arabia as a reformist movement to purify the Arabian society
from what is deemed as un-Islamic practices while \textit{Salafism} as a reaction to Western colonialism. In practice,
\textit{Wahhabis} have a stronger aversion to Sufism while the \textit{Salafis} are more tolerant of Sufism. The \textit{Jamaat} in
Pakistan and India for instance have many members who are Sufis. The \textit{Ikhwan} in certain parts of the Arab
World such as Sudan also adopts many Sufi practices. The key similarity between the two ideologies is
their goal to implement strict Islamic laws within an Islamic state. Interview with Qazi Hussein Ahmad.
\textsuperscript{56} For more on the impact of \textit{Wahhabi}’s petro-dollar on Islamic groups, see Fred R Von Mehden, \textit{Two
Worlds of Islam: Interactions between Southeast Asia and the Middle East} (Gainesville: University Press of
Terror} (New York: Doubleday, 2002).
avoid criticizing the ideology. The Shaykh Al-Azhar was also known to have worked closely with the Saudis and had sympathy for their belief.\(^{58}\) The growth of radical Islamic groups during this period forced Anwar Sadat’s and Hosni Mubarak’s regimes to enhance the link between Islam and the Egyptian state, and lean toward Al-Azhar in order to counter the militant challenge.\(^{59}\) This meant that they had to allow ulama in Al-Azhar to propagate conservative Islamic views on issues such as personal status, birth control and organ transplantation, censorship of films, the dissemination of plays and books perceived as harmful to Islam. On the question of politics, Al-Azhar elites continued to propagate the need for further Islamization of Muslim societies. The increased financial support for the Ikhwan meant that they were able to assert themselves more strongly in various institutions such as the unions and student groups. Scholarships were also given to students to study in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States during this period.\(^{60}\)

The impact of the Wahhabi-Salafi thought in the religio-political outlook of budding ulama from Malaysia was significant. While Wahhabism and Salafism are two different ideologies, they have similar religio-political aims, such as the enforcement of stricter Islamic laws and formation of an Islamic state, and it is this aspect of these ideologies that influenced Malaysian ulama and religious students. Exposure to the ideas of this group occurred on several fronts. Most of these religious students were exposed to ideas of a more rigid interpretation of Islam through their lectures in Al-Azhar and more importantly due to the religio-political fervour created by the Ikhwan.\(^{61}\) In the religious

---


realm, these students rejected all schools of Islamic law and most of them subscribed to the stringent Hanbali School of law and an anti-Sufi ideology.\textsuperscript{62}

Mona Abaza observed these religious traits during her field study of Southeast Asian students in Al-Azhar. She described the Malaysian students as being more rigid and legalistic compared to Indonesian and Bruneian students.\textsuperscript{63} For instance, Malaysian students adhered to strict segregation of sex and tend to be very rigid in their dressing. Female Malaysian students were often pressured by male counterparts to wear the \textit{minitelekung} rather than just the simple headscarf. At the same time, many of the Malaysian men were not willing to speak to Abaza, as she was a member of the opposite sex.\textsuperscript{64} Their more legalistic approach to Islam also meant that they were often supportive of efforts to introduce stricter Islamic laws in Malaysia. Naturally, many also began to develop support for PAS due to the party’s effort at Islamising the system. PAS leaders such as Nik Aziz, Hadi Awang and other PAS ulama also delivered talks organized by Malaysian students to further enhance support for PAS.\textsuperscript{65} Many of these students became recruits of PAS upon coming back to Malaysia. Some even became part of the higher echelon of leadership in PAS, such as Nasharuddin Mat Isa, the current Deputy President of PAS.\textsuperscript{66}

The graduates of Al-Azhar of the 1960s also figure prominently in the religious faculties of Malaysian tertiary institutions, with many of the lecturers clearly influenced

\textsuperscript{63} Interview with Mona Abaza.  
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{65} PAS Youth Annual Report 1980-1981, p. 4; PAS Annual Reports between 1983 -1991; Interview with Hassan Shukri and Nasharuddin Mat Isa. Various student organizations were also started in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia by PAS to indoctrinate the students.  
\textsuperscript{66} Interview with Nasharuddin Mat Isa.}
by Salafi ideology.\textsuperscript{67} As such, a scan of the reading list for courses taught in these faculties included writings of Al-Banna, Qutb, Maududi and even Khomeini.\textsuperscript{68} Graduates of Al-Azhar also came back to Malaysia to join pondok, local madrasahs or to start Islamic schools.\textsuperscript{69} The thinking of the Salafi-Wahhabi figures thus continues to influence and shape the religio-political thinking of religious students studying in Malaysia.

The synthesis of the factors mentioned above has resulted in the development of a more legalistic type of ulama in Malaysia. While many of these students coming back to Malaysia worked as independent preachers, many also came back to work within the government schools, mosques and religious institutions. The new form of Islam that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in Malaysia, which persists to the present day, is formal, legalistic and bureaucratic in nature. It differs from the earlier form of Islam promoted by earlier ulama. As a result of their education in the Middle East they often use their position within the government infrastructure to refashion Islamic tradition and create a more important political role for themselves. This refashioning of Islamic tradition was enhanced by the Malaysian government’s Islamization process.

\textbf{Paradox of Islamisation and Ulama}

The rise of Dr Mahathir Mohammed to the office of Prime Minister in 1981 heralded a dynamic new strategy of Islamization. Unlike his predecessors, especially Tunku Abdul Rahman, who were reluctant to use Islam as a political strategy, Mahathir began speaking of the importance of Islam in Malaysian public life. However, his critics

\textsuperscript{67} Interview with Ahmad Awang.
\textsuperscript{68} Von Mehden, \textit{Two Worlds}, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{69} Rosnani, \textit{Education Dualism}, p. 90.
often argued that Mahathir was a secularist using Islam as a political tool.\textsuperscript{70} His Islamisation drive was perceived as an out-flanking manoeuvre to isolate a rejuvenated PAS under the new leadership of ulama. His handling of the Islamic challenge from Islamic groups and forces varied and involved a combination of methods. As one political commentator noted, it was a mishmash of accommodation, co-option and confrontation.\textsuperscript{71} An indirect consequence of his policies, however, was a strengthening of the influence of ulama in Malaysia.

The Islamization policy was often qualified as being oriented towards inculcating upright and moral values compatible with the government’s plans for governing all Malaysians. In achieving this, Mahathir introduced, “The Assimilation of Islamic Values in the Administration of the Country” policy.\textsuperscript{72} This policy was described as promoting justice, respect, diligence, cleanliness, trustworthiness, efficiency, toleration and other such values in the administration. Unlike the symbolic concessions of previous decades, it was apparent that Mahathir calculated the imperatives of an offensive strategy to counter PAS in the prevailing atmosphere.\textsuperscript{73} Another way Islamic groups were accommodated by intensifying Islamic programs such as, the airing of the call to prayer as well as Islamic talks, forums and sermons throughout the country.\textsuperscript{74} Although these programs were limited to the discussion of basic precepts of Islam and never discussed

\textsuperscript{70} Interview with Ahmad Awang, Hadi Awang, Ghani Shamduddin, Nik Aziz, Dato Harunsanni and Halim Kader. Many of these ulama had direct contact with Mahathir and feel that he does not know enough about Islam but posit himself as an expert on Islam and criticize ulama. In addition, Ahmad Awang and Harunsanni mention that Mahathir’s understanding of Islam is very minimal as he rejects aspects of Islam that Mahathir considers negative such as polygamy but these ulama do not think there can be anything negative about Islamic teachings.


\textsuperscript{72} Shanti Nair, \textit{Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy}, (New York: Routledge, 1997) p. 33.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

issues such as the position of Islamic law in Malaysia, they had an impact of creating an Islamic environment in the country. Such public displays of Islam resulted in the unintended consequence of increasing the influence of ulama such as Haron Din and Ismail Kamus who became popular due to these programs.

Mahathir also embarked on a large-scale expansion of the religious bureaucracy. In the process he centralized all Islamic initiatives under the Religious Affairs Department of the Prime Minister’s Office. The statistics reflect the magnitude of importance that the Mahathir Administration placed on this Department. In 1982, the Department had 100 staff members; by 1987 this figure had grown to 608. YADIM, was strengthened and given a central role in spreading the message of Islam. Expansion of the religious bureaucracy was not limited to the federal level; religious departments at the state level continued to expand with significant increases in staff employed in the state religious department and the office of mufti. The increased bureaucratization of ulama held a vital function of integrating Islam to the national establishment. This was to allow for greater control of religious groups. To further accommodate the demands of the society and ulama, the administration also introduced Islamic finances, Islamic departments in the universities and other Islamic institutions. Most of these institutions were helmed by ulama thus expanding their role and function within the Malaysian society.

Accommodation to the demands of Islamist groups and ulama also occurred in the realm of Shariah law legislation. Although Shariah law and Islamic courts have

---

75 Nair, Islam, p. 33.
76 Interview with Ulama.
77 Nair, Islam, p. 40.
continually shared jurisdiction over Muslims’ lives with civil law, their loci of power was increasingly intensified in the government’s Islamization drive. The status of judges was raised to be on par with that of their counterparts in the civil judiciary, thus making them more powerful. In 1988 the Islamic courts were recognized as the equal of civil courts and were given broad powers to protect the sanctity of Islamic law. Muslim life became increasingly regulated by Islamic jurisdiction in such matters as fasting, through the payment of zakat (the giving of alms) and other religious tithes, and through prohibitions on activities such as alcohol consumption and gambling. At the state level, several legislations were also enacted to police the morality of Muslims. For example, the state of Johor provided for caning and jail sentences for acts of lesbianism, sodomy, pre-marital sex, as well as for pimping, incest, and prostitution. In Melaka, the state government issued a circular requiring all female employees, including non-Muslims, to ensure that they do not reveal their elbows and knees. In Selangor, Muslim women could be fined for dressing inappropriately and taking part in beauty pageants under a 1995 Shariah enactment, based on a fatwa by the Selangor state mufti. Perhaps what is more interesting about this legislation is the fact that it was rarely implemented. Rather, it was enacted to show the Islamic nature of the government. This became starkly obvious when the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) arrested and fined three Muslim women for taking part in a beauty pageant. The Malaysian political leadership was angered by the arrest. It was argued that the arrest was not in line with the secular system in Malaysia. The Mufti of Selangor retorted back with citations of the 1995 legislation.

80 Interview with Ulama.; *Asia Week*, 16 Jun 2000 and 5 Dec 2000; *New Straits Times* 5 and 7 Jul 1997
Although the episode resulted in the dismissal of the mufti, it is symptomatic of the increasing assertiveness of ulama in Malaysia.

The creation and expansion of a massive religious bureaucracy, vested with legislative and judicial authority throughout the country, helped entrench the rightful authority of the ulama as the official interpreters of Islamic doctrine, teachings and legal principles. The actions of the Malaysian government to reinvigorate an Islamic image created a perception that the government was receptive and sympathetic to the cause of political Islam. On the other hand, many from outside and even within UMNO itself took the opportunity to use Islam not only for political subterfuge but also as an agenda to gain Malay support. In trying to enhance this Islamic image further, Mahathir co-opted ulama into politics. He knew of the influence that ulama wielded and saw the need to include them in matters beyond religion. Among these ulama were Dr Yusuf Noor, Zainal Abidin Kadir and Abdul Hamid Othman. In the 2004 elections, in an effort to win back the declining support of the Malay populace, Mahathir’s successor Abdullah Badawi fielded as many as sixteen ulama to contest the election. These ulama included Dr Mashitah Ibrahim, a popular preacher often featured in Islamic programs in Malaysian television and Dato Pirdaus Abdullah, the imam of the national mosque. These ulama were used to curb PAS’ burgeoning support. In the case of the 2004 elections, they successfully did so as these ulama trounced PAS ulama in many seats that PAS held. The fact that Badawi’s father and grandfather were prominent ulama added credibility to his

---

82 Patricia Martinez, “The Islamic State or the State of Islam in Malaysia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, (December 2001), 23, 3, pp. 189-200.
84 *Straits Times*, 16 Jul 2004.
own Islamic credentials. In yet another attempt to co-opt ulama, the Malaysian government established the National Ulama Consultative Council in 2002, whose main role was to ensure that the policies formulated by the government were in line with Islamic principles.\footnote{New Straits Times, 7 Sept 2002.} Through this process, ulama now occupy a more important position within UMNO and Malaysian politics.

Another approach that the Malaysian government used to manage Islam has been the policy of selective confrontation. Despite protecting and enhancing the power and authority of ulama, the Malaysian government sought to limit it to those who were seen to be moderate and accommodating towards state policy. In addition, the government has tried to establish tight control over ulama by controlling, defining and even bureaucratizing the ulama through licensing their practice and organizing them hierarchically.\footnote{Vali Nasr, Leviathan, p. 120.} They have also tried to regulate the management of mosques, the conduct of religious classes and attempted to standardize the Friday sermon for all mosques throughout the country. This strategy has been aimed at ensuring that ulama in PAS do not get access to these channels to air their political views against the government.

In addition, the Malaysian government has begun to realize that it is necessary to censure even ulama within their ranks. This has occurred several times. Ahmad Awang, former Director of the Islamic Centre, was moved to become Director for Daawah in the Ministry of Education after he reproached Mahathir over several issues, one of which, was Mahathir’s viewpoint that wearing the headscarf is not an Islamic obligation.\footnote{Interview with Ahmad Awang.} Despite involving ulama in politics, Dr Mahathir contradicted himself by urging ulama to
stay out of politics, claiming that this would be detrimental to the religion’s intellectual energy.\textsuperscript{88} While this statement was obviously aimed at PAS ulama, many ulama within the government ranks were offended by his remarks.\textsuperscript{89}

This chapter has highlighted several factors to account for the transformation of ulama in Malaysia. The position adopted by ulama was prompted by several factors. The challenge from the \textit{daawah} movement, namely ABIM, forced older ulama in PAS and in the government to enhance their own Islamization drive, co-opting members of the ABIM and to redefine their Islamic belief to include a more legalistic understanding of Islam, such as with the call for stricter Islamic laws and the establishment of an Islamic state as well as newer idea of Islamic leadership. At the same time, exposure to other ulama groups such those from Egypt, Pakistan and Iran brought about a new understanding of their role and function in the society. Often this meant that ulama began to see themselves not only as religious scholars but also as political leaders or advisors with the responsibility to Islamise the society and government. Lastly, the Islamisation drive by Dr Mahathir resulted in the creation of a religious bureaucracy and society, which is now more susceptible to ulama’s ideas on Islam. His contradictory stances towards Islam further convinced the ulama that there was a need for them to take both religious and political matters in their own hands. This has led to the reconstruction of tradition.


\textsuperscript{89} Interview with Ulama.
Chapter 3: Islamic State and Ulama

Ulama began a process of reconstructing traditions in the 1970s starting with issues pertaining to local cultures and Muslim domestic practices. In this period they carved a more important space for themselves in the religious life of Muslims in Malaysia. While in the past, ulama were willing to play second fiddle to the rulers as long as their authority was preserved; this began changing in the 1980s. With the advent of the Mahathir government and with ulama leadership of PAS, a politically motivated reconstruction of tradition began to develop. Ulama began to expand Shariah to include politics and governance. This was especially true after the 1990s when debates over the Islamic State began to take shape in the public domain. This chapter traces the evolution in the understanding of the concept and seeks to show how this concept represents an example of ulama’s reconstruction of tradition.

The concept of the Islamic state has been a subject of discussion and contention among Muslim scholars since the demise of the last Caliphate in the 1920s.¹ Some ulama have appealed, repeatedly and often forcefully, to the ideal of an Islamic state. While much ink has been spilt in the literature relating to this issue, there continue to be a lack of understanding of what accounts for such a state. Part of this problem has occurred due to the fact that there is nothing in the Koran and Sunnah that specifically prescribe the form of state that must be established, leaving a large portion of governance to be decided through contemporary *ijtihad*.² At the same time, while classical works on Islamic

¹ Scholars such as Muhammad Abduh, Hassan-Al Banna, Moulana Maududi and Ayatollah Khomeini had all attempted to develop theories to discuss the Islamic State.

jurisprudence are overflowing with treatises on governing, advice to sovereigns and didactic tales, they do not explain the nature of the Islamic state. They only deal with the social and political conditions of their time as had been highlighted in the first chapter, and are thus difficult to apply to contemporary societies. The idea of an Islamic state is therefore not a part of Islamic tradition but had been held up as a panacea to counter the secular values of the West by ulama. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no authentic Islamic political system and the Islamic state is an ideological construction forged from the reconstruction of Islamic tradition.

Central to the conception of the Islamic state has been the strict implementation of Shariah law, specifically the application of Islamic criminal laws. It is in these discussions on Shariah that one sees a more evident attempt by ulama to reconstruct tradition to carve a larger space in the religio-political running of the state. While the Koran and Sunnah specify some aspects of the Shariah, they have never been brought out in its entirety and presented to the Muslim community without the deductive additions elaborated by individual scholars and the different school of thoughts. The Shariah, especially in the realm of criminal law, has been constantly debated upon and changed by scholars over the past millennium. The views of classical scholars of Islam have often contradicted each other, as their judgments have been determined by their context and living conditions. And most importantly, these laws were rarely codified, making it

---


4 Asad, Principles, pp. 100-1.

5 Ibid.
easier for differences in opinion to be accommodated. As such, one can presume that the call for the complete implementation of Shariah is a reconstruction of tradition by ulama. This process can be clearly seen in the model of the Islamic state proposed by PAS and government ulama in Malaysia.

**The Islamic State**

Under the influence of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Malaysia was founded as a secular state. Tunku argued that Malaysia is not an Islamic state but a secular state and that Islam is only the official religion for ceremonial purposes. By the 1990s however, discussions about the nature of an Islamic state occurred, with several seminars being organized by the government to discuss various issues. On 3 Aug 2001 a meeting was held in which seventy ulama and academics gathered to discuss the subject of Malaysia as an Islamic state. At the meeting it was agreed that Malaysia qualified as an Islamic state and a program was launched to explain to people why Malaysia was an Islamic state. Over a month later, the then Prime Minister Dr Mahathir declared Malaysia an Islamic state. From a historical vantage point, Mahathir’s pronouncement departed substantially from the position of earlier leaders of Malaysia. The pronouncement was a clear attempt by Mahathir to truncate PAS’ growing influence. At the same time, he had done so under advice from government ulama, who hoped that he would introduce more Islamic laws afterwards.

---


8 In support of this declaration, several senior government ulama wrote books to justify the government’s position on the Islamic state and to explain the structure and characteristic of the Islamic state envision by UMNO and its ulama. Wan Zahidi Wan Teh, *Malaysia adalah sebuah Negara Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: JAKIM, Ministry of Information, 2001; Shahrir Abdullah, *Malaysia Sebagai Negara Islam* (Kuala Lumpur,
In 2004, in yet another attempt to out-Islamise PAS, the government of Abdullah Badawi introduced the concept of Islam Hadhari, which was defined as a comprehensive approach for the development of mankind, society and country based on the perspective of Islamic civilization.\(^9\) Islam Hadhari was the brainchild of a committee comprising ulama such as Nakhaie Ahmad, Abdullah Zin and several state muftis. Thus, similar to the Islamic State declaration, this initiative was from the ulama.

For the founders of PAS, the “Islamic state” was to be a modern state in which the ethical aspects of Islam would be a guiding principle; the focus however would be Malay rights. As such, PAS leaders rejected calls for the immediate implementation of Islamic laws at the general assembly of the party in 1954.\(^10\) Under the leadership of Dato’ Asri between 1974 to 1982, the party’s ideology swung closer to Malay nationalism; ulama at this time also played advisory role in PAS, but did not hold key leadership positions within the party. As such, there was no real attempt by PAS to promulgate Islamic laws and implement them. This could be seen in the PAS’ governments stance in Kelantan and Terengganu after the 1959 elections. It was only after ulama took over the party’s leadership that there was a shift to a more rigid understanding of an Islamic state.

The emergence of ulama as leaders of PAS in 1982 gave birth to a totally new understanding of the Islamic state. It was also the first time that the Islamic state took centre stage in Malaysian political discourse. After overthrowing the leadership of Asri Muda, Yusuf Rawa and other ulama began to shift the ideology of the party to one that

---


\(^10\) PAS Annual Report, 1954-1955, p. 16. Hassan Shukri, in describing PAS from 1950s-1970s, said that the understanding on Islamic ideas of politics was very limited among ulama, thus there has been less emphasis on the political aspects of Islam. Interview with Hassan Shukri.
was diametrically opposite to its earlier ideology. Yusuf Rawa distanced himself from the Malay nationalism advocated by Dr Burhanuddin and Dato’ Asri. In his first address to the party, he strongly condemned Asri’s ideology, which he described as fanatical and chauvinistic, and thus not in line with the teachings of Islam. Upon dismissing Malay nationalism as an ideology, the party then began to adopt an overtly Islamic image and ideology. It is at this point that ideas, such as the concept of Islamic state, began to take a different form.

Despite their espousal of an Islamic state in the 1980s, PAS leaders were hazy about the concept. Learning from the experience of other Islamist movements, PAS did not want to create cleavages within the party about the form and structure of such a state. It was only in 2001 when Dr Mahathir declared Malaysia as an Islamic State and issued a challenge to PAS that a paper entitled “Negara Islam” was put up. The party’s leadership initiated a study into the issue, with the objective of declaring an official party position on the content of the Islamic State envisaged for Malaysia. This study, sanctioned by former PAS President Fadzil Noor, was undertaken by a team which comprised Zulkifli Ahmad, Director of the PAS Research Centre and Kamaruddin Jaafar, Vice-President of PAS. The outcome of this study was a draft document on the Islamic State in Malaysia prepared in 2002. Notably however, this document was rejected by the Ulama leadership of PAS. A second study was commissioned by Ustaz Abdul Hadi

---

12 PAS ulama had written extensively to educate the public about the necessity of such a state but had never delved into the mechanism of such a state. In 1980, the Ulama Council in PAS published a book, Islam and Politics, to educate the public about their new policies. Other books include Dewan Ulama PAS Pusat, Islam Dan Politik (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Ulama PAS Pusat, 1980), pp. 11-5. Abdul Hadi Awang, Konsep Negara Islam dan Matlamatnya (Kuala Lumpur: GG Edat, 1986).
13 Interviews with leaders of Jamaat-E-Islami in 2004 reveal the differences in their understanding of their Islamic state. Interview with Qazi Hussein Ahmad, and Syed Munawwar Hassan.
14 Minute of Meeting of PAS Executive Committee, 11 May 2003, p. 5.
Awang, who replaced Fadzil Noor as party President after the latter’s death in June 2002. This led to the production of another version of an Islamic State document crafted by the ulama led by Haron Din that was eventually publicly released in December 2003. In many senses, the first blueprint was similar to the idea of the state envisioned by Dr Burhanuddin. It incorporated Islamic ethical principles within the framework of the state and downplayed the importance of Islamic laws. Thus, the second blueprint represented the thinking of PAS ulama rather than that of all PAS members.

Following the publication of the publication of this blueprint, some PAS ulama wrote articles and books explaining the structure of the Islamic state. In his writings on the Islamic state, Harun Taib, one of the authors of the blueprint, argued that the principle of democracy would be preserved. PAS interpreted democracy as being the same as the principle of Shura. In PAS’ Islamic state, Shura was to be implemented in all aspects of life. Another important tenet of this Islamic state was the principle of freedom and justice for all citizens regardless of race or religion. Despite the seeming similarities between the PAS envisioned Islamic state and a Western democracy, ulama in PAS have indicated in their writings the differences between the two systems. Thus, freedom accorded to the people was not an absolute freedom. It was to be curtailed in the event that such a freedom disrupted peace or contravened Islamic laws. An example of this is the banning of all forms of entertainment seen to contravene Islam such as entertainment centers and free mixing of sexes.

---

15 Interview with PAS leaders.
18 Interview with Nasharuddin Mat Isa.
A similar argument can be seen in the government ulama’s Islam Hadhari model. Wan Zahidi Wan Teh argued that the form of democracy Malaysia practiced was the same as the concept of Shura.19 Both PAS’ Islamic State and the government’s Islam Hadhari documents did little more than state general principles drawn from classical Islamic sources and identified areas of government policies that needed to reflect these principles, interspersed with Quranic verses.20 However, the vagueness of the principles of the Islamic State and Islam Hadhari did not seem to bother the ulama. They utilized the vagueness of these principles by interpreting the laws in accordance with their understanding of these laws. The ulama also mobilized Islamic tradition to support their claim for an Islamic state as the conceptual matrix borrowed from Western political science with Koranic terminology to Islamise the grid.21

They interpret the term Shura, which originates from the Koran, in the language of Western political science. This process can be observed in the writings of both Hadi Awang and Wan Zahidi when they likened the concept of Shura to democracy. When assessing the concept of Shura as it was applied in the various Muslim empires of the past, it is obvious that this was yet another attempt by ulama to reconstruct Islamic tradition. For most of Islamic history, Shura was not an elected or representative body. It comprised important leaders of the community under the leadership of the Prophet and the first two caliphs, Abu Bakar and Umar. By the time of Othman, Shura became the assemblage of his relatives. The same could be said about many of the Caliphates, whereby Shura took different forms, most of which were diametrically opposed to

contemporary understanding of democracy.\(^{22}\) As such it becomes difficult to claim that Shura and democracy are synonymous. It can be seen that the motive of presenting a new concept of statecraft as Islamic tradition, is be motivated by political agendas.

**Shariah and Islamic State**

The place of Shariah in the administration of the state was another important element of the Islamic state proposed both by PAS and government ulama. The hallmark of PAS’ Islamic state has been its conviction in the implementation of the Shariah, with particular emphasis on the enforcement of Islamic criminal laws, which comprise Hudud, Qisas and Ta’zir.\(^{23}\) PAS ulama referred to the Koran and Sunnah to argue that Shariah laws must be implemented in full. These laws include the cutting of hands of thieves and the stoning to death for adultery. Prior to the publication of the Islamic State Document, PAS tabled a Hudud Bill in Kelantan’s Parliament in 1993. The bill sought to introduce new laws to regulate what the ulama deemed as rising crime rates in Malaysia. The bill included a section on “hudud” offences such as wine drinking, apostasy, unlawful sexual intercourse (zina), robbery and accusing someone of zina.\(^{24}\) Prepared by a committee comprising ulama in PAS, the state Mufti and other ulama in the Kelantan State Islamic Religion and Malay Council (MAIK), the bill brought about criticism from all quarters including ulama outside PAS. The criticism stemmed from various articles, which seemed to be unjust, especially to women. Others criticized the laws as obsolete,

---


\(^{24}\) Not all these offences can be strictly categorised as hudud but PAS had chosen to draft the bill in this way. Hashim Kamali, *Punishment in Islamic Law: An Enquiry into the Hudud Bill of Kelantan* (Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 1995), Appendix.
draconian and thus inhumane. Ulama in PAS made several changes to the bill and began to campaign fervently for the implementation of the laws by issuing various publications and organizing public forums and seminars to discuss the issue. Although the bill was passed in the Kelantan Parliament, it was not ratified by the Federal Government and thus could not be implemented. In Terengganu, a similar bill was enacted in 2002. By this time, many ulama who initially opposed it, had changed their opinion while most government ulama were quiet about the matter. It was again rejected by the federal government. Ironically, despite rejecting the Hudud bills of PAS, the Malaysian government found itself harried to move closer to the agenda of PAS when its own ulama began pressurizing the government to introduce such laws.

Many government ulama argued that it was the responsibility of the government in an Islamic state to strive towards the implementation of all aspects of Shariah laws including criminal laws. The support ulama gave to Mahathir’s Islamic State and Badawi’s Islam Hadhari was based on the conjecture that the government would eventually institutionalize Islamic criminal laws. Nakhaie Ahmad postulated that criminal laws must be implemented and mentioned that various provisions needed to be prepared before Islamic criminal laws could be implemented. For instance, the legal

27 For instance Prof Ahmad Ibrahim who initially opposed to the Kelantan Bill was involved in drafting the Terengganu Bill. Interview with Hadi Awang
29 Nakhaie Ahmad, “Hudud dalam Konteks Perlaksanaan Syariat Islam yang Menyeluruh” in Seminar Kebangsaan Cabaran Perlaksanaan Islam dalam Konteks Masyarakat Malaysia, 28 June 1992, p. 10. Those who oppose the bill had argued that the bill is not comprehensive enough and must cover more aspects of the hudud. See Abdul Halim Muhammady, “Undang-Undang Jenayah Syariah dan Perlaksanaannya di Malaysia”, Seminar Perlaksanaan Hukun Syarak Di Malaysia, 9-10 Februari 2001. There are however many government ulama who support the bill such as the Mufti of Perak and Selangor; Sayuti Omar, Talqin untuk Mahathir (Kuala Lumpur: Tinta merah, 1994).
system, *Shariah* courts, supporting enactments and the detailed study of the *hudud* needed to be undertaken before Islamic criminal laws could be implemented. He also criticized UMNO leaders for condemning the Islamic criminal laws as obsolete and not suitable for contemporary society. Another government alim, Dr Faisal Haji Othman asserted that it was compulsory for all Muslims to believe in the criminal laws, and failing to do so, was equivalent to rejecting the basic belief of Islam. He added that the Islamic criminal laws could be implemented according to the principles of *tadaruj*, meaning that the Malaysian government can delay the implementation of Islamic criminal laws to a more suitable time.

Delving into the thinking of ulama on the issue of *Shariah*, it was clear that the government ulama, much like PAS’ ulama, supported the implementation of *Shariah* including Islamic criminal laws and saw its implementation as compulsory. While they differed on the question of whether *tadaruj* could be invoked in the Malaysian context, they often agreed that the *Shariah* laws, including the Islamic criminal laws, were uniform, divine and as such could not be changed. However, examples from Islamic history proved to the contrary. Islamic criminal laws, similar to other branches of Islamic law, have constantly been debated and reviewed by ulama of the past. For instance, the

---

32 Ibid. Also see Nakhaie Ahmad, “Pendekatan dalam Perlaksanaan Hukum Hudud di Malaysia” Seminar Kebangsaan Cabaran Perlaksanaan Islam dalam Konteks Masyarakat Malaysia, 28 June 1992, p. 6.
33 Such views were also expressed by ulama during interviews conducted with them. Razali Shabuddin mentioned that *hudud* is an issue of *aqidah* and one is treading on dangerous grounds when declaring that *hudud* is not compulsory. Interviews with other government ulama also reveal similar thinking and views. Annual Bakri Haji Haron and Kamarul Zaman Haji Yusoff, *Negara Islam: Nota-Nota Penting buat Dr Mahathir* (Kota Bahru: Pustaka Qamar, 2002). In this publication, the authors, who are PAS members, quoted excerpts from government ulama’s speeches and writings to prove that even they are supportive of the *hudud*. 

70
Ottomon courts appointed judges from different mazhab to ensure the fair execution of laws. Contrary to the assertion of ulama about the uniformity and divinity of the laws, the implementation of Islamic criminal laws, has always differed. In the courts of the medieval Muslim empires, the burden of discovering what the Shariah actually prescribed rested on the courts. These laws may thus change depending on the circumstances of why the crime was committed. For instance, a thief who stole because his family was starving would not be punished in these medieval courts. However this is not feasible in the modern court system due to the nature of modern courts. It is also impossible for the modern court to ascertain the motivation of a criminal due to the large number of cases it deals with daily. Thus, courts are left with the option of codifying the Shariah. A codified form of the Shariah will not be able to be executed with the same spirit of justice that the medieval courts could.

Ulama’s writings on Islamic state reveal that they are focused on the issue of the codification of Shariah laws. Both the Kelantan and Terengganu Hudud bills were presented in a codified form. Nakhaie Ahmad’s call for new enactments to be in place before the implementation of Islamic criminal laws was a reflection the awareness for such a codification. Nonetheless, from the ulama’s point of view, the codification of such laws must be carried out by ulama as they are the only ones who are experts in this area.\textsuperscript{34} At the same time as experts on the formulation of these laws, they will have the right to censure and oversee its implementation. These are exemplified in PAS’ idea of forming a Majlis Shura Ulama and the government ulama’s calls for greater powers to be institutionalized in their hands. The ulama’s characterization of themselves as experts and specialists in matters of the afterlife is also commonly encountered in their writings and

\textsuperscript{34} Zaman, \textit{Ulama}, p. 98.
statements. For instance, Fadzil Noor’s argued that ulama are the only group that can exercise *ijtihad*. In the same vein, Nakhaie Ahmad postulated that ulama should regulate government policies to ensure compliance with Islamic laws. It can be seen that that ulama upheld the need to return to Islamic tradition by expanding the implementation of *Shariah* in the Islamic state to create new religious and political functions for themselves. This process will result in the state becoming beholden to ulama thus increasing their religious and political authority.

Another issue related to the concept of Islamic state is the role, the ulama see themselves playing in such a state. An important feature of PAS Islamic state is the establishment of the office of *khalifah*. The *khalifah* or the head of state would uphold the sanctity of Islam and administer the country.\(^{35}\) Fadzil Noor had sketched the attributes of the *khalifah* stating that the *khalifah* must be a person who is knowledgeable, understands Islamic laws at a stage where he can exercise *ijtihad*, be fair and be able to run the administration in accordance with Islamic tradition; such a person can only be found amongst ulama.\(^{36}\) As highlighted earlier, in 1983, Yusuf Rawa had pushed for ulama leadership and argued fervently that only the ulama were qualified enough to run the country. In further enhancing the vision, PAS enacted a new body within the party, known as the *Majlis Shura Ulama* or the Ulama Shura Council, a body that was to oversee the policies and actions of the party to ensure its compatibility with Islam.\(^{37}\) In line with this vision of an ulama advisory council, PAS proposed the formation of a similar body in their Islamic state, the Ulama Shura Council at the federal level, whose

---


\(^{37}\) PAS Constitution, 1993, pp. 4-9.
role was to explain and interpret the government’s policies to ensure that they are in line with the teachings of Islam. The concept of ulama leadership was implemented in Kelantan. The party appointed Nik Aziz Nik Mat, a well-known and respected alim from Kelantan, as the Chief Minister of the state. Other leaders appointed in Kelantan’s Cabinet were also ulama. This pattern of appointing ulama to top governmental positions continued throughout the 1990s when PAS won the elections in the state of Terengganu. Hadi Awang was appointed Chief Minister of Terengganu and many ulama were appointed to his cabinet.

The attitude of government ulama towards the idea of leadership in an Islamic state was rather vague since their writings on the Islamic state often avoided this issue. The only exception to this was Nakhaie Ahmad’s *Islam from the Perspective of Civilization* in which the author acknowledged the significance of ulama as an institution, which he believe should play an advisory role to the government. He wrote that despite the corruption of various Muslim governments and regimes, the ulama should continue to perform various roles and functions in government departments to fulfill the requirement of *fardhu kifayah* and ensure that government policies were in line with Islam. The government ulama saw the role of ulama as being advisors to the Islamic state rather then as leaders of the state itself. Nevertheless, they continued to see the need for the management of Islam and Islamic laws to be under the sole purview of ulama. Many government ulama felt that the government leaders should stop interfering on issues related to Islam, since they were not experts in the field. Some ulama consider it

---

38 Hussin Yaakub, *UMNO*, p. 256.  
40 Ibid, p. 89.
necessary for the institutionalization of power in their hands when dealing with Islamic issues.\footnote{41} Ulama’s views on the question of leadership are a clear reconstruction of the concept of leadership in Islam. In the case of PAS’ ulama they proposed the idea of an ulama leadership while the government ulama looked upon themselves as advisors who could dictate on the secular leadership of the country. This will ensure that the state was run according to Islamic laws. However, within the tradition Sunni Islam, there had never been such a theocracy; ulama have never served as heads of governments.\footnote{42} While the Prophet himself combined the role of a spiritual and political leader, Islamic tradition did not specify the need for this. The examples from the various caliphates also clearly points to this fact. The ulama remained subservient to the secular leadership of the caliphates.\footnote{43} From this, one can deduce that ulama have distorted history in an endeavor to establish a different understanding of their role in society. Thus, one can conclude that it is an attempt to carve a larger religio-political role for themselves within Malaysian society. Often this meant that ulama began saw themselves not only as religious scholars but also as political leaders or advisors with the responsibility to Islamise the society and government.

In summary, it is important to note that ulama in Malaysia have consistently reconstructed Islamic tradition since the 1980s. While they had initially concentrated on issues such as eradicating local cultural practices, they have gravitated more towards

\footnote{41}{Interview with Ulama; Sharifah Zulhaini Musa, “Campurtangan Pemimpin Politik dalam Pentadbiran Undang-Undang Islam di Malaysia: Satu Kajian di Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor,” (Unpublished Thesis, Islamic Studies Department, 2001).}
\footnote{42}{The only exception to this is Iran. However, this has to do with the Shiite doctrine that they subscribe to.}
political issues. Central to their reconstruction of tradition is their conception of the Islamic state. It has been argued that both PAS and government ulama have reconstructed Islamic tradition to carve larger and important roles for themselves in the public realm. The different facets of an Islamic state, such as the concept of Shura, Shariah and ulama’s central role in the state, reveal attempts to reconstruct Islamic tradition. The impact of their influence can be felt in both the religious and political realm of Malaysian society.
Chapter 4: Impact of Religio-Political Activism of Ulama on Contemporary Malaysia

The increased religio-political influence of ulama in Malaysia has had a significant impact on Malaysian society. While both Mahathir and Abdullah Badawi sought to use Islam as a political tool, they have become captives to the Islamization process that has taken place since the 1980s. From the late 1990s onwards Mahathir’s and Badawi’s governments have been forced to lean towards ulama in order to counter the PAS challenge. The expansion of the religious bureaucracy has created a situation whereby ulama have become too powerful for the state to control. This has allowed ulama within the government to make effective use of state channels, including the legal system, to advance their cause. Increasingly the government has been placed in awkward situations of introducing stricter Islamic laws. In addition, debates over Islamic matters have situated ulama from both the government and PAS against liberal Muslim groups and NGOs. The most important impact of this transformation is on the position of non-Muslims in Malaysian society. Ultimately it has changed the nature of both Islam and society in Malaysia.

Religio-Political Activism of Ulama

By the later part of the 1990s, the constant criticism and calls by Mahathir for the reformation irritated many ulama including those in the government. This resulted in their willingness to confront the government openly and assert their religious authority independently on issues related to Islam. During the 1997 beauty pageant controversy, Ustaz Nakhaie, the director of YADIM and an UMNO member had stated clearly that the
actions of the Mufti and the JAIS officers does not demonstrate an extreme stand as the participants of the pageant had contravened Islamic moral standards.\(^1\) This was despite the fact that several UMNO leaders including Mahathir had condemned the actions of the Mufti.

Ulama’s influences in politics go beyond their direct involvement in politics or among PAS supporters. The Islamic rhetoric of ulama has successfully radicalized UMNO, or at least sections within the party. It is clear that a disjuncture exists between the party leadership, which has sought to defend a liberal conception of Islam, and the rank and file, many of whom believe that it is their Islamic duty to implement stricter Islamic laws and the Islamic state. A case in point is the call of support for the enactments mentioned above by ulama from PAS and even those in UMNO.\(^2\) For many ulama, Islamic criminal law is the heart of the *Shariah*. Consequently, UMNO members or supporters have been left in a religious quandary.\(^3\) Often under such pressure, UMNO members tend to lean towards the legalistic position. This was clearly seen when the *hudud* laws were tabled in Kelantan in 1993, two UMNO assemblymen voted in support of the Bill and in July 2002; when PAS tabled it in Terengganu, three of the four UMNO assemblymen present abstained.\(^4\) Several instances of newer state laws passed also seem to be pointing in this direction. In 2000, ulama in Perlis, convinced their Chief Minister to propose and adopt the Islamic Aqidah Protection Bill, in which Muslims found guilty of heretical behavior would be sent to “faith rehabilitation center” so that their interpretation


\(^{2}\) Several of the state muftis have also been known to be supporters of the *hudud*. Interviews with Muftis.

\(^{3}\) *Sunday Mail*, 8 Dec 2002.

and practice of faith could somehow be corrected by the religious ideologues of the state.\(^5\)

Beyond politics, ulama position themselves as the *de facto* authorities and guardian of Islamic ethics. As such, ulama have become involved in a wide spectrum of cultural life, especially the de-legitimizing of liberal Muslims with what they perceive as dissident views in matters of faith. Ulama had been in the forefront of attacking several writers, including Sisters in Islam (SIS) executive director Zainah Anwar, academics Farish A. Noor and Patricia Martinez.\(^6\) These ulama claimed that the writers had written articles, which supposedly insulted Islam, the Prophet and the ulama institution through their writings and thus legal actions should be taken against them. They successfully muzzled these voices by preventing them from writing in the local newspapers. With such criticism, ulama within government bureaucracy have argued that they should not be allowed to assume authority in Islam as their ability to interpret the Quran and speak about Islam is questionable.\(^7\)

Ulama’s legalistic stances have resulted in a more legalistic understanding of Islam among the Malay populace. This could be seen in the expression of Islamic consciousness manifested most vividly in the popularity of Islamic dress and legislation.\(^8\) The political pressures this has asserted had prompted government leaders to introduce more legalistic Islamic laws. The initiatives of the chief ministers of Selangor and Johor, both UMNO-members, to introduce AIDS tests for Muslim couples and attempts by

---


\(^7\) Interview with Ulama.

elements within UMNO to formulate a Faith Protection Bill (known as the Aqidah or Faith Act) in November 2000 legislating against apostasy, similar to a bill passed in June 2000 in Perlis are examples of these attempts.\(^9\)

As highlighted earlier, government ulama aspire for the formation of a “true” Islamic state, the introduction of Islamic laws such as *hudud* and of the need for ulama to be given more authority to run the affairs of the state.\(^{10}\) While they do not call for an outright political leadership led by ulama, they felt the need for more ulama to be involved in politics and for the political leadership to stop interfering in the religious affairs of the state as they are not qualified to do so.\(^{11}\) Despite their religious position, many of the senior officials in JAKIM, YADIM and the religious affairs ministry remain committed in their political support for UMNO.\(^{12}\) As highlighted in the previous chapter, this support however is conditioned by the government’s commitment to enhance the position of Islam. Many government ulama do not have qualms about shifting their support to PAS and have done so in many instances. A scan of the line-up of current PAS leadership reveals that many were former government ulama. These ulama joined PAS as they have grown disillusioned with the Malaysian government’s Islamization drive.\(^{13}\) Even more damaging for the Malaysian government is that many middle and lower management JAKIM officers and even some of the state muftis are quiet supporters of

---


\(^{10}\) Interview with Ulama.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Interview with Nakhaie Ahmad and Dato’ Harunssani. However the same cannot be said about the junior and the middle management officers in these institutions who are mostly PAS supporters.

\(^{13}\) Interview with Ahmad Awang, Azamuddin Taib, Halim Kader.
A prominent PAS leader, Ustaz Ghani Shamduddin, in explaining the formation of the PUM said ulama in the government service are often expected to toe the government line. The formation of the association is a mechanism to allow the ulama to voice their concern and disagreement without having to fear government prosecution.15

The attitude of the Malaysian government towards Islam has also become a passport for many ulama in PAS to enhance the spread of their own brand of Islam as they are convinced PAS’ ulama that there is a strong degree of support for the political Islam project amongst Malaysian Muslims.16 Concurrently, PAS ulama have also taken the opportunity to strengthen its position among the Malay populace. Ulama in PAS have argued that the government only initiated what they dubbed as cosmetic Islamic program.17 Nik Aziz highlighted that the government’s collection of revenue from the large gambling industry and the prevalence of illegal prostitution shows the lack of political will on the side of the government to implement an Islamic system. For Nik Aziz, Islamization means total transformation of the system, from one that is un-Islamic to one that is base on Islam.18

At the same time, PAS also constantly rejoices whenever there are fray between the government and ulama, which has often proven beneficial for them. The fallout between the Mufti of Selangor and Mahathir saw PAS gaining a very important political figure within its ranks. The 1997 sacking of Anwar Ibrahim also resulted in many ulama such as Haron Din, and Ismail Kamus joining PAS. These ulama were and continue to be

---

14 Interviews with ulama reveal their sympathies and support for PAS. This was also confirm by PAS ulama such as Hassan Shukri, Hadi Awang and Nashruddin Mat Isa who confirmed that most of the government ulama are PAS supporters but conceal their sympathies for fear of prosecution by the government.
15 Interview with Ghani Shamsuddin.
16 Interview with Hassan Shukri.
17 Interview with Nik Aziz Nik Mat and Harun Taib.
extremely popular with the Malaysian public, often appearing in the *Forum Perdana*, a popular weekly religious program. The inclusions of these ulama in PAS has added credibility and strengthened support for PAS’ demand for an Islamic system. The strengthening in the religio-political position of ulama have given rise to a variegated composition of the Muslim public sphere and had led to the emergence of different groups contesting the right to define and interpret Islam in the society. This is due to the fact that the Malaysian government needs these groups to counter the influence of ulama.

**Rethinking Islamic Politics in Malaysia**

As highlighted above, the religio-political activism of ulama in Malaysia had led to greater Islamization of the society and country. In attempting to counter the influence of ulama, the Malaysian government had allowed various liberal Muslim groups and individuals to challenge this Islamising trend. The Malaysia leadership tacitly endorsed a floodgate of questioning and debate over the issue of the centrality of Islam in governance and law.\(^{19}\) This was seen in various issues such as the support given to SIS by the Women Affairs Minister on the issue of polygamy. At the same time, the government under Abdullah Badawi had come to the aid of the liberal writers mentioned above.\(^{20}\) Such a strategy is adopted to prevent the alienation of UMNO’s supporters who adhered to a more legalistic form of Islam. Thus the assignment of discrediting and rejecting legalistic Islamic policies (often proposed by the government ulama themselves) were left to these groups. On the other hand, other non-ulama Islamic organizations have been in the forefront defending the position of ulama. Thus, beyond the PAS-UMNO

---

\(^{19}\) Maznah Mohamad, *The Challenge of Islam Within and Beyond Democracy*, *Aliran*, Issue 9, 2001

\(^{20}\) *New Straits Times*, 3 Jun 2005
Islamic divide, one notes the widening discourse on Islam in Malaysia whereby different actors emerge to contest the right to interpret and define Islam in the country.

Key to this contest is the emergence of two contending Muslim groups, namely the legalists and the liberals, who want to define the role of Islam in the public domain. The legalists encompass ulama within the government departments, UMNO, PAS and their supporters in ABIM, TERAS and organizations such as the MPF. The liberals include the groups and individuals mention above, key members of the Malaysian cabinet and others linked to them. Within the liberal camp, SIS has in recent times played a critical role in attempting to engage the politics of Islamisation. SIS was formed in 1988 and registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in 1993 under the name SIS Forum (Malaysia) Berhad. Its stated objectives are promoting and developing a framework of women’s rights in Islam, which takes into consideration women's experiences and realities and the creation of public awareness, and reform laws and policies, on issues of equality, justice, freedom, dignity and democracy in Islam. Its strategies of resistance, which include engaging in Islamic discourse and providing counter-narratives in the hope of expanding the democratic space for Malaysian Muslims, have sometimes been condemned by ulama for their lack of sufficient Islamic knowledge. The attention that SIS received from the English medium media enabled them to clamor for support among the non-Muslims and the English speaking community in Malaysia.

21 It should be noted that not all ulama are in this category.
To correct this perceived influence of liberal groups, a group of Muslim professionals formed the Muslim Professional Forum (MPF). In its stated objective, MPF had state that they aim to counter the influence of the liberal groups. In their view, liberal Islam seeks to undermine and belittle the role of the prophetic tradition as one of the two foundations of Islamic knowledge, spirituality, worship and practices. The MFF argued that the personality of the Holy Prophet himself that is denigrated and abused. Similar to SIS, MPF had focused their engagement in the English media due to their lack of proficiency in English. They could not engage the liberal groups meaningfully due to their poor grasp of the English language. The emergence of these trends reflects the impact or reaction to the growing influence of ulama and their legalistic form of Islam. The positioning of these trends thus reflects larger polarization within Malaysian society.

An assessment of several controversies since 2000 reveals this trend. A case in point is the 2005 Federal Territory Religious Department (JAWI) controversy when officers from JAWI raided a Singaporean-owned nightclub. Muslims were then asked to take breathalyzer tests to check whether they had drunk alcohol, and Muslim women were paraded before the officers to ensure that they were not dressed indecently. The raid has sparked debate on the enforcement powers of religious officers and on the legitimacy of enforcing public morality. Following the controversy, contradictory statements were issued by government leaders. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdullah Mohamed Zin, an alim was reported as saying that JAWI was right in its actions as the raid was done according to procedure and that Muslims in

---

24 Interview with MPF members.
25 Ibid.
the disco were said to be having a “booze fest”.27 Others such as the UMNO Youth religious bureau Chairman Shamsul Najmi Shamsuddin also supported the actions as he felt that Muslims should not be in a place that serves liquor or get involve in gambling.28 Ulama in PAS were among the most fervent supporters of JAWI. The affair thus saw a convergence of views between ulama in PAS and in the government. On the opposing side, SIS, the Cultural Minister, Rais Yatim and Women Affairs Minister Shahrizat Jalil and UMNO Deputy Head, Khairy Jamaluddin criticized the actions of the officers.29 The fact that Abdullah Badawi did not make any stand on the issue suggest that there was a division within the cabinet on the issue. SIS organized a campaign against policing morality by issuing press statements and organizing a public forum entitled The Enforcement of Public Morality to campaign against moral policing. MPF on the other hand organized its own campaign for the enforcement of public morality. Besides issuing press statements to address the issue, MPF also galvanized its female members to attend SIS’ public forum to present their views on the topic.30 The division between the two camps reflects a larger ideological divide that have shaped Islam in Malaysia. Several other issues especially related to the non-Muslim rights continue to reflect this trend.

**Position of Non-Muslims and Ulama’s Activism**

In promoting their more legalistic form of Islam, ulama have downplayed Malay ethnicity and argued against what they deem to be the excesses of *asabiyah*. Ulama especially those in PAS, have argued against traditional politics of ethnic representation,

---

27 *New Straits Times*, 4 Feb 2005,
criticizing the New Economic Policy and constantly stressing Islam’s recognition of equality among races.\textsuperscript{31} PAS ulama have argued that PAS’ Islamic state is based on the model of the first Islamic state established in the multi-cultural society of Medina by the Prophet during the \textit{hijrah}, where non-Muslims were accorded freedom of worship and cultural practice, and lived in harmony with Muslims.\textsuperscript{32} While ulama in UMNO and the government may not necessarily reject the ethnic politics model, they are against what they saw as a policy which profits only those who are linked to UMNO.\textsuperscript{33}

Ulama in PAS have attempted for a long time to build their reputation as being non-communal. As a gesture to non-Muslims in Terengganu, when Abdul Hadi became Menteri Besar of Terengganu, he overturned a government policy that prevented Christians from building a church, and permitted pig-rearing by the Chinese community.\textsuperscript{34} The significance of these gestures is profoundly ironic. As observed by Patricia Martinez, it is perhaps significant that in their fidelity to the concept of an Islamic state, PAS has given non-Muslims more rights in fundamental issues, even as it has taken away others such as drinking alcohol in public and closing down unisex hair salons.\textsuperscript{35} Due to the pressures from PAS’ actions that seemed to shun chauvinistic ethnic policies, UMNO was forced to tamper its own Malay chauvinistic stance. In one of the most dramatic moves to pave its advent towards a multi-ethnic future, UMNO announced that Chinese members of the now disbanded Parti Akar in Sabah could be admitted into

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{31} Joseph Liow, \textit{Political Islam}, p. 188. \\
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p. 189. \\
\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Ulama \\
\textsuperscript{34} Interview with Hadi Awang. \\
\textsuperscript{35} Joseph Liow, \textit{Political Islam}, p. 189. \\
\end{footnotesize}
The political pressures that Islamization had built for both UMNO and PAS seems to indicate a move away from an ethnically biased perspective.

Despite the positive impact of the Islamisation for non-Muslims, larger negative impacts could be seen surfacing in the Malaysian society. Developments within Muslim community and politics had unnerved non-Muslims in Malaysia. As early as 1983, The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) was formed. The council was formed against the backdrop of statements issued by Malaysian government regarding Malaysia’s ultimate status as an Islamic State causing concern among the leaders of the non-Muslim religions over the need to defend their rights. In more recent times, the case of Everest climber M. Moorthy or Mohammad Abdullah, his Muslim name, had created fear amongst non-Muslims about their position in Malaysian society. A controversy had broken out due to the ambiguity over the deceased’s religion. The Shariah court of Malaysia ruled that he was a Muslim. Subsequently, his wife’s appeal to claim his body for burial in accordance with Hindu funeral rites was dismissed by the high court claiming that it had no jurisdiction over the Shariah court cases.

In the above cases, PAS and government ulama have constantly pressurized the government to adopt policies in support of legalistic Islamic positions at the expense of non-Muslim rights. It was widely known that the National Council of Muftis supported the position that the Shariah court should remain independent of the civil court and unanimously agreed that the Article should not be amended to ensure that Muslims in the

---

38 New Straits Times, 20 Jan 2005
country did not lose their rights. Similarly, PAS ulama were among the most ardent defenders of both the court decision and the move not to amend the constitution. The position of the ulama was supported by the legalistic groups and once again SIS was the most vocal Muslim group calling on the amendment to the article. PAS ulama had used the issue to highlight what they portrayed as the weakness of Shariah laws in Malaysia and called for Shariah to be implemented in its entirety, a view that many legalistic Muslims echoed.

These controversies reflect a long history of discord and distrust between the Malay community and other communities. However, while the controversies in the 1970s and the 1980s revolve around the issue of ethnicity and what is seen as the economic deprivation of the Malay community, the current controversies centre around religious issues. This reflects the increasing religiosity of the Malaysian Muslims which in turn had given rise a more insecure non-Muslim community. Many non-Muslims feel that their rights to practice their religion are increasingly compromised in light of increase Islamisation propounded by government and PAS ulama. The non-Muslim populace are constantly forced to galvanize themselves together in what seems to be a religiously polarized Malaysia.

The religio-political activism of ulama in Malaysia has and is likely to have significant impacts on the larger Malaysian society. The latest political showdown between former Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir and current Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi has once again shaken Malaysia’s political atmosphere. In such a circumstance, Islam have once again been employed in the battle. Dr Mahathir remarked that Badawi

---

39 *New Straits Times*, 1 Mar 2006 and Interview with Muftis.
41 *New Straits Times*, 11 Jan 2006
had done little for Islam especially as chairman of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). In this saga, ulama have once again emerged victorious. PAS ulama have sought to capitalize on the issue for political mileage and government ulama have utilized the issue to pressure Badawi’s government to defend legalistic Islamic provisions (such as Article 11 of the constitution which gives primacy to Shariah court within the legal system) as well as to take a more active role in the current Middle East conflict. It is thus likely that the religio-political authority of ulama in Malaysia will continue to expand to include more aspects of cultural, social and political life in Malaysia.

43 Interview with Ulama.
In a recent talk at an institute in Singapore, Dr Farish Noor, an expert on Malaysian politics, described liberal Muslim groups in Malaysia as ‘finished’. He noted that legalistic Muslims have come to dominate the discourse. This shift did not occur suddenly. Its origins were in the developments of the 1970s and 1980s, and the key players prompting this shift were the ulama. As highlighted in the first chapter, ulama play an extremely important role and wield great influence in Malay society. The religious orientation of early ulama was greatly influenced by the values of Sufism. Following the tradition of early Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, they emphasized the ethical values of Islam rather than Islamic law. At the same time, ulama were also willing to subordinate their needs to those of Malay rulers. Even when they were involved in politics, ulama often played supporting roles and were more inclined to embrace nationalism then Islam in their political ideology.

However, several developments in the 1970s and 1980s prompted ulama to articulate a changing and more important role for themselves in the realm of Islamic politics. These developments included the linkages and exchange of ideas between ulama in Malaysia and the Middle East, challenges from Islamist groups and the Malaysian government’s contradictory position on Islam. In a process that I portray as a ‘reconstruction’ of Islamic tradition, ulama began to call for the formation of an Islamic state and emphasized the implementation of a number of aspects of Islamic law, especially criminal law. In presenting the importance of the Islamic state and laws, ulama preserve the right to dominate its governance and maintain the sole privilege of interpreting its laws, thus not only preserving but further enhancing its authority. Due to
their influential position, ulama have been able to influence not only the Malay populace but also to put pressure on the Malaysian government to adopt some of their conservative plans. This, in turn, has resulted in the further Islamisation of the society. As a result of the reconstruction of Islamic tradition, Malaysian society today is one plagued by the struggle between legalistic elements which and liberal segments. Although they are often depicted as being oppositional, due to their allegiance to different political parties, the legalistic includes ulama affiliated to PAS and UMNO, as well as their conservative Muslim supporters such as MPF, call for similar goals. Events in the last few years have shown that it is the loud thundering voice of the legalistic Muslims that will continue to eclipse the liberal voices in Malaysian society.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Sources

Books


**Journal Articles**


Patricia Martinez, “The Islamic state or the State of Islam in Malaysia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, (December 2001), 23, 3, 474-504


R.O. Winstedt, “Kingship and Enthronement in Malaya, *JMBRAS*, 20, (June 1947), 129-139


**Conference and Seminar Papers**


**Unpublished Academic Works**


**Internet Websites**


**Reports and Documents**


**Newspaper and Magazine Articles**

Asia Week, 16 June 2000 and 5 Dec 2000

Harakah, 31 Dec 2005


Aliran, Issue 9, 2001

New Straits Times, 3 Feb 1994

New Straits Times, 20 July 1994

New Straits Times, 9 Oct 1994

101
New Straits Times 5 July 1997
New Straits Times 7 July 1997
New Straits Times, 4 August 2001
New Straits Times, 30 Sept 2001
New Straits Times, 7 Sept 2002
New Straits Times, 4 Feb 2005.
New Straits Times, 3 June 2005
New Straits Times, 1 Mar 2006
New Straits Times, 29 Jan 2006.
New Straits Times, 17 February 2005
New Sunday Times 22 December 2002
New Sunday Times, 10 Feb 2002
Straits Times, 16 July 2004
Sunday Mail, 8 December 2002.

**Malay Sources**

**Books**


**Annual Reports and Unpublished Document**


Minute of Meeting of PAS Executive Committee, 11 May 2003.

Minutes of Meeting of PAS Working Committee on 20 July 1969.


Minutes of PAS Youth Annual Meeting 1978

PAS Annual Report, 1954-2004


PAS Fifth Annual Meeting held on the 23, 24 and 25 December 1956.

PAS Third Annual General Meeting on the 12 13 and 14 of August 1954.


Speech of Yusuf Rawa at PAS Annual Meeting 1983


**Seminar Papers**


**Unpublished Academic Works**


**Arabic Sources**


**Interviews**

Ahmad Awang, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. PAS Central Office, Lorong Hj Hassan, Harakah Office, Nufair St, Kuala Lumpur, 30 Dec 2006.

Ahmad Sonhadji, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. B.243 Toa Payoh Lor 1, #03-40, Singapore, 3 Feb 2004.


Fadli Ghani, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. PAS Central Office, Lorong Hj Hassan, Taman Melewar, Selangor Malaysia, 29 Dec 2006.
Ghani Shamsuddin, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. 8-4 The Right Angle, Jalan 14/22, Seksyen 14, Petaling Jaya, 27 Jan 2006.

Hadi Awang, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. Rusila Mosque, Kampung Rusila, Terengganu, 12 Jan 2006.


Harun Taib, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. Rusila Mosque, Kampung Rusila, Terengganu, 12 Jan 2006.

Hassan Shukri, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. PAS Central Office, Lorong Hj Hassan, Taman Melewar, Selangor Malaysia, 28 Dec 2005.

Hassan Shukri, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. PAS Central Office, Lorong Hj Hassan, Taman Melewar, Selangor Malaysia, 22 Mar 2006.


Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Interview by Author, Kota Darul Naim, Kota Bahru, Kelantan, 14 Jan 2006.

Osman Mustapha, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. Daawah Division, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 29 Dec 2005.

Qazi Hussein Ahmad, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. House 130, St 14 Sector E 7 Islamabad, 31st Dec 2004.

Razali Shahabuddin, Interview by Author, Tape Recording. Daawah Division, Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 29 Dec 2005.


Appendix 1

The interviews conducted were with Nik Aziz Nik Mat (Spiritual Head of PAS and Chief Minister of Kelantan), Hadi Awang (President of PAS), Nasharuddin Mat Isa (Deputy President of PAS), Harun Taib (Chairman of PAS Ulama Council), Hassan Shukri (PAS Central Executive and former Deputy President of PAS), Ghani Shamsuddin (PAS Central Executive Council Member, former President of the Malaysian Ulama Association and former ABIM member), Fadli Osman (Manager for PAS Archives), Azamuddin Taib (PAS Central Executive Member and former Imam of the National Mosque), Ahmad Awang (PAS Central Executive Council and former Director of the Malaysian Islamic Centre), Halim Kader (Deputy President of PUM and former Mufti of Terengganu), Osman Awang (Director of Daawah Division, JAKIM), Dato’s Harunsani (Mufti of Perak), Datuk Wira Hj. Rashid Redza (Mufti of Melaka), Razali Shahabuddin (Coordinator of the Islam Hadhari Project), Mona Abaza (Scholar on Islam in Southeast Asia and Middle East), Sudanese Islamist figure, Qazi Hussein Ahmad (Ameer of Jamaat-E-Islami Pakistan), Syed Munawar Hassan (Sect-Gen of Jamaat-E-Islami Pakistan), Ahmad Sonhadji (Advisor to Pergas), Sheikh Johari Bux (Central Executive Member of MPF) and Azra Banu (Member of MPF). 30 officers in religious councils of Perak, Federal Territory, Selangor, Melaka, Kelantan and Terengganu were also interviewed.

There are several categories of ulama interviewed for the thesis. The first category interviewed were the leaders of PAS. They were interviewed by the sole virtue of their involvement in PAS. Among those interviewed were Nik Aziz, Hadi Awang, Nasharuddin Mat Isa and Harun Taib. All of these ulama with the exception of
Nasharuddin represent the more traditional segment of the party. The questions posed to them centered around the issue of changes within PAS that occurred in 1982, policies of the parties in relation to the Islamic state, Shariah, position of non-Muslims and PAS’ linkages to other ulama groups. Nasharuddin Mat Isa represent the younger group of ulama. Several questions such as the perceived clash between the younger groups of ulama and older group of ulama within the party and his vision for the future of PAS were discussed.

The second category of ulama interviewed were PAS members and supporters who were part of the government religious bureaucracy or are still part of the bureaucracy. These include Azamuddin Taib, Halim Kader, Ahmad Awang, Dato’ Harunsanni and Datuk Wira Redza, Razali Shahbuddin and Osman Awang. Some of those who are still part of the government’s religious bureaucracy prefer to remain anonymous. Most of them are not official members of PAS but some are members of PUM. However, as many as 25 out of 32 religious officials interviewed declared their allegiance to PAS while others were apolitical. These ulama were interviewed as they were or are still part of the government. As such, their views on issues such as the Islamic state, Shariah and the ulama leadership become important, in understanding better the thinking of ulama in Malaysia. Questions posed to them revolved around the issue of their thoughts on the government’s Islamisation drive, PAS’ Islamic programs and the Islam Hadhari project. Some of those interviewed were able to relate some of their anecdotal experiences dealing with Malaysian leaders such as Dr Mahathir and Abdullah Badawi.
The third category of interviewees was those who provided useful insights on more specific areas related to the thesis. Hassan Shukri had joined the party in 1957 and witnessed changes within the party. This provided useful information about the history of PAS as well as its links to other Islamist groups. Fadli Ghani, while not an alim, is very informed about PAS Youth and provided useful inputs about this group in PAS. Ghani Shamsuddin provided useful insights to the links between PAS and ABIM as well as the role and function of PUM. Mona Abaza shared her thoughts on Malaysian religious students she came across during her field trip in the Al-Azhar University. Interview with Ahmad Sonhadji showed linkages between Islamists groups in Egypt and Malaysia. Earlier interviews with Qazi Hussein and Munawwar Hassan were useful in revealing linkages between their organization to ulama in Malaysia. Sheikh Johari Bux and Azra Banu gave useful insights on the MPF, its role, its function, its thinking towards ulama, Islam and Shariah in Malaysia.

The Malaysian ulama who were interviewed were mostly educated in the Middle East with the exception of Osman Awang who was educated in the National University of Malaysia, Islamic Department. Among the anonymous ulama interviewed, twenty were educated in the Middle East, India and Pakistan, five were educated in local madrasahs and pondok schools, and the remaining received their education from the Islamic department of local universities. In terms of their doctrinal inclinations, most of the ulama were influenced by Salafi-Wahhabi ideas. However, their relationship towards Sufism is rather ambiguous. While rejecting the ritualistic aspects of Sufism, they embrace the philosophical values of Sufism. Ulama educated in the madrasah and pondok tend to be more Sufistic in their outlook and tend to be critical of the Wahhabis and are
less political. Interestingly, most ulama educated outside Malaysia and in the local universities hold similar political views.

The ulama in PAS who were interviewed represent all segments of the party. Harun Taib, Nik Aziz and Hadi Awang represent the older, more conservative group within PAS, while Nasharuddin Mat Isa represents the younger group in the party. These ulama drive the party’s policies and future plans, which make their religio-political thinking relevant to the thesis. Interviews with these ulama were also conducted unravel the differences which exist between the older and younger group of ulama. These ulama also have a significant influence over Muslims in Malaysia and are directly or indirectly involved in the running of the state of Kelantan. Their thinking on religious and political issues will be reflected in the kind of policies they churn out to direct the Kelantanese and larger Malaysian Muslim society. The ulama interviewed in the government also represent different segments of government ulama. The Mufti of Perak and Malacca are part of the National Fatwa Committee, which promulgates fatwas, which regulate the lives of Malaysian Muslim. As part of this committee, they are able to pressure and influence the government to adopt certain policies on Islam. As such, understanding their religio-political thinking becomes important. The anonymous religious bureaucrats interviewed are in both the senior and middle management positions. Their work involves the implementation of Islamic policies. At the same time, their thinking on issues of religion and politics is likely to shape policies. The kind of policies that are implemented at the ground level. This will ultimately affect the type of Muslim society that is established.