

## 7 From Pondok to Parliament

### The Role Played by the Religious Schools of Malaysia in the Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

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The *pondok* or madrasa has for centuries been a core institution of Malay society, as the centre where the indigenous elite were trained. The *pondok* school takes its name from the dormitories in which the students (predominantly male) live, often simple huts clustered around the home of the teacher or teachers. In the past, states like Kelantan, Trengganu and Patani (which today is a province in Southern Thailand) were known for their *pondoks* that produced successive generations of Muslim scholars who in turn contributed to the Malay world of letters. *Pondok* schools also played an important role in the development of early Muslim political consciousness and were instrumental in the early stages of the anti-colonial struggle in Malaya, much in the same way that madrasas did in many other colonised Muslim societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This chapter looks at the phenomenon of the *pondok* schools of Malaysia with reference to the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), that was formed in 1951.<sup>1</sup> It will consider the development of both the Malaysian Islamic party and the network of *pondok* schools from which it emerged, and which it later nurtured and developed as its political power base. It has to be noted from the outset that the *pondok* schools of Malaysia have been the subject of intense debate since the beginning of the twentieth century, and that until

today there are those in Malaysia – notably the leaders of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party – who regard these institutions with some degree of suspicion, branding them as schools that teach a conservative interpretation of Islam. The Malaysian government has been particularly critical of those *pondoks* and madrasas that are known to have links with PAS, and the criticism of PAS's madrasas and *pondoks* as training centres for potential radical militants and as institutions that preach hate against the state has remained a constant leitmotif in Malaysian politics until the present day while the country is under the leadership of Mahathir's successor, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.<sup>2</sup>

Since the events of 11 September 2001, many Muslim countries have redoubled their efforts to control, monitor and even shut down these institutions that have been cast in a negative light, as bastions of conservative Muslim thinking and training centres for violent Islamist groups. Reports by various intelligence agencies and research centres have pointed to the alleged links between these religious schools and militant Muslim organisations, and the South Asian Analysis Group's (SAAG) report in 2004, for instance, went as far as claiming that at least 167 Malaysian students were enrolled in the militant-linked madrasas of Pakistan in 2002.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, since 2001, the Malaysian government, both under Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003) and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (since 2003), has tried, time and again, to control the development and proliferation of these institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding the media hype over the network of *pondok* schools in the country, the Malaysian government's apparent concern over the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaysia has more to do with the fact that many of them were formed by and supported by the Malaysian Islamic party today. In the Malaysian context, therefore, discussion of the alleged 'threat' represented by some *pondok* schools is a loaded one, where the real issue is not the existence of religious schools (that have existed for centuries, in any case) but rather the political challenge posed by PAS. This party was formed in 1951 and has evolved into an Islamist party that explicitly calls for the transformation of Malaysia into an Islamic state and which enjoys considerable support among Malay Muslims. However, PAS has since the late 1990s also adapted itself to the realities of multiracial, multicultural and multi-confessional Malaysia where circa 40% of the population are non-Malays and non-Muslims. Over the past two years (2005-7), PAS has instituted a series of im-

portant changes in its outlook and self-representation, reaching out to non-Malays and non-Muslims across the country as well as the new breed of urban-based Malay-Muslim professionals.

Notwithstanding the new urbane look of the Malaysian Islamic party, one should not overlook the fact that the party's emergence on the local political scene was largely aided and abetted by its links to more traditional Muslim educational institutions, the *sekolah pondok* and madrasa system in Malaysia. In order to get a better insight into PAS's historical links to the latter, we begin with a cursory overview of the development of the Muslim educational system in British Malaya from the late nineteenth century onwards, which sets the scene for the subsequent emergence of PAS.

### *The Madrasa and Political Mobilisation in Colonial Malaya*

The mode of British colonial rule in Malaysia (then known as British Malaya) was complex, combining various forms of direct and indirect rule.<sup>5</sup> While attempting to create a colonial import-substitution economy based on a pluralistic economic system, the British colonial administrators were also cognisant of the fact that the society they had colonised was deeply influenced by Islam, which had arrived in the Malay archipelago and taken root in the thirteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Fearful of the prospect of causing a nation-wide Malay-Muslim backlash against Western colonial rule, the British – while seeking to expand their economic interests and exploitative practices – tried to maintain some semblance of traditional Malay-Muslim identity as well. Hence, there was little interference on their part in the areas of Malay religion and customs, and few attempts were made to control the development of the *pondoks* and madrasas of the Malay kingdoms across the Peninsula.

That the Malay-Muslim community had to be pacified and possibly co-opted into the colonial economic-political apparatus was evident then for it was during the period of the late-nineteenth century that opposition to the British and their mode of colonial rule first emerged among the Malay and Peranakan (Indian-Malay or Arab-Malay) Muslims of Malaya.<sup>7</sup> Caught between a secular mode of governance in the Straits Settlements and the conservative mode of feudal governance in the Malay kingdoms, many of the younger generation of Malay and Peranakan Muslims began to organise

themselves into political associations and movements that sought the betterment of Muslims via education. This loosely assembled group was called the '*Kaum Muda*' (Younger Generation) who were opposed to the conservative ways of the '*Kaum Tua*' (Older Generation).

During this period the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaya were among the first centres of political mobilisation for the new generation of the *Kaum Muda* reformers, mostly Malay and Peranakan Muslims who had grown up in the British colonial settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. Unlike the native subjects of the Malay kingdoms, these urban-based Malay and Peranakan Muslims did not live under the influence of courtly protocol or customary *adat* law. They were shaped by the values and lifestyle of a modern, cosmopolitan mercantile community where economic and political success was the key to survival.

Among the influential figures of the *Kaum Muda* were Sumatra-born Sheikh Mohamad Tahir Jalaluddin al-Azhari and Malacca-born Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi. Both were regarded as representatives of the *Kaum Muda* generation and they were very attracted to the reformist and modernist ideas then in vogue in the Muslim world. Interestingly, it was during the British colonial era that the *pondoks* and madrasas of the *Kaum Muda* reformers became more closely connected to other institutions of learning abroad, thanks to the development of modern transport and communications. The spread of modernist ideas was facilitated by the advances in modern transport and communications made possible by the opening of the Suez Canal. Like other reformers of the Malay world, men like Sheikh Mohamad Tahir had travelled to the Arab lands and studied in Mecca and at al-Azhar University in Cairo. With other prominent Malay-Muslim reformers such as Sheikh Muhammad Basyuni Imran of Sambas, these reform-minded Islamists studied with Malay-Muslim ulama and scholars already based in Mecca. It was also during their travels to the Arab countries that the *Kaum Muda* reformers were first exposed to the ideas of the Egyptian scholar and disciple of Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of colonial intervention and the introduction of new transport, communication and media technologies, the form and content of teaching that took place in the more modern *pondoks* and madrasas of the *Kaum Muda* reformers began to change as well. Some of these reformers founded new religious schools of their own: Syed Sheikh al-Hadi was the most active in setting up reform-minded modern madrasas in the Crown

Colonies of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. Among the numerous madrasas he set up were Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah in Singapore, Madrasah al-Hadi in Malacca and Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiyyah in Penang. Many of these madrasas also served as printing presses and publication houses where new books and journals promoting the cause of reform were published and disseminated. On 23 July 1906, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir established his own reformist magazine *al-Imam* (the Leader), modelled on the reformist publication *al-Manar* (the Beacon) published in Cairo by Rashid Rida. Among the more popular and influential of the journals then were *al-Imam* (published by Sheikh Mohamad Tahir and Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Singapore), *Al-Ikhwan* (published by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang), *Seruan Azhar* (published by Kesatuan Jamiah al-Khairiah (Malay Students Association of al-Azhar, Cairo), *Pilihan Timur* (published by Indonesian students at al-Azhar, Cairo) and the teachers' magazine, *Majalah Guru*. Through the educational efforts of Sheikh Mohamad Tahir and Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, the modern reformist ideas of the new generation of Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida were introduced to the Malay-Muslims of the peninsula.

Thus, in the early twentieth century, the colony of British Malaya was witnessing the development of a relatively new phenomenon: modernist-inspired *pondoks* and madrasas that set themselves up as alternative sources of Islamic teaching that were more inclined towards political mobilisation and developing the political clout of the Muslims of Malaya. By the 1930s, a period characterised by global economic depression and a period when the economic strength of the Malay-Muslim rubber planters and rice farmers was at its weakest these modern *pondoks* and madrasas took the plunge and entered the world of politics. Foremost in the emerging nationalist struggle in Malaya was a madrasa in the village of Gunung Semanggul in Northern Perak, called Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif, that had come under the control of the Kaum Muda.<sup>9</sup> The Ma'ahad al-Ehya was set up on 15 April 1934. It was built on the foundations of an older educational establishment, the Sekolah Pondok al-Rahmaniah, founded by Ustaz Haji Abdul Rahman bin Mahmud, who had studied in Mecca as well as al-Azhar University, Cairo.

The earlier Sekolah Pondok al-Rahmaniah was a more traditional and conservative institution that offered basic religious education and classes in Arabic and Islamic history. But as Nabir Abdullah (1976) notes, by the early 1930s, the teachers of Sekolah al-Rahmaniah felt that it was time to expand

its services and facilities. They were readers of reformist magazines and journals like *Seruan Azhar*, *Pilihan Timur* and *al-Ikhwan* published by reformist thinkers like Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang. They decided to turn their school into a modern madrasa. Discipline at the revamped reformist madrasa was strict. Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir, the first principal, required that all students wear white uniforms and the black felt *songkok* (not the white skull cap, *kepiah*, associated with traditional *pondok* schools), shave their heads and work six days a week. The school taught a combination of religious and worldly subjects, including art, music, world literature as well as Indian, Chinese and European culture and civilisation. This madrasa was one of the few religious educational establishments with a special department for female students. (There were not as many girls as boys; by the late 1930s, the female enrolment was circa 30.)

Many students of the madrasa became activists who later joined *Sahabat Pena* (Pen Pals Association) as well as other Malay associations in the 1930s. On 1 January 1940, the madrasa formed a company of its own, the *Persatuan al-Ehya as-Sharif Berhad*, with 1,786 members. Within a year the company's membership rose to 3,258. In the 1940s, the school became the focal point of many Malay-Muslim political activities from which the country's first Islamic party, *Hizbul Muslimin*, was to emerge.<sup>10</sup>

In March 1947, the Malay National Party of Malaya (*Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*, PKMM) under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy sponsored the first Pan-Malayan Islamic conference at the Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif. The madrasa was then run by Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir, who was also one of the PKMM's founders. The conference set out to address the economic problems faced by the Malay-Muslims. It was meant to bring together the more politically active and progressive Islamic movements and thinkers in the country. As a result of this conference, the *Majlis Agama Tertinggi* (Supreme Religious Council, MATA) of Malaya was created. At the second MATA conference on 17 March 1948, the *Partai Orang Muslimin Malaya* (*Hizbul Muslimin*) was formed, after the second Pan-Malayan Islamic conference declared that MATA should be reorganised as an Islamic political party. The *Hizbul Muslimin* put forward the claim that Malaya should be independent and that the country should be governed according to Islamic law.<sup>11</sup>

However, the *Hizbul Muslimin* was not destined to last long. The British colonial authorities who had returned to Malaya after the Second World War were already engaged in a low-level conflict with the Malayan Commu-

nist Party (MCP) and were also wary of the *Hizbul Muslimin*, fearing that its links with the left-wing Malay nationalists and the Islamic movements of Indonesia might make it a powerful force in Malay political circles. In a report entitled 'Effect of Action by Government in Malaya to Counteract Malayan Communist Party Plans', issued in August 1948, the Malayan Security Service claimed that the MCP had 'made a further approach to the Malays under the religious cloak of the Supreme Islamic Council and later the pseudo-political party *Hasbul Muslimin* (sic).'<sup>12</sup>

By late 1948, growing political tension in the colony led to the declaration of a state of emergency and the banning of the Malayan Communist Party. Also on the list of banned parties was the *Hizbul Muslimin*, whose leaders were arrested. Their detention spelled the end of the Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif madrasa, because colonial authorities had also arrested and detained the party's president Ustaz Abu Bakar and six other leaders. These arrests adversely affected the educational and political activities at the Ma'ahad. Nearly half the students left as there were no longer enough teachers. It was from this period onwards that the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaya came under the scrutiny of the Malayan security services, for it was now clear that these religious schools could also play a role in the politics of the colony.

Despite the arrests of the teachers at the Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif, the madrasas and *pondoks* of Malaya continued to flourish throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. In summing up the early history of these institutions in Malaya, it can be said that as a result of the colonial encounter a new type of modernist, politically-inclined *pondok* system had developed in Malaya, running parallel to their more traditional and conservative counterparts. The links of the Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif to the country's first Islamic party demonstrated that *pondoks* and madrasas were not solely educational institutions and that they could also play a role in the political lives of Muslims. It was therefore not surprising that the development of the country's second (and longest-lasting) Islamic party PAS took place in the bosom of the country's *pondok* and madrasa network as well.

## *The Founding of PAS and its Links to the Pondok and Madrasa Network of Malaysia*

The nucleus of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party actually lay in the Bureau of Religious Affairs of the ethno-nationalist Malay party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) that was founded in 1946 by a coalition of nationalist Malay organisations at the peak of the struggle against British colonial rule.<sup>13</sup> At that time, UMNO's bureau of religious affairs was dominated by Malay-Muslim imams and teachers of *pondok* and madrasa schools, and many of their concerns (such as the need to develop Islamic education in Malaya) reflected their own professional interests in keeping the *pondok* system alive in the country. But deep-rooted ideological differences between the *ulama* and political elite of UMNO eventually led to the split between the two factions and the emergence of PAS on 24 November 1951.

PAS's close links to the world of Muslim education was evident in the name of the organisation itself. When it was formed in 1951, PAS was then called the *Persatuan Alim Ulama Sa-Malaya* (Organisation of Muslim Scholars of Malaya) and it was led by Haji Fuad Hassan, who was the head of the UMNO party's bureau of religious affairs. The party's first official headquarters was based at the Madrasah al-Masriyyah at Bukit Mertajam in Penang, an old establishment that had been founded by Sheikh Salleh Masri in 1906, and which happened to be the madrasa where Fuad Hassan himself had studied. At the second PAS General Assembly, held in 1952 at another madrasa in Bukit Mertajam, Penang – the Madrasah Da'irat al-Ma'arif al-Wathaniah that was founded by Sheikh Ahmad Badawi (father of the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) – the party established its youth wing known as the *Dewan Pemuda PAS*. Later the party's youth wing would open its own offices at a third madrasa, the Madrasah Khairiyyah at Pokok Sena in Kedah. During PAS's early years, many of its leaders and members happened to be religious teachers, imams and *lebais* at the madrasas, *pondoks* and mosques of the northern Malay states, and it was no accident that PAS's opponents referred to the party as one of the three P's: *Padi*, *Pondok*, *PAS* (rice fields, *pondoks*, and PAS).

From its earliest days, PAS's leaders were keen to develop their contacts and links to Malaysia's *pondok* and madrasa network. In the period 1956-1969, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad – both of whom were the products of both religious and as secular educations – were

the leaders largely responsible for turning PAS into a political party with a rationalised organisational structure, a chain of command and links with other Islamic parties and movements abroad. Cognisant of the fact that the new Islamic party was desperately in need of funding and manpower, PAS leaders like Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee turned to the *pondoks* and madrasas for help. It was during this period that PAS began to develop its sub-elite strata of party-political functionaries consisting of PAS-supporting ulama, imams, *gurus* and *dakwah* missionaries.

In the 1960s, PAS began to lay down its foundations of a cadre system by developing its network of Islamic schools. Through their contacts in the *pondoks* and madrasas that dotted the Malay Peninsula, the PAS was able to spread its message quickly, effectively and most important of all, cheaply. Under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, PAS developed into an Islamist party that was both nationalist and anti-imperialist in its outlook. The party articulated concerns related to economic independence, the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonial hegemony, as well as the need to promote a dynamic and issue-based form of popular Islam. But in 1969, Dr. Burhanuddin passed away after being detained without a trial by the Malaysian government. PAS then came under the leadership of Mohamad Asri Muda, who was a staunch defender of Malay rights and privileges.

The period of Asri Muda's leadership of PAS was a highly controversial one. In Malaysian political circles, he was known as a fervent Malay ethno-nationalist as well as one of the few upcoming Malay-Muslim politicians whose educational background was entirely local. In his youth he had studied at both the madrasas and Malay vernacular schools of Kelantan and neighbouring states.<sup>14</sup> Between 1970 to 1982, Asri Muda turned PAS into an ethno-centric Malay-Muslim party that was concerned with the promotion of the status of Malay-Muslims in Malaysia.

It was during Asri Muda's time that PAS's power base was rooted in the northeastern state of Kelantan, and it was in Kelantan that Asri worked hardest to secure PAS's organic links with the *pondok* and madrasa network. The predominantly Malay state of Kelantan was, at that time, one of the most remote and isolated states on the peninsula and was viewed with a mixture of curiosity and contempt by the elites in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. But despite the relatively low level of development, Kelantan was known as a centre of Islamic learning, earning it the reputation of being

both the heart of Malay culture on the peninsula and as the *serambi Mekah* (porch of Mecca). Kelantan was also closely linked to the Malay community of Patani to the north, which had once been a Malay kingdom but had been incorporated into the state of Thailand (formerly Siam) after the Anglo-Siamese treaty of 1909. Both Kelantan and Patani had been at the forefront of Muslim education and like Kelantan, Patani was also known for its extensive *pondok* school network.<sup>15</sup>

Soon afterwards, Asri was able to expand his local support base when he was given the opportunity to set up party branches in the predominantly Malay state of Trengganu, directly to the south of Kelantan. Besides lectures given at mosques, *surau* and madrasas, they also used the more informal modes of communication used by Islamist movements in other parts of the world. Like Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Asri Muda preferred winning new supporters via informal personal contacts at places such as coffee shops.

Meanwhile, Kelantan's southern neighbour, Trengganu, also had a reputation as a centre for Islamic learning. While Kelantan was known as the *serambi Mekah*, Trengganu proudly declared itself the *serambi Madinah* (porch of Medina) in the peninsula. The first PAS branch in Trengganu was set up in 1956 in Dungun under Asri's personal direction. Henceforth, Asri concentrated most of his efforts on the northern states of Kelantan and Trengganu, working closely with his lieutenants and trying to convert the local imams and *pondok* teachers to PAS's cause. Asri realised that when one dealt with the local *guru* of the *pondok* schools and madrasas he had to adopt a very different approach. The local imams and gurus of Kelantan and Trengganu were not particularly happy with PAS's success, as it represented a threat to the *status quo ante*. Traditionally, the state's gurus and imams were respected and revered men of learning, but they kept their distance from the world of politics. Winzeler (1975), among others, has noted that the gurus of Kelantan were generally conservative and traditional in their outlook, belonging to the more reactionary *Kaum Tua* generation.<sup>16</sup> They shied away from politics and were reluctant to embrace any kind of Islamist movement that called for socio-political reform. Some were also supporters of the traditional establishment, which was identified with the Kelantan royal family and UMNO, under Tunku Abdul Rahman. Asri knew that he had to win the support of this vital local constituency if he was to win control of Kelantan for good. To win over these conservative and recalcitrant re-

ligious functionaries and leaders, Asri needed to adapt his own Islamist discourse to emphasise both his Islamist and his Malay-centric nationalist concerns.

Through the careful cultivation of personal client networks with the local religious teachers and patronage of the *pondoks* and madrasas of Kelantan and Trengganu, Asri Muda managed to secure their loyalty and support during the elections of 1959 right up to 1969. During the 1959 elections, PAS's election campaign in the states of Kelantan and Trengganu was aided and abetted by the state's religious teachers and schools, helping the party rise to power in both states for the first time ever. This made PAS the first Islamist party in Asia to be legally elected into office.

The close co-operation between PAS and the religious schools network continued right up to the late 1960s, which allowed PAS to again win big in both states during the 1969 elections. The results of these elections, however, were nullified as a result of the declaration of a state of National Emergency in May 1969 by the UMNO-led government, which had lost considerable support across the country.

### *Economic and Structural Change in the 1970s and its Impact on PAS and the Pondok Network*

It is evident that the existence and development of the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaysia were determined by various political-economic factors and the changes that took place in Malay-Muslim society as a result of structural-economic changes as well. Earlier we argued that *pondoks* and madrasas existed in the Malay world well before the coming of Western colonial rule, though the encounter with Western colonialism did ultimately force some of the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaysia to adapt to the political and economic realities of the times. That the *Kaum Muda's* modern *pondoks* and madrasas emerged in the 1920s was to be expected, considering the migration of Muslims to the Crown Colonies of Penang, Malacca and Singapore whose political economies were very different from that of the traditional agrarian feudal economies of the Malay kingdoms. The different socio-economic realities of the Crown Colonies opened up new opportunities for the economic and political mobilisation of Malayan Muslims, which

also led to the emergence of these new modern *pondoks* and madrasas that were interested in issues of economic and political emancipation.

By the 1970s, Malaysia was beginning to undergo more radical socio-economic changes that likewise affected the development of the *pondoks* and madrasas and their place in Malaysian society. Thanks to economic and demographic factors brought about by Malaysia's economic development and the transition to a more urban-based polity, the country's religious schools were gradually sidelined by the rise of the nation's new urban-based universities. By 1969, Malaysia was witnessing the emergence of new Islamist actors and agents on the national scene, mainly the urban and campus-based Islamist student movements such as the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, ABIM) and the Sufi-inspired traditionalist-mystical *Darul Arqam* movement.<sup>17</sup>

ABIM and the *Darul Arqam* movement were both campus-based, urban organisations that were symptomatic of the changes taking place in Malaysia and in Malay-Muslim society at the time. The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which sought to improve the economic lot of the Malays, coupled with the creation of new industrial zones on the west coast of the Malaysian Peninsula and the opening of new urban settlements meant an expansion of the urban services sector, which led to more rural youth migrating to the cities for educational and work opportunities while the Malay hinterland was slowly but eventually significantly depopulated. As a result of the gradual urbanisation of the Malay community, the religious schools of Kelantan and Trengganu shrunk in size, numbers and importance; only to be overshadowed by the new modern universities, Islamic colleges and the International Islamic University that was founded in Kuala Lumpur in 1982.

The gradual socio-economic changes that were taking place in the Malay community meant that both PAS and UMNO had to adapt to the developments among their primary political constituency. By the 1970s and 1980s, the UMNO-led government was already trying to reform Malaysia's *pondoks* and madrasas by bringing some of them under state control and patronage. PAS in its turn sought to maintain its links with the *pondok* network by sponsoring religious schools of their own, and providing opportunities for the best graduates of these *pondoks* and madrasas to continue their studies in the religious schools of Pakistan and India. By 1980, about 14% of Malaysia's total student population was estimated to be engaged in Islamic

studies in the strict sense.<sup>18</sup> But both the UMNO-led government and PAS were aware of the political potential of the religious schools, and, furthermore, the Iranian revolution of 1979 had demonstrated how students, when indoctrinated and mobilised, could be a potent force.

PAS was then under the leadership of Haji Yusof Rawa, who was of ulama background and who led the so-called ‘ulama faction’ that had grown in power within the party. Yusof Rawa was himself a product of religious education in Malaysia’s madrasas and was later a student at several Islamic madrasas and colleges in Cairo and Mecca. Yusof Rawa had come under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood during his studies in Egypt, and it was he who re-oriented PAS’s struggle and brought it in line with other Islamist movements and political organisations in the rest of the Islamic world. Borrowing some of the methods of the Muslim Brotherhood, PAS under the leadership of Yusof Rawa introduced the practice of *usrah* (group meetings) in madrasas and mosques intended to bring party members together and to encourage them to understand, develop and propagate the ideology of the party among themselves as well as among non-members. These *usrah* sessions were divided into different types: *usrah* sessions for the party leaders and *usrah* for ordinary members. *Usrah* sessions for the *muslimat* (women members) were also encouraged. On some occasions, the *usrah* was accompanied by a *kenduri* (feast) held in members’ homes to which non-members were also invited. These meetings helped to generate a sense of common belonging and fellowship (*ukhuwwah*) among the PAS members and bring them closer together. Apart from *tarbiyah* and *usrah* sessions, Yusof Rawa and PAS’s leaders also played an active role in supporting (and often leading) many religious meetings and rituals performed by PAS members. *Qiamulail* (Ar. *qiyam al-layl*, ‘rising from sleep in the night’) sessions were also held on every Thursday evening.

Yusof Rawa and the other ulama leaders of PAS were instrumental in promoting the *pondoks* and madrasas that served as their political base as well as privately-run educational centres. Besides Yusof Rawa subsequent decades also saw the rise to political prominence of two *pondok*-based ulama, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat in Kelantan and Tuan Guru Hadi Awang in Trengganu. The much-revered Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat was based in Kelantan and became the first PAS leader whose education was almost entirely based on the traditional *pondok* and madrasa system. His father, Ustaz Nik Mat Alim, had his own religious school, the Sekolah Agama Darul

Anwar, and, in his youth, Nik Aziz was sent away to study in various famous traditional *pondoks* in Kelantan and Trengganu, completing his education with a long stay at the Dar al-'Ulum of Deoband in India. He emerged to play a crucial role in the transmission of the Deobandi concept of education and the Deobandi curriculum amongst the Malay *pondoks*.<sup>19</sup>

Like Yusof Rawa, Nik Aziz's outlook on Islamic education and the role of the *pondoks* and madrasas was shaped in part by his own experience and the teaching he had received abroad in Deoband, India. Upon his return to Malaysia in 1962, Nik Aziz first worked at Tarbiyyah Mardiah Islamic Secondary School. He then began working at his father's school, the Madrasah Darul Anwar. Worried about the prospect of the demise of the *pondoks* and madrasas of Kelantan and equally concerned by the government's constant attempts to reform these institutions, Nik Aziz began to tour the state, giving speeches in which he compared the state of Islamic education in Malaysia with that of other Islamic countries. He argued that Muslims should pay for their own Islamic education, and cited the example of al-Azhar University in Cairo, which was sponsored by public donations. This produced the desired result, and the public began making donations to the Darul Anwar school.

For PAS leaders like Nik Aziz, a religious education was a means for creating a class of spiritually inclined leaders who would safeguard the welfare and concerns of Muslims and see that *shari'a* law would eventually be implemented in Malaysia.<sup>20</sup> Students of the religious schools were seen as assets in the struggle to promote a stricter adherence to Islam in the country. Another aspect of Deobandi thinking clearly evident in Nik Aziz's style of leadership is the desire to purify Islam and Muslim culture from elements regarded as superstitious (*khurafat*), polytheistic (*shirk*), unlawful innovations (*bid'a*) and deviant teachings (*ajaran sesat*). Some of the traditional ulama, he argued, were wrong because their scriptural knowledge rested on old Malay textbooks (*kitab Jawi*) that were poorly translated.<sup>21</sup> He insisted that only a thorough campaign to eliminate and remove all of these elements from Malay society could transform them into true Muslims. This brought him into conflict with the traditional ulama of the more traditional madrasas and *pondoks* of Kelantan.

The other PAS leader and *alim* who was noted in his efforts to promote the *pondoks* and madrasas was the Trengganu-based Tuan Guru Hadi Awang, who was strongly entrenched in his Madrasah Rusila in the small

coastal town of Rusila (near Marang, Trengganu). Ustaz Hadi Awang had inherited control of the madrasa from his father who was also known as one of the foremost Ustazs in the state. Both of these prominent madrasas were attended by Malay-Muslim children whose families were mainly members or supporters of PAS. In the case of Hadi Awang's Madrasah Rusila, the institution would eventually develop working links with major madrasas abroad such as the Syed Maudoodi International Islamic Institute (SMII) of Lahore that was run by the Pakistani Islamist party, the Jama'at-i Islami. The best graduates of Hadi Awang's Rusila madrasa would be selected to continue their studies at the SMII in Pakistan, which, in turn, further bolstered the links between the two Islamist parties across the Indian Ocean.<sup>22</sup>

However, while PAS leaders like Yusof Rawa, Nik Aziz and Hadi Awang were busy trying to expand and develop the network of *pondoks* and madrasas linked to PAS, other developments in Malaysia further complicated the already complex image of these traditional institutions. The UMNO-led government was relentless in its efforts to cast the PAS-controlled *pondoks* as centres of obscurantist teaching and militant anti-government activity. In 1985, another opportunity to demonise the *pondok* institution arose.

### *Suppressing the Radical Tendency in PAS: The Memali Massacre*

The 1980s witnessed the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of Malaysia as it was led by the country's fourth Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Dr. Mahathir was a modernist at heart who wished to transform Malaysia into a fully-industrialised country. He was also known for his antipathy towards and suspicion of PAS – which he regarded and cast as a fundamentalist party – and its links to Malaysia's *pondoks* and madrasas. Understandably PAS's ulama and teachers of the PAS-controlled *pondoks* regarded Dr. Mahathir as a dangerous secular leader who was keen to radically transform and modernise the madrasas and *pondoks* altogether, in order to deprive the Islamic party of one of its most important support bases and networks.

Throughout the 1980s, the tenor of the strife between UMNO and PAS reached its most virulent peak, with several PAS leaders openly condemning Dr. Mahathir and the UMNO-led government for being secular, Westernised

and anti-Islam. Among these scholar-leaders was Ustaz Ibrahim Mahmood, a well-known religious teacher in Kedah, who had studied at various *pondoks* and madrasas in Malaysia and later abroad at places such as the Dar al-'Ulum Deoband in India and al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Later he completed his studies at the University of Tripoli in Libya, earning him the nickname 'Ibrahim Libya'.

Upon his return to Malaysia, Ibrahim Libya worked for the Malaysian government's Islamic Centre, which was one of the offices linked to the Prime Minister's Department. He soon left government service and joined the opposition PAS instead, and founded his own madrasa, the Madrasah Islahiyyah Diniyyah, in the state of Kedah.<sup>23</sup> The madrasa soon became recognised as one of the most active centres of PAS activities in Kedah, and it was from his madrasa that Ibrahim Libya began to issue his calls for *jihād* against the Malaysian government on the grounds that UMNO, as an ethno-nationalist party, was in fact a secular party opposed to the values and objectives of political Islam. Ibrahim Libya's call for open revolt against the state eventually led to a warrant for his arrest being issued.

On 19 November 1985, the state's security forces surrounded the village of Memali in an attempt to arrest the PAS leader and his followers. In the clash that ensued, Ibrahim Libya and fourteen of his followers were killed. On the same day, a state of emergency was declared in the state of Kedah and restraining orders were imposed in the neighbouring states of Kelantan, Trengganu and Perak. Henceforth, the Malaysian government's relations with PAS's madrasas and *pondoks* became troublesome and difficult, to say the least.

The killings at the Memali madrasa marked the nadir of the UMNO-led government's relations with the *pondok* and madrasa network in Malaysia. PAS, in its turn, used the Memali incident as proof that the Malaysian government was not sincere in its claims that it wanted to promote Islamic education in Malaysia, and reacted to the UMNO-led government's criticisms by further intensifying its support of and co-operation with the *pondok* and madrasa network. During the Federal Elections of 1990, PAS managed to win many of the State Assembly seats and all of Kelantan's Federal seats, thereby wiping out all traces of UMNO influence there. Tuan Guru Nik Aziz was elected as the Chief Minister of Kelantan, the first *ulama* ever to be elected to such a prominent political position.

Having thus risen to power, one of the first things that Tuan Guru Nik Aziz did was to table a financial aid package to the state's madrasas. This was because all Federal government funding to the religious schools in the state had been stopped by the UMNO-led government. In the 1991 Kelantan state budget, the PAS-led government allocated 15 million Ringgit (4 million USD) to the *Yayasan Islam Kelantan* (Kelantan Islamic Foundation), to improve the standard of religious (Islamic) education. State funds were also allocated to *pondok* schools.<sup>24</sup> Tuan Guru Nik Aziz even arranged for the Sultan of Kelantan to tour the *pondok* schools during his birthday celebrations in 1991.<sup>25</sup> These investments paid off very quickly. In 1990, 34,721 students were enrolled in religious schools sponsored by the Yayasan Islam. In 1991, the figure rose to 37,726; in 1992, 39,633; and in 1993, 41,864.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Future of Malaysia's Madrasas and Pondok, and Their Relevance to PAS*

The future development of Malaysia's madrasas and *pondoks* hangs in the balance as the country continues in its march towards economic development accompanied by massive rural migration to the urban centres and the creation of a new urban-based Malay-Muslim constituency. The question therefore arises: What will the fate of Malaysia's predominantly rural madrasas and *pondoks* be in the long run?

This chapter has focused primarily on the strong historical links between the Pan-Malaysian Islamic party and Malaysia's madrasa and *pondok* networks. As we have shown, PAS's early success would not have been possible without the close co-operation between the Islamist party's leaders and the madrasas and *pondok* schools in the predominantly rural Malay states of the north. From the very beginning, PAS, the party whose leaders and members were originally composed of religious scholars and functionaries, had close links to the religious schools network that spread across Malaysia's Malay-dominated rural hinterland, which has served as its support base and communications centres till this very day. When the party began to adopt hi-tech modes of communication to maintain its links with its members and to spread its message even further, one of the first innovations it introduced was the practice of filming and transmitting the sermons and speeches of the party's *ulama* leaders from the madrasas and *pon-*

doks via the Internet. The Friday sermons and lectures by PAS leaders like Tuan Guru Nik Aziz and Tuan Guru Hadi Awang from their respective madrasas in Kelantan and Trengganu are still being beamed across the planet to their followers and supporters through the party's Web site and other related services such as PAS-TV.

For obvious reasons, PAS is not about to abandon its long-standing relation with Malaysia's *pondok* and madrasa network. Though no definitive statistics are available and little research has been done on the religious schools in Malaysia today,<sup>27</sup> it is estimated that some 125,000 Malaysian boys and girls are enrolled in the country's madrasas and *pondoks*.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, there is still no definitive register today that includes all of the religious schools in the country; or a register of religious schools that are linked to, and supported by, the Malaysian Islamic party itself. What is clear, however, is that the Malaysian government is now forced to deal with the issue of madrasas and the phenomenon of educational dualism (to borrow Hashim Rosnani's phrase).<sup>29</sup>

The Malaysian government is fully cognisant of the fact that madrasas and *pondoks* are here to stay, and that PAS will continue to nurture its links with these institutions of Muslim learning, and it has since the 1970s attempted to create, fund and develop its own network of state-sponsored Islamic religious primary and secondary schools, Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan Agama (SRKA) and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA). While the Malaysian government has been less successful in determining the form and content of the independent madrasas and those that have come under the support and patronage of PAS, it has at least been able to extend its educational reform measures to the SRKAs and SMKAs under its control, where today English has become a compulsory subject for all students.<sup>30</sup> The Malaysian government's concern about what is taught in these *pondoks* and madrasas also extends further abroad, to the point where the Malaysian government has even suggested that it may play a role in improving the teaching curriculum of the madrasas in the troubled Muslim-dominated provinces of Patani, Jala, Satun and Narathiwat in Southern Thailand.<sup>31</sup>

The stakes in the campaign to rein in the *pondoks* and madrasas were raised even higher following the attacks on the United States of America in 2001 and the Malaysian government's tacit endorsement of Washington's global 'War on Terror' that ensued. While the government of Dr. Mahathir

Mohamad was not exactly known for its love of Washington, the advent of the 'War on Terror' allowed the Malaysian government to strategically reposition itself in a favourable light thanks to its own long-standing campaign to weaken the appeal of the Islamists of PAS.

The transnational networks of itinerant scholars and students who move around the world from one madrasa to another was among the first things to be affected by the new of the post-9/11 geo-political realities. By 2002, the Malaysian government was already clamping down on foreign students coming to Malaysia to study in its religious schools, and other Muslim governments followed suit. By 2004, the number of Malaysian (and other Southeast Asian) students in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and India had dropped to a trickle and the government of Pakistan refused to offer new student visas to Southeast Asian students who wanted to study in the madrasas there. Furthermore, in January 2002, the Malaysian government ordered its security forces to raid and close down the madrasa of the conservative Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (who was on the run from Indonesian authorities and who had been living in exile in Malaysia) that was based in the southern Malaysian state of Johor, bordering Singapore. Though Ba'asyir had no relations or contact whatsoever with PAS, the clamp-down on his small madrasa came at a time when all *pondok* and madrasa schools were suspected and this only further exacerbated the negative image of these institutions as a whole.

In 2002, the Malaysian government also suspended funding to 260 madrasas and *pondoks* across the country that were run privately by non-state and non-UMNO trustees and directors, on the grounds that some of them might be directly or indirectly linked to PAS.<sup>32</sup> In 2003, the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was actively discouraging Malaysian parents from sending their children to *pondok* schools (particularly those with open links to PAS) on the grounds that these schools were 'preaching hate' against the Malaysian government and being used as recruiting grounds for both PAS and other more radical dissident Islamist groups in the country.

### *Fear and Loathing: The Demonisation of the Pondok and Madrasas of PAS in Malaysia Today*

As we have shown earlier, *pondok* schools and madrasas have existed in Malaysia since before British colonial rule. What is significant, however, is how the impact of Western colonialism gave birth to a new type of *pondok* and madrasa that was not only modern in its teaching methods and curriculum, but also in its political ambitions. A new generation of *kaum muda*-led *pondoks* and madrasas emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century, which were overtly political and played a key role in the political empowerment and mobilisation of the Muslims of Malaya. During the early stages of the anti-colonial struggle in British Malaya, the Malay-Muslim elite were less wary of these politicised *pondoks* and madrasas for the simple reason that their struggle against British colonial rule concurred with the interests of the Malay-Muslim elite who also wanted to see the end of British colonialism in Malaya. Thus the *pondok* and madrasa schools were seen (and characterised) by the Malay elites as generally positive, and were commended for the role they played in preserving Malay-Muslim identity as well as developing the first generation of Malay-Muslim proto-nationalists who later took active part in the anti-colonial struggle in British Malaya.

The view of the *pondoks* and madrasas began to change in the late 1940s, when it became clear that some of these religious schools were aligned to the radical Malay Left who not only wanted independence but also wanted to create an independent Muslim state, which would cater to the interests of the Malay peasantry. By the time the conservative UMNO party was formed (in 1946) and the Malaysian Islamic Party PAS had entered the arena of post-colonial politics (in 1951), PAS's *pondoks* and madrasas were specifically singled out as potential threats to UMNO's political fortunes, and by extension, to the Malaysian state.

As we have shown earlier in this chapter, the UMNO-led Malaysian state's reaction to the *pondok* and madrasa network in Malaysia has been two-fold: On the one hand, the UMNO-governed state has tried to co-opt and patronise non-political *pondoks* and madrasas as their own; while, on the other hand, doing its best to limit the popularity and influence of those religious schools that have come under PAS's influence. This was the background to the numerous attempts at Islamic educational reform in Malaysia

during the Mahathir era (1981-2003) and which persists to this very day under the leadership of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

This sustained campaign to control the *pondoks* and madrasas of the country has often been couched in a discourse of paternalistic concern for Malaysia's Muslim citizens that posits the view of *pondoks* and madrasas as being, at best, quaint, rustic and traditional institutions that need to be overhauled and reformed: In 2001 the country's Education Minister Musa Muhammad noted that less than 25% of the madrasas and *pondoks*' graduates qualified for admission to the country's universities (as compared to some 90% of secular national school graduates).<sup>33</sup> Shortly after other Malaysian leaders such as Abdul Ghani Othman, Chief Minister of Johor, added that 'there must be a balance between religious education and scientific knowledge so that students from religious schools will not lag behind in the modern world'.<sup>34</sup> Some Malaysian politicians have even suggested that some of the *pondok* schools be re-packaged as potential sites for foreign tourists to visit, in order to get a glimpse of the 'authentic, traditional' life of rural Malays.<sup>35</sup> However, this paternalistic and sometimes patronising discourse of care and control once again reiterates the common jaundiced view (favoured by Malaysia's Western-educated elite) that the *pondok* and madrasa are exotic, outdated institutions that have not kept up with modernity and that if left to their own devices, can only produce poorly-educated graduates whose knowledge skills are useless in a modern industrial economy.

In its attempt to keep the nation's *pondoks* and madrasas under its control, the UMNO-led state has sought to promote the religious schools that have come under its own patronage. With higher-level Islamic education being offered by institutions like the International Islamic University of Malaysia and research on Islamic issues being carried out at institutes such as IKIM and ISTAC, the government-sponsored religious schools (SRKAs and SMKAs) of Malaysia have also received further financial, material and logistical support in the form of higher budget allocations, donations of computers and special promotional campaigns (via the Internet and other forms of communication) to advertise themselves as alternative institutions of Islamic learning to PAS's madrasas and *pondoks*.<sup>36</sup>

In tandem with this paternalistic discourse of care and patronage that posits the stereotypical image of the traditional *pondok* and madrasa as an outdated institution is a more aggressive and sinister discourse of security

and anti-terrorism, which puts forward the claim that the *pondoks* and madrasas of PAS in particular have been instrumentalised by the party to create its own pool of fanatical party cadres; and that some of PAS's madrasas may even have links to violent militant groups both inside and outside of the country. As we have shown above, this second discourse has been particularly well served since 11 September 2001 and Washington's unilateral declaration of a 'War on Terror'. The government of Malaysia (like the governments of Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey and many other Muslim countries) seized upon this shift in geo-strategic realities to renew its assault on PAS's *pondoks* and madrasas, this time with the tacit endorsement of Western agencies, governments and media who were likewise worried about the prospect of the rise of militant radical Islam world-wide.

However, this discourse of security-maintenance and terror-prevention also reiterates the trope of the *pondok* or madrasa as an institution that should be kept at arm's length and mistrusted. In the Malaysian context, it also involves the historical erasure of the genuinely emancipatory role played by many of the *pondoks* and madrasas of the past in the anti-colonial struggle for independence (which was indeed a political struggle with radical political objectives).

The fate of the *pondoks* and madrasas of Malaysia today therefore hinges on the twists and turns of geo-politics and how the combined pressure of the discourse of paternalistic education reform as well as the discourse of terror-prevention will be utilised by the UMNO-led state in the future. As we have shown above, this conflict is primarily a political one, which has more to do with the constant battle for Malay-Muslim votes between the two biggest Malay-Muslim parties of Malaysia, UMNO and PAS, than with the teaching of Islam in the Muslim schools themselves. After all, the UMNO-led government has shown that it is more comfortable with the *pondok* and madrasa schools that have come under its control, thereby demonstrating that Islam and Islamic education is not the problem *per se*, but rather PAS and its support of other *pondoks* that have eluded governmental patronage and surveillance. Thus the long-term future of Malaysia's *pondoks* and madrasas will be determined by the outcome of this political contest between UMNO and PAS, as both sides will undoubtedly remain relentless in their claim to be the party that best caters to the needs of Muslim education in Malaysia.

## Notes

- 1 For an account of the emergence and historical development of PAS, see: Farish A. Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party 1951-2003*, 2 vols., Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2004.
- 2 Farish A. Noor, 'Stirring the "Militant Islam" Bugbear Again?', *Pakistan Daily Times*, 27 June 2007.
- 3 See: B. Raman, 'Thailand and the International Islamic Front', SAAG paper no. 890, 9 January 2004. The SAAG report of 2004 claimed that 'according to very reliable statistics for 2002, there were 190 students from Southeast Asia in the madrasas of Sindh, Pakistan, of whom 86 were from Malaysia, 82 from Thailand and 22 from Indonesia; 151 in the madrasas of Punjab, of whom 61 were from Malaysia, 49 from Thailand and 41 from Indonesia; and 59 in the madrasas of the Northwest Frontier Province, of whom 21 were from Indonesia, 20 from Malaysia and 18 from Thailand. Thus, there were 167 Malaysians, 149 Thais and 84 Indonesians in the various madrasas of Pakistan then.
- 4 Jonathan Kent, 'Malaysia's Doubt About Muslim Schools', BBC World Service, 3 April 2003.
- 5 The encroachment of British colonial rule into the Malay states was carried out slowly and in stages: first through the creation of the Straits Settlements in 1826, then the formation of the (indirectly ruled) Federated Malay States in 1896 and finally the Unfederated Malay States in 1909. In 1867, control of the Straits Settlements was passed over to the Colonial Office in London.
- 6 On Islam's early arrival in the Malay world, see: S.Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963; Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1963; William R. Roff, 'Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s-1990s: exemplars, institutions, and vectors', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9(2), 1998, 210-228.
- 7 In the Malaysian context, the term 'Peranakan' refers to those of mixed ancestry, be they of mixed Malay-Arab, Malay-Indian or Malay-Chinese descent.
- 8 For more on the contact between Muslim thinkers and reformers of Southeast Asia with their counterparts in Egypt and the Arab world, see: Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
- 9 Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif Gunung Semanggul, 1934-1959*, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, 1976.
- 10 Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif*.
- 11 The *Hizbul Muslimin* party's founders included Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir (principal of Madrasa Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif), Ustaz Abdul Rab, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (leader of the PKMM) and Kyai Masyhur Azahari of the Indonesian Masyumi movement. Other Malay radicals and leftist-nationalists

- such as Mohammad Asri Muda, *Hizbul Muslimin's* first secretary, also played a crucial role in its formation and activities.
- 12 A.J. Stockwell, *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya*, part I, London: HMSO, 1995, p. 55.
  - 13 The conservative-nationalist UMNO party has its roots in the First Malay Congress that was held in Kuala Lumpur on 1-4 March 1946. The Congress discussed the plan to form PEKEMBAR (*Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu*), but later opted for the title UMNO (United Malays Nationalist Organisation) instead. On 11 May 1946, the UMNO party was officially launched at the *Istana Besar* (Grand Palace) of Johor Bharu. UMNO's first President was Dato' Onn Jaafar. In the early days, the party was a broad and all-encompassing organisation that included Malay political movements from across the entire political spectrum of the country. Over time, however, the conservative character of UMNO emerged as Leftists and Islamists began to leave the organisation to form parties of their own.
  - 14 After he had completed his basic religious education in Kelantan, Asri Muda worked briefly at the madrasa Ma'ahad al-Ehya of Gunung Semanggul, where he began to formulate his ecumenical ideology of Islamism combined with radical Malay nationalism. When the *Hizbul Muslimin* party was formed in 1948, Asri became its secretary. When PAS was first established in 1951 as the *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya*, he became one of its first members and, with the help of Osman Abdullah, was made a member of the executive committee. His wife, Ustazah Sakinah, eventually rose to become head of Muslimat PAS, the women's wing.
  - 15 For more on the pondok schools of Patani, see: Hasan Madmarn, *The Pondok and the Madrasah in Patani*, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Press, 1999. Hasan Madmarn notes that until the early 20th century, the pondoks of Patani served as the last bastion of traditional Malay-Muslim culture and identity in the face of successive assimilation policies adopted by the Thai government since the time of King Chulalongkorn right up to the military dictatorship of General Phibun Songkram of the 1930s. Madmarn also notes that the pondoks of Patani were almost universally conservative and aligned themselves with the Kaum Tua conservative tradition, and that their curricula and teaching methods were antiquated and 'medieval' compared to what was taught at the *pondoks* and madrasas of the Kaum Muda reformists (pp. 18-20).
  - 16 Robert L. Winzeler, 'Traditional Islamic Schools in Kelantan', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 48 (1975), 99-100.
  - 17 On the emergence of these new Islamic movements, see: Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984; Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti Press, 1987.
  - 18 Quoted in Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge / Singapore: ISEAS, 1997, p. 116.

- 19 For more on the life of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, see: Mohammad Sayuti Omar, *Salam Tok Guru: PAS Perintah Kelantan*, Kuala Lumpur: Tinta Merah, 1999.
- 20 Omar, *Salam Tok Guru*, pp. 36-37.
- 21 The term *kitab Jawi* refers to Malay-language Islamic books in Arabic script, dealing with doctrine and canonical obligations and containing medieval cosmological and eschatological ideas. See: Mohd. Nor bin Ngah, *Kitab Jawi: Islamic thought of the Malay Muslim scholars*, Singapore: ISEAS, 1983.
- 22 See also Chapter 5 in this volume.
- 23 C. N. al-Afghani, *Operasi Kenari: Suatu Hukuman Tanpa Bicara*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Pemuda Press, 1990, p. 64.
- 24 Jamal Mohd. Lukman Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz*, Kuala Lumpur: Sulfa Press, 1999, p. 141.
- 25 Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz*, p. 160.
- 26 Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Kelantan: Universiti Politik Terbuka*, Nilam Puri: Ma'ahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah, 1995, p. 236 n. 18.
- 27 One of the research projects currently being undertaken in Malaysia on the subject of madrasas and *pondoks* is the research cluster 'Design of Madrasahs – A Case Study of Madrasahs in Malaysia that are run by Private or Non-Governmental Bodies'; currently being carried out at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in Johor. (see: <http://www.rmc.utm.my/ProjectDir/abstract.asp?vot=71274>).
- 28 Jonathan Kent, 'Malaysia's Doubt About Muslim Schools', BBC World Service, 3 April 2003.
- 29 See: Hashim Rosnani, *Educational Dualism in Malaysia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- 30 Mujtaba Hamdi, 'Madrasahs: Lessons from History', SEAPA (Southeast Asian Press Alliance) report, 2003, online at: <http://www.seapabkk.org/newdesign/fellowshipsdetail.php?No=674> ; and Eric Teo Chu Cheo, 'Malaysia Gives Islam a Chance to Shine', *Japan Times*, 19 April 2004.
- 31 That the Malaysian government is worried about the teaching that takes place in the *pondoks* and madrasahs of the Muslim provinces in Southern Thailand is understandable considering the escalation of inter-religious violence there between 2002 to the present. During the tenure of Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the Thai government's relations with the Malay-Muslim minority in Southern Thailand reached an all-time low: Sporadic attacks and bombings led to killings on a weekly basis, causing havoc to local commerce and increasing the political tensions. Allegations of militant training in the *pondoks* of Patani added to the fear that these institutions were guerilla training centres linked to international terrorist organisations. Furthermore, the proximity of Patani to the Malaysian state of Kelantan that is ruled by PAS also meant that there was the danger that alleged Muslim militants from Thailand may seek refuge in Malaysia. On 12 February 2007, the Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi met with his Thai counterpart Sarayud

- Chulanorn to discuss Malaysia sending government-appointed religious teachers to teach at the pondoks of Patani, and to update and modernise the curriculum of its institutions. ('Malaysia and Thailand to Accelerate Development in Border Areas', *Bernama Press*, 12 February 2007, online at: <http://www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v3/news.php?id=246401>).
- 32 'International Religious Freedom Report 2004: Malaysia'. United States Department of State, Washington, DC. Online at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35405.htm>.
- 33 M. Bakri Musa, 'Meanwhile: Religious schools hinder progress in Malaysia', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 April 2001.
- 34 Michael Richardson, 'Asians Take a Closer Look at Islamic Schools', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 February 2002.
- 35 See: 'Call to Upgrade Malaysia's Tourist Homestay Industry', (Bernama News Agency, 28 November 2007, online at: <http://web7.bernama.com/events/tmm2007/news.php?id=299194>). Ironically perhaps, the suggestion of converting *pondoks* into tourist attractions came from a PAS member of Parliament, Abdul Fatah Harun.
- 36 One such case being the Muslim religious school affiliated to the Technological University of Malaysia, the Sekolah Agama Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (in the state of Johor) which was supported by government funds when it created its own promotional Web site to attract more students. See: 'UTM Religious School Launches its own Website', *The Star*, 24 April 2007.