

**ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN THE PERIPHERY:  
A STUDY OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE DARUL ARQAM MOVEMENT  
1968-1996**

Thesis submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

As a case-study, this thesis investigates the political challenge posed by Darul Arqam, an Islamic movement, to the Malaysian state from 1968 until 1996. As a general manifestation of Islamic resurgence, the challenge sheds light on three important issues: the tactics, methods and strategies pursued by Islamic movements; the secular authorities' pattern of response to Islamic movements; the impact of repression on Islamists. The Darul Arqam challenge was unique in dispensing with conventional Islamist ideas and practices, in generating an atypical reaction from the state and in producing an unconventional counter-response to state-initiated suppression. Darul Arqam's roots are traced to Malaysian Islam's largely sufi inclinations, which have been neglected by most contemporary Islamists for their perceived disadvantages, but which Darul Arqam successfully harnessed to its benefit. Given Darul Arqam's disavowal of political violence and the state's strategy of emphasising cooptation and accommodation of Islamists, its full-blown repression of Darul Arqam in 1994 deserves scrutiny in its myriad aspects and implications. The paradox of Darul Arqam's challenge is underlined by its innate capacity to weather external pressure, showing that wholesale repression would not necessarily amount to liquidation of a grassroots movement.

Applying the case-study of Darul Arqam to wider historical and situational settings, this thesis urges a rethinking of issues and concepts of general theoretical and practical significance. Malaysia and Darul Arqam are contextually situated within the Islamic periphery: a subject area which has eluded the serious attention of scholars intent on unearthing the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence. Yet, unconventional cases in the periphery, often guided by a pragmatic appreciation of indigenous mores, may be a more appropriate yardstick to gauge the potential of political Islam on account of its inherent grassroots appeal. Within the context of political Islam in Malaysia, this study examines the relative impact of long-term internal structural processes and global developments in moulding the contemporary scenario.

Ideologically, the empirical case-study of Darul Arqam as a dynamic movement, combining the theory of sufi-messianic Islam with an achievement-oriented economic ethic, challenges conventional theories which postulate an incompatibility between religion, especially in its otherworldly dimensions, and modernisation, as measured mainly in terms of material development. Darul Arqam, despite its heavily spiritual inclinations, emerged in the 1990s as an independent economic powerhouse which threatened the status quo of Malaysian politics. It is the successful marriage between apparently contradictory modes of social organisation, arguably unprecedented among contemporary political Islamists, which underlines Darul Arqam's distinctiveness and merits as a case-study with global implications.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

### Organisations, institutions and movements:

ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> : Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia
AGC	Al-Arqam Group of Companies
ALIRAN	<i>Aliran Kesedaran Negara</i> : National Consciousness Movement
AMCJA	All-Malayan Council of Joint Action
AMMYC	All-Malayan Malay Youth Congress
API	<i>Angkatan Pemuda Insaf</i> : Aware Youth Corps
APU	<i>Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah</i> : People's Unity Force
ASAS	<i>Angkatan Sasterawan '50</i> : Generation of 50s Writers
ASASI	<i>Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia</i> : Islamic Science Academy of Malaysia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASN	<i>Amanah Saham Nasional</i> : National Unit Trust
AWAS	<i>Angkatan Wanita Sedar</i> : Aware Women Corps
BAHEIS	<i>Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam Jabatan Perdana Menteri</i> : Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department
BERJASA	<i>Barisan Jamaah Islamiah Malaysia</i> : Muslim Front of Malaysia
BMA	British Military Administration
BPMSA	<i>Bahagian Pengeluaran Minda Syeikhul Arqam</i> : Production Division of the Mind of <i>Sheikh al-Arqam</i>
CCC	Chinese Consultative Committee (of PAS)
CEC	Central Executive Committee (of ABIM, PAS)
CFM	Christian Federation of Malaysia
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya (or MCP: Malayan Communist Party)
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DKA	<i>Darah Keturunan Arab</i> : of Arabic blood
DKK	<i>Darah Keturunan Keling</i> : of Indian blood
ESCAR	Essential (Security Cases) Regulations
FELCRA	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FIS	<i>Front Islamique du Salut</i> : Islamic Salvation Front (of Algeria)
FOSIS	Federation of Students' Islamic Societies (of Britain)
GAPIM	<i>Gabungan Penulis Islam Malaysia</i> : Federation of Muslim Writers of Malaysia
GERAKAN	<i>Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i> : Malaysian People's Movement
GIA	Islamic Armed Group (of Algeria)

GKK	<i>Gerakan Kempen Kesedaran</i> : Consciousness-Raising Campaigns
HAK	<i>Harakah Keadilan Rakyat</i> : People's Justice Movement
HAMIM	<i>Hizbul Muslimin</i> : Party of Muslims (formed 1986)
HM	<i>Hizbul Muslimin</i> (formed 1948)
IAIN	<i>Institut Agama Islam Negeri</i> : State Institute of Islamic Studies (of Indonesia)
ICMI	<i>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia</i> : Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals
IAF	Islamic Action Front (of Jordan)
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIU	International Islamic University
IKIM	<i>Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia</i> : Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
INDAH	<i>Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam</i> : Islamic <i>Dakwah</i> and Training Institute
IPI	<i>Institut Pengajian Ilmu-ilmu Islam</i> : Institute for the Study of Islamic Sciences (of ABIM)
IRC	Islamic Representative Council (or MSM: <i>Majlis Syura Muslimun</i> )
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
ISIS	Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Kuala Lumpur
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation
JAKIM	<i>Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia</i> : Islamic Development Department of Malaysia
JIM	<i>Jamaah Islah Malaysia</i> : Organisation for Islamic Reformation
KBI	<i>Koperasi Belia Islam</i> : Muslim Youth Cooperative (of ABIM)
KJS 1993	<i>Kanun Jenayah Syariah (II) 1993</i> : Islamic Criminal Law Bill 1993 (of Kelantan)
KMM	<i>Kesatuan Melayu Muda</i> : Young Malays' Union
KOHILAL	<i>Koperasi Al-Hilal Berhad</i> (of PAS)
KRIS	<i>Kesatuan Ra'ayat Indonesia Semenanjung</i> : Union of Peninsular Indonesians
LEPIR	<i>Lembaga Pendidikan Ra'ayat</i> : Council for People's Education
LPN	<i>Lembaga Padi dan Beras Negara</i> : National Paddy and Rice Authority

LUTH	<i>Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji</i> : Pilgrims' Management and Fund Board
MABIMS	<i>Menteri-menteri Agama Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia dan Singapura</i> : Religious Affairs Ministers of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore
MAKSI	<i>Madrasah Kebudayaan dan Seni Islam</i> : School of Islamic Culture and Arts (of Darul Arqam)
MARA	<i>Majlis Amanah Rakyat</i> : Council of Trust for Indigenous Peoples
MATA	<i>Majlis Agama Tertinggi SeMalaya</i> : Pan-Malayan Supreme Islamic Council
MCA	Malay(si)an Chinese Association
MCCBCHS	Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism
MCKK	Malay College of Kuala Kangsar
MIC	Malay(si)an Indian Congress
MISG	Malaysian Islamic Study Group
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MSD	Malaysian Students' Department
MSR	Malay Special Rights
MTS	<i>Majlis Tertinggi Shura</i> : Highest Consultative Council (of ABIM)
MUI	<i>Majlis Ulama Indonesia</i> : Council of Indonesian <i>Ulama</i>
MUIS	<i>Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura</i> : Islamic Council of Singapore
NASMA	<i>Parti Nasionalis Malaysia</i> : Nationalist Party of Malaysia
NCC	National Consultative Council
NEP	New Economic Policy
NFC	National <i>Fatwa</i> Council
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NOC	National Operations Council
NU	<i>Nahdatul Ulama</i> : Renaissance of <i>Ulama</i> (of Indonesia)
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PAP	People's Action Party's (of Singapore)
PAPERI	<i>Persatuan Persaudaraan Islam</i> : Muslim Brotherhood Association
PAS	<i>Parti Islam SeMalaysia</i> : Islamic Party of Malaysia
PDC	Penang Development Corporation
PEPERMAS	<i>Pusat Perekonomian Melayu SeMalaya</i> : Pan-Malayan Malay Economic Centre
PERDA	Penang Regional Development Authority

PERIPENSIS	<i>Persatuan Islam dan Pencak Silat Singapura</i> : Islamic Society of Martial Arts of Singapore
PERKIM	<i>Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaysia</i> : Muslim Welfare Association of Malaysia
PETA	<i>Pembela Tanah Ayer</i> : Defenders of the Motherland
PETRONAS	<i>Petroleum Nasional</i> : National Petroleum
PKPIM	<i>Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam SeMalaysia</i> : National Association of Malaysian-Muslim Students
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (now PAS)
PMS 46	<i>Parti Melayu Semangat 46</i> : Spirit of 1946 Malay Party
PMU	<i>Persatuan Melayu Semenanjung</i> : Peninsula Malays Union
PNB	<i>Permodalan Nasional Berhad</i> : National Equity Corporation
PSRM	<i>Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia</i> : People's Socialist Party of Malaysia (or PRM: <i>Parti Rakyat Malaysia</i> )
PUM	<i>Persatuan Ulama Malaysia</i> : Ulama Association of Malaysia
PUTERA	<i>Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat</i> : Centre for People's Power
PWTC	Putra World Trade Centre
RM	<i>Ringgit Malaysia</i> : Malaysian ringgit (currency)
RTM	<i>Radio Televisyen Malaysia</i> : Radio and Television of Malaysia
SACC	Societies Act Coordinating Committee
SDP	Socialist Democratic Party (of Malaysia)
SITC	Sultan Idris Training College
SMU	Singapore Malay Union
SUARAM	<i>Suara Rakyat Malaysia</i> : Voice of Malaysians
SYAMELIN	<i>Syarikat Melayu Internasional Malaysia</i> : International Malay Corporation of Malaysia
TNB	<i>Tenaga Nasional Berhad</i> : National Energy Limited
UM Group	Utusan Melayu Group
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
USA	United States of America (or US: United States)
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
YADIM	<i>Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah</i> : Islamic Missionary Foundation

**Sources:**

<i>AM</i>	<i>Aliran Monthly</i>
<i>BH</i>	<i>Berita Harian</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Berita Minggu</i>
<i>FEER</i>	<i>Far Eastern Economic Review</i>
<i>FT</i>	<i>Financial Times</i>
<i>MD</i>	<i>Malaysian Digest</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Mingguan Malaysia</i>
<i>NST</i>	<i>New Straits Times</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Straits Times (Singapore)</i>
<i>UM</i>	<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>

Note: Whenever a source is mentioned as part of the text rather than the reference, no abbreviation is used. Whenever a source is mentioned for the first time as part of the reference, both its full title and abbreviation are used; for example, (*Berita Harian: BH 13.6.94*).

## NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

1. In this thesis, the transliteration of Arabic words uses the system proposed in Isma'il Raji al Faruqi, **Toward Islamic English**, Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1986 (see especially pages 16-18). Where the transliteration departs from this system, it is because the author sticks to the spelling most commonly used in order to avoid confusion. For example, 'Darul Arqam' is preferred to 'Dar al-Arqam'.
2. Arabic, Malay and specialist terms are generally italicised, except where they are considered to be in common use by English-medium academics and students of the relevant disciplines. In any case, the specialist spelling is retained. For example, 'Quran' is non-italicised, and the common English spelling - 'Koran', is foregone. Non-English words not mentioned in the glossary are also italicised; for example, *inter alia*, *modus operandi*. Except for specialist terms considered to be in common use, non-English words are supplied with their English language equivalents in brackets when first used. This rule applies to institutions, but not to places and individuals' names.
3. Titles of books, theses and documents mentioned in this thesis, excluding the bibliography, are written in bold; for example, **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia**. Foreign language titles are not italicised; for example, **Revolusi Mental**. Titles of articles are written in inverted commas and italicised if they are in a non-English language; for example, 'Soros criticises Malaysian PM', '*Kabinet Bayangan Arqam*'. In all cases, when the titles are in non-English languages, the English translation is immediately supplied in parentheses.
4. Since Malaysian and some non-Malaysian Muslim authors use no surname, their whole names, either spelt out in full or with initials preceding their last name, are quoted when mentioned as references. For example, Ghazali Basri is cited as 'G. Basri'.
5. All Quranic references are from **The Holy Qur'an: Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali**, Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, n.d. (first edition 1934). The relevant chapter number, in Roman alphabets, is given first, followed by the verse number; for example, "*We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures*" (Quran XXI: 107).
6. Footnotes and quotations are subject to all the above rules; however, quotations are always italicised, except when they are sufficiently long or essential so as to form a paragraph on its own.

## GLOSSARY

Note: In this glossary, standard Arabic terms are differentiated from non-Arabic and specialist terms. Arabic terms which have been converted for non-Arabic language and specialist use are included in the latter category, with the Arabic language equivalent supplied in parentheses.

### Standard Arabic terms:

<i>abuya</i>	father
<i>ahkamullah</i>	the words or laws of Allah (or <i>ahkamu Allah</i> )
<i>Ahl al-Halli wa al-'Aqdi</i>	those who loosen and bind: members of <i>Shura</i> Council
<i>akhlaq</i>	exemplary moral character
<i>al-jannah al-'ajilah</i>	temporary heaven for righteous servants of God
Al-Mahdi	the divinely guided one: pre-Doomsday Islamic messiah
<i>al-ma'thurat</i>	Hassan al-Banna's collection of Quranic and prayer rites
Allah	the God
<i>Amir</i>	leader of Islamic society
<i>amr bi al-ma'ruf</i>	enjoining the good (used with <i>nahi an al-munkar</i> )
<i>aqidah</i>	Islamic belief
<i>awrah</i>	parts of the body prohibited from public exposure
<i>ayatullah</i>	sign of the Allah's greatness, title of Shiite <i>imams</i>
<i>bayt al-mal</i>	state treasury
<i>bid'ah</i>	reprehensible innovations in religion
<i>dakwah bi al-hal</i>	propagation by example (' <i>dakwah</i> ' uses Malay spelling)
<i>dalil</i>	proof
<i>dhikr</i>	remembrance of God
<i>dhimmis</i>	protected non-Muslim minorities
<i>din</i>	religion
<i>din al-hayah</i>	the Islamic way of life
<i>Eid al-Adha</i>	Festival of Sacrifice on 10 Dhu al-hijjah of Islamic calendar, held in conjunction with the <i>hajj</i>
<i>Eid al-Fitr</i>	day of celebration to mark the end of Ramadan
<i>fard 'ain</i>	individual obligation
<i>fard kifayah</i>	collective obligation
<i>fatwa</i>	Islamic legal ruling (plural: <i>fatawa</i> )
<i>fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence

<i>fitrah</i>	specific alms-giving during the month of Ramadan
<i>hablumminallah</i>	man-Creator 'vertical' relationship
<i>hablumminannas</i>	man-man 'horizontal' relationship
<i>hadith</i>	saying or action of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>hajj</i>	pilgrimage to Makkah
<i>halal</i>	Islamically permissible, legal
<i>haqiqah</i>	the Reality of Allah
<i>haram</i>	forbidden according to the <i>shariah</i>
<i>hudud</i>	limits, criminal punishments instituted by the Quran and <i>Sunnah</i>
<i>ibadah</i>	worship
<i>ijma'</i>	consensus of jurists
<i>ijtihad</i>	independent judgement and reasoning
<i>imam</i>	prayer leader, leader of Muslim community
<i>iman</i>	faith, conviction
<i>iman 'ayyan</i>	the convinced faith
<i>islah</i>	reform
<i>istinbat</i>	reasoning by inference
<i>jihād</i>	holy war, religious resistance against political enemies
<i>jilbab</i>	chador with face-veil, <i>purdah</i>
<i>jizyah</i>	poll tax imposed by the Islamic state on <i>dhimmis</i>
<i>kafir</i>	infidel, unbeliever
<i>kalimah shahadah</i> (or either term alone)	the attestation of faith: 'there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger'
<i>khawariq al-'adah</i>	defiance of laws of nature
<i>khilafiah</i> (or <i>ikhtilaf</i> )	legitimate differences of opinion
<i>kufu</i>	suitability in marriage
<i>kun fayakun</i>	be and shall be
<i>mahmudah</i>	virtuous attributes
<i>makruh</i>	detestable or discouraged according to the <i>shariah</i>
<i>maradatillah</i>	Divine Pleasure
<i>ma'rifah</i>	true understanding of Allah
<i>mazmumah</i>	evil attributes
<i>mubah</i>	optional or allowable according to the <i>shariah</i>
<i>mufti</i>	religious scholar formally appointed for issuing <i>fatawa</i>
<i>muhaddithin</i>	scholars of <i>hadith</i> (singular: <i>muhaddith</i> )
<i>mujaddid</i>	revivalist, renewalist
<i>mujahadah al-nafs</i>	purification of the soul

<i>mullah</i>	Shiite Muslim cleric
<i>munafiq</i>	hypocrites
<i>muqarrabin</i>	those who enjoy intimacy with Allah
<i>mustakbirin</i>	the oppressors
<i>mustazaffin</i>	the oppressed peoples
<i>mutawatir</i>	having several narrative chains, categorically authentic
<i>muwahhidun</i>	unitarians, another term for <i>Wahhabis</i>
<i>nafs</i>	the baser self, desire
<i>nafs mutmainnah</i>	the righteous / peaceful self
<i>nahi an al-munkar</i>	forbidding the evil (used with <i>amr bi al-ma'ruf</i> )
<i>qada'</i>	fate, divine judgement
<i>qadar</i>	destiny, divine assignment of ends
<i>qadi</i>	judge in a <i>shariah</i> court
<i>qanaah</i>	contentment with whatever has been granted by Allah
<i>qat'i</i>	definite; <i>nas qat'i</i> means 'definite base' in the <i>shariah</i>
<i>qisas</i>	criminal punishments based on the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'
<i>qiyam al-lail</i>	night vigil
<i>qiyas</i>	reasoning by analogy
Ramadan	Muslim fasting month, ninth month of Islamic calendar
<i>salik</i>	seeker of Ultimate Truth
<i>shariah</i>	comprehensive system of Islamic law
<i>shirk</i>	idolatry
<i>shura</i>	consultation
<i>Sunnah</i>	the exemplary path of the Prophet Muhammad, as shown by his overall lifestyle and practices
<i>tafsir</i>	exegesis of the Quran
<i>tajdid</i>	renewal
<i>ta'lim</i>	imparting of knowledge
<i>taqlid</i>	rigid conformity with established principles
<i>taqwa</i>	piety, fear of Allah
<i>tarbiyyah</i>	education, guidance
<i>tariqah</i>	the Spiritual Path, sufi order or brotherhood
<i>tasawwuf</i>	sufism, mysticism, Islamic spiritualism
<i>tawaqquf</i>	not wholly rejecting, yet not necessarily accepting
<i>tawassul</i>	invocation of intermediaries, usually the <i>awliya'</i> , when making <i>do'a</i> to Allah.
<i>tawhid</i>	unity of God, body of knowledge dealing with theology

<i>tazkiyah al-nafs</i>	self-purification
<i>tarawih</i>	voluntary night prayers throughout Ramadan
<i>ulama</i>	Islamic religious scholars (singular: <i>alim</i> )
<i>ummah</i>	global Muslim community
<i>waqf</i>	endowments
<i>zanni</i>	uncertain, as opposed to <i>qat'i</i>

### Malay and specialist terms (Arabic equivalent in brackets):

<i>adat (adah)</i>	indigenous Malay customs and traditions
<i>agama</i>	religion (also <i>ugama</i> )
<i>ahli</i>	member of a society or organisation
<i>akal (aql)</i>	reason, intellect, mental faculty
<i>Al-Kitab</i>	the Holy Book: Indonesian language version of the Bible
<i>amalan utama</i>	paramount practices, main worship
<i>asoibs</i>	followers of Al-Mahdi as mentioned in <i>hadiths</i>
<i>aurad (awrad)</i>	prayer formulae, spiritual incantation
<i>Aurad Muhammadiyah</i>	<i>tariqah</i> practised by Darul Arqam members
<i>azan (adhan)</i>	call to daily prayers
<i>baju kurung</i>	loose Malay dress covering the whole body
<i>barakah (baraka)</i>	blessings, grace and approval of Allah (also <i>berkat</i> )
<i>Barisan Nasional</i>	National Front, Malaysia's ruling coalition
<i>bayan</i>	lecture on the necessity and nature of the <i>tabligh</i> work
<i>Bumiputera</i>	sons of the soil: indigenous peoples of Malaysia
caliph ( <i>khalifah</i> )	Islamic political leader, Prophet Muhammad's successor. 'Righteous Caliphs' refer to the four caliphs who successively ruled the <i>ummah</i> after the Prophet's death.
<i>ceramah</i>	religious talks
<i>dakwah (da'wah)</i>	propagation of Islam, Islamic missionary effort
<i>dakwah songsang</i>	upside-down <i>dakwah</i> , heterodox <i>dakwah</i>
<i>darurat</i>	emergency
<i>daulah (dawlah)</i>	the state
<i>daulat</i>	a Malay ruler's divinely-ordained right over subjects
<i>derhaka</i>	treason against a Malay ruler or the state
<i>Dewan</i>	section, wing or chamber of an organisation
<i>Dewan Negara</i>	upper house of Malaysian Parliament
<i>Dewan Rakyat</i>	lower house of Malaysian Parliament

<i>do'a (du'a')</i>	supplication addressed to Allah
<i>gasht</i>	visit by <i>tabligh</i> missionaries
<i>guru</i>	Malay religious teacher
<i>gurudwara</i>	Sikh temple
<i>hukum (hukm)</i>	laws
<i>ibadah asas</i>	basic worship
<i>ibadah cabang</i>	intermediate worship
<i>ibadah umum</i>	general worship
<i>Indonesia Raya</i>	political union between Indonesia and Malaysia
<i>jabatan</i>	department
<i>jamaah</i>	organisation, congregation, group (also <i>jamaat, jama'at</i> )
<i>jawi</i>	Arabic script for Malay language
<i>kafir-mengkafir</i>	trading of accusations of one another's infidelity
<i>kampong</i>	Malay village
<i>Kaum Muda</i>	Young Faction, pre-Independence modernist-reformists
<i>Kaum Tua</i>	Old Faction, pre-Independence traditionalists
<i>kenduri</i>	religious feast mostly associated with marriage ceremony
<i>kerah</i>	forced labour under a feudal Malay ruler
<i>keramat (karamah)</i>	saintly miracles
<i>khalwat</i>	seclusion: the state of being in unlawful proximity with a marriageable member of the opposite sex
<i>ma'ash</i>	remuneration according to household needs
<i>madrasah</i>	modern Islamic school
<i>majlis</i>	council
<i>Majlis Syuyukh</i>	Council of <i>Sheikhs</i> , Executive Council
<i>ma'rufat (ma'ruf)</i>	goodness (also <i>makruf</i> )
<i>Maulid (mawlid)</i>	celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday
<i>menyesatkan</i>	deviationist
<i>mini-telekung</i>	long Malay headscarf
<i>mubaligh</i>	preacher
<i>Mudir</i>	Director of <i>shukbah</i>
<i>munkarat (munkar)</i>	evil (also <i>mungkar</i> )
<i>mursyid (murshid)</i>	righteous guide in the Spiritual Path
<i>Mursyid al-'Am</i>	General Guide
<i>nasyeed</i>	Islamic song
<i>Orang Asli</i>	aboriginal peoples of Malaysia
<i>orang besar</i>	traditional Malay aristocratic chief
<i>Penghulu</i>	Malay village leader

<i>pondok</i>	boarding house for traditional Malay students of Islam
<i>pardah</i>	chador with face-veil
<i>Qismu Muslimah</i>	Women's Section
Quran ( <i>Al-Qur'an</i> )	Islamic holy book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad
<i>raja</i>	traditional Malay ruler-king
<i>Ratu Adil</i>	Just Prince: Indonesian version of Al-Mahdi
<i>redha (rida)</i>	wholehearted acceptance of Allah's will
<i>rezeki (rizq)</i>	God-granted material bounties, destined economic lot
<i>roh (ruh)</i>	the soul
<i>Rukunegara</i>	Pillars of Nationhood, Malaysia's national ideology
<i>rumi</i>	romanised script for Malay language
<i>sabar (sabr)</i>	patience
<i>salawat (darud)</i>	salutation of peace upon the Prophet Muhammad
<i>sayyid</i>	honorific title of a Prophet Muhammad's descendant
<i>sekolah</i>	school
<i>sesat</i>	deviant
<i>sharifah</i>	female equivalent of a <i>sayyid</i>
<i>sheikh</i>	a sufi master, a venerable Islamic figure
<i>shukbah (shu'bah)</i>	specialised department
<i>sufi</i>	a practitioner of <i>tasawwuf</i>
<i>sultan</i>	hereditary ruler of a Malay(sian) state
<i>sunnat (mandub)</i>	commendable according to the <i>shariah</i>
<i>surau</i>	Malay prayer house
<i>syaitan (shaitan)</i>	the devil, Satan
<i>syukur (shukr)</i>	thankfulness to Allah
<i>tabligh</i>	preaching
<i>tafakur (tafakkur)</i>	meditation, deep reflection
<i>tahalli</i>	sufi method of filling the heart with <i>mahmudah</i>
<i>tahlil</i>	religious chantings of 'there is no God but Allah'
<i>tajalli</i>	instantaneous peace of the heart deriving from unceasing concentration on Allah
<i>takhalli</i>	divesting the heart of <i>mazmumah</i>
<i>tauliah</i>	letter of authority allowing religious instruction in public
<i>tawakkal (tawakkul)</i>	full reliance on Allah
<i>thoifah</i>	<i>jamaah</i> , small but distinct revivalist group
<i>tudung labuh</i>	Malay chador without face-veil
<i>ukhwah (ukhuwwah)</i>	brotherhood
<i>usrah</i>	family, Islamic study circle

<i>ustaz</i>	Islamic religious teacher
<i>Wahhabi</i>	the term pertaining to followers or religious doctrines of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787)
<i>wajib (fard)</i>	obligatory according to the <i>shariah</i>
<i>wali (waliyy)</i>	Islamic saint (plural: <i>awliya'</i> )
<i>wawasan</i>	vision
<i>Yang diPertuan Agong</i>	federal king of Malaysia elected by its Council of Rulers
<i>Yang diPertua Negeri</i>	federally appointed governor of a Malaysian state
<i>yaqazah</i>	miraculous meeting, in state of consciousness and <i>zauk</i> , between two humans, one of whom may be deceased.
<i>zakat (zakah)</i>	obligatory alms-giving based on annual wealth
<i>zauk</i>	mystical ecstasy
<i>ziarah (ziyarah)</i>	informal visitation

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Countless terms have been employed by academics and journalists alike to characterise the evident growth of Islamic consciousness among Muslims worldwide, as manifested by the newly discovered urgency among them to conduct their lives in accordance with Islamic norms. Whether we call it 'Islamic resurgence', 'Islamic revival', 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'Islamic renewal', 'Islamic reawakening', 'political Islam', or simply 'Islamism'; the phenomenon that concerns us entails a significant degree of change engulfing the entire Muslim *ummah*.<sup>1</sup> This is a change not of the Islamic religion per se, but rather of how Muslims view, practise and implement the requirements of Islam as they perceive it.<sup>2</sup>

Islamic resurgence,<sup>3</sup> and similarly used terms, entail above all the reassertion of Islam as a doctrine and practice covering all aspects of contemporary life as stipulated by the *shariah*<sup>4</sup> (Mawdudi 1986, Choudhury 1990: 36-42). For resurgent Muslims or Islamists, it is imperative that their lives be governed by the *shariah*, a complete implementation of which can only take place within an 'Islamic state': a polity which arouses great divergence of opinion with regard to its nature, characteristic and operation. While certain fundamentals of such a state may not be points of contention, these seldom go far beyond generalities. Despite the claim of such states as Iran, the Sudan and Saudi Arabia to possess full Islamic credentials, the perfect textbook 'Islamic state' of Islamists remains elusive in reality, left as a

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<sup>1</sup>*Ummah* refers to the global Muslim community, and 'ummatic' in this thesis means 'pertaining to the *ummah*'. For an elaboration of the concept, see transcripts of an interview with Dr. Abdullah Naseef, Secretary-General of the Makkah-based Muslim World League, in Sardar and Davies (1989: 107-117).

<sup>2</sup>To say that Islamic resurgence implies changes in Islam itself would be an enormous affront to Muslims, who see their religion as having been completed by the final revelation to the Prophet Muhammad: "*This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*" (Quran V: 3).

<sup>3</sup>The term 'Islamic resurgence' is employed here, without semantically differentiating it with other terms implying a revival of some sort, to denote political action designed to establish Islam as the supreme creed of a polity (Dessouki 1982a: 4, cf. Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 2-3). Although the most common term used in the West to depict the phenomenon is 'Islamic fundamentalism', this term suffers from severe drawbacks, as has been pointed out by several scholars. See discussions in Momin (1987), Shepard (1987), Rajashekar (1989) and Esposito (1992: 7-8). Apart from 'Islamic resurgence', the most common terms employed in this thesis are 'political Islam' and 'Islamism', both of which are broadly used interchangeably with 'Islamic resurgence' and with each other, but for varying contextual purposes.

<sup>4</sup>*Shariah* is the comprehensive system of Islamic law and jurisprudence. For details, see Ghanem (1983).

hypothetical construction to be found only in the books of Islamic theoreticians.<sup>5</sup> Among Muslim circles, differences of opinion exist not only in defining what properly constitutes an 'Islamic state', but also in observing and interpreting the present state of the *ummah* as a community being globally affected by a wave of resurgence (cf. Sardar 1984, Sulani et. al. 1984, Bebir 1993).

While the voluminous literature on the subject of 'Islamic resurgence' serves as the background to this study (cf. section 1.4.1), the focus of the study is on the challenge presented by one movement, Darul Arqam, to the political establishment of one nation-state, Malaysia, since the movement's founding in 1968 until its demise in 1994. The choice of Malaysia as an object of research is heavily based upon the researcher's belief that a unique dynamic characterises the Malaysian versions of Islam and 'Islamic resurgence'. To start with, the researcher classifies Malaysia as being part of the 'Islamic periphery' in an effort to distinguish it from the 'Islamic core' of the Middle East (cf. sections 1.4.2, 1.4.4). The distinctiveness of the Islamic periphery is drawn out in terms of its willingness and ability to accommodate indigenous cultures and traditions without necessarily harming the fundamental message of Islam. In Malaysia, such a pragmatic approach to Islam has been historically witnessed in the pioneering missionaries' toleration of Malay customs and the anti-colonial Islamists' espousal of Malay nationalism. It was such perceived pliancy on the part of the non-Middle Eastern Muslims that may have conditioned past scholars' marginalisation of Islam's role in the periphery, and by implication, may have influenced their consignment of the periphery to a realm within which the prospect of Islamic resurgence arising from endogenous factors was non-existent. This study, therefore, departs from the prevalent framework of conceptualising the Muslim world, and as such, attempts to redress the bias that has been exhibited towards the Middle East 'core' countries in Western-based works on Islam (cf. section 1.4.3).

Most authors who have dwelled on the subject of Islamic resurgence or what has come to be fashionably known in Malaysia as the *dakwah*<sup>6</sup> phenomenon, have pinpointed the middle to late 1970s as the crucial period from which Islamic resurgence blossomed in Malaysia. This was manifested in a number of ways: growth in the number and membership of revivalist movements, chief among which were the

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<sup>5</sup>For examples of some of the proposed models of the Islamic state, see Islamic Council of Europe (1979), Maududi (1980), Al-Turabi (1983), Lukman Thaib (1990) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (n.d.).

<sup>6</sup>*Dakwah* comes from the Arabic term *da'wah*, meaning 'propagation'. Originally, *dakwah* referred to the proselytising activities of Muslims upon non-Muslims, but in the context of present-day Islamic resurgence, *dakwah* implies spreading the message of Islam as *din al-hayah* (The Way of Life) to born Muslims, in other words, to encourage Muslims to become better Muslims by preaching the universality of the Islamic faith; see Piscatori (1986: 127-129). For the peculiar Malaysian context, see Nagata (1984: xviii), Kessler (1980: 3-4) and F.M. Jamil (1988: 120-121).

Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM: *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*), Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh; increased donning especially by youngsters of clothes which conform to the Islamic rules of modesty and chastity, such as the veil for women and religious headgear for men; increased demand for Islamic literature in the Malay language; and increased attendance at Islamic conferences, gatherings and talks. Islamic resurgence gathered pace in Malaysia only after nearly twenty years of independence, despite the position of Islam being officially entrenched in the Federal Constitution.

In the above context, two aspects of the uniqueness of 'Islamic resurgence' as found in Malaysia tower above others: the multi-ethnic character of the population and the accommodative government response. These aspects bring to the fore a number of issues:

First, the 'Malaysian experiment' i.e. the effort to conduct the Malaysian state according to Islamic norms, assumes the utmost significance since it will determine the viability of Islamists' claim of Islam being compatible with a plural society - the main problem area of an Islamic polity identified by Western scholars of Islam. In particular, at stake is the future of the large non-Muslim minority in Malaysia. Will their present status as equal citizens be reduced to that of *dhimmis*<sup>7</sup> in an Islamic state of Malaysia? How do Islamists in Malaysia aspire to deal with the approximately nine million non-Muslim population were they to come to power?

Second, within the Malaysian setting, an overlapping of religious and racial issues is arguably inevitable in the polemic between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is so since according to the Federal Constitution, the ethnic identity of the indigenous community is given a religious colouring i.e. that a Malay be a Muslim. This has led a number of scholars to question the 'purity' of the present Islamic resurgence in Malaysia; asking whether the resurgence is a manifestation of Malay-Muslim ethnic insecurity more than anything else. It is argued, moreover, that Islam has acquired a newly found vigour in the lives of Malays in the wake of the May 1969 ethnic riots and the following 'indigenisation' of Malaysian public policy, both of which led to a renewed sense of identity and the emphasis on Islam as a criterion to distinguish between Malays and non-Malays.

Third, in contrast to the harsh suppression of Islamic movements perpetrated by Middle Eastern governments, the response of the Malaysian government to the Islamic resurgence has stressed accommodation rather than repression. This trend has become more evident since the Premiership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, and symbolised at the highest levels by the successful cooptation of prominent individuals

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<sup>7</sup>*Dhimmis* refer to the protected minorities under Islamic sovereignty. The extent and nature of *dhimmis*' rights have been widely discussed by Muslim scholars; see for example Faruqi (1980) and Al-Qaradawi (1985).

previously identified with the Islamic resurgence movement and ensuing Islamisation policies. This accommodative government response has had tremendous impact in shaping the non-violent character of the Islamic resurgence. The government's adept response to demands from Islamists has managed to neutralise their challenge and break up the apparent unity of the Islamic resurgence movement, yet the continuing existence of Islamic dissent shows that doubt still exists as to the true nature of government Islamisation policies. Are the policies a sincere attempt to uphold Islam or merely cosmetic changes to appease Islamists?

Operating within the Malaysian setting, the research further narrows down into an examination of one specific Islamic movement: Darul Arqam. On the one hand, this study is a direct outgrowth of the systematic, full-blown government repression on Darul Arqam during a tumultuous four-month period from June to October 1994. Judging from the scale and intensity of the measures undertaken to suppress the alleged threat posed by Darul Arqam to the Malaysian socio-political order, the repression was undoubtedly the most severe clampdown experienced by a particular non-governmental organisation (NGO) at the hands of the Malaysian government. The research attempts to investigate the nature, causes and impact of events preceding and during the clampdown, focusing particularly upon paradoxes of the episode. In many ways, as will be shown, the actions of the Malaysian authorities and the reaction of the Darul Arqam movement and other interested parties were tradition-breaking in the context of the politics of Islam in Malaysia. The episode casts a significant light upon the various tactics, methods and strategies pursued by different Islamic movements in their route to power. It shows how response from the establishment differs in accordance with the different operational norms of an Islamic movement. For Islamists in particular, the episode demonstrates the danger of underestimating the extent of resources at the government's disposal in combating the 'Islamic threat', and of overestimating their movement's own strength and resilience in facing the secular-nationalist state.

On the other hand, this study recognises that the unprecedented manner in which Darul Arqam was suppressed and eliminated could not have come about if its organisational and ideological character had not been unique. In this study, therefore, the challenge of Darul Arqam to the Malaysian state is presented as a dynamic phenomenon manifesting itself in various forms at different stages. In this context, the primary significance of the 'Darul Arqam episode' in 1994 lies in its being a culmination of a series of deteriorating relations between protagonists of two different visions for the Malaysian society. In seeking an explanation as to why the head-on confrontation between Darul Arqam and the Malaysian state came only in 1994 after several years of 'skirmishes' dating back to 1979, the reader is presented with an

examination of the development of the Darul Arqam movement since its inception in 1968. Of particular importance is the gradual concoction of a specific organisational and socio-political doctrine, concomitant with the execution of a highly successful economic enterprise. It is argued that it is the elegant combination between theory and practice, in implementing Islam in as comprehensive a manner as possible, which serves as the main distinction between Darul Arqam and other contemporary Islamic movements not only in Malaysia but also throughout the Muslim world. Fully realising that local media distortions have been rife in the reporting on Darul Arqam, and that Darul Arqam was denied the means of communicating to the public for the greater part of its conflict with the state, the researcher embarked on a scrutiny of internal Darul Arqam sources and a field survey of former Darul Arqam members in a particular state of Malaysia.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the 'Darul Arqam episode' is incomplete without a consideration of long-term structural processes which put the 1994 events within broader historical and ideological perspectives. Both historically and ideologically, Darul Arqam exemplifies the successful amalgamation between indigenous-traditionalist and doctrinaire-revivalist modes of Islam and Islamic resurgence (cf. chapter 2: 2.3, 2.4; chapter 3: 3.3, 3.4). The historical perspective is located within the context of Malaysia's Islamic structures being heavily influenced by sufism and its peoples' propensity towards accommodation with traditions which in the Middle East core would be widely regarded as non-Islamic. Hence, Darul Arqam's ardent espousal of sufism struck at the historical roots of Malaysian Islam. Its gradualist and non-violent approach gained adherents from all walks of Malay-Muslim society, but particularly appealed to first-generation urban dwellers who found difficulty in reconciling traditional Malay-Islamic values with the frantic pace of modern life. Not only did Darul Arqam give an Islamic dimension to their Malay-centric physical and intellectual ambience, as when it exploited Malay economic inferiority towards building an Islamic economic system, but it also supplied their new Islamic consciousness with a distinctively Malaysian orientation, as palpably manifested in its Malaysian-centred doctrine of messianic revival. Considering its consistent cultivation of mutual adaptability between doctrinal Islam and the Malay-Islamic identity, Darul Arqam, more than the other Islamic movements, epitomises the uniqueness of Malaysian-style Islamic resurgence.

## 1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

First and foremost, this thesis aims to provide an explanation and analysis of the origins, the causes, the nature, the paradoxes and the impact of the conflict between Darul Arqam, an independent Islamic movement, and the Malaysian state, from Darul Arqam's inception in 1968 to its demise in 1994. The conflict is presented as a specific case of a mutual antagonism that exists between religious 'fundamentalist' movements and the secular authorities of rapidly modernising societies, in the Muslim world particularly, and in developing countries in general (cf. Haynes 1993). The research is therefore of primary interest to those seeking an explanation for the widely documented emergence, character and impact of what has become fashionably known as, *inter alia*, 'Islamic resurgence', 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'Islamic revival' and 'political Islam': a relatively recent, yet extremely significant, phenomenon in the politics of developing countries.

The researcher recognises that it is academically unsound to lump together the wide range of experiences of Islamic resurgence taking place in a wide range of countries, each of which is conditioned by its own particular social, political, economic and cultural make-up. Therefore, it has to be stressed that this study focuses upon one specific Islamic movement: Darul Arqam, operating within the contemporary milieu of one specific country: Malaysia, which is categorised as being within the periphery of the *ummah*. The exploratory nature of the research means that comparisons, if made at all, do not attempt or claim to be exhaustive. Such comparisons, whether movement-based or country-based, will be made only insofar as they assist the researcher's objectives. These objectives may be situated within the context of four subject matters. These are, in the order presented in the thesis, and elaborated in sub-sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 respectively:

First, the dynamics that are taken to characterise the on-going relationship between core and peripheral areas of the *ummah*, and how far this affects the development of Islam in the periphery.

Second, the conceptual understanding of political Islam in Malaysia, both in historical and contemporary moulds.

Third, the case-study of Darul Arqam and its challenge to the Malaysian state.

Fourth, wider ramifications of Darul Arqam's aforesaid challenge to existing theories of Islamic resurgence and modernisation, and its impact on development and nation-building in Malaysia and the *ummah*.

### 1.2.1 CORE-PERIPHERY DYNAMICS

With respect to the first subject matter, this thesis seeks to unearth the origins of the prevailing conception of the *ummah* as being divided into a Middle East core and a non-Middle East periphery, and to reflect on the serious implications of misconceptions arising from the grossly unequal treatment meted out to investigations of the core and the periphery. The misconceptions unmistakably assume the form of a dormant periphery constantly reacting to cues from a dynamic core, where the main ummatic issues, structures and institutions are situated. Malaysia is featured here as an example of the hitherto misunderstood periphery.

### 1.2.2 POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

Within the second subject matter, this thesis explores the development of political Islam in Malaysia, with a view towards pin-pointing prevailing misconceptions which have rendered past studies of Malaysian Islam in need of urgent reinterpretation. Several themes are covered:

First, the wider implications of sufi influence on Malaysian Islam, beyond actually engendering it. While past scholars have mostly faulted sufism for its negative effects in watering down doctrinal Islam, this study attempts to explain the sufis' accommodative approach in terms of strategic considerations, and argues that the legacy of sufism has overall been positive in consequence.

Second, the direction of the anti-colonial struggle. This study dispenses with the prevailing view of Islamic reformists' supposedly effectual contribution to the cause of anti-colonial Malay nationalism. It tries to show that anti-colonial uprisings were for the most part neither nationalist nor reformist, but were the outcome of self-interested Malay leaders' attempts to retain their pre-colonial privileges. While reformism did make headlines in pre-independence debates on Islam, it had minimal impact at the level of movement-organisation and practical policy, not the least because it derived significant influence from Middle Eastern trends and thereby neglected the accommodative sufi-based heritage of the Malay-Muslim masses.

Third, the origins and character of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia, which are argued to be overwhelmingly endogenous, notwithstanding the presence of external catalysts. This questions the viability of the dominant core-periphery framework, which pre-supposes Malaysia's position as a reactive participant in ummatic changes.

Fourth, the dynamics governing the relationship between Islamic movements and the Malaysian state, which is argued to be more multi-faceted and accommodative

in its response management strategy. This greatly differs from the ruthless approach of its Middle Eastern counterparts, but adheres to the tolerant heritage of Malaysian Islam.

Fifth, the nature of Malaysian-style Islamic resurgence, which is investigated by unravelling the myriad aspects of the five major Islamic movements. Is it ethnic-centred, intellectually retrogressive and over-concerned with trivial and physical aspects, as alleged by some sceptics? Has it dispensed with or downgraded Malaysian Islam's sufi-based tolerant heritage, which is presumably essential, although not necessarily indispensable, within the contemporary framework of a multi-faith, multi-cultural Malaysia? While negative traits are found to exist in all the Islamic movements, Darul Arqam, belying its erstwhile negative reputation among analysts, is argued to be a worthwhile case-study in its espousal of an innovative and comprehensive Islamic agenda.

### **1.2.3 CASE-STUDY OF DARUL ARQAM**

Regarding the third subject matter: the case-study of Darul Arqam and its challenge to the Malaysian state, this thesis seeks cogent answers to the following issues and questions:

First, the crackdown on Darul Arqam suggested that by 1994, Darul Arqam was seen as the most potent challenge to have emerged from within the Islamic resurgence movement against the secular Malaysian state. What was the real motivation behind the government's crackdown on a movement well-known for its non-political orientation? For even if it had exhibited political inclinations, Darul Arqam's purported route to power was amorphous. Paradoxically, the clampdown was perpetrated by a government which had allegedly become more Islamic, as suggested by the growth of Islamic institutions, the increased use of the language of Islam in public pronouncements of government figures, and the successful cooptation of individuals strongly identified with the Islamic resurgence. Was the clampdown a sincere expression of protecting the Islamic faith from 'deviationism', or was it a reflection of the government's frustration at its failure to promote Islam as successfully as had been done by independent Islamic organisations? To what extent were the religious reasons given by the government inter-mingled with political and economic factors?

Second, what was so unique and dangerous about Darul Arqam that the Malaysian authorities had to resort to a repressive action which other Islamic movements had been hitherto spared? How real was the alleged threat posed by Darul

Arqam to the socio-political *status quo* in Malaysia? Did Darul Arqam deserve the clampdown or was the alleged threat exaggerated by a government intent upon realising its own political ambitions? Why was the clampdown on Darul Arqam not condemned by fellow Islamists from other *dakwah* movements? On the other hand, why was the repressive action of the Malaysian government questioned by the governments and media of countries where Darul Arqam had acquired bases and influence?

Third, what factors were responsible in shaping the extraordinary development of Darul Arqam from an originally humble, inward-looking study circle to a colossal movement boasting a self-sustaining and comprehensive socio-economic order run almost totally independent of Malaysia's liberal-capitalist system?

Fourth, in the light of the success of the Malaysian state in defeating Darul Arqam, considered to have been the most economically well-organised Islamic movement, what future holds for Islam and Islamic movements in Malaysia? Can an Islamic polity in Malaysia ever develop via a grassroots movement, or is it impossible to divorce the implementation of Islam from state influence? In this context, the 'Darul Arqam episode' in 1994 serves to warn the remaining Islamic movements of the extent to which they could go in erecting their own independent systems of life based not on the official national ideology, but on their own ideological worldview as defined by Islam. The researcher believes that there are general lessons to be learned by all interested parties, irrespective of national and political orientation, from the political challenge presented by Darul Arqam to the Malaysian state.

#### **1.2.4 WIDER SIGNIFICANCE OF DARUL ARQAM**

The central hypothesis of this study is formed by the fourth subject matter. This revolves around the ideological importance of a specific doctrine based on Islamic principles and values in shaping the Darul Arqam movement, and in presenting an alternative way of life to that upheld by the Malaysian state. The major success of Darul Arqam lies in its ability to translate its doctrinal interpretation of a non-violent form of Islam into practical and independent systems of life: a unique combination between theory and practice. It is in the wider ramifications of Darul Arqam's struggle that this thesis' theoretical contribution outranks its position as merely a case-study of an Islamic movement.

Theoretically, this study challenges the assumption of many Western authors that the resurgence of Islam is necessarily a reflection of other social, political and economic factors which pressure Muslims into reasserting their identity through

Islam. It urges a rethinking of the parameters that are assumed to govern the relationship between the Middle East core and the periphery; the example of Darul Arqam demonstrating the relevance and applicability of a periphery-based doctrine and organisation beyond the confines of its provenance. On a wider scale, the study challenges conventional modernisation theories which denigrate the role of religion as a significant factor in the economic and political development of developing countries. It argues that the Darul Arqam model of a self-sufficient Islamic society, built upon Islamic principles and a thriving economic enterprise, is evidence that Islam, even one strongly coloured by sufi-messianic aspects, does not necessarily act as an obstacle to the processes of modernisation and development, as has been contended by a number of Western scholars, notably those following the sociological analysis of religions developed by Max Weber (1930, 1965) (cf. chapter 7: 7.4).

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research involves both theoretical and empirical investigations. Using Darul Arqam as its model, it argues that properly implemented, Islam is capable of assuming the role of the primary motivating force in moulding society, based upon a conceptual framework which views Islam as a comprehensive social order with a distinctive mode of operating the political, economic and cultural lives of its citizens. It is argued that the Islamic resurgence, perceived through this holistic worldview rather than as a set of rituals focusing solely upon the advancement of the vertical man-God relationship, represents not a retrogressive movement but a progressive one seeking a social order properly balanced between material and spiritual dimensions of life. The primary mistake of Western theorists of modernisation, leading to their failure to assign to Islam any role in the economic and political development of Muslim countries, lies in their conception of Islam as a private religion unconcerned with worldly affairs. It is also this different mode of conceptualising Islam which explains the unfavourable image and treatment accorded to Islamic movements at the hands of secular-nationalist authorities of developing Muslim states. Such movements are labelled 'extremist' and 'fundamentalist' in an effort to portray them as non-rational, backward-looking and anti-progress, when the truth is that they only strive to uplift the status of Islam to the role that it should command in organising society. While it is true that the implementation of this noble endeavour by Islamic movements has left much to be desired, it is argued that the Darul Arqam model has managed to show the viability of an approach which stresses peace and systemic

independence, although it has yet to reach the stage of capturing the reins of government.

For an examination of the Darul Arqam model, both library-based and fieldwork approaches were used. In the former, a documentary analysis of Darul Arqam publications was undertaken. Of particular importance were publications which have been subjected to a blanket ban under the Printing and Presses Act. Such publications comprise books, magazines, pamphlets and internal documents as far as these could be unearthed. A content analysis of speeches, informal talks and public sermons by Darul Arqam leaders, many of which have been recorded in cassette or video-tape form, also formed a crucial part of this exercise. In addition to such primary research material, secondary information was acquired through books, articles, academic theses and newspaper and magazine reports written by both academics and journalists. Within such a varied source of materials, the positive, neutral and negative views on Darul Arqam were subjected to scrutiny.

In terms of fieldwork, the main part was a survey of former Darul Arqam members in the state of Penang in the northwestern part of Malaysia. The mainly attitudinal survey was conducted during a two-month period from the beginning of March 1996 to the end of April 1996. It was designed to investigate the following issues:

First, the significance of Darul Arqam in shaping the lives of members.

Second, past and present political vision and orientation of ex-Darul Arqam members.

Third, ex-Darul Arqam members' past and present attitudes towards fellow ex-members, co-Islamists, the established authorities, the media and the larger society.

Fourth, the extent to which ex-Darul Arqam members have coped with the post-repression era.

Fifth, whether ex-Darul Arqam members harbour any hopes for a future revival of their movement or its distinctive brand of political Islam.

The choice of Penang as the venue of the survey was dictated by the fact that the situation of Malay-Muslims in the state has been extremely precarious due to their minority status, their inferior socio-economic position *vis-à-vis* non-Malays and the irresistible intrusion into traditional Malay lifestyle of an alien materialistic culture brought about by Penang's rapid pace of mass industrialisation and urbanisation. If judged on the theory of Western scholars on the causes of Islamic resurgence, Penang, being metropolitan in character and highly susceptible to the penetration of foreign elements through tourism and international trade linkages, would be a perfect breeding ground for Islamic movements, which so often thrive on recruiting culturally

alienated individuals plunged into a severe identity crisis. Overwhelmed by non-Muslims numerically, politically and economically, Muslims in Penang are presumably extremely self-conscious of their identity, such that an interlocking of religious and ethnic factors in the dichotomisation of society is practically inevitable. Therefore, an examination into the social composition and attitudes of ex-Darul Arqam members would to an extent enable us to deduce any correlation that exists between participation in Islamic resurgence movements and indigenous Malay self-assertion under conditions of economic backwardness and cultural insecurity.

While the above survey is in the form of questionnaire, a number of respondents were selected for interview. The aim of the interview sessions were to clarify and add to what had been mentioned in the questionnaire. Interviewees consisted of a proper balance between former Darul Arqam leaders and ordinary members, between full-time and part-time members, and between males and females. The researcher also made a participant observation of the former Darul Arqam community in Penang and Kuala Lumpur by visiting and spending time at the several centres and settlements handled by them. The internal information derived would hopefully give solid conclusions in explaining the resilience and vitality of Darul Arqam as an independent Islamic movement. In view of the possible reluctance of these target groups to answer questions directly related to the Darul Arqam issue, which was still considered a taboo at the time of the fieldwork, it must be stressed that the interview sessions were not necessarily formal or introduced as one intended to survey opinions on Darul Arqam.

## **1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

### **1.4.1 EXPLANATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL PHENOMENON OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE**

Explaining the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence involves a delicate balancing between global and parochial factors. While it is difficult to deny the existence of common threads between different countries' experiences as a result of transnational structures and linkages, the internal dynamics acquired by the nation-state, for instance through the crystallisation of national symbols and identities under the post-Second World War international system, means that country-specific factors should not be disregarded in explaining socio-political phenomena whose impact reverberate nevertheless on a global scale. Bearing in mind such considerations and corresponding generalisations, this section tries to pick up common threads that have

been judged by observers and participants to have causally influenced the emergence and course of Islamic resurgence in its myriad forms and varieties. Specific explanations for the phenomenon in Malaysia are outlined in Chapter Three.

Since the late 1970s, the global wave of Islamic resurgence has been firmly entrenched as a major discussion area in both academic and propagandist circles of the West. While the purpose, nature and implication of their respective analyses may differ from one another, recent trends have shown them to be underlined by one apparently common theme, viz. the countervailing impact of Islamic resurgence upon the global hegemony of a New World Order broadly governed by liberal-capitalist socio-economic mores, political democracy and secular international law, under the aegis of a United Nations heavily influenced by the major superpowers (George 1994: 3-4). Since the collapse of the bipolar world order brought about by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the downfall of international communism, the Islamic world has arguably assumed the role of bogeyman among proponents of post-modern globalisation along liberal-capitalist lines (Ahmed 1993: 193-204, cf. Huntington 1993, Miller 1993, Davidson and Rees-Mogg 1994: chapter 7). Despite the efforts of scholars to debunk exaggerated conjectures of an impending or existing international Islamic conspiracy (cf. Ayoob 1981, Dessouki 1982, Esposito 1992), they have been more than matched by a persistent harping on the theme by the popular media, which thrives upon caricatures and stereotyped images of Muslims.<sup>8</sup> The pervasiveness of anti-Islamic prejudices, which liberal-capitalist protagonists among policy-makers and advisors have earnestly exploited to further their political and ideological agenda, have been reinforced by such emotive events as the Rushdie affair of 1989,<sup>9</sup> the Gulf

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<sup>8</sup>See for example the following reports: 'Islam and the West', *The Economist*, 22.12.90, 6.8.94; Charles Krauthammer, 'The New Crescent of Crisis: Global Intifada', *Washington Post*, 16.2.90; Christopher Dickey's 'Bride, Slave or Warrior' and 'Muslim Europe' in *Newsweek*, 12.9.94 and 29.5.95; Ahmed Rashid, 'March of the Militants', *Far Eastern Economic Review: FEER* 9.3.95; Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'The lesson of Algeria: Islam is indivisible', *The Independent*, 6.1.95; Patrick Bishop, 'Islam's shadow spreads', *Daily Telegraph*, 20.2.95; Rajeev Syal and Christopher Morgan, 'Muslims set to outnumber Anglicans', *The Sunday Times*, 11.5.97, and the booklet edited by Derek Jones, *The Fundamental Question* (London 1994), to accompany a television programme of the same title, first shown over Channel 4 in June 1994. Even the relatively innocuous *Reader's Digest* is fond of publishing articles which paint distorted images and fan fears of Islam, as neatly reviewed by the article, '*Reader's Digest's* Holy War against Islam', *Impact International*, February 1995. For examples, see Nathan Adams, 'Iran's War on the West', *Reader's Digest*, January 1994; Ann Louise Bardach, 'Tearing Off the Veil', *ibid.*, July 1994; Fergus Bordewich, 'A Holy War Heads Our Way', *ibid.*, January 1995, and Sai'd Al-Ashmawy, 'The Hi-jacking of Islam', *ibid.*, December 1995. For an Islamic overview of the Western media onslaught against Islam, see Tamimi (1996).

<sup>9</sup>Referring to the worldwide controversy surrounding the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which was regarded by many Muslims as blasphemous. The affair was particularly inflamed by the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini's imposition of the death penalty on Rushdie, who has since been in hiding. For Western and Muslim perspectives on the affair, see respectively, Ruthven (1991) and Ahsan and Kidwai (1991).

War of 1990-91<sup>10</sup> and the Muslim terrorists' bombing of New York's World Trade Centre in 1993 (cf. Husain 1995: 141-142, 245-249, 281-282).

As the argument goes, with transnational economic structures and new communications technology spelling the practical end of the nation-state (Ohmae 1996), the centripetal character of Islam, so long as it is understood and practised in a comprehensive sense, offers for Muslims the real way out of the foreign-imposed quagmire of a liberal-capitalist 'global village' (cf. George 1993, 1994; Pasha and Samatar 1996). Proclamations of Western domination have ignited the Third World masses' sense of distinctiveness from a Western world increasingly identified with neo-imperialist policies, but while such awakenings have invariably taken up ethno-cultural concerns, the Islamic world has been characterised by a peculiar reaffirmation of religious belief and practice as well (cf. Roberts 1985: 387ff, Hunter 1988: 282-283, Huntington 1993: 26-29). A rediscovery of history, outlining the perennial conflict between the Western and Islamic worlds, adds fuel to the emergent antagonism (cf. Armstrong 1988, Huntington 1993: 30-31, Talbi 1995).

Under the Western-dominated post-1945 international order, Islamic resurgence has been a prominent theme in international affairs during the past thirty years or so. In studies of Islamism, the specification of a time-period of investigation is important since resurgence has been a common and recurring theme throughout Islamic history. In fact, the present Islamic resurgence should present no surprise to the pious Muslim whose belief is as stated in a Prophetic *hadith*<sup>11</sup> narrated by Abu Hurairah and found in Abu Dawud's collection: "*Allah will raise, at the head of each century, such people for this Ummah as will revive its Religion for it*" (quoted in Maududi 1981: 33-34, Voll 1983: 33).

It is within the Islamic belief therefore for *mujaddids* (revivalists) to appear and offer renewalist interpretations of the sources of the *shariah*, primarily the Quran and the *Sunnah*,<sup>12</sup> in the light of existing conditions and novel problems affecting the *ummah*. What has often been termed 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the West is in actual

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<sup>10</sup>Referring to the successful Western-led military incursions, codenamed Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, to recover Kuwait as a sovereign territory, after she had been invaded and annexed by Iraq as her 'nineteenth province' in August 1990. For a discussion of the impact of the Gulf War on Islamic resurgence, see Faksh (1994).

<sup>11</sup>A *hadith* refers to a saying or action of the Prophet Muhammad as reported by any of his Companions or wives, and passed through successive Muslim generations until ultimately compiled by specialist scholars called *muhaddithin*. In orthodox Sunni Islam, the most authoritative books of *hadith* are the compilations of Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875), and followed by those of Abu Dawud (d. 888), Tirmidhi (d. 888), Nasa'i (d. 913) and Ibn Majah (d. 886). The *Sunnah*, a more wide-ranging term literally meaning 'the Prophet's trodden path', is made up of the *hadith*, the Prophet's practice emulated by his Companions and the Prophet's approval of the Companions' deeds. For details, see Ghanem (1983: 19-22, 33-37).

<sup>12</sup>On *Sunnah*, see above, fn. 11. Orthodox Sunni Islam perceives the *shariah* as having four main sources, viz. the Quran, the *Sunnah*, *ijma'* (juristic consensus) and *qiyas* (analogical reasoning). See Ghanem (1983: 32).

fact a movement of religious 'renewal' and 'reform', as understood by the terms *tajdid* and *islah* respectively (Voll 1986: 169, Owen 1992: 168). While 'fundamentalism' implies a reactionary attempt to recreate a 'golden age' believed to have existed in the past (Burrell 1989a: 5, Lawrence 1989), *tajdid* and *islah* imply moving forward and applying broad principles of the religion to accommodate contemporary changes. A consistent attempt at *tajdid* and *islah* dispels the myth of Islam being a traditional religion at odds with modernisation and resistant to change.<sup>13</sup> The arrival of centennial *mujaddids* gives the idea of the history of Islam being typified by a pattern of alternate decline and revival of the *ummah*. Indeed, in the literature on Islamic revival, such glorious names in Islamic history as Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1263), Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi (d. 1763), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tijani (d. 1815), Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi (d. 1859), Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahdi (d. 1885), Jamal al-din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Hassan al-Banna (d. 1949) come to light (cf. Maududi 1981, Mortimer 1982: chapters 3-4).

In other words, according to Islamists, the present Islamic resurgence has been pre-ordained, bearing in mind that the year 1979 marked the beginning of the fifteenth century of the Islamic calendar (cf. Dessouki 1982: v, 1982a: 3). The preceding state of the *ummah* is viewed as one reaching its nadir, being engulfed by such widespread malaise as economic poverty and inequality, political corruption and dictatorship, spiritual crisis, moral decline and intellectual stagnation (cf. Amin 1989, Abdul Mujib 1994). The position of Islam, which in better times served as the primary guiding force of Muslim rulers, has sunk to such a low level that it has been relegated by post-colonial national leaders to a ceremonial status of 'official religion' of newly independent nation-states, signifying a delinking of Islam from the political realm, and its use merely as an instrument of legitimation.<sup>14</sup> At the extreme end, the disestablishment of Islam took place in Turkey under policies introduced by the arch-secularist, Kemal Ataturk (d. 1938) (Mortimer 1982: 134-158). So obvious was the neglect of Islam in the socio-political aspects of Muslim nation-states that even Muslim academics have spoken of the 'bypassing' and 'decline' of Islam with respect to its institutional and socio-political role (Sharabi 1965: 26-27, cf. Pipes 1980: 9).

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<sup>13</sup>For further details on the twin concepts of *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform), see Voll (1983) and Merad (1978).

<sup>14</sup>For example, state constitutions of Pakistan (article 1), Syria (article 3), Malaysia (article 3) and Jordan (article 2) all acknowledge in one way or another the position of Islam as the state religion; yet, in none of these countries was the *shariah* made the basis of legislative, executive or judicial decisions. In the Islamist literature, such states, being overwhelmingly founded upon the principles of nationalism, are characterised as 'Muslim' rather than 'Islamic' or 'ummatic' (cf. Ahmed n.d.: 35-42). For a historical discussion of the decline of the religious institution as the state's ideological watchdog in the Muslim world, see Watt (1988: chapter 2).

In seeking for causal explanations for the Islamic resurgence, we should distinguish between long-term processes and specific events which act as catalysts. Underlying structural deficiencies of and changes to the *ummah* are a result of long-term processes to which the Islamic resurgence represents just one type of response. Specific events are often manifestations of long-term underlying processes, so that as far as the role of events as causal explanations for the current Islamic resurgence is concerned, it can only be secondary to the long-term structural changes. Nevertheless, the catalytic effect of tumultuous events cannot be denied; it is these events which often make sensational headlines in the international media to the detriment of academic objectivity (cf. Hussain 1990: chapter 7, Ahmed 1993: 195-200). But still, the trigger effect of specific events could only have become so great by virtue of an evolving structural process.

Within such a perspective, the present Islamic resurgence can be seen first and foremost as a Muslim reaction against Western imperialism in various forms (Piscatori 1986: 35-36, Bannerman 1988: 166-167, Burrell 1989a 8, Esposito 1992: 67-69, Haynes 1993: 71). The colonial legacy has left deep scars in the relationship between the Western and Muslim worlds; a mutual antagonism that has endured since the Crusades (cf. Armstrong 1988). Despite the formal end to colonialism and the inauguration of the nation-state system, the Muslim world has retained dependence upon a technologically, economically and militarily superior West. Engulfed by an inferiority complex unheard of during the epoch when the world order was constructed under the auspices of Islamic hegemony, Muslim nation-states now scrambled in a humiliating manner for alliances with one of the two opposing sides of the Cold War in the bipolar international order. However, joining such alliances was to commit oneself to unequal power-relationships in which the direction of policy-making was tilted to the advantage of non-Muslim superpowers. In the economic sphere, neo-imperialist tendencies were evident in the operation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, both of whom trapped Muslim governments into a cycle of never-ending debt payments and whose structural adjustment programmes hit hard on the average citizen of Muslim countries.

Continued subservience to the hegemony of Western powers was anathema to the Muslim masses for reasons of dignity as well as practical difficulties effected on their daily lives. Condemnation of the West and of Westernised elite rulers of post-colonial Muslim states has consequently been a favourite theme in the current Islamic resurgence (cf. Jameelah 1965: chapters I, VII; Ali Nadwi 1977: chapter 5). The chaotic state of the *ummah* has been blamed upon 'Westoxification'; by imitating the West, not only have Muslims failed to achieve the desired economic benefits, but they have also been culturally disfigured. The Islamic resurgence thus represents a revolt

of the Muslim masses against their continued subordination at the hands of Western neo-imperialists and their proxies: Westernised elite rulers whose attitudes were not dissimilar to that of their colonial masters (Jansen 1979: 123-126, 167-169, Arif 1988: 7-8, Ayubi 1991: 217-218, Esposito 1991: 151-152; 1992: 124-125). The resurgence represents an attempt to assert full rather than nominal independence, and is also a revolt against the international order which is seen to have failed Muslims on a global scale (Ayooob 1981a: 288, Watt 1988: 102-103, cf. Maududi 1979, George 1993).

Yet, it might still be disputed whether the anti-Western agenda of the Islamic resurgence would have become so prominent had the pro-Western policies of post-independence Muslim rulers been able to produce the desired material rewards. Condemnation of the West has become extremely conspicuous in the Islamic resurgence precisely because policies associated with the West had failed dismally, at the same time that Western peoples were experiencing the pinnacle of material civilisation (cf. Ahmad 1979: chapter 2, Roberts 1985). The 'demonstration effect' of the vivid disparity in wealth, despite Muslim states following the same path towards modernisation and development, has arguably struck the chords of the Muslim masses. Was there a Western-masterminded conspiracy to retain Muslim economic backwardness, or were the development policies adopted by the Muslim rulers unsuitable or being distorted at the level of implementation?

Confronted with pressing economic hardship and subservience, Muslims allegedly turned towards Islam, with its paramount agenda for social justice (Nait-Belkacem 1978, Sardar and Davies 1989: 49-59, Burrell 1989a: 9), to release frustrations at the unfulfilled expectations and promises of nation-building strategies of post-colonial Muslim states. In this sense, the Islamic resurgence represents above all a symptom of a development crisis (Piscatori 1986: 27-29, Bannerman 1988: 168, Husain 1990: 53-55, Ayubi 1991: 175-177, Esposito 1991: 272-273). As evidence that the Islamic resurgence owes its origins primarily to the failure to overcome problems associated with uneven and skewed development, it has been shown that the social composition of Islamists is invariably made up of the young, the 'new middle class' of professionals, technocrats and students of non-religious subjects, and the urban dispossessed (Ibrahim 1980: 438-440, Ayubi 1991: 162-164). All such groups have their own reasons to bear a grudge against the state for its failure to deliver economic dividends in the wake of the growth of urbanisation and education.

Strongly related to the above is the role of the boom in oil prices in the 1970s (Pipes 1980: 17-41, Pipes 1982). Not only has the oil boom further distorted the already skewed pattern of socio-economic and political development of Muslim states (Bromley 1994: 173-174), but it has also heightened the Muslims' sense of self-confidence. The oil bonanza has somehow been treated as a bounty from God: a sign

of God's mercy to help Muslims in their battle against the 'infidel' West. The OPEC oil price crises demonstrated that Muslims had gained the upper hand, if only temporarily, against the West in economic terms. Besides reconfirming the eternal truth of the Islamic message and aggravating social and economic dislocations, the oil wealth has also enabled Muslim states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Libya to channel their abundant resources towards financially assisting the cause of Islamic resurgence throughout the *ummah*. The existence of the largest oil reserves in Muslim lands has ensured that the Muslim world acquired unprecedented geo-political significance, such that any outburst of Islamic activism would gain instant publicity in the West, which has a vested interest in retaining governments that would ensure an uninterrupted flow of oil supplies to the developed world. The advantage of media exposure has also drawn the Western audience to the plight of Islamists being suppressed and denied their human rights by secular-nationalist Muslim governments. While oil-generated wealth is in significant ways a boon to the cause of Islamic resurgence, it is double-edged. The wealth, rather than being distributed across the population, accrues to the state, which so often uses its additional resources to fund its coercive apparatus to the detriment of Islamists themselves.

In a wider perspective, the Islamic resurgence may be viewed as a manifestation of Muslim reaction against a universal crisis of modernity (Qutb 1975, Voll 1986: 170-171, Watt 1988). To Western social scientists, the capability of a doctrine born and perfected in seventh century Arabia to mobilise masses is to say the least baffling; happening at a time when the secularisation of Muslim society has been assumed to be irreversible. This proved to be a gross miscalculation; it was assumed that post-colonial Muslim's government's path towards modernisation had a pervasive effect upon Muslim society, and that modernisation would inevitably be accompanied by secularism and the decline of religion (Rubin 1990: 12, Haynes 1993: 6-7). Contrary to the popular label of anti-modern 'fundamentalists' thrown against Islamists, their response to post-colonial modernisation has been pragmatic rather than reactionary: one of eclecticism rather than outright rejection. Islamists are at ease with the latest sophisticated technology and are not dismissive of Western science; rather, they have utilised the products of modernisation to bolster their cause. For example, the skilful use of the latest information technology has proved instrumental as a means of speedily propagating the Islamic message (Burrell 1989a: 7, Esposito 1991: 271, Piscatori 1986: 30). The global communications revolution has undoubtedly assisted the cause of Islamic resurgence, although it has also intensified hostility against Islamists through sensational media reporting.

What Islamists oppose is not Western-inspired modernisation per se, but rather the accompanying social ills such as break-up of family life, individualistic and

materialistic attitudes to life, widespread divorce, sexual freedom, crime and immorality in general (Bannerman 1988: 27). In the basic search for identity which follows, Islam's strong emphasis on communal life and social responsibility is particularly appealing (Irving 1975, Piscatori 1986: 30-31, Bannerman 1988: 169). Thus the first step in any movement of Islamic resurgence almost always involves a return to the mosque for congregational prayers and the formation of study circles which may eventually function as politically-oriented clandestine cells (Maududi 1978a: 25-32, Siddiqui 1975: 209-210). To the basic question of "*who am I?*", Islamists emphasise their Islamic character over ethnicity, nationality, colour or class (Maududi 1978: 6-7, cf. Al-Ahsan 1992: chapter 3). For individuals disillusioned with modern society, spiritual and communal contentment offered by religions are naturally appealing, but what distinguishes Islamists from born-again adherents of other religions is the Islamists' invariable inclination to assert their religious beliefs in a politically-oriented direction. The Islamic resurgence we witness today is not a movement of inward-looking mystics whose goals are geared towards achieving the highest stage of the vertical man-God relationship; but is rather an endeavour to re-establish God's rule on earth by a reassertion of Islam as a *din al-hayah* (way of life) which necessarily involves perfecting the horizontal man-man relationship via an Islamic social order.

In Islam's glorious days, temporal accomplishments had been taken as an indication of spiritual truth (Burrell 1989a: 12). Now, the persistent backwardness of the *ummah* has been interpreted as a sign of God's wrath at the secular and inept policies pursued by post-colonial nationalist governments. Muslims have been left far behind in terms of material development not because of their adherence to an inherently anti-progressive religion, as alleged by some orientalist (cf. Jansen 1979: 75-86, Hussain 1990: 30-32); but rather because they have strayed away from Islam. A vital component of the doctrine of Islamism has consequently been the cleansing of the religion from innovations associated with folk beliefs, pre-Islamic practices and the rise of degenerate sufism.<sup>15</sup> Islamic resurgence is a movement against external

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<sup>15</sup>Many analysts acknowledge the vital role of *tasawwuf* or sufism: the branch of the Islamic doctrine associated with spirituality and mysticism, in the rapid spread of the faith outside the Arab Peninsula (cf. Mortimer 1982: 53-55, Hiro 1988: 31-36). Sufism's appeal to the masses lay in its ability to accommodate indigenous cultures into its practices and its egalitarian tendencies, as opposed to the highly scholastic and rigid approach adopted by the formal *ulama* (cf. fn. 16 and 19 below). Nevertheless, as the sense of decline began to besiege the *ummah*, Islamists increasingly voiced their concern at the part that the excesses and degeneration of sufism had to play in the perceived decay (cf. Piscatori 1986: 23, where he quotes the jurist Javed Iqbal as mentioning 'decadent Sufism' as one of the causes of Muslim decline, and Maududi 1981: 137-139). Sufis, as the practitioners of sufism are known, have been accused of adopting popular superstitions, beliefs and philosophies alien to Islamic theology; of selfishly immersing themselves in their own spiritual world and engaging themselves in pointless metaphysical debates at the very same time when the surrounding Muslim society, under the onslaught

challenges as well as internal decay, against Western hegemony and tyranny as well as Muslim complicity and docility, against Western infidelity as well as Muslim idolatry, against Western hedonism as well as Muslims' excessive spiritualism.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the desolate state of the *ummah* has partly to be blamed on Muslims themselves for deserting Islam. For Islamists, the solution to the malaise befalling the *ummah* lies in an unequivocal return to Islam not merely as a theological belief, but also as a complete way of life, encompassing its own political, economic, social and cultural systems.

Long-term structural changes aside, the establishment of Islamic resurgence on a worldwide scale was effected as well by the catalytic effect of dramatic events with ummatic significance. The Israeli defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 Six Day War, referred to in popular Arab literature as 'the catastrophe', was a turning point in convincing Muslims of the fallacy of secular nationalism as potently embodied by Nasserism in Egypt. The centrality of the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war lies in its discrediting 'profane' doctrines and its raising issues of identity as to the role of religion in private and public life. Although the 1967 defeat was essentially an Arab one, its impact reverberated around the Muslim world, due especially to the occupation by Israeli forces of Jerusalem, where the Al-Aqsa mosque: the third holiest place in Islam, was, and still is, situated (cf. fn. 23). The humiliating outcome of the war, in particular the unprecedented swift manner in which the combined Muslim army was defeated and the consequent loss of territory, invited a prevailing climate of self-assessment (Piscatori 1986: 26-27). In their search for causes of the defeat, Muslims were quick to conclude that God had betrayed them for deserting their religion, and that the Jewish victory could be explained by their strict adherence to Judaism.<sup>17</sup> Islam emerged as the prime contender to fill in the ideological vacuum which followed.<sup>18</sup>

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of colonialism, was becoming ever more secularised and lax in Islamic practice (Mortimer 1982: 58, Amin 1989: 225-226).

<sup>16</sup>By 'excessive spiritualism' is meant an extreme inclination towards the brand of sufism which expounds asceticism and withdrawal from society, as opposed to the progressive brand of sufism which seeks an inner as well as outer reform of society (Mortimer 1982: 70-79). Islamists reject the Muslim equivalent of the Christian 'hermit'. Professor S.Q. Fatimi, while attributing the Islamisation of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago mainly to the tireless missionary efforts of the sufis, explains: "*Asceticism, being foreign to the spirit to Islam, was never fully accepted by Sufism, though for historical reasons it was encouraged to some extent in the initial stage of its development as a reaction against the newly acquired luxurious living of the Khalifs and their courts, and has left some deep traces on Sufi teachings as a whole*" (Fatimi 1963: 78).

<sup>17</sup>In fact, this was not necessarily true, for perhaps there were as many secular Jews as there were religious Jews in Israel, if not more (Deshen 1982: 85-118). Moreover, explaining the Israeli victory by resorting to religiosity by itself denies Islam's exclusive claim to divine truth.

<sup>18</sup>In Egypt, where the impact of the 1967 humiliation had been most greatly felt, the reappearance of Islam into public limelight was given a new impetus in the early 1970s by President Sadat's appeal to Islamic slogans and symbols, demonstrated most spectacularly by the use of the codename 'Badr', resembling the Prophet Muhammad's first victorious war against the Makkan idolators, in the relatively

The event which really secured for Islamic resurgence a permanent place at the forefront of international politics and public concern was the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, and the ensuing installation of an *ulama*-led<sup>19</sup> government. To Western observers, most of whom had underestimated the extent and depth of Muslims' commitment to the cause of Islamic resurgence, the success of the Iranian revolution was a sign that the Islamic resurgence was no mere epiphenomenon: it was here to stay, and would seek to expand until similar 'revolutions' are effected throughout the Muslim world. The Iranian revolution was perceived as a sign of bigger things to come, so that the West had better become mentally and physically prepared for a possible Islam-Western confrontation on a global scale (Esposito 1992: 175-184). To Islamists, the revolution was the fulfilment of what had hitherto been a dream: the deposition of a tyrannical ruler and its replacement by the *ulama*, the consignment of secular nationalism to the graveyard and its replacement by a socio-political order based on Islamic principles. The success of the Iranian revolution proved above all that oppressed Muslims determined to uphold the sanctity of Islam could succeed in their fight against injustice; the Iranians, after all, had to fight a monarch backed by an awesome security and military apparatus, oil wealth and Western intelligence agencies (Burrell 1989a: 27-28, Haynes 1993: 71-72). Nobody could have foreseen the ignominious downfall of the Shah of Iran until the very late stages of the revolution. In the academic field, the revolution sparked off a widespread interest in Islamic resurgence. A number of works admit they owe their origins to the Iranian revolution and its aftermath (cf. Ayooob 1981a: 1).

However, contrary to the popular media image of a monolithic 'green peril' intent upon destroying Western civilisation via a global revolution masterminded in Teheran or Khartoum (cf. Miller 1993), movements which seek to establish Islamic states are extremely diverse in their origins and methods employed to achieve their aims. Although Pan-Islamist aspirations have not necessarily been discarded by present-day Islamists, most have admitted the necessity of operating within the boundaries of their respective nation-states as defined by the post-Second World War international order. Hence, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt today does not aim

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successful 1973 war against Israel. Muslim confidence was boosted further by the 1973 Arab oil embargo which caused severe economic dislocations and anxieties in the Western world. Sadly, for Sadat, his toying with resurgent Islam proved ultimately to be his undoing. When he reversed his policy of accommodation towards Islamists to one of repression, he was assassinated by the more militant elements in 1981. See Armstrong (1988: chapter 9) and Hiro (1988: 69-81).

<sup>19</sup>The *ulama* are Islamic scholars who, by virtue of their religious education and knowledge, are entrusted with the responsibility of managing religious institutions and issuing *fatawa* (legal rulings) on behalf of the Muslim community. *Ulama* has inappropriately been translated by some Western observers as 'clergymen'. There is no Islamic equivalent of priests, although there is a significant difference between the Sunni and Shia *ulama*, in that the highest-regarding ones of the latter do possess claims to act as an intermediary between God and the masses while the Sunni *ulama* are mere interpreters of religion without any other special claim (cf. Khuri 1987).

beyond Islamising the Egyptian state, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS: *Front Islamique du Salut*) aims no further than taking the reins of government in Algeria, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS: *Parti Islam SeMalaysia*) works to accomplish a Malaysian state based on Islamic principles, and so on. This prevailing environment stems from the recognition that the *ummah* has been for far too long divided within an international order conditioned by nation-states; such that the best way to work for a global non-differentiated Islamic *ummah* would be through the breaking down of artificial barriers separating today's Muslim nation-states, once Islamic governments have been installed in these countries (Siddiqui 1986). But the responsibility for effecting the transformation from secular-nationalist to Islamic governments lies wholly with Islamic movements of the particular countries. Despite the rhetoric of revolutionary Iran on 'exporting the revolution', evidence suggests that there exists no Islamic equivalent of the Comintern (Ayooob 1981a: 1-6, Hadar 1993, Richards and Whitaker 1994).

The appropriateness of country-specific analyses in any study of Islamic resurgence is underlined by differing prevailing conditions of affected countries, where distinct sets of causal and catalytic explanations operate. For example, in many Middle Eastern states, brutal repression of Islamists has only added fuel to the crest of Islamic resurgence. Outright suppression only pushes Islamists underground and drives them towards militancy. But in Malaysia, where policies towards Islamists have stressed accommodation and cooptation rather than overt coercion, we see Islamic resurgence blossoming in a non-militant form (cf. Abdul Hamid 1994: chapter 2). In Syria, where the ruling government is disproportionately composed of members of the Alawite minority sect, Islamic resurgence has taken up a largely sectarian character (Hinnebusch 1982: 138-150). In countries where Muslims form immigrant communities with minimal ethnic variation, for instance France with her North African community and Britain with her South Asian community, Islamic resurgence strongly undertakes communal undertones (cf. Darsh 1980: chapters 3-4, Dickey 1995). This also applies to countries where the influx of non-Muslim migrant communities has left the Muslim community with only a slender majority in terms of population, for instance Malaysia (cf. Nagata 1984, Chandra Muzaffar 1987). In countries where Islamic resurgence is identified with a Muslim minority fighting for autonomy from a non-Muslim government, for example among the Moros in the Philippines, the Kashmiris in India, the Malays in Southern Thailand and the Palestinians; the prospects of achieving national independence may figure as prominently as Islamic motives in moulding the Islamic struggle (cf. May 1992).

In short, we cannot discount the possibility of other social cleavages: ethnic, class, regional, etc., overlapping with the religious factor in accounting for the Islamic

resurgence in different countries. Nonetheless, for Islamists, it would be extremely offensive to attribute their 'discovery' of the Islamic message to other causes which suggest 'escapist' explanations and the misuse of Islam as a political tool. In any case, it is practically impossible to quantify to what extent one's rediscovery of Islam has been due to one's sincere effort at intellectual endeavour and 'soul-searching', and to what extent it has been initiated by other non-religious, primarily socio-economic, factors. Such an exercise at quantification, if at all attempted, shows the researcher's lack of understanding of the Muslim worldview, which sees religion not as a separate entity from other aspects of life: social, economic, political, moral and cultural. For Islamists, all aspects of life are to be governed by Islam, in accordance with the definite boundaries specified by the *shariah*. To them, Islam is *din al-hayah*: a way of life which stipulates a unique system for spiritual, intellectual and material development. Misunderstanding of the Muslim world often stems from scholars' attempt to define, categorise, interpret and stereotype Muslims from a secular worldview (Hussain 1990: chapter 6). For many Muslims, the transcendental appeal of the Islamic message and the vitality of Islam, as shown by its ability to rise in the face of what has seemed to be a perpetual decline, are more than satisfactory explanations for their turn towards Islam (Piscatori 1986: 37, Arif 1988: 8-10).

Finally, the importance of recognising the variety of Muslim experiences in different nation-states is highlighted by the anomaly brought about by the tendency of contemporary writers to emulate the orientalist conception of the *umma* as being composed essentially of an Arab core and a non-Arab periphery. Within such a framework, one may seem to speak of a 'global' or 'ummatic' resurgence when one is overwhelmingly referring to Middle Eastern structures, peoples and events as proactive motors of the phenomenon. The Islamic periphery, by contrast, is treated as a reactive participant in any ummatic development. The flow of cause and effect will necessarily be from the Middle Eastern core to the periphery, since socio-political changes in the periphery are viewed as dependent on Middle Eastern forces. These issues are further explored in sections 1.4.2 and 1.4.3.

#### **1.4.2 THE CORE-PERIPHERY DIVISION OF THE *UMMAH*: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Usage of the concepts 'core' and 'periphery' with regard to relationships within the Muslim world may appear contentious for two reasons. Firstly, this particular practice of distinguishing between a 'core' and a 'periphery' departs significantly from the paradigm of international political economy as used by its theorists. For them,

structural division of nation-states into a 'core', a 'semi-periphery' and a 'periphery' is relevant only insofar as it refers to an international division of labour in the global capitalist economy. Within this relationship of exchange, on which the world economy was said to have been stabilised, the periphery was to supply primary products, viz. raw materials for industrial production and foodstuffs, to the core, which would then manufacture goods for export to the periphery and among countries of the core. Within such a trading system, the core, augmented by the political colonisation of the periphery, ventured into a process of industrialisation, simultaneously denying indigenous capital accumulation on the part of the periphery. The periphery, as a general rule, is conditioned by dependent development, relying upon circumstances created for and by the core (Dicken 1992: 11-12).<sup>20</sup>

Accordingly, what distinguishes the periphery from the core is primarily economic peripherality, as manifested in the former's separate and subordinate position to the latter, and to a lesser extent, the accompanying political, social and cultural peripherality (Clapham 1992: 3-4). Within this paradigm, nation-states of the Muslim world overwhelmingly fall into the category of the periphery (Mehmet 1990: 36). Their peripheral character has persisted into the post-colonial era, for political independence was not accompanied by economic independence. Although Middle East oil-rich states have been amongst those with the highest per capita incomes in the world, this has been achieved by a consolidation of their position as *rentier* states, which depend for subsistence upon a continuous generation of external unearned income rather than by an expansion of the productive base of the national economy (Beblawi 1990). Few Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Turkey have verged on the status of newly-industrialising countries (NICs) (Mehmet 1990), but their rapid pace of industrialisation and economic growth have not been achieved by eschewing dependent development. Beside being beset with new internal problems of unsustainable and inequitable growth, they have been tied to the core in novel ways, especially through external debts (Dale 1984: 189, Dicken 1992: 449-454). Considering the relatively minimal economic interaction that takes place among Muslim nation-states (Piscatori 1987: 232-234; von der Mehden 1993: 35-37), one may validly question the validity of the concepts 'core' and 'periphery' as applied to the Muslim world.

The second objection to our distinguishing between a Muslim 'core' and 'periphery' would possibly come from Islamists who argue that such an exercise merely augments the artificial differentiation of the *ummah* already perpetuated by its

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<sup>20</sup>Extended and detailed analyses of the historical evolution of the global economic system based upon an international division of labour between a core and a periphery are offered in the literature on 'world systems' and 'dependency' theories. See among others Wallerstein (1979), Frank (1971), the collection of essays in Amin et. al. (1982) and the review by Dale (1984).

imperial-orchestrated fragmentation into nation-states.<sup>21</sup> The central argument here is that Islam guarantees equality of all before God and rejects any differentiation based upon such artificial ranks as race, wealth, colour, ancestry and tribe.<sup>22</sup> The only legitimate basis for such a differentiation, if there is to be one, would be geographical, for the importance of Islam's holy sites, viz. the Grand Mosque in Makkah, the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, has been established by Islamic teachings (cf. Armstrong 1996: 223-225).<sup>23</sup> In the simplest sense, the Islamic core is defined by these three holy places, such that the further one travels from these places, one's position within the *ummah* becomes more 'peripheral'.

In recognition of the objections raised above, both of which possess their own bases of legitimacy, it has to be emphasised that in this study, we are concerned with the concepts of 'core' and 'periphery' only insofar as it pertains to divisions in the Muslim world in an ethnographic sense i.e. in terms of the physical distribution of the various ethno-cultural-linguistic groups which together constitute the *ummah*. In this, we are in agreement with Mehmet (1990: 20-21), whose study is situated against the background of a profound identity crisis affecting peoples whose ethnographic origins and history differ from those who share such characteristics with the pioneering adherents of Islam. Muslims in the Islamic periphery have arguably more difficulty in reconciling their cultural heritage, as inherited from their non-Muslim forefathers, with the Arabian origins of Islam. They are perennially involved in the construction of a worldview and civilisation shaped as much by a multi-cultural history as by an Islam originally imported from the desert lands of Arabia. For Muslims in the

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<sup>21</sup>For a sample of writings by Islamists vehemently attacking nationalism as the cardinal ideological barrier towards unification of the Muslim world into an ummatic state, see articles in Ghayasuddin (1986) especially the unequivocal stance of Siddiqui (pp 1-22); Ahmed (n.d.), Aman Hobohm (1978) and Maududi (1979). See also the survey of such views by Piscatori (1986: chapter 5).

<sup>22</sup>This argument is substantiated by judicious use of Quranic verses and *hadiths*, for example:

"Mankind was one single nation" (Quran II 213)

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you" (Quran XLIX: 13).

"We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures" (Quran XXI: 107). The commentator A. Yusuf Ali elucidates this verse as follows: "There is no question now of race or nation, of a 'chosen people' or the 'seed of Abraham'; or the 'seed of David'; or of Hindu Arya-varta; of Jew or Gentile, Arab or 'Ajam (Persian), Turk or Tajik, European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; or American, Australian or Polynesian" (Yusuf Ali n.d.: 846, fn. 2762; cf. Aman Hobohm 1978: 281).

"All men are equal in Islam. The Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab, nor does the non-Arab have superiority over the Arab, save in the fear of God" (*hadith* quoted in Aman Hobohm 1978: 275).

<sup>23</sup>The importance of the holy sites is underlined by their having been mentioned in the Quran (XVII: 1, IX: 108). The Grand Mosque and Al-Aqsa Mosque were the starting and resting points respectively of the Prophet Muhammad's one-night celestial journey to meet God (cf. chapter 6: fn. 18). The historical significance of Prophet's Mosque, in which the Prophet Muhammad's tomb is located, has been elaborated by Zakaria Bashier (1990: 50-56). Muslims believe that prayers conducted in any of these three major mosques reap higher reward than worship anywhere else in the world

periphery, 'Islam' and 'Arab' are not necessarily congruent with each other, as in the case of language. Despite the recognition given to Arabic as the language of Islam,<sup>24</sup> it has not entrenched itself firmly enough so as to become the mother tongue of the masses in the periphery, despite centuries of conversion to Islam. Its use has been confined to those fortunate enough to have undergone education in the Arabic medium. This differs markedly from the situation in the Middle Eastern core, where "*Islam is to all intents and purposes the essence of Arab history and Arab civilisation,*" and where even Arab-Christian nationalists take pride in Islam as an Arab national achievement (Mortimer 1982: 231-232).

Within our paradigm, the Islamic periphery can be said to be situated within the Muslim-majority territories, or those with significant Muslim minorities, other than the long stretch of lands from the western end of the Maghreb to the eastern end of Iraq: these areas form the core and incorporate peoples in which Arabic is spoken as the primary language. While economic criterion may also be a viable point of differentiation i.e. in terms of oil and non-oil economies, this does not concern us for it is not in the economic sphere that core-periphery relations have been most significant within the *ummah*. Muslims in the periphery look upon Muslims in the core not primarily as possessors of oil wealth, but as co-religionists who, by virtue of their ethnographic affinity to the earliest bearers of the faith and the great Islamic heritage, should assume prime position if not natural leadership of the *ummah* (Ali Nadwi 1977: chapter 8).

It has to be stressed therefore that our division of the *ummah* into a core and a periphery serves only as a mechanism of investigation, and is not meant to categorise Muslims according to artificial ranks of importance. Belying the designation 'periphery' imposed on them by scholars studying the Islamic world, areas of the

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<sup>24</sup>For example, the late Professor Ismail Al-Faruqi argues that the essence of Islam can be understood via the Quran, an understanding of which requires an essential command of the Arabic language. As he writes, the Quran "..... *is as clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to those of Arabia in the Prophet's day (570-632 A.D.) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'anic text, and those of Arabic consciousness embedded in the Arabic language, have not changed through the centuries. This phenomenon is indeed unique for Arabic is the only language which has remained the same for nearly two millenia, the last fourteen centuries of which are certainly due to the Holy Qur'an. Nobody has denied that Islam has a recognizable essence, readable in the Holy Qur'an. For Muslims this essence has been on every lip and in every mind every hour of every day*" (Al-Faruqi 1978: 85). Yet, for the majority of Muslims in the Islamic periphery, the last part of the aforesaid statement cannot be said to be wholly applicable, for an understanding of the said essence requires for them the aid of translations of the Quran into the local language. In this regard, Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina of the University of Virginia, in his preface to an English translation of the Quran, reminds us: "..... *translations of the Qur'an, however faithful to the original Arabic, cannot be regarded as more than an interpretive translation of the Word of God into a language in which it was not revealed in the first place. Moreover, the translation is bound to be conditioned by the understanding of the Qur'anic message in its entirety by the translator, who, if she or he happens to be a Muslim, will represent one or the other school of thought within the Islamic community in the translation*" (preface to Shakir 1988: v, emphasis added).

Islamic periphery are not necessarily marginal in significance. In fact, no *a priori* reason exists to deny the possibility that, as Mehmet contends, "*Crises in the periphery are often more crucial than those in the core, for they may be harbingers of fundamental change*" (1990: 8). Continued perfunctory attention given to studies of the Islamic periphery is thus unwarranted, and constitutes a loss even for the core, whose peoples are thereby deprived of knowledge of unique characteristics that make up peripheral Islamic societies.

### 1.4.3 AN OVERVIEW OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE ISLAMIC PERIPHERY

It has not been until fairly recently that academics have voiced their concern over the lack of attention given to Islam and its peoples in areas of the Muslim world lying outside its perceived 'core' of the Arab Middle East. This is despite the fact that for the larger part of Islamic history, the lands of the 'Islamic periphery' have held the largest concentration of Muslims in the world.<sup>25</sup> As has recently been admitted by a prominent Western scholar of contemporary Islam:

Because Islam is often equated with the Middle East, we tend to forget that the largest Muslim populations are to be found in Asia..... Asia too proved to be a major theater for the growth of Islamic revivalism. (Esposito 1992: 13).<sup>26</sup>

For the early orientalist scholars, who were born and bred in the Western colonial tradition (Hussain 1990: chapter 3), Islam and Islamic societies could be understood solely by looking at Arabia, its peoples, and their social and cultural customs and practices. Islam as practised apart from the version that prevailed in its Middle East heartlands was viewed as too syncretised with local customs and folk practices to merit scholarly investigations towards a doctrinal understanding of the religion. In this light, Edward Said, drawing upon the Anglo-French-American experience of Oriental scholarship, has critically observed that:

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<sup>25</sup>From the global Muslim population figures for mid-1985 as found in Esposito (1987: 262-263), it is discovered that of the ten countries with the largest Muslim populations, seven can unambiguously be located within the Islamic periphery. These are, in descending order of populousness, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, the former Soviet Union, Turkey and Nigeria. Together, they account for sixty-two percent of the global Muslim population. Such ethnographic distribution is confirmed by later figures; see for example the 1991 revised edition of Ahsan (1977: 43-47).

<sup>26</sup>It is interesting to note that Esposito then immediately quotes the example of Malaysia. For similar expressions of concern at having disproportionately relegated the position of the Islamic periphery in studies of the Muslim world, see Mortimer (1982: 19), Israeli and Johns (1984: v), Esposito (1987a: 10-11) and von der Mehden (1993: xi).

..... the Arabs and Islam..... for almost a thousand years together stood for the Orient..... a large part of the Orient seemed to have been eliminated..... not because those regions were not important (they obviously have been) but because one could discuss Europe's experience of the Near Orient, or of Islam, apart from its experience of the Far Orient. (Said 1978: 17).

Such scholars seemed to have overlooked the existence of an Islamic socio-political and institutional history beyond the core Islamic heartlands of the Middle East; in effect treating the Islamic periphery as a mere adjunct to core.<sup>27</sup> Islam and local customs were treated as two irreconcilably opposing ends. The coming of the former into the non-Arab territories was looked upon as an imposition of Arabic culture and norms upon indigenous peoples less than willing to forego their ancestral traditions. Consequently, the tendency of such scholars has been to seek explanations for the conversion of non-Arab masses in some secular domain unrelated with the transcendental appeal of the divine message of Islam. In Islamic terms, the periphery was viewed as fundamentally static and reliant upon the dynamics of the Middle Eastern core. Within the periphery itself, Islam was regarded as peripheral *vis-à-vis* indigenous customs and practices when it comes to defining social mores. Such a perspective which denigrates the role of Islam in the periphery is typified by van Leur's comment on the role of religion in the shaping of Indonesian society; that it was but "*only a thin, easily flaking glaze on the massive body of indigenous civilisation*" (1955: 169).<sup>28</sup> Within the orientalist paradigm, Islam in the periphery was peripheral not only in its geographical separateness from the core, but also in its socio-political significance *vis-à-vis* indigenous traditions of the peripheral lands.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>A consistent exposition of such views as outlined in this paragraph is to be found in the valuable survey of orientalist literature done by Khurshid Ahmad (1979: chapter 3); see also fn. 29 below.

<sup>28</sup>In this case, van Leur was levelling judgement against both Islam and Hinduism. This provocative remark by van Leur has been the subject of constant discussion by scholars of Malaysian Islam; see for example S.H. Alatas (1963: 67), Ismail Hamid (1982: 275) and S.A. Hussein (1988: 71).

<sup>29</sup>It is worth quoting at length from two prominent orientalists to exemplify their paradigm of thought:

*"The Islam which conquered the northern region was not the Islamic religion but the Islamic state. The Arabian burst forth upon an unsuspecting world as members of a national theocracy. It was Arabianism and not Mohammedanism that triumphed first. Not until the second and third centuries of the Muslim era did the bulk of the people in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia profess the religion of Mohammad. And when they were converted the people turned primarily because of self interest - to escape tribute and seek identification with the ruling class. As for Islam as a culture, it developed slowly after the military conquest on a substratum composed of the core and heritage of the Syro-Aramaean, Persian and Hellenistic civilization which had preceded"* [P.K. Hitti, as quoted in Khurshid Ahmad (1979: 21), from **History of the Arabs**, London: Macmillan, 1951, fifth edition, pp. 145-146].

*"..... Mahomet began his career merely as the Prophet of Arabia and gradually persuaded himself that he was the Prophet of the whole world..... The result has been that a religious system adapted only for one age and country has been pressed upon the necks of all ages..... Mahometanism is a national system which attempts to be universal and which most grievously fails in its attempt. The creed of Islam showed in far greater points how ill-suited it was to be transplanted beyond the limits of its native soil"* [E.A. Ferman, as quoted in Khurshid Ahmad (1979: 39), from **History and the Conquest of Saracens**, pp. 151-152].

The orientalist approach castigated by Edward Said (1978) has persisted into the post-colonial era, although in a somewhat muted fashion (Momin 1987: 40). The Islamic periphery has continued to be denied an individuality of its own, being treated as a reactive participant to changes in the core rather than as a prime mover in developments of *ummah* (Siddique 1985: 337). Reasons for the corresponding lack of interest in the Islamic periphery have been reformulated in contemporary terms, ranging from its relative geopolitical insignificance due to an absence of the politics of oil (Esposito 1987a: 11) to its supposedly less vigorous manifestation of 'political Islam' (Ayubi 1991: ix). Academic neglect of the Islamic periphery has correspondingly been accompanied by public ignorance, if not outright hostility, of the Muslim world, as manifested in the persistent myth of a monolithic Islam intent upon destroying Western civilisation by force if necessary (Ayoob 1981a: 1-6).

Even contemporary Muslim scholarship, dominated by writers from the core countries, has arguably failed to give due recognition to the importance of studying the periphery. There still persists in the Arab core an exclusionist view of Islam being an Arab-oriented religion: that Islam in the periphery is somehow less pure as a result of being tainted with pre-Islamic ideas, and that assimilation of Muslims in the periphery would de-Arabise and therefore downgrade the religion (Mehmet 1990: 20, von der Mehden 1993: xi). In outlining such an opinion, an Arab intellectual has written:

..... Islam is originally Arabic. Some would even say, Islam has an Arab face and Arab soul. This reality upholds the conviction of the Arabs that those non-Arab peoples who have adopted Islam could never be more able to comprehend it, to interpret it and to apply it in a better way than the Arabs themselves could really do. [Nasif Nassar, as quoted in Tibi (1986: 41), from 'Al-Arab, al-Islam wa al-Thawrah al-Irانيyah' (The Arabs, Islam and the Iranian Revolution), *Al-Fikr al-Arabi al-Mua'sir* 2 (June 1980): 13].

In the West, the advent of global Islamic resurgence initially led to the publications of amateur works which, assisted by emotive titles, presented the phenomenon as a belligerent and monolithic movement (cf. Jansen 1979, Laffin 1979). While this simplistic trend has not totally evaporated, various scholarly efforts have been put into projecting a fairer image of Islam and Islamic resurgence, notably by relying on Muslims' own sources, as exemplified in the works of Professor John Esposito (1983, 1987, 1992) (cf. Ahmed 1993: 207). Therefore, it is only apt that a more judicious view of the Islamic periphery and its hitherto neglected role in the Muslim world be adopted and put forward by both Muslim and Western scholars of Islam. A contemporary scholar of Southeast Asian Islam, for instance, has stressed the need to understand Islam in the region beginning "*with data from the area rather than*

*with some Middle Eastern and theological formulation of Islam,"* without denying the creed's universalism or Middle Eastern origins (Hooker 1983: vii).

This thesis is a further attempt towards redressing the apparent bias that has been shown against lands of the Islamic periphery in studies of Islamic resurgence,<sup>30</sup> with a particular focus on Malaysia. It seeks to demonstrate the unique dynamics that characterise political Islam in Malaysia, arguing that of late, the most potent challenge to the liberal-capitalist approach of its secular administration has come not from Islamists of the modernist-reformist variety, but from those of the sufi-revivalist orientation. The effort is made to portray the distinctiveness of political sufism in Malaysia by citing the case of Darul Arqam, the sufi-revivalist movement embroiled in a fatal confrontation with the Malaysian government in 1994. Hopefully, such an approach will highlight the perennial problem of misplaced emphasis that has dogged Western-based students of Islamic resurgence in their quest to locate an 'Islamic threat'.

#### 1.4.4 MALAYSIA AS PART OF THE ISLAMIC PERIPHERY

The position of Malaysia as part of the Islamic periphery is unambiguous. Geographically, it is far removed from the Middle East Islamic heartlands. Situated in the southern part of the Far East, Malaysia<sup>31</sup> comprises two parts of land separated by nearly seven hundred kilometres of the South China Sea. Peninsular Malaysia<sup>32</sup> represents the terminus of Asia's southeastern landmass; bordering Thailand to the

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<sup>30</sup>This is with the exception of Iran and Pakistan, both of which may be legitimately classified as part of the Islamic periphery, yet figure conspicuously in the literature on Islamic resurgence, as a direct consequence of the installation of Islamic governments there under Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 and President Zia ul-Haq in 1977 respectively

<sup>31</sup>As a political entity, Malaysia came into being on 16 September 1963, with the coming together of Malaya, which had been independent since 31 August 1957, Singapore, and the Borneo territories of Sabah (formerly British North Borneo) and Sarawak into a single federation. In 1965, Singapore withdrew from the federation and organised itself as an independent sovereign state, so that Malaysia today consists of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Constitutionally, Malaysia is organised around a federal structure, whose head of state, the *Yang diPertuan Agong*, is elected on a rotational basis by the Council of Rulers. This Council consists of rulers, called sultans, of nine states in Peninsular Malaysia with royal families. Besides having a head of state (a sultan, or in the case of the four states without one, a *Yang diPertua Negeri* a governor appointed by the federal government), each state possesses its own constitution, a legislative assembly and an executive council headed by a chief minister. As part of the agreement in the formation of Malaysia, the states of Sabah and Sarawak have retained a larger degree of autonomy *vis-a-vis* their counterparts in the Peninsula (Milne and Mauzy 1986: 108-110). Prior to the formation of this Malaysian state, the term 'Malaysia' was popularly used by scholars, writing in a historical mould, to mean the whole Malay-Indonesian archipelago, including the Philippines (cf. Marrison 1951, Fatimi 1963, S.H. Alatas 1963, Othman Mohd. Yatim 1985: 151, fn. 1). In this thesis, usage of the term 'Malaysia' conforms to its contemporary political meaning, while the term 'Malaya' is employed to denote 'historical' Malaysia.

<sup>32</sup>Previously known as 'West Malaysia' or before independence, as 'Malaya'.

north, connected by a causeway to Singapore in the south, and separated to the west by the Straits of Malacca from the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Administratively, this land of nearly 132,000 square kilometres is made up of eleven states<sup>33</sup> and the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur. On the island of Borneo to the east, lay the two states of Sabah and Sarawak,<sup>34</sup> and the federal territory of Labuan,<sup>35</sup> all of which cover around 198,000 square kilometres (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 1, Demaine 1996: 558).

Over three-quarter of Malaysia's estimated total population of 18.4 million reside in the Peninsula (*ibid.*). These are made up of an ethnic composition of 58.5 percent (8.43 million) indigenous Malays, 31.1 percent (4.25 million) ethnic Chinese and 9.8 percent (1.38 million) Indians, mostly of Tamil origin (*ibid.*). In Sabah and Sarawak, approximately fifteen and thirty percent of the population respectively are Chinese, while the others are from several indigenous groups, including, among others, Malay, Kadazan,<sup>36</sup> Iban,<sup>37</sup> Murut, Melanau, Bidayuh and Bajau. These indigenous groups, plus the Malays and *Orang Asli*<sup>38</sup> of Peninsular Malaysia form the *Bumiputera*<sup>39</sup> category of the population. In terms of religious affiliation, practically all Malays are Muslims, while the Chinese and Indians are Buddhists and Hindus respectively. An increasing number of the non-Malay *Bumiputera* population are converting to Islam and Christianity, although most remain animists (Cho 1990: 15-16, Milne and Mauzy 1986: 66-68).

To many observers, it is the unusual racial mosaic of the Malaysian population that serves as her main attraction for academic investigation (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 2), and for which its society has been variously described as 'communal', 'segmental', 'plural', 'fragmented' and 'divided' (cf. Means 1975: 153, Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 23, von der Mehden 1987: 179). In fact, previous studies of Malaysian politics have been invariably based upon the pivotal role of communalism in shaping the Malaysian political process (cf. Ratnam 1965, Means 1970: 12, Milne and Mauzy 1978: 3-6, Kahn 1992). The unique aspect of Malaysian society lies not so much in its diversity per se, as many countries in the world can claim to be so, but

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<sup>33</sup>These are, from north to south, on the west coast, Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Johore; and on the east coast, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang.

<sup>34</sup>These two states used to be collectively known as 'East Malaysia'. The term has been formally dropped as it seemed to have suggested the existence of two separate Malaysian states.

<sup>35</sup>The island of Labuan was ceded by the Sabah state government to the federal government in 1984.

<sup>36</sup>Also called Dusun, Kadazan is the largest indigenous group in Sabah at 30 percent of its total population.

<sup>37</sup>Also called Dayak, Iban is the largest indigenous group in Sarawak at 30 percent of its total population.

<sup>38</sup>Meaning 'aborigines'. Numbering only around 100,000, the *Orang Asli*, many of whom still live in jungles in the interior, form less than one percent of the total population of Malaysia (Milne and Mauzy 1986: 68).

<sup>39</sup>Literally meaning 'sons of the soil'.

rather in the precarious nature of its diversity. The ethnic balance in the population is such that no single group can claim hegemony over others or autonomy as a social unit (Means 1975: 153-154, Milne and Mauzy 1978: 3). Political dominance does not go hand in hand with economic supremacy; the interdependence between ethnic groups being solved by means of a conventionally institutionalised process of inter-ethnic bargaining (cf. chapter 3). The popular designation of Malaysia as a Muslim state belies the slender numerical majority of its Muslim population, whose hold on power in its parliamentary democracy is perpetuated only with the cooperation of non-Muslims. Since independence in 1957, the indigenous Malay-Muslims have had to live with a perceived 'threat' from non-Muslim races to their self-proclaimed political and cultural superiority. It is against this background of an ethnic-oriented Malay fight for survival that Islamic resurgence has taken place, making the situation all the more peculiar as compared with other areas of the Islamic periphery, and certainly with the Middle Eastern core (Keddie 1988: 20-21).

If Malaysia's peripheral position within the *ummah* is without doubt, the extent of its peripherality as a Muslim nation-state within the international community is even greater. This might not seem so surprising, considering the dominant view, until recently, in the non-Muslim world of Islamicity being identified with Arabness (cf. section 1.4.3). The prevalent view of Malaysia in the West used to be that of a 'paradise': an 'instant Asia' in which different races lived harmoniously in a cooperative effort at nation-building and attainment of national unity around a single national culture (Gott 1985, Milne and Mauzy 1986: 6-7).

The onset of Islamic resurgence, of which, as noted by von der Mehden (1983)<sup>40</sup> and Newsom (1987),<sup>41</sup> the average Westerner is virtually ignorant in the case of Malaysia, has led to a re-examination of the simplistic view above. Views of scholars range from those wary that such a resurgence may threaten the delicate balance maintaining the fragile inter-ethnic unity on which the social cohesion of the Malaysian state depends (cf. Lapidus 1988: 782, Milne and Mauzy 1986: v, 174; Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 98-99), to those more appreciative of the possibility of Islamic resurgence impacting positively on a socio-political order conditioned by a multi-ethnicity uniquely Malaysian (cf. Choudhury 1990: 145, M.N. Monutty 1989: 277-284).

Diversity of views aside, Islam has carved an unprecedented niche for itself in post-independence Malaysian politics. Gone are the days when Rosenthal's presumption of a certain reasonableness in expecting that "*amid the strains and*

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<sup>40</sup>von der Mehden writes: "*Certainly, the [resurgence] movement in Indonesia and Malaysia is totally unknown outside the academic and corporate communities*" (1983: 28).

<sup>41</sup>Newsom observes: "*The fact that Indonesians and Malaysians feel strongly about aspects of the Arab-Israeli problem comes as a surprise to many Americans*" (1987: 7).

*stresses inherent in such a mixed population, an Islamic state based on an Islamic ideology would not be the most appropriate institution" (1965: 287) would have been taken for granted. In a discussion on post-war Southeast Asian nationalism, William Holland (1978: 14-15) perceptibly notes the exception of Malaysia to the general observable rule that a decline of ideology is accompanied by a decline in religion. The special place that Malaysia commands in the worldwide Islamic resurgence is underlain by the formal task facing its Islamists: that of reconciling the implementation of an Islamic political order with the inherent tensions of a plural, multi-faith, multi-cultural society. In this sense, Malaysia represents a test-case of the claim, as advanced by Islamic theoreticians (cf. Hamidullah 1983: 199-215, Faruqi 1980, Al-Qaradawi 1985), of the viability of an Islamic state peacefully and justly incorporating non-Muslim minorities into its polity.<sup>42</sup> Although peripheral by geography, history and ethnographic origins of her Muslim peoples, as Bruce Lawrence contends, ".....the Malaysian perspective helps to illumine other areas of the Muslim world" (1989: 197).*

#### **1.4.5 A REVIEW OF WORKS ON CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIAN ISLAM**

Considering the secondary role that the Islamic periphery has had to play in studies of Islam and the Islamic world (cf. section 1.4.3), the present study does not assume the reader's prior knowledge of Islam in Malaysia, whether in the historical or contemporary mould. While one could arguably understand the orientalist-influenced marginalisation of the 'Islamic factor' in studies of colonial Malayan politics and society, such an approach became less justified as independence brought about the institutionalisation of Islam in the nation's political framework, albeit to a limited extent.

As a study of an Islamic movement, Darul Arqam, within the broad subject of political Islam in contemporary Malaysia, this thesis hopes to contribute towards reversing the academic consignment of Islam to the periphery of Malaysian society; a trend which continued up to the time when the Islamic resurgence was beginning to impact on Malaysian politics at both institutional and grassroots levels. The significance of this study could be appreciated by noting the significant number of works which drew pessimistic conclusions as to the role of Islam in Malaysia's path of

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<sup>42</sup>For a contrary view: one which argues against any notion of a Muslim socio-political order operating in compatible terms with a plural society, see Vatikiotis (1987: chapter 5).

nation-building. In this light, the essays by von der Mehden (1963), Ratnam (1985)<sup>43</sup> and Means (1969) on political aspects; by Rosenthal (1965) and Suffian Hashim (1965) on legal-constitutional issues, and by Parkinson (1967) in the economic sphere, deserve mention as writings which tended to downgrade the role of Islam in Malaysia's post-independence polity.

Serious research into the evolving role of Islam in Malaysian politics began to appear in the 1970s. Scholars initially confined their investigations to the state of Kelantan, which was regarded as peculiar in having a society apparently more strongly influenced by Islam, as reflected in the successive electoral victories achieved there by the opposition PAS. The main works, viz. Winzeler (1970), Nash (1974), Kessler (1978) and the essays in Roff (1974), did not depart from the previous trend of stressing the 'negative' aspects of Islam, although they may have differed in their diagnoses of the 'problems' of the Kelantan society. For example, Winzeler focused on societal destabilisation caused by the ceaseless conflict between Islam and Malay *adat*<sup>44</sup> (cf. chapter 2: 2.3). Nash saw 'fundamentalist' Islam as a source of intra-Malay and communal tension, and a barrier to modernisation long in coming for Kelantan's tradition-inhibited 'peasant citizens'. In Kessler's view, the basis of PAS' popularity in Kelantan could be sought in class differences that had coloured Kelantan's Malay society since colonial times.

In the late 1970s, events such as the installation of Islamic governments in Pakistan and Iran showed to Western scholars of Islam and the Islamic world that political Islam was not a solely Arab phenomenon. Consequently, the Malaysian situation began to elicit concern from scholars presenting themselves as general theoreticians of the global Islamic resurgence. But their treatment of Malaysia was not wholly satisfactory. Even in studies which do mention Malaysia in its capacity as an independent participant in the Islamic resurgence, the lack of research is borne out by their presentation of misleading facts. For instance, Daniel Pipes gives "*some of Malay[sic]'s dakwah movements*" as an example of "*activist groups which go to extremes*" (1982: 37). Yet, he does not provide a shred of evidence to justify his inclusion of the movements he does not name into the 'extremist' category which encompasses groups with a proven history of violence, such as the *Al-Takfir wal-Hijrah* (Excommunication and Emigration) in Egypt (ibid., cf. Ibrahim 1980). As later research has shown, Malaysian *dakwah* movements have not been prone to violence and extremism, and minor incidents such as the short-lived campaign of destruction of Hindu temples in the late 1970s was the work of splinter zealots who, being disorganised and eschewing missionary activity, hardly deserved the appellation

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<sup>43</sup>First published in 1969, and republished in 1985 in Ahmad Ibrahim et. al. (eds.), **Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia**. See bibliography for details.

<sup>44</sup>On *adat*, see chapter 2: fn. 9.

'*dakwah* movement' (cf. chapters 3-4, Abdul Hamid 1994: chapter 2). On a similar plane, Ameer Ali, who contrasts the experience of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia with that of Sri Lanka, offers a stereotype of the Jamaat Tabligh and Darul Arqam movements as "*overtly fanatical in their spiritual convictions, .....attach[ing] only secondary importance to more mundane affairs of life .....[and] religious zealots with a crusading spirit*" (1984: 307). Not only is Ameer Ali's analysis short of evidence, but his account of Malaysia's Islamic movements suffers from glaring factual errors, as when he named Terengganu, a state on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, as the base of Darul Arqam (ibid.: 305, cf. chapter 4).

Such misrepresentations notwithstanding, the very attempt to include Malaysia in analyses of contemporary political Islam represents an advancement from the pre-1980 period, when the tradition-orientedness of Malaysian Islam was taken for granted. It was left to a new generation of 'Malaysianist' specialists to assert the emergent influence of Islam, as a contemporary ideology in its own right, in Malaysian politics and society. As a measure of their interest, generalist articles outlining the broad traits of new resurgent Islamic trends in Malaysia began featuring in journals and books edited by upcoming experts of Islamic politics (cf. Lyon 1979, von der Mehden 1980, Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981, Funston 1981).

Two scholars eventually dominated debates on contemporary Malaysian Islam in the 1980s. First, Judith Nagata, an anthropologist based at York University, Toronto, Canada, and with vast fieldwork experience in Malaysia. Her generalist essays (Nagata 1980, 1980a, 1982) served as precursors to her highly acclaimed *magnum opus*, **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots** (1984), to which virtually all later works on Islamic resurgence have referred, although not necessarily approvingly. The distinctiveness of **The Reflowering** lay in its pioneering reliance upon Islamists' own information in exhaustive empirical investigations into Islamic movements at grassroots level; an approach which has influenced later researchers. Nagata's analysis of the roots, modes and implications of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia convinced her that the phenomenon has been motivated mainly by the imperative of ethnic differentiation in a society polarised along communal lines.

The second writer to make an impact on the question of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia was Chandra Muzaffar, a political scientist at the Centre for Policy Research, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and leader of the social reform movement, *Aliran Kesedaran Negara* (ALIRAN: National Consciousness Movement). His book, **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia** (1987), was preceded by several articles (Chandra Muzaffar 1985, 1986, 1986a, 1986b); together, they argued that the Islamic resurgence besetting Malaysia posed a predicament to the nation's

political and social development as Islamists, supposedly obsessed with identity-based differentiation, aggravate ethnic polarisation which has already been perpetuated by state policies formulated by vested elite interests.

Nagata and Chandra Muzaffar postulated an ethnic-centred view of Islamic resurgence by scrutinising grassroots activists and Islamist elites respectively. Their works were together complemented by Hussin Mutalib's **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics** (1990), which was based on his doctoral thesis, **Community of Islam and Sons of the Soil: The Islamic Reassertion in Peninsular Malaysia, 1963-84** (Sydney University, 1985). Hussin Mutalib redressed, to a certain extent, the imbalance favouring ethnic-oriented explanations in the 'Malayness versus Islamicity' dialectic governing socio-political relations among Malay-Muslims and Malaysians as a whole. In contrast with generalist contributions on the various ways and means of state response to Islamic resurgence (cf. Barraclough 1983, von der Mehden 1986), **Islam and Ethnicity** emphasises the importance of Islamisation policies above all else. Hussin Mutalib's thorough discussion complemented, in analytical terms, observations of Islamic-oriented changes at state level, first put into academic writing by Milne and Mauzy (1983). Hussin Mutalib's subsequent work, **Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?** (1993), while not adding much to **Islam and Ethnicity** in terms of substance, further explores the practical difficulties faced by Islamists in their quest to transform Malaysia into an Islamic state. The obstacles were skilfully discussed in terms of unavoidable social and political realities, in addition to the state-imposed measures.

By the late 1980s, Malaysian scholars, understandably disturbed by Nagata's simplistic conclusions and weaknesses in methodology, were producing works which questioned the applicability of her ethnic-centred arguments. Their countervailing conclusions were derived at by means of profound research into myriad aspects of the main Islamic movements. In this light, the unpublished doctoral theses of Fadzillah Mohd. Jamil: **The Reawakening of Islamic Consciousness in Malaysia 1970-87**, (University of Edinburgh, 1988); Syed Ahmad Hussein: **Islam and Politics in Malaysia 1969-82: The Dynamics of Competing Traditions** (Yale University, 1988), and Mohammad Nor Monutty: **Perception of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia: A Critical Analysis of ABIM's role and its Impact Among Muslim Youth** (Temple University, 1989), deserve mention. Fadzillah Mohd. Jamil's rebuttals of Nagata and Chandra Muzaffar undertook a historical approach. Syed Ahmad Hussein tackled Islamic movements by studying their structural organisations and doctrinal issues and alternatives. Mohammad Nor Monutty framed his arguments by examining the experience of one Islamic movement, viz. ABIM. But whereas Fadzillah Mohd. Jamil and Mohammad Nor Monutty were optimistic as

regards the future role of Islamists in Malaysian politics and society, Syed Ahmad Hussein was pessimistic, postulating instead a theory of the neutralisation of the voice of dissenting Islam by around 1982. Among sceptics and cautious observers could also be included Zainah Anwar (1987) and K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery Cheek (1988, 1992). Their writings looked at Islamic resurgence from the perspectives of students and political strategists respectively.

Attention has shifted in the 1990s to in-depth studies of Islamic movements in specific topical areas. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah's **Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran Jamaat Tabligh dan Darul Arqam** (Traditional Islamic Movements in Malaysia: The History and Thought of Jamaat Tabligh and Darul Arqam) (1992) offers a critical probe into the ideologies and doctrines of the Jamaat Tabligh and Darul Arqam movements, Muhammad Syukri Salleh's **An Islamic Approach to Rural Development - The Arqam Way** (1992) examines Darul Arqam's development strategies and practices, and Roald's **Tarbiya: Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia** (1994) discusses the attitudes and policies of the major Islamic movements towards education and women, with a slight emphasis on ABIM. The present thesis, being a study of Darul Arqam, continues with the above trend, but with a novel emphasis on the active role played by the movement in the political process and economic modernisation of Malaysia. The author's contribution to the study of contemporary Islam in Malaysia could be gauged by his distinctive conceptual and methodological treatment of Darul Arqam, in contrast with many of the previous works which merely grazed that subject matter. This is clearly indicated in a separate review of works on Darul Arqam, in Chapter 6: 6.1.

## **1.5 THESIS ORGANISATION: SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

This thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter One introduces the thesis as a contribution to the literature on global Islamic resurgence, but within the situational framework of Malaysia, which is presented as an unambiguous case of an area located in the periphery of the Muslim world. Within the ummatic context, the fundamental issue posed is the inappropriateness of retaining the approach guiding past scholars of Islam, whereby the Islamic periphery was unerringly viewed as reactively dependent on the dynamics of core Middle Eastern political, economic and social structures. Within the Malaysian context, the focus of the thesis revolves around the challenge posed by the Darul Arqam movement to the state, covering the entire period of Darul Arqam's existence.

In due recognition that the Malaysian scenario has eluded the serious attention of most Western-based students of Islam, Chapters Two and Three discuss the socio-political position of Islam in the historical and contemporary moulds respectively. In Chapter Two, the main subject matters, viz. the comprehensive impact of the coming of Islam on Malaya's peoples and structures, and the challenge presented by Islamists to colonial rule, postulate a conception of Malayan Islam as having been dominated by the interaction between a sufi-based Islam and the competing traditions of Malay *adat* and Malay nationalism. In contrast with the Middle Eastern situation, the aforesaid interaction was more often tolerable than hostile, despite the rigid boundaries known to separate Islamic from non-Islamic traditions. By assigning to Islam a significant role in the development of Malayan politics and society, the present author begs to differ from previous orientalist scholars, for whom the sufi-tainted Islam was merely a veneer on the indigenous cultural heritage of peripheral Islamic societies. The legacy of the pioneering sufis' toleration of indigenous traditions was reflected in the ideological and strategic pragmatism of pre-independence Islamic reformists. While such pragmatism may be frowned upon by core-based Islamists as a sacrifice of principles, it has had positive consequences in rendering Malaysian Islam with a tolerant, accommodative and non-violent character.

Chapter Three extends the historical analysis of Malayan Islam to the contemporary period. The origins, characteristics, manifestations and implications of Islamic resurgence on society-state and Muslim-non-Muslim relations are discussed without losing bearing on the established historical contexts. Elements of continuity from the past exist in different forms: Malay ethnicity replaces Malay *adat* in the 'Islam versus Malayness' dialectic, while the secular state supplants the colonial state as the Islamists' object of transformation. The institution of the New Economic Policy (NEP), following the racial riots of 1969, is identified as the crucial factor in engendering Islamic resurgence in its multi-faceted configuration. Although seemingly more 'fundamentalist' in outlook than their predecessors, contemporary Islamists retain essential historical features of Malayan Islam, such as repudiation of militancy, accommodation to less than Islamic structures and a willingness to work towards peaceful coexistence with non-Muslim minorities. The multi-faceted nature of Islamic resurgence triggered a manifold response from the authorities, whose overall approach, however, emphasised incorporation and neutralisation rather than suppression and elimination. Such reaction contrasts with the repressive methods adopted by both the British colonial government and Muslim governments of the Middle East. Contextually, it may be situated within the overall accommodative

political culture of Malaysian Muslims, who have dominated governmental affairs since independence.

Chapter Four looks at the most important manifestation of Islamic resurgence: the Islamic movements. As the movement which forms the basis of discussion in subsequent chapters, Darul Arqam is given priority treatment. Comparative analyses of the movements centre on divergent methods and emphases. In their rudimentary beginnings and aims, the movements are discovered not to have exhibited significant variations. Three movements, viz. Darul Arqam, ABIM and the Islamic Representative Council (IRC) were direct products of the initial phase of Islamic resurgence; Jamaat Tabligh blossomed from the ensuing rise in Islamic consciousness, and PAS reformed itself as a revivalist party in the early 1980s. All five movements stressed the necessity of an 'Islamic social order' or 'Islamic state', however misty the concepts may mean to them, at some point of their struggle. *The methods they adopted had their own costs and benefits, making it difficult to quantify their relative accomplishments in effecting Islamic-oriented changes in Malaysian society.* More probably, all have had their share of success, and they may well have acted in complementary terms and circumstances without acknowledging one another. But as other movements increasingly succumb to state-inflicted pressures and offers, Darul Arqam's propensity and capacity to follow its peculiar line, both ideologically and as a practical way of living, had, by the 1990s, aroused unprecedented concern from a state which was becoming increasingly restless at having its own Islamic credentials challenged.

Chapter Five deals with all relevant aspects governing the turbulent relationship between Darul Arqam and the Malaysian state from 1968 until 1994. The relationship is described as one of gradual deterioration, whereby both the nature and intensity of the state's treatment of Darul Arqam altered to the detriment of the latter. While inquisitive questioning of Darul Arqam's unconventional beliefs and practices had beleaguered the movement from its formative phase, only in the 1990s has the state felt compelled to wage an all-out offensive against Darul Arqam. The government-led campaign against Darul Arqam established new frontiers on the issue of state response to Islamic movements: elimination was manifestly preferred to neutralisation, Islamic uniformity was preferred to diversity, and the rule of law was sacrificed in the name of protecting the sanctity of the Islamic faith. As the episode took place at a time when the agglomeration of power in the hands of the ruling elite had been virtually accomplished, solitary private voices of disapprobation of the state's indiscriminate crackdown on Darul Arqam members were scarcely regarded. Further ironies are found in the muted response of their co-Islamists, as contrasted with the heavy criticism of the state's actions from foreign-based press and human rights organisations. Paradoxes of the episode taken altogether, it is difficult to concur with

the government's claim that the clampdown on Darul Arqam was devoid of political motives and guided solely by religious considerations.

Chapter Six details the design and findings of empirical exercises undertaken to investigate issues surrounding Darul Arqam's outstanding capacity of mobilising followers and resources towards realising its vision of a self-sustaining Islamic society. This puts into perspective the Malaysian state's rising hostility towards Darul Arqam, which prior to the 1990s had carried such an inward-oriented image that academics were barely interested in conducting systematic research into the impact of Darul Arqam on Malaysian politics and society. From the participant observation and survey questionnaire administered to former Darul Arqam members, two factors are discovered to have wielded the greatest influence in ensuring previous resilience, determining present survival and enhancing prospects for future revival. These are: first, Darul Arqam's messianic ideology, as manifested within a holistic 'Islam is the solution' framework involving synchronous combinations of theory and practice, message-orientedness and man-orientedness and spiritual and material development; and second, Darul Arqam's startling economic success, which provides the ways and means of reinvigorating dormant activities. While both factors are mutually reinforcing once they operate, *the ideological basis serves as a necessary condition of economic vitality*, for in Darul Arqam's scheme, reformation of structures must in principle be preceded by reformation of humans.

Chapter Seven discusses further the decisive factors of messianism and economic activism, showing that both of them constitute new trends in the theory and practice of contemporary Islamic resurgence. Even if past revivalist upsurges had experienced spasmodic fervour in messianic and economic activities, their theoretical foundation was conventional and their methods were traditional. Their success, when compared with Darul Arqam's feat, was moderate, although time will tell whether Darul Arqam's impact is as short-lived as their messianic predecessors' had been. Evidence from Darul Arqam's exploits serves to refute arguments which blame messianism and Islam as barriers to modernisation, as put forward by scholars writing in the Weberian tradition and echoed by elites of the Malaysian state. In this sense, Darul Arqam's challenge to the Malaysian state could be perceived in terms of its economic achievements bolstering the credibility of its model society, which directly counters the legitimacy of a modern developed society as envisioned by the state.

Chapter Eight draws out recent trends of political Islam in Malaysia with a view to judging future prospects of Islamists in Malaysian politics. It offers a postscript on issues and events surrounding former Darul Arqam members since the movement's dissolution, and explores the feasibility of two alternative strands of political Islam in Malaysia. These alternatives, viz. the political party option and the

establishment option, are examined based on recent encounters with the imperatives of the secular state. This enables readers to reflect on the distant likelihood of Malaysia turning into an Islamic state, in whatever form it may assume.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis with a summary of the main findings.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXTUALISING ISLAM IN THE PERIPHERY: AN INTERPRETATION OF MALAYAN ISLAM FROM ITS INCEPTION UNTIL INDEPENDENCE (1957)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the premise, established in the previous chapter, that Islam in the periphery has been comparatively designated a minor role in academic studies, this chapter attempts to sketch a brief history of Malayan Islam in the pre-independence epoch. The intention is not to provide a comprehensive narrative of historical events; rather, it is to locate pertinent historical facts which enable us to contextualise the evolving role of Islam in contemporary Malaysian politics and society. Moreover, a fresh interpretation is offered; one which differs substantially in certain respects, despite a similarity of facts, with other well-known studies of Malayan Islam by both Western and Malaysian scholars.

#### 2.2 THE GENESIS: ARRIVAL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ISLAM IN THE MALAY-INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO

In treating the subject of pre-colonial Islam in the area of what today forms modern Malaysia, it would be erroneous to fail to refer also to neighbouring areas in the Malay archipelago or 'historical' Malaysia (cf. chapter 1: fn. 31, 32). For it was only with the advent of European hegemony that territorial boundaries emerged to define the political division of the region into separate colonial protectorates. Prior to the colonial era,<sup>1</sup> inhabitants of the Malay world conceived of the whole archipelago, comprising roughly present-day Southeast Asia, as their homeland. Inter-regional mobility was not uncommon between the peoples,<sup>2</sup> who enjoyed, with only the slightest variation, affinity in terms of culture, language, physical appearance and a syncretic worldview as conditioned by elements of animism, Hinduism and Buddhism (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 9; cf. Winstedt 1961: 5-33). Similarly, Muslim traders and missionaries responsible for the introduction of Islam into the archipelago never saw

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<sup>1</sup>Designation of a period as 'pre-colonial', 'colonial' and 'post-colonial' is entirely arbitrary (cf. fn 17 below), and in the case of the Malay world, differs according to regions and colonial powers.

<sup>2</sup>Such widespread geographical mobility extended well into the eve of full British control of the administration of states in the Malay Peninsula (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 183-184).

it as being comprised of separate principalities of differing religio-political persuasions. As one historian of the subject has clarified:

The coming of Islam to Malaya was part of a vaster movement, the penetration of Islam into the world of South East Asia..... Islam in Malaya has to be seen in connection with happenings in Sumatra and Java. (P.E. Josselin de Jong, as quoted in Fatimi 1963: 3, from Radio Malaya broadcast, 1956).

For scholars investigating the coming of Islam to the Malay world, three inter-related issues have concerned them most: the period of Islam's arrival, the ethnographic origins of the earliest Muslim settlers, and the indigenous peoples' motives for and medium of conversion i.e. the questions of 'when', 'who' and 'how' respectively (Coatalen 1981: 102, Hooker 1983a: 3). Based on available historical sources, researchers have settled for the end of the thirteenth century to the early fourteenth century as the period when Islam started to gain a foothold among local communities in the Malay world (*ibid.*, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 11). Evidence is pointed of Marco Polo's description of Perlak in north Sumatra as a Muslim kingdom in 1292 (Fatimi 1963: 8, Arnold 1961: 371); the year 1297 or 1307 inscribed on the tombstone of Malik al-Salih, the first Muslim ruler of Samudra-Pasai (Fatimi 1963: 9-11); and the famous *Batu Bersurat* (stone inscription) of Terengganu, which appears to be an edict on Islamic law, bearing the date 1303 or 1386-87 (*ibid.*: 60-64, Paterson and Blagden 1924, Rauf 1964: 78). Chinese sources have related how two envoys sent by the Samudra ruler to China in 1282 bore the Muslim names of Hasan and Sulayman, proving that Muslims were already playing a vital role in the state affairs of the Samudra-Pasai kingdom (Fatimi 1963: 10, 14). While this seems to corroborate the claim of the **Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai** (Pasai Chronicles) of Pasai being the first country in the region to accept Islam (*ibid.*: 37), mention needs to be made of the account of Merah Silu's i.e. Malik al-Salih's conversion as found in the **Sejarah Melayu** (Malay Annals), which tells how the missionary expedition to Samudra, led by a certain Sheikh Ismail and Sultan Muhammad of Malabar, had on their way converted the heathen peoples of Fansur, Lambri, Aru and Perlak (*ibid.*, Arnold 1961: 371-372, Marrison 1951: 29-31). Further, according to the Achehnese Chronicles, the distinction of having introduced Islam to Acheh c. 1112 lies with an Arab missionary, Sheikh Abdullah Arif, whose disciple, Sheikh Burhanuddin, managed to propagate the new faith down the west coast up to Priaman. The same source also relates how a Sultan Johan Shah, a preacher said to have come from the west,<sup>3</sup> founded a Muslim dynasty in Acheh c. 1204 (Arnold 1961: 370, S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 11, Fatimi 1963:

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<sup>3</sup>Arnold (1961: 370) surmises that 'the west' here would best fit the Coromandel or Malabar coast in southern India, although Arabia and Persia could not be *a priori* ruled out.

38). Through a succession of independent Muslim kingdoms: Samudra-Pasai, Malacca (1403-1511), Aceh (1496-1650) and Johore-Riau (1650-1800), all of whom depended for their prowess upon maritime commerce and control of the seas, a base for the expansion of Islam to the whole archipelago was continually maintained (F.M. Jamil 1988: 21). Nevertheless, as far as the Malay Peninsula was concerned, it was the rise of the Malaccan dynasty that really represented the watershed in the Islamisation process (Hall 1981: 222-235, Andaya and Andaya 1982: 53-55, Johns 1957: 8-9).

What distinguishes the thirteenth century from earlier periods, of which evidence also exists of contacts with Muslim traders on the coasts,<sup>4</sup> is the former's overtly missionary content of communication between the Muslim and the Malay worlds. Previous liaisons seemed to be coloured largely by considerations of trade, notwithstanding the fact that these early trading contacts were undeniably instrumental in convincing local populations and rulers of the merits of the Islamic religion (Tibbetts 1957: 44), for instance through the stability brought about by the implementation of Muslim commercial law and the Muslim traders' own honest business practices (Johns 1984: 117, 1961a: 21). During this stage of 'incubation', as Rauf (1964: 81) calls it, inter-mingling with the local community involved not only commercial interaction, but also inter-marriages, adoption of local customs and languages, and various other associations with local chiefs (Arnold 1961: 369). All of these familiarised the indigenous populations with the sight and practices of Muslims, if not with the tenets of the faith itself. Local perceptions of Islam as a benign, non-alien religion was crucial in setting the stage for the mass conversion of an entire society - a widely acknowledged distinctive feature of the Islamisation of the Malay world (cf. Kahane 1984: 163, Coatalen 1981: 100). The Islamisation process, an uninterrupted phenomenon from the thirteenth to sixteenth century, had such a radical impact upon Malay society so as to be recognised as 'a revolution from within' - a most momentous event in the history of the Malays (S.H. Alatas 1963: 62-63, S.N. Al-

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<sup>4</sup>For example, the Chinese annals record the presence in 674 of a Sumatran Muslim settlement headed by an Arab chief (Arnold 1961: 368). This was the year when Muawiyah (d. 680), founder of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) in Damascus, was reputed to have abortively planned for an invasion of the Malay archipelago (Fatimi 1963: 69). Following a massacre of Arab and Persian settlers in Canton, China c. 877, large numbers of them found refuge in Kalah (or Klang), believed to be situated in present-day Kedah on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia (S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 11). This Kalah had been depicted by several ninth and tenth century Arab historians and geographers, among whom could be named Hasan bin Ahmad Muhallabi, Ya'qubi, Abu Zayd of Siraf, Ishaq ibn Imran, Mas'udi and Abu Dulaf, as a prosperous port-city whose inhabitants spoke Arabic and Persian among others (Tibbetts 1957: 14-22, S.F. Alatas 1985: 164). Chinese records further show how a large proportion of envoys sent by the Hindu kingdom of Srivijaya to China in the tenth to twelfth centuries bore Muslim names (Nakahara 1984: 4-5). Finally, in Java, the gravestone of a Muslim lady by the name of Fatima bears the date 1082 (Fatimi 1963: 38-41), nearly four centuries before the fall of the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit unleashed vigorous proselytisation efforts and mass conversions of natives of the island (Arnold 1961: 388-391).

Attas 1969: 2). The greatest achievement of the wholesale conversion process was that it was effected by sheer means of persuasion and preaching, with barely any use of force or violence (Arnold 1961: 367, 369, 409; Kahane 1984: 164). The decisive step was almost always the conversion of a local ruler (Rauf 1964: 81-82), whereby it has been said that "*people have generally the religion of their kings*" (Ibn Khaldun, **History of the Berbers**, as quoted in Coatalen 1981: 108). The case for the Malay world has been spelt out as follows:

The Malay identifies race with religion, and religion and custom with his ruler. The adoption of Islam by the Malay princes meant, therefore, that in the course of time the whole race became Muslim. (Marrison 1957: 292, also quoted in Fatimi 1963: 88, S.F. Alatas 1985: 169, S.A. Hussein 1988: 70)

The cardinal issue which has confronted historians of the subject is how to explain the sudden intensification of missionary activities to the Far East from the thirteenth century onwards, despite an on-going relationship of at least four centuries between the Muslim and the Malay trading worlds (S.F. Alatas 1985: 164, Coatalen 1981: 109, Milner 1983: 44). Scholars brought up in the Dutch orientalist tradition (cf. section 2.3) have sought answers in terms of extra-religious convenience brought about by the act of conversion. Among them, van Leur has emphasised economic and political advantages that accrued to native rulers via alliances with Muslim merchants; the Malaccan dynasty being portrayed by him as having "*adopted Islam and used it as a political instrument against Indian trade*" (1955: 112; cf. S.F. Alatas 1985: 167-168, Fatimi 1963: 90-92, Coatalen 1981: 106). The above-said alliances were cemented by kinship ties crystallised through strategic inter-marriages (Harrison 1954: 50-51), of which the most classic case cited has been the conversion of the first Malaccan ruler, Parameswara, upon marriage to a daughter of the Sultan of Pasai (Fatimi 1963: 85-87, S.F. Alatas 1985: 169-170, Coatalen 1981: 104).<sup>5</sup> Schrieke (1957: 231-236), in trying to locate parallel developments in the East with the Muslim-Christian conflict initiated by the Western Crusades, suggests the post-Crusade Portuguese expansion eastwards as having provided the impetus for countervailing large-scale proselytisation efforts of Muslim missionaries (cf. S.H. Alatas 1963: 71-73, S.F. Alatas 1985: 168-169, Coatalen 1981: 107-108).

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<sup>5</sup>Scholars differ as to whether Parameswara assumed the name of Megat Iskandar Shah upon his conversion, or whether the Megat Iskandar Shah who married the daughter of the King of Pasai was in actual fact Parameswara's son and eventual successor. The majority of them, however, seem to endorse the former view; see for example Winstedt (1961: 34) who quotes from Tome Pires' **Suma Oriental**, Hall (1981: 225), Marrison (1957: 291), Johns (1957: 8), Rauf (1964: 78) and S.N. Al-Attas (1969: 12). The year of the conversion has been variously put by them at 1404, 1409, 1410 and 1414. For the contrary view, see for instance Nakahara (1984: 8-9), who relies upon Chinese sources.

Overall, however, the theories above seem to have been discredited for their Euro-centric bias, for failing to take the Malay-Indonesian society as the frame of reference from which a historiography of the area can be properly developed (Johns 1961a: 10-12). Syed Hussein Alatas (1963) has pin-pointed the methodological errors of and faulty conceptions held by proponents of the above theories, the implication of which has been a denial of "*an Islamic period with an individuality of its own*" (1963: 62). Syed Naguib Al-Attas (1969: 19) similarly criticises the theories' 'autochthonous' inclinations, by which it was meant that Islam allegedly only changed the outer forms, but not the inner essence and worldview of Malay-Javanese civilisation. Such tendencies naturally result in bold pronouncements to the effect that the impact of Islam in civilising the Malays was judged to be insignificant (cf. chapter 1: 1.4.3, fn. 28). Using Islamic-Malay literature of the period in question as the prime category for investigation, Syed Naguib Al-Attas convincingly shows how Islam effected a wholesale transformation of the spiritual, cultural and intellectual outlook of Malay-Indonesian society, consequently labelling the 'autochthonous' theories of Schrieke and van Leur as "*not established upon firm facts and sound reasoning*" (1969: 5), but based instead on "*superficial observation*" (ibid.: 7).

Such vehement criticisms have left as most credible the theory, originally proposed by Johns in a series of articles (1961, 1961a, 1961b), that it was the sufi<sup>6</sup> missionaries who were primarily responsible for bringing about the mass conversions of peoples of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago from the thirteenth to sixteenth century (cf. S.F. Alatas 1985: 170-172, Fatimi 1963: 23, 93-100). In support, Syed Naguib Al-Attas (1963: 20-21) differentiates between the 'introduction' or 'coming' of Islam as carried out by early merchants and traders, and the subsequent 'establishment' of Islam, made possible only by large-scale propagation efforts of the sufis. He bases his argument upon the dominance of themes connected with philosophical mysticism and metaphysics in colouring religio-intellectual debates and Islamic-Malay literature during the period of Islamisation (S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 26-32; cf. Johns 1961a: 15-17, 1961b: 147ff, 1975: 41ff). The post-thirteenth century timing of the role of the sufis was intimately connected with the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258, which heralded for the *ummah* an era of sufi hegemony during which "*membership of a mystical order was practically synonymous with the profession of Islam*" (Johns 1961a: 14, 1961b: 146). It is thus possible to postulate an exodus of sufis from the heartlands of Islam following the catastrophic Mongol invasions, sparking off an unprecedented flurry of sufi evangelical missions to peripheral lands. This is not to totally discount the role played by the Muslim trading

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<sup>6</sup>The term 'sufi' is used to pertain to practitioners of *tasawwuf*: the spiritual or mystical branch of Islam, also known as sufism. See also fn. 18 below, Chapter 1: fn. 15 and 16, and Chapter 4: fn. 14 and 15

communities after the thirteenth century, for the sufis and their *sheikhs* might as well have accompanied the traders, who themselves might have belonged to any one of the *tariqahs* (sufi orders) (Johns 1961: 40-41).<sup>7</sup>

As to the ethnographic origins of these missionaries, a number of possible places have been suggested by theorists, ranging from Gujarat, southern India, Bengal, Arabia, Persia and even China (Coatalen 1981: 102-103, Hooker 1983a: 4-6). The oldest theory, ascribing a Gujarati provenance of Malay Islam and held by Dutch orientalist of the first half of this century, has been thoroughly refuted by Marrison (1951), who, along with Arnold (1961: 368), proposes coastal southern India, whose Muslims follow the same Shafii school of *fiqh*<sup>8</sup> as the Malays, as the more likely source of Malay Islam. Despite archaeological evidence confirming the region's pre-Malaccan gravestones as owing their origins to Cambay, Gujarat (cf. Othman Md. Yatim 1985: 148), Marrison (1951: 31-34) surmises that they could as well have been brought much later than the dates inscribed on them (cf. Drewes 1985: 9-10, Hooker 1983a: 5-6). On the other hand, Syed Naguib Al-Attas completely rejects an Indian provenance of Malay Islam, arguing instead that:

Any author described as 'Indian' or work as of 'Indian origin' by Western scholars turned out to be actually Arab or Persian, and most of what has been described as Persian has in fact been Arabian, whether considered ethnically or culturally. (S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 25).

In other words, India, Persia and China were merely routes of Arab missionaries, notwithstanding the fact that they might have stayed long enough in these itineraries so as to be accepted and treated as fellow Indians or fellow Persians by the natives of those places. Due to the extreme diversity of views and lack of further conclusive research, the safe option will be to adopt an eclectic view as to the ethnic group responsible for the Islamisation of the Malays, as favoured by Fatimi (1963) and Johns (1975: 39), and despite the former's own theory of a Bengal origin for Malay Islam (Fatimi 1963: 12-23; cf. Drewes 1985: 10-13). As Fatimi later states:

..... **the privilege of being the pioneers in propagating Islam to the peoples of this part of the world is not the monopoly of any one Muslim community**..... the main sources of the older Malaysian culture are (i) China (ii) the Arabian Empire and (iii) the Indo-Pakistan sub-

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<sup>7</sup>On the notion of *tariqah*, generally understood as sufi orders or brotherhoods, see also Chapter 4: fn. 15. For a contrary view to the ones outlined in this paragraph, see Drewes (1985: 14) and Kahane (1984).

<sup>8</sup>Commonly translated as 'Islamic jurisprudence', *fiqh* may be understood in terms of the bodies of rules and regulations which have developed as a result of scholarly interpretations of the *shariah*. Since such interpretations may differ from one scholar to another, Islamic history has witnessed the development of various schools of *fiqh*, only four of which are today recognised in orthodox Sunni Islam. These are the schools founded by Abu Hanifah (d. 767): the Hanafi school, by Malik ibn Anas (d. 798): the Maliki school, by Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafii (d. 820): the Shafii school, and by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855): the Hanbali school. See Ghanem (1983: 31-32, *passim*).

continent. These are also sources of their present faith. (Fatimi 1963: 35-36, emphasis in original)

### 2.3 ISLAM, ADAT AND THE MALAYS: PROBLEMS OF CONCEPTUALISATION

Western scholarship on Southeast Asian Islam was pioneered by Dutch orientalists, whose research was geared towards intellectually justifying colonial domination of subjugated cultures and devising practical guidelines for Dutch colonial policy. In such self-proclaimed 'civilising' missions, the orientalists provided colonial administrations with "*interpretations with which to dispute the natives' perception of Islam*," becoming in effect a tool of imperialism "*for the subversion of Islam*" (Hussain 1990: 25-26). Snouck Hurgronje, whose work, *The Achehnese* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), has been described as "*a watershed in Western knowledge of South-East Asia*" (Ellen 1983: 50), and who embodies the Dutch orientalist tradition *par excellence*, has provided the rationale for orientalism in the following terms:

The more intimate the relations of Europe with the Muslim East become, the more Muslim countries fall under European suzerainty, the more important it is for us Europeans to become acquainted with the intellectual life, the religious law, and the conceptual background of Islam. (Quoted in Said 1978: 256, from Hurgronje's review of Eduard Sachau's *Muhammedanisches Recht*, 1899)

With such considerations in mind, it is hardly surprising that the writings of such orientalists as Schrieke and van Leur were prone to conclude that no profound influence had been effected upon Malay-Indonesian society by the establishment of Islam (cf. section 2.2). Syed Hussein Alatas consequently heaps blame upon Hurgronje for originally proposing and popularising the idea that "*Islam in Indonesia is but only a thin crust formed on the Hinduistic-Indonesian body of beliefs*" (1963: 67). He criticises Hurgronje's contention that Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago was typified more by territorial expansion than inner intensification (ibid.: 68), having been forced at an early age to confront the political challenge of colonialism. The net effect of Hurgronje's ideas is that Malay-Indonesian Islam has allegedly failed to mature to standards as demanded by orthodoxy; its practice characterised instead by a 'syncretic parallelism' between Islam and pre-Islamic Malay

*adat*<sup>9</sup> (S.A. Hussein 1988: 73-74). By this is meant a coexistence of Islamic laws (*hukum syarak*) and customary laws (*hukum adat*) as the 'two forces in Malay society' (Mohd. Din bin Ali 1963), both of which served as "an integral of its culture, both applicable to the entire society, and both perceived as a system by inhabitants of that society" (Josselin de Jong 1960: 203). Studies of Islam in traditional Malay society have consequently been replete with the theme of an irreconcilable conflict between Islam and Malay *adat*, the former being regarded as a source of tension, an alien intrusion into society, a threat upon the Malay social system. As Ellen observes:

..... because a strong plural *adat* tradition was seen as a sure bulwark against a subversive Islam and incipient nationalism, the so-called conflict between *adat* and Islam has been well-reported by ethnographers and others. Indeed, the conflict was at least in part a product of the partiality of colonial governments. For a long time, Islam appeared only to be of interest to anthropologists in so far as it conflicted with *adat*. (Ellen 1983: 69)

On the one hand, it cannot be denied that vestiges of Hinduistic-animistic cultural beliefs and practices have survived in Malay society despite Islamisation. Often cited are the superstitious beliefs in spirits (*semangat*, *penunggu*), ghosts (*hantu*) and *keramat*,<sup>10</sup> and the various rites and magical incantations offered to appease them, including the wearing of amulets (*tangkal*) (Firth 1974: *passim*, Husin Ali 1985: 295-296, Winstedt 1961: 18-25). Hence the importance of the role played in traditional Malay society by the *pawang* (shaman / spirit-healer / exorcist) and *bomoh* (witch-doctor) (Firth 1974: 209-217, Raybeck 1974: 238ff, Nash 1974: 60-62, 78-81; Husin Ali 1985: 298-300). Customs inherited from a pre-Islamic past have also continued to pervade the Malay ceremonies of the various life-stages, viz. pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, marriages and funerals (Winstedt 1961: 28-29). Despite many indigenous beliefs and practices being recast in Islamic language,<sup>11</sup> one cannot help but conclude that the implications of adhering to them borders upon a denial of

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<sup>9</sup>*Adat* here refers to the body of pre-Islamic indigenous customs and traditions as inherited from the practice of forefathers and handed down to posterity by example. For a sample of studies of the relationship between *adat* and Islam, see Josselin de Jong (1960), Mohd. Din bin Ali (1963), Mahathir Mohamad (1963), Hooker (1974) and Taufik Abdullah (1985).

<sup>10</sup>*Keramat* comes from the Arabic *karamah*, meaning originally a miracle performed by a *wali* (saint / holy man). However, in traditional Malay society, it has come to assume the meaning of a deceased saint, or his grave, believed to have magical powers by which he / it can intercede on behalf of the living. Consequently, offerings, physical and spiritual, are made at such tombs. A further distortion of the word has *keramat* to mean any such object or animal with the said powers (Rauf 1964: 89, Firth 1974: 206-209).

<sup>11</sup>For example, Winstedt (1961: 31-32, 205-207) shows how some magic charms have acquired the Islamic idiom by a final recitation of the *kalimah shahadah* i.e. 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger', despite an earlier invocation of a Hindu deity. In some cases, the Hindu god or goddess is merely replaced by Islam's infidel *jimms*.

Islamic monotheism. The very fact of their existence, albeit in watered-down versions, seems to reflect the syncretic nature of Malayan Islam.

On the other hand, the point about syncretism must not be stretched too far as to emphasise that when pitted against Islam, it is *adat* which prevails, thus denigrating the role of Islam in Malay society. Yet this is exactly what scholars writing in the Dutch orientalist tradition have been prone to do. Viewing Islam as a timeless socio-cultural system, they fail to recognise the ability of Islam to accommodate pre-Islamic cultures so long as the latter do not run contrary to Islamic principles. Even the slightest trace of *adat* is interpreted by them as demonstrating the syncretic quality of the local version of Islam; not as evidence of the richness of the Islamic social system in not limiting itself to social norms of seventh-century desert Arabia and being able to present Islam 'with a Southeast Asian / Malayan face'. This point has been stressed by an Indonesian Muslim scholar:

The continuation of pre-Islamic ceremonies cannot be said to be contrary to Islam, for this religion also recognizes the teachings, opinions and traditions of non-Islamic people so long as these do not violate its *hudud* (limits, regulations)..... (fn.: Western writers usually do not distinguish this characteristic of Islam when discussing Islam in Java or in Southeast Asia in general. They, in general, stress the existence of Islamic syncretism without, however, making use of a consistent criteria, i.e. the principles of Islamic teachings.) (Deliar Noer 1975: 52-53)

Hence, for instance, undue emphasis has been laid by Western scholars upon the retention of Hindu themes in old Malay literature, when it is the success of missionaries in presenting the ancient epics with an Islamic idiom, for example by the substitution of Hindu heroes with Muslim warriors, that deserves mention (cf. Winstedt 1961: 139-148). The continuing use of Sanskrit terms in the religious terminology of the Malays, for example *syurga* (paradise), *neraka* (hell), *agama* (religion), *puasa* (fasting), *surau* (prayer house) and the inscription of *Dewata Mulia Raja* instead of *Allah Taala* on the *Batu Bersurat* of Terengganu, have all been cited to stress the Hindu legacy on the Malays (cf. Hooker 1983a: 6-7), when the more significant fact is that their usage after the advent of Islam has been devoid of any Hindu content whatsoever and is relevant only in so far as the words refer to Islamic teachings.

A perusal of such works further reveal the tendency of their authors to ascribe the perceived syncretism to the mystical form of Islam brought by Indian sufi missionaries whose own religious beliefs were allegedly much tainted with pantheistic ideas as inherited from their Hindu past (cf. Winstedt 1961: 31-33). An analysis of seventeenth century Malay sufi tracts concludes that they are "of the

*heretical pantheistic type,*" suggesting the possibility of "*the cultural background of the Malays predispos[ing] them towards the intellectual form of pantheism*" rooted in the teachings of the tracts (Johns 1957: 10-11). Another study, citing Professor Gibb,<sup>12</sup> argues that it was sufism's transcendentalist interpretations of religion that "*gave to Islam its amazing ability to tolerate and adapt to the beliefs and practices of the pre-Muslim society*" (Means 1969: 266; cf. Means 1982: 446-447). One historian could even compare the *aurad* (prayer formulae) of the sufis with "*pagan incantations*" and the *zauk* (mystical ecstasy) they experience during *dhikr* (remembrance of God) sessions with "*the seance of the local shaman*" (Rauf 1964: 83), later going so far as to claim that "*the Hindu idea that contact with the supernatural is to be sought through austerity and deprivation served as a prototype of the Sufi practice which came with Islam*" (ibid.: 87-88). It is a pity that even Malay scholars have uncritically adopted the above views, blaming sufism for the perpetuation of *adat* in Malay society, and implying that its sufi origins constitute a weakness rather than a strength of Malayan Islam (cf. Mohd. Taib Osman 1985: 44-45, S.A. Hussein 1988: 73, F.M. Jamil 1988: 16-17).

It is observed that except for Johns, none of the other writers mentioned above have studied or researched into sufism as a specific discipline. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that such anti-sufi views as outlined above stem from their proponents' lack of knowledge about sufism; their analyses being based more on conjecture rather than hard evidence. A completely different perspective of sufism and its implications in pre-colonial Malaya have been put forward by Syed Naguib Al-Attas, whose extensive theoretical and empirical research on Malay sufism, as borne out by the brilliant works he has produced on the subject (1963, 1966, 1970), arguably makes him the leading contemporary authority on the subject.

While admitting the nature of Islam that came to Malaya as "*couched in Sufi metaphysics*" (1969: 5), Al-Attas does not see this as having enforced the syncretic quality of Malayan Islam. On the contrary, sufism has had the opposite effect of inaugurating an unprecedented rise of rationalism and intellectualism which in turn revolutionised "*the Malay-Indonesian world view, turning it away from a crumbling world of mythology..... to the world of intelligence, reason and order*" (ibid.). Much of the misunderstanding of the role of sufism in conditioning the worldview of

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<sup>12</sup>Professor Gibb's lengthy comment goes as follows: "*There is in the mental makeup of nearly all the Muslim peoples a strong infusion of what we may call the 'raw material of pantheism'. I mean the heritage of primitive animism, the belief in spirits, in jinns, in afrits..... And though some of these animistic beliefs and practices were definitely rejected by Islam and remained outside it, yet a certain number of them gained admission and eased the way for the worship of saints and 'marabouts'; the belief in a hierarchy of living walis, who exercise divinely conferred powers in this world; and other such elements, which were taken up into Sufi thought*" (Quoted in Means 1969: 267, 1982: 446; from Gibb, H.A.R., *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1947, pp. 22-23).

neophytes stems from scholars' own prejudiced view of sufism as allegedly being derived more from exogenous sources than from Islam itself; sufism and orthodoxy being perceived in mutually incompatible terms (cf. fn. 18). In the case of Malaya, it was argued that the Hinduistic-Vedantic elements of Indian sufism blended well with popular Malay animistic beliefs. Al-Attas warns against bringing the presumed causal relationship between sufism and indigenous beliefs too far:

Sufism, without a doubt, was born of Islam, and drew its inspiration from the principles already stated in the Qur'an and from the Traditions of the Prophet. It has been the tendency of most European writers on the subject to attribute the growth, origin and development of Sufism to extraneous sources such as Christian, neo-Platonic, or Vedantic. It does not follow that when one doctrine is almost identical with respect to its growth, development and traits with that preceding it, that that doctrine must therefore have been derived from the preceding one. (S.N. Al-Attas 1963: 4)

Al-Attas (1963: 23-29; cf. 1970) shows, by a careful reading of them, that the authors of the sufi tracts described by Johns (1957: 10) as "*heretical pantheistic*" were in actual fact as 'orthodox' as their orthodox persecutors, and the misjudgement of them as 'heterodox' and 'pantheist' might have stemmed from an unfortunate misinterpretation of their texts. Al-Attas twists the causal relationship in such a way as to argue that pagan beliefs and *adat* have survived in Malay society not because of, but despite, sufism:

Sufi metaphysics did not come, contrary to what is generally held even by some Muslim scholars, to **harmonize** Islam with traditional beliefs grounded in Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and other autochthonous traditions; it came to **clarify the difference** between Islam and what they had known in the past. (S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 30, emphasis in original)

The persistence of such traditional beliefs and *adat* must be understood instead in the sufis' gradualist approach at proselytisation. The *tariqahs* that spread Islam into Malaya have largely been of the peaceful and non-militant variety (S.N. Al-Attas 1963: 98-99); tolerance presumably being one of their major traits. But tolerance of pre-Islamic beliefs is not identical to embracing them; the term 'tolerance' denoting a patient forbearance in the face of an object or an act fundamentally categorised as 'wrong' and thus disapproved of (G. Basri 1988: 298-299). Islamisation being a continuous process, it cannot be expected that the pagan Malays be turned overnight into orthodox Muslims. If the sufis who had come to Malaya had not considered reasons of strategy and expediency in their missionary activities, local reaction to them might have proved disastrous, as exemplified by the massacre of two thousand *ulama* in interior Java during the reign of Mangkurat I (1645-1677) (Johns

1961b: 154). Lessons in strategic proselytisation were apparently not learned by the early Christians who came to the Malay world; for despite enjoying the patronage of colonial governments, they failed to win significant numbers of converts among Malay peoples due to their rapacity and intolerance (Northcott 1991: 49, Mehmet 1990: 24; cf. Arnold 1961: 404-406). Nor were they learned by the nineteenth century Sumatran Padris,<sup>13</sup> whose relatively violent methods to convert the native Bataks served only to repel the latter even further (ibid.: 373). In this respect, Johns, despite his less than accurate characterisation of the Malay mystics he studied, rightly observes, with reference to Java, but relevant also to Malaya:

..... a characteristic of the Sufi Apostolate was a readiness to build on the past and to enroll elements of local belief and custom into the service of Islam<sup>14</sup>..... it can be fairly asserted that an Islam of the Wahhabi<sup>15</sup> type would have made little impact on Java for the same reasons as the modernist Masjumi party, spiritual descendant of the Wahhabis, has been a comparative failure there. (Johns 1961a: 19)

This is not to deny that some *tariqahs* did later degenerate, leading to the intentional incorporation, as opposed to the unavoidable toleration, of non-Islamic elements into their practices.<sup>16</sup> This usually occurred after the demise of the early founders of the orders, and the assumption of their leadership by followers not well-versed in the orthodox tenets of the faith. But this happened in their degenerate, not original, form. In any case, it is such *bid'ah* (innovations) that Islamic revivalists and reformists have all along concentrated their efforts in combating.

## 2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM UPON PRE-COLONIAL MALAY STATE AND SOCIETY

Once we have desisted from conceptually stereotyping traditional Malay society in terms of a perennial conflict between *adat* and Islam, we shall be in a

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<sup>13</sup>The so-called Padri movement was launched in Minangkabau in 1803 when three pilgrims returning from Makkah began to zealously introduce reforms along the same lines as the Arabian *Wahhabis*, whose militant puritanism undoubtedly served as an inspiration to them (Reid 1967: 272, Taufik Abdullah 1985: 96-97, Arnold 1961: 375-376, Dobbin 1974).

<sup>14</sup>Syed Farid Alatas has qualified this statement by adding "*as long as they do not contradict Qur'anic revelation*" (1985: 171).

<sup>15</sup>On *Wahhabism* and the *Wahhabis*, see below, fn. 54, and Chapter 5: fn. 27.

<sup>16</sup>However, they were quick to be replaced by the 'genuine' *tariqahs*. For instance, Taufik Abdullah (1985: 98) relates how in mid-nineteenth century, the *Shattariyah* order, once the most influential in Minangkabau, had to make way for the more orthodox-oriented *Naqsybandiah* order "*towards the perfection of the Islamic society*" once corrupt forms of mysticism began to creep into its practices.

position to appreciate the impact of Islam upon pre-colonial<sup>17</sup> Malay political life. At first, this may be difficult to see, for the establishment of Islam in Malay society did not mean Islamic institutions superimposing themselves on existing structures such as to nullify the prevailing social order. Sufi missionaries had as their priority the social transformation of Malay society, not the political metamorphosis of the Malay state; for the former could well work its way towards the latter, albeit gradually, but the imposition of an Islamic state, as defined by the prevalence of Islamic structures and institutions, upon an unwilling population yet to fathom the basic tenets of the faith, would only invite a counter-productive backlash. It was not the case that the sufis neglected politico-legal matters i.e. the *shariah*, because they believed them to be peripheral *vis-à-vis* rituals and spiritual matters,<sup>18</sup> as has been implied by certain authors (cf. Means 1969: 266-267, N.M. Yasin 1994: 38); rather, it was a matter of their engaging in strategic proselytisation. In propagating the faith to the *rajās* (kings) and rulers of the Malay world, they did not expect a swift wholesale transformation of the state into one resembling the Prophet's Islamic state of Madinah; rather, they calculated that the Malay masses, still imbued with the Hindu concept of *dewaraja* i.e. of the king being the incarnation of a deity, would follow without hesitation the

<sup>17</sup>In this study, the term 'pre-colonial' is used to designate the period before the establishment of British colonial rule, as indicated by the formal recognition of British Residents or Advisors in the different Malay states. The dates differ from state to state, but the practice of accepting British Residents was inaugurated by the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, which extended British control over Perak. The analysis does not extend to the Straits Settlements, all of which were without traditional Malay rulers and were acquired by the British much earlier: Penang in 1786, Singapore in 1819 and Malacca in 1824. Although the era of colonial rule in Malaya was inaugurated by the Portuguese occupation of Malacca in 1511, the hegemony of the Portuguese and then the Dutch (1641-1824) did not extend beyond Malacca and thus did not affect the politico-legal structure of the other Malay states.

<sup>18</sup>It has been almost conventional to stereotype sufism and orthodoxy as representing two opposing poles; the sufis emphasising spirituality while the orthodox *ulama* stressing legal matters (cf. Hiro 1988: chapter 2). This framework is unsatisfactory because it lumps all forms of sufism into the 'ecstatic' kind as represented *par excellence* in the Malay world by the Achehnese, Hamzah Fansuri (d. 1600) and Shamsuddin Al-Sumatrani (d. 1630), whose intellectual forefathers were the Andalucian mystic Muhyuddin Ibnu Arabi (d. 1240), Nuruddin Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492) and Abd al-Karim Al-Jili (d. 1428); Al-Jili's doctrine of the *Insan al-Kamil* (Perfect Man) having an everlasting impact upon the theosophical doctrines of Malay sufism (Johns 1957, Milner 1983: 39-43, S.N. Al-Attas 1963: 5-29). It disregards the fact that from its early days sufism also had its 'sober' variety as systematised by the Persian Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who has been credited with not only reconciling sufism with orthodoxy, but also with elevating sufism "to an exalted position within the fold of 'orthodoxy'" (ibid.: 9; cf. Hiro 1988: 32). In the Malay world, Al-Ghazali's sufi doctrines had held sway by the eighteenth century, as shown by the widely taught translations and commentaries of his works done by such Malay sufis as Abd al-Rauf Al-Sinkli (d. 1693) and Abd al-Samad al-Palembani (Bousfield 1983: 126, Johns 1984: 128, Rauf 1964: 88). The legendary Kelantanese sufi and religious teacher-cum-reformer, Tok Kenali (d. 1933), was also greatly influenced by the teachings of Al-Ghazali (Abdullah Al-Qari Haji Salleh 1974: 87, 99; Abdul Ghani Said 1993: 114). As a final observation, John Bousfield's conclusion, made after a thorough examination of several Malay sufi tracts of both the 'ecstatic' and 'sober' varieties, is instructive: "..... people of *tassawuf* always stress that adherence to *shariah* is essential. One cannot follow the Path without *shariah* for the latter is the boundary of the path. The sufi who leaves *shariah* has also left the Path. The two, *shariah* and *tassawuf* are inseparable. The 'outer' and 'inner' of a unity. We find members of *tariqah* insisting that any student must first be well-grounded in *tafsir*, *fikh*, *usul'l-dinn* and *tauhid* before beginning the study of *tassawuf*" (Bousfield 1983: 126).

example set by their leaders and hence speeding up the pace of their being brought into the fold of Islam. Proselytisation of the rulers, far from being an end in itself, served as a means towards large-scale missionary activities. The missionaries did not seek a revamp of the old order by taking over the reins of government; they were rather content to see the evolution of society towards an Islamic order going hand in hand with widespread theoretical and practical apprehension of Islamic principles.

Hence, not only were the basic structures of the pre-colonial Malay state retained throughout the period of Islamisation; but being recast in Islamic idiom, they also acquired a newly-found political legitimation.<sup>19</sup> Divine kingship was merely replaced by the concept of rulers as the 'shadow of God on earth' (*zilullahi fil 'alam*);<sup>20</sup> their positions being variously referred to as 'sultans', 'caliphs' or 'Yang diPertuan' (Milner 1983: 35-36, Ismail Hamid 1982: 275-276, S.A. Hussein 1988: 76). The aura of sanctity surrounding the institution of kingship did not disappear, as shown by the elaborate ceremonial practices during the installation of a Malay sultan - full of distinctive regalia and overlaid with symbols that used to colour pre-Islamic royal rituals (Winstedt 1961: 65-69, Milner 1983: 31-33). Such grandeur, still to be observed today, was undoubtedly a far cry from the practice of the Righteous Caliphs,<sup>21</sup> and virtually rendered insignificant any Islamic content of such ceremonies, such as the utterance of the verse "*We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth*" (Quran XXXVIII: 26) by a court official upon enthronement (Roff 1967: 68, S.A. Hussein 1988: 77). The pyramidal structure of the traditional Malay state remained intact, with state officials, disproportionately composed of aristocrats and nobles, carrying such pre-Islamic titles as 'Bendahara', 'Temenggong', 'Shahbandar' and 'Orang Besar'; and still commanding the absolute loyalty of their fiefs (Winstedt 1961: 63-90). In terms of legal systems, the contradictions between the *shariah* and indigenous legal digests of pre-colonial Malay states have been documented by

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<sup>19</sup>This act of legitimising authority was actually in concurrence with the prevailing practice of *Sunni ulama* in the Middle East core since the Umayyad dynasty inaugurated the monarchical system of government in 661. This was based on the consensus that bad government was better than no government, which would lead to anarchy and to the detriment of the *ummah*. See Mortimer (1982: 36-38) and Ayubi (1991: 14-16).

<sup>20</sup>In traditional Malay society, it was believed that rulers possessed *daulat* - a pre-ordained right over their subjects, whereby any act of insubordination against them, however unjust they were, would incur the wrath of gods (or 'Allah' after the advent of Islam), such that rebels were consigned to eternal damnation. The belief gave Malay rulers an aura of invincibility and undoubtedly contributed to the steadfastness to the principle of blind loyalty to them (cf. fn. 27 below; cf. R. Soenarno 1960: 1). Such damnation purportedly took its toll upon one Megat Seri Rama, who, according to one version of *Sejarah Melayu*, after killing the tyrannical Sultan Mahmud of Johore in 1699, lived in agony for the remaining years of his life, with the inside of his feet's wound growing grass (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 77-78, S.H. Alatas 1968: 581-582, fn. 5).

<sup>21</sup>The Righteous Caliphs (*Khulafa ar-Rashidin*) refer to the four successive caliphs who ruled after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 633. They were Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (d. 635), Umar Al-Khattab (d. 644), Uthman ibn Affan (d. 656) and Ali ibn Abi Thalib (d. 661).

Winstedt (ibid.: 91-119). It is related, for example, how the Pahang digest, written under the auspices of Sultan Abd al-Ghafar Mahyuddin Shah (reigned 1592-1614), prescribed three hundred and sixty different kinds of tortures as penalties for traitors (ibid.: 102); how the crimes of homicide and felony merely incurred for the offender fines under the Ninety-Nine Laws of Perak (ibid.: 103); and how under the Malacca digest, those guilty of treason might have themselves scalped or their tongue cut off (ibid.: 100), while those who don the royal colour of yellow might incur the death penalty (ibid.: 99). On the whole, as far as the Malay legal digests were concerned, they continued to be permeated by the influence of the two major sets of customary laws, viz. *Adat Perpatih* (matrilineal law / law of ministers) - prevalent among the Sumatran Minangkabaus and their descendants in Negeri Sembilan, and *Adat Temenggong* (patriarchal law / law of the Minister for War and Police) (ibid.: 91). Both sets of laws have been described by one writer as "*mostly either non-Islamic or un-Islamic*" (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 13).

While all the evidence above apparently confirms the 'failure' of Islam to extirpate traces of indigenous customs and traditions in the politico-legal structure of pre-colonial Malay states, it cannot be necessarily concluded that "*the influence of Islam upon the Malays in general in the early Malay states was not very profound*" (F.M. Jamil 1988: 22). Firstly, in concurrence with the policy of gradual change stressed by the sufi missionaries, evidence exists of a gradual movement towards the politico-legal structure of the Malay states becoming increasingly Islamic, while tolerating native rules and customs which "*could be reconciled with the general juridical principles of Islamic law*" (Ismail Hamid 1982: 278). It has been reported that Sultan Iskandar Thani of Aceh (reigned c. 1636-41) was praised by the author of a major religious tract, **Bustan al-Salatin**,<sup>22</sup> for abolishing the requirement for litigants to take oaths by placing their hands in boiling oil and licking red-hot steel (Winstedt 1961: 104). There is no reason to suppose that similar developments did not occur in the Peninsular Malay states as well. A colonial administrator of British Malaya is said to have remarked: "*Moslem [sic] law would have ended in becoming the law of Malaya had not British law stepped in to check it*" (R.J. Wilkinson, as quoted in S.A. Hussein 1988: 78). This echoed the common judgement among the Islamic-oriented that had it not been for the Western colonial intervention, the indigenous systems, being "*embryonic Islamic states*," were destined to develop towards the ideal of an Islamic state (ibid.).

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<sup>22</sup>The author is identified as Nuruddin Al-Raniri (d. 1666) (M.N. Monutty 1989: 23, Taufik Abdullah 1986: 86-87), the Gujarati-born chief *qadi* under whose advice the mystical works of Hamzah Fansuri and Shamsuddin Al-Sumatrani, a former *Sheikh al-Islam* of Aceh, were denounced as heretical and thereby consigned to the flames (ibid., S.N. Al-Attas 1963: 22-28, 1969: 16; Johns 1984: 122).

Always acknowledging the possibility of changes towards the better, the Malay legal digests should not be examined as static documents. Interpretations of the digests differ according to which manuscripts are scrutinised, and which aspects of them, such as their trend towards the adoption of Islamic norms or their retention of unIslamic regulations, the scholar wishes to highlight. Hence, Winstedt (1961: loc. cit), Gullick (1965: 139) and Means (1969: 268-269) came to the conclusion, based upon an examination of the legal codes of some states, that Islam played a negligible role in the shaping of the pre-colonial Malay state, belying any claim of it to be a 'state religion'. On the other hand, Ismail Hamid (1982), Norhashimah Mohd. Yasin (1994) and others,<sup>23</sup> by a similar process of inquiry, have presented a completely different scenario. Ismail Hamid, for instance, claims that "*the role of Islam was to lessen the force of the traditional customs which regulated political and legal affairs*" (1982: 277) and "*Adat Temenggong, as a school of customary law, has been almost completely influenced by Islamic law*" (ibid.: 278). Research by Norhashimah Mohd. Yasin (1994: 32) has further revealed that only in criminal laws did indigenous elements predominate in the Malacca legal digests - the precursor of legal digests of all other states, whereas in other areas, the basic law was formed by the *shariah* (cf. Milner 1983: 27). After examining legal digests of seven other states in pre-colonial Malaya, she maintains that Islam was *de facto* a 'state religion', having observed that:

- (a) Islam was the basis of law in most of the Malay states
- (b) There existed Islamic judicial officials such as *Qadi* and *Mufti*<sup>24</sup>
- (c) Islamic elements were contained in the private as well as public laws of the traditional Malay states prior to British colonial rule. Even though there were also provisions of pre-Islamic and customary elements in the legal system, Islam was given much emphasis and consideration. (N.M. Yasin 1994: 36)

Furthermore, the approach of concentrating on structures and institutions, although enabling us to conjure a general picture of the ideological orientation of the pre-colonial Malay state, may be less useful in the more important exercise of unravelling the extent of Islam's influence upon Malay society. In this, we presume that institutional and structural developments in a polity do not necessarily reflect contemporaneous ideological trends dominant among its members. This relates closely with our previous observation of sufi missionaries working from the grassroots in their gradualist 'bottom-up' approach of Islamic propagation. As for their approach to the upper echelons of society, they were content to serve as advisors to

<sup>23</sup>See the authors cited in N.M. Yasin (1994: 31).

<sup>24</sup>This constitutes a direct refutation of claims made by Gullick (1965: 139), Means (1969: 269) and S.A. Hussein (1988: 77) of the absence of the institution of *Qadi* in Malay states prior to British colonial rule.

rulers,<sup>25</sup> guiding them in the tenets of the faith and suggesting ways and means of gradually incorporating Islamic principles in the running of affairs of the state. As decision-making was still in the hands of the rulers, the extent of the state operating in conformity with the *shariah* depended on their and other state functionaries' commitment to Islam.<sup>26</sup> It is when the rule of a sultan departs significantly from the *shariah*, such as when the advice of the *ulama* are ignored, or when the *ulama* as a social institution loses the favour of the ruler, or when the *ulama* themselves neglect their public role of educating society; that the sultan and his ruling elites become oppressive and society degenerates to the morally reprehensible state as lucidly described by the nineteenth century Malay traveller-cum-writer, Abdullah bin Abd al-Kadir Munshi, in his celebrated **Kesah Pelayaran Abdullah** (The Story of Abdullah's Voyage) (ibid.: 38, 41-43; Shahrudin Maaruf 1984: 27-34). Similar accounts depicting a society in which vices and brutality prevailed have also been chronicled by the authors of **Sejarah Melayu** and **Misa Melayu**, both of which tell of conditions of Malay socio-political life in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries respectively (ibid.). Within such a society, which could be properly labelled 'feudal', values and practices which Islam came to eradicate such as blind loyalty to the ruler,<sup>27</sup> indolence, indulgence in futile forms of entertainment (mainly opium-smoking, gambling and cock-fighting), excessive emphasis on martial prowess at the expense of intellectual progress, and lascivious and rapacious behaviour; re-emerged.<sup>28</sup> We would also witness a virtual absence of implementation with regard to Islamic forms of arbitration and punishment, especially when disputes involved members of the ruling elite as an interested party (N.M. Yasin 1994: 37-38, Means 1969: 269). It was the

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<sup>25</sup>The most illustrious examples are those of the Achehnese sufi missionaries-cum-*ulama*, Shamsuddin Al-Sumatrani and Nuruddin A-Raniri (cf. fn. 22 above), both of whom served as role advisors to Sultan Iskandar Muda (reigned 1607-36) and Sultan Iskandar Thani (reigned 1636-41) respectively. It is also related how Malaccan sultans took a particular interest in sufi questions and referred their theological problems to the *ulama*, sometimes specifically sending envoys to seek explanations from them (Johns 1975: 41, Milner 1983: 40-41).

<sup>26</sup>There have been instances of Malay sultans acting earnestly to enforce Islamic forms of justice and the rule of law. For example, the **Sejarah Melayu** tells how the legendary night patrols of the Malaccan Sultan Alauddin Ri'ayat Shah (reigned 1477-88) and other stringent measures to enforce security had managed to virtually wipe out theft; an achievement so noble that some Malay writers have compared him with Caliph Umar Al-Khattab (Ismail Hamid 1982: 276; cf. Shahrudin Maaruf 1984: 106)

<sup>27</sup>Hussin Mutalib (1990: 12) explains that the feudal principle of blind loyalty, as enshrined in the Malay proverb '*pantang Melayu menderhaka!*' (it is un-Malay to rebel) was transformed by Islam to a conditional clause of obedience: '*Raja adil raja disembah, raja zalim raja disanggah!*' (A just king is obeyed, an unjust one is challenged!). An example of the first principle in operation is demonstrated by the episode in **Sejarah Melayu** when Bendahara Mutahir of Malacca, having been falsely accused of treason and denied a fair trial, castigates his son for wanting to resist the royal command of execution, calling such an action treacherous, a disgrace to his ancestors and alien to the way of the Malays (S.H. Alatas 1968: 581, Shahrudin Maaruf 1984: 31-32).

<sup>28</sup>For a discussion of feudalism as it pertains to pre-colonial Malay society, in which such values as mentioned above predominate, and its legacy upon the political practices of modern Malays, see S.H. Alatas (1968) and Shahrudin Maaruf (1984).

case of Islamic law, albeit in partial form, not operating because it was not in the interest of the people entrusted with the task, being individuals with meagre understanding of and scanty commitment to the faith, to do so. The proper yardstick in appraising to what extent a society is Islamic is the degree of 'Islamicity' of its members, not its institutions.

In eschewing the approach which focuses on the nature of institutions to gauge the level of the influence of Islam in Muslim states, we have the support of Milner (1983). Milner criticises "*Gullick and others*" for adopting "*a too narrow definition of Islam that they judged the religion as having had little political impact*" in pre-colonial Malay states (1983: 23). Based on an examination of the influence of Persian notions of kingship and sufic ideas of leadership in shaping the ideological worldview of Southeast Asian Muslims, Milner cautions against necessarily attaching to them labels such as 'heterodox' and 'bad' despite their "*rejection of the sharia[h]-minded's' definition of the Islamic state*" (ibid.: 42-43). He cites the fourteenth century Arab traveller Ibn Battuta as having refused to depict the Malays as "*spiritually lax*" (ibid.). While submitting to Gullick that "*sharia[h] law was not effective law in the pre-colonial period,*" he aptly reminds us that "*the prevailing political culture of the medieval Islamic world was appropriated by Muslim South-East Asians who came to consider Islam as their 'state religion'*" (ibid.: 48), implying thereby how inappropriate it would be for us to exclude pre-colonial Malay society from the Islamic community of nations just because of the apparent incorporation of pre-Islamic elements in the running of their polities.

Considering the importance attached by missionaries to educating the masses rather than Islamising state institutions, it would not be inappropriate to suggest that it was in the field of Islamic education that the influence of Islam upon Malay society has been most profound. Islam clarified for the Malays the nature of Being and laid the philosophical foundations for the intellectual, rationalistic and internationalistic spirit in their quest for knowledge (S.N. Al-Attas 1969: 28-30). It was in the period of Islamisation that translation works and philosophical treatises, previously written for a select audience at royal courts, were produced in abundance by Malay authors (ibid.: 6), and taught widely to the masses via the *pondok*<sup>29</sup> education system. Thus,

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<sup>29</sup>Literally meaning 'huts' and originally from the Arabic *funduq* (place of temporary residence), *pondoks* refer to religious boarding houses built in the precinct of a *surau* which serves as a teaching centre-cum-prayer house supervised by a *tuan guru* (religious teacher), whose residence is often located within the same vicinity. Students flock around a particular *pondok* (or *pesantren* as it is known in Indonesia) i.e. the overall institution, depending on the reputation of the *guru*. Students are normally self-supporting, and apart from studying the traditional religious sciences of *tawhid* (theology), *fiqh*, *tasawwuf*, *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), *hadith* and Arabic language; students also sometimes undergo vocational and agricultural training. Graduates have the opportunity to further their religious studies in the Middle East, of which the favourite centres of learning for Malay students have always been the Grand Mosque in Makkah (before the *Wahhabi*-Saudi occupation in 1924) and the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Today,

through the medium of education and the emphasis given by their sufi teachers to spiritual equality, the Malays were above all introduced to the essentially democratic character of Islam; a development so vital to restore their self-confidence in the face of their highly differentiated society - a legacy of the Hindu caste system (Ismail Hamid 1982: 279). As one scholar has put it:

Islam gave the small man a sense of his individual worth as a member of the Islamic community. According to Hindu ideology he was merely a creature of lower order than the members of the higher castes. Under Islam he could, as it were, feel himself their equal, or even, in his quality as a Moslem [sic], the superior of such of them. (Wertheim 1959: 196, also quoted in S.A. Hussein 1988: 71, Ismail Hamid 1982: 279)

## 2.5 THE EXPANSION OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE AND ITS POLICIES TOWARDS ISLAM (c. 1874-1940s)

The history of the extension of British suzerainty over the Malay states is one of gradual transfer of sovereignty from more than willing sultans and ruling elites, who, embroiled in internecine factional conflict, unashamedly courted British support to bolster claims to the throne of their preferred royal pretender. Having strayed away from Islamic principles and dictated instead by self-seeking considerations, the politically naive Malay chiefs and nobles, in the face of seemingly benevolent intentions of British colonialists, never gave a thought to the long-lasting implications of their overtures to the latter. They were not long to discover that the largesse they gained by their exploits was purely temporary, and was obtained at the extremely high cost of losing their grip on the Malay masses. When we wonder why there was such minimal popular resistance to increasing British encroachment upon Malay dominions (cf. S.H. Alatas 1968: 579), we ought to reflect on the long periods of victimisation imposed on the masses by their own feudal chiefs and masters. It was not so much that there was an inherent Malay cultural trait of acquiescence to established authority;<sup>30</sup> rather, in the short term, the Malays accurately judged that

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the *pondok* system has largely been taken over by the government and modified into the *madrasah* or *sekolah Arab* (Arabic school) system, whose curricula include modern subjects such as mathematics, English and natural science. However, independent *pondok* institutions can still be found in the northern states of Kelantan and Kedah. For details, see Winzeler (1974: 262-268), Rauf (1965: 22-23), M.N. Monutty (1989: 32-35, 66: fn. 58), Taufik Abdullah (1986) and Abdul Ghani Said (1993: *passim*).

<sup>30</sup>This view of the Malay formed a vital component of the British caricature of the Malay during the colonial days. Consider for example, the following comment by Frederick Weld, Governor of the Straits Settlements in 1880-87: "*I doubt if Asiatics will ever learn to govern themselves; it is contrary to the genius of their race, of their history, of their religious system, that they should. Their desire is a mild, just and firm despotism*" (quoted in Andaya and Andaya 1982: 175). See also a similar remark by Frank Swettenham, who held several colonial posts in British Malaya (*ibid.*: 175-176).

they stood to gain *vis-à-vis* their feudal oppressors, for the coming of the European meant first and foremost the abolition of man-to-man subordination in the form of slavery, debt-bondage and *kerah*<sup>31</sup> (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 160-161; cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990: 16). In the long term, however, colonialism stood to benefit only the colonial masters and their local protégés among a select few of the aristocratic elite. Colonialism left the pre-colonial Malay state existing only in symbolic form; the traditional advantages associated with having a stake in its hierarchical structures of authority hardly remaining.

While the Malays tolerated, not welcomed, British colonialism on account of its instant liberation of the masses and the rewards of personal perks to nobles, the British themselves were motivated primarily by economic rather than humanitarian considerations. The acquisitions of the islands of Penang (1786)<sup>32</sup> and Singapore (1819)<sup>33</sup> were made by the British East India Company in the name of the British monarch, and were followed by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty (1824), adding Malacca to the list of British protectorates.<sup>34</sup> This completed British control of strategic possessions along the Straits of Malacca, and in 1826, Singapore, Malacca and Penang were reorganised as the Straits Settlements, which were administered from British India until 1867, when responsibility for them was taken over by the Colonial Office (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 122). British policy in the years 1824-1874 was generally one of non-interference in native political affairs; the period witnessed no significant territorial advances and has consequently been dubbed a 'half-century of

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<sup>31</sup>*Kerah* refers to a feudal institution by which a *raja* or a noble had complete right to the labour of his subjects, as a result for example of the latter failing to repay arrears long due. By *kerah*, subjects had to fight wars and build palaces for their superiors without remuneration, even if this meant leaving their families in the lurch; failure to abide incurring the penalty of death or property confiscation (Shaharuddin Maaruf 1984: 30-31, N.M. Yasin 1994: 41-42).

<sup>32</sup>Penang was acquired through outright chicanery by Francis Light, an agent of the British East India Company. In return for rights to the island and the adjacent area of what became Province Wellesley (today known as Seberang Perai, and is administratively under the state of Penang), he promised Sultan Abdullah of Kedah an annual compensatory payment and military assistance against future incursions against the state by the Siamese. As it turned out, much to the disillusionment of the sultan who did organise unsuccessful raids to recapture the island, not only was the financial settlement far less than expected, but the promised military protection never materialised; Kedah being directly ruled by the Siamese in 1821-42 (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 107-108, 116-120).

<sup>33</sup>The acquisition of Singapore by Stamford Raffles, also an employee of the East India Company, was effected in exchange for British recognition of Husain, eldest son of Sultan Mahmud who had earlier been passed over in a succession dispute, as legitimate heir to the Johore-Riau throne (Milne and Mauzy 1978: 12, Andaya and Andaya 1982: 110-111). This means of acquiring territory was the first of such kind, and was to become normal practice during the British 'forward movement' later in the century; see also fn. 36 below.

<sup>34</sup>Malacca had already been under temporary British rule in 1795-1819 by a mutual agreement with the Dutch during the Napoleonic wars. After brief repossession by the Dutch (1819-24), the fate of Malacca as a British colony was sealed through the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, by which the two colonial powers agreed to demarcate between themselves spheres of influence in the East Indies; Britain agreeing to withdraw permanently from any area of Java and Sumatra in return for the Dutch relinquishing any remaining claim to territories in the Malay Peninsula (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 122).

inactivity' (cf. Hall 1981: 552-553). Positive activity was restricted to containing Siamese influence beyond the northern belt of the Peninsula<sup>35</sup> and suppressing dangers posed by piracy to the smooth flow of maritime commerce along the Straits (Milne and Mauzy 1978: 12).

The commencement of a British 'forward movement' in the Malay states was closely related to the mid-century economic boom generated by a large-scale increase in tin-mining (*ibid.*: 13). The prevailing socio-political order in the states seemed on the verge of collapse, with incessant succession disputes, feuding between rival chiefs and factions vying for control of revenue-yielding tin-mining areas, and fierce fighting between Chinese secret societies, whose organisations had accompanied the influx of Chinese immigrants attracted by the economic opportunities offered in the tin industry (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 135-150, F.M. Jamil 1988: 23-24). Worse still, such conflicts often inter-mingled, leading to a virtual state of anarchy. Under such conditions, the colonial authorities were continually pressed by British commercial interests, anxious to preserve their investments, to intervene and restore peace and order (Milne and Mauzy 1978: 14). Added to this was the fear generated by active expansionist policies in the East pursued by other European powers: the French, the Dutch but especially the Germans, as a direct impact of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; such that a persistent refusal to join in the 'scramble for colonies' would only mean Britain losing out in the competition for resources vital for industrial expansion (F.M. Jamil 1988: 24, Thio 1957: 46, 48, 52-54).

Thus, on the pretext of ending disturbances, a vigorous policy of intervention in the Malay states was launched; the Straits Settlements providing a convenient base. Under the governorship of Andrew Clarke (1873-75), Selangor, Perak and Sungei Ujong (part of Negeri Sembilan) were brought into the British fold. After a temporary halt in 1875-80, the forward movement was resumed under the energetic governorship of Frederick Weld (1880-87), and under the auspices of Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State for Colonies (Thio 1957: 46-50). Henceforth, despite occasional rebellions, the British never looked back. Pahang and Negeri Sembilan were secured by 1888 and 1895 respectively, and together with Perak and Selangor, formed in 1896 a reasonably centralised administrative structure, the Federated Malay States (FMS).<sup>36</sup> By the 1909

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<sup>35</sup>Through an Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826, the British gave implicit recognition to Siamese influence over the northern states of Kedah (including Perlis at this time), Kelantan and Terengganu.

<sup>36</sup>In the former FMS, the recurring pattern of British intervention showed a striking similarity, consisting of the propping up of one claimant to the throne as the rightful heir, and the legal recognition of his sovereignty in exchange for the imposition of a Resident, whose advice had to be asked for and acted upon on all matters except those concerning Malay religion and custom. In Perak, where the first of such intervention took place, for instance, the British threw their weight behind Raja Abdullah in the face of rival claims by Raja Ismail and Raja Yusuf (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 149-150, 154-155). Having been found guilty of intrigue against the Resident, J.W.W. Birch, who was murdered in 1875, Raja Abdullah and Raja Ismail were later exiled; the British later installing Raja

Anglo-Siamese Treaty, British suzerainty was extended to the northern states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu, and together with Johore, where British hegemony dated from 1914, they were collectively referred to as the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). It is generally understood that in the UMS, British control over state administration was slower to take effect and was less extensive, as symbolised by their having accepted British Advisors instead of Residents, as in the FMS.<sup>37</sup> In reality, however, the impact of British rule upon the politico-legal structures of the FMS and the UMS were very much the same, with the sultans' sovereignty, theoretically preserved, amounting to being no more than titular heads of state acting under the instructions, rather than advice, of British administrators (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 14-15, N.M. Yasin 1994: 51). The overall situation has been summed up by Moshe Yegar:

The greater degree of independence of the Unfederated States was illusory; there, too, administrative policy and direction were the responsibility of British advisers and their European staffs. There were fewer of them than in the Federated States, but their control was as strong. Every key-position was held by a British officer..... Though the sultans met regularly with the British advisers and the State Councils were encouraged to debate Bills, yet they were never allowed to be no more than consultative..... Rulers and chiefs were given pensions and allowances; they might retain their old titles and the outward trappings of power. In legal theory, the Sultan - not the British Crown - was sovereign..... in actuality, his executive powers had vanished..... Instead of the Sultan carrying on the government with the advice of the Resident or adviser, the Resident or adviser carried it on with whatever advice from the Sultan he found necessary; the "advice" had to be "acted upon". (Yegar 1984: 190-191).

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Yusuf as sultan in 1887 (ibid.: 162-163). The primacy of economic motives of the British, despite masked intentions, is clear in one account we have of the case in Pahang. Commenting on the pretext given by the British, viz. the failure of the Sultan to solve the murder case of a British subject, Dr. Eunice Thio authoritatively writes: "*Goh Hui's murder was not the cause of the change from the system of advice by an Agent to one of control by a Resident. It was only a convenient occasion..... The version given by Sir Frank Swettenham, Sir Richard Winstedt and other historians of Malaya is that a Resident was sent to Pahang as the result of the murder of a Chinese British subject. No mention is made of the Pahang Corporation or of the investment interests who stood to gain by the change effected in 1888*" (1957: 73). Thio goes on to quote from John Dickson, the then Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements: "*The financial interests which influential men in England had in that State was much greater..... those interests were able to bring to bear upon the Government at home, and through them on the Government of the Colony, an amount of pressure which it was impossible to resist.....*" (ibid.).

<sup>37</sup>At the time of its creation, the central authority of the FMS was a Federal Secretariat, based at Kuala Lumpur and headed by a Resident-General with authority over all four state Residents and responsibility towards the Governor of the Straits Settlements who was also the High Commissioner for the FMS. Further centralisation took effect with the creation in 1909 of a Federal Council presided over by the High Commissioner, whose personal nominees accounted for four 'unofficial' members of the Council. In 1911, a Chief Secretary officially took up the duties of the now defunct post of Resident-General. See Andaya and Andaya (1982: 183-184) and Milne and Mauzy (1978: 15-16).

On the whole, the extension of British control over the Malay states was accomplished gradually, with a minimal amount of force and was tolerated by the local population on the understanding that it involved indirect rather than direct rule.<sup>38</sup> Members of the old order were duped by material rewards and apparent concessions into believing that they retained existing power-structures and privileges. In their eyes, the most significant concession was as spelt out in Clause VI of the Anglo-Perak Pangkor Treaty of 1874 - a model for subsequent British treaties with other Malay states, that a British Resident's advice "*must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom*" (quoted in Andaya and Andaya 1982: 155, Means 1969: 274, emphasis added). On the one hand, such wording, which on the surface guarantees the preservation and protection of Islam and Malay *adat*, was enough to assure the Malays that the country remained theirs despite the general administration of the state being in British hands, and in spite of the massive influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants to work in British-sponsored tin mines and agricultural plantations (ibid.: 276, Yegar 1984: 192).<sup>39</sup> The sultans' role as 'protector of the faith' assumed unprecedented importance as his

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<sup>38</sup>Indirect rule, as understood by the practice of ruling through local representatives of the colonial government, far from being exceptional to Malaya, was the norm of British imperialism in practically all her colonies.

<sup>39</sup>While both Chinese and Indian contacts with the Malay world predate European colonisation, it was the arrival of them in extremely large numbers in the nineteenth century, welcomed and encouraged by the British, which heralded the introduction of a plural society into Malaya. For the British, their coming was an instantaneous solution to the constant demand for labour of the ever-expanding colonial economy; most of them being employed on contract basis in tin mines and agricultural plantations for the Chinese, and in public works construction projects and the rubber industry for the Indians. Their importance to colonial economic policy was such that the British took the rate of migration, particularly of the Chinese, as a reliable indicator of economic development. Often hailing from poverty-stricken areas of southern China and southern India, most of them came to escape economic hardship, with the intention of returning once fortunes had been made. As such, colonial policy treated them as transients rather than potential permanent residents, even when it became quite clear that unforeseen circumstances, such as protracted indebtedness, compelled many to abandon their original intentions. Even though some did return, particularly in periods of economic depression, they did so only to encourage further immigration by assisting relatives and spreading exaggerated tales of *nouveaux riches* among the migrant communities. By 1931, the indigenous Malays had constituted less than half the population of Malaya. The British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' never devised any integrative mechanism by which the different communities could interact in an environment free from ethnic-bias, except for the English-medium schools, which in any case were out of reach of rural communities. Each ethnic group lived in totally different worlds, separated by occupational category, area of residence, educational stream and political outlook (which for the migrant communities centred on events in their homelands); to add to the already stark differences in religion, language, colour, social structures and cultural habits. As a result, there developed stereotyped perceptions of the three communities, held not only by the British, whose expatriate community developed a tendency towards social exclusivity, but also by each ethnic group with respect to others; the Malays being characteristically viewed as 'lazy', stemming from their persistent refusal to work in the wage-based colonial economy. The hardening of ethnic boundaries was to have disastrous consequences for inter-ethnic relations, developing into near-crisis proportions in the early post-War period. Clearly, the basis for the acute ethnic problems in independent Malaysia had been laid, deliberately, during the colonial era. See Andaya and Andaya (1982: 135-143, 175-181, 200-203), Means (1970: 26-41), Khoo Kay Kim (1981) and Cheah Boon Kheng (1981).

'secular' powers suffered severe curtailment (S.A. Hussein 1988: 79-80, Means 1969: 274). As a result of such protection, for instance, Christian missions were prohibited from proselytising among the Malays (G. Basri 1988: 73), except in the Straits Settlements. Yet, even in these Crown Colonies, and despite the patronage enjoyed by the established church, fear of provoking Malay reaction forestalled any concerted effort to spread the gospel to the Malays (Means 1969: 275-276).<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, legal restrictions upon the jurisdiction of heads of state, to matters concerning only Islam and *adat*, introduced the secular concept of separation between religion and state hitherto alien to the Malay ideological worldview (Ismail Hamid 1982: 277), notwithstanding the gross abuses by the ruling elite and lack of implementation with regard to Islamic injunctions in the pre-colonial Malay state. Islam was effectively privatised, becoming equated in the minds of many with politically insignificant rituals (S.A. Hussein 1988: 80). In their desire to reap maximum material benefits for their own selfish ends, the Malay signatories of treaties with the British willingly submitted to the latter's parochial view of religion, hence divesting Islam of its socio-political and legal content. The rulers themselves were recognised as heads of the Islamic religion in their respective states in the similarly limited manner as the Queen was Head of the Church of England: purely ceremonial titles which never took into account the holders' commitment to upholding the faith. The sultans and the elite sycophants around them failed to comprehend the all-embracing nature of Islam as much as the British, for whom secular principles had been deeply embedded in their political culture, misunderstood it. Worse still, even in the limited spheres of religion and custom, the Malays were to find their lives being intruded into as a result of modern administrative reforms; for as the level of colonial regulation over domestic affairs rose to unprecedented levels, it became increasingly difficult to isolate religion from such domain (F.M. Jamil 1988: 27). In the words of Hussin Mutalib, "*the declared contractual abstinence from the cultural and religious affairs of the Malays proved impossible to uphold in practice*" (1990: 15). In no other area were the secularising policies of the British to impact more significantly upon the Malays and Islam, than in the spheres of Islamic law and administration and education.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>For a brief history of Christian missionary work among the Malays in British Malaya and reasons for their failure, see G. Basri (1988: 80-85) and Means (1982: 460-462).

<sup>41</sup>Hussin Mutalib mentions a third, viz. the emergence of a plural society in Malaya and the "*lack of integrative efforts to bring the different ethnic communities together*" (1990: 15). However, British colonial policy in this domain does not seem to have borne directly upon Islam, at least for the greater part of the period we are concerned with, as much as it affected inter-ethnic relations and the nature of Malay politics on the eve of independence and throughout the post-independence period. In any case, it has been referred to in fn. 39.

As regards developments in the legal sphere, one study has remarked that under British rule, *"the codification of civil and criminal law resulted in the strengthening of Muslim law at the expense of the adat more than ever before"* (F.M. Jamil 1988: 34). Nevertheless, it seems unduly naive of the author to go on and equate the term 'Muslim law' with '*shariah*' (ibid.). A similar confusion of concepts is to be found in Moshe Yegar's claim: *"The British search for legal clarity and exact definitions made for some differentiation between Shari'a[h] and adat, Shari'a[h] being preferred"* (1984: 193). While it was true that Muslim law successfully established itself as the law of general application in the Malay states via a gradual formalisation of its substantive rules into statute (Hooker 1983b: 171, N.M. Yasin 1994: 57), this body of rules which the British preferred to call 'Muhammadan law' was never nearly the same as the *shariah*. A number of court cases confirmed that Muhammadan law was merely *"personal religious law"* as applied to *"those who acknowledge Islamism"* (ibid.: 60, Hooker 1983b: 172). It was formulated in terms of legal concepts and a significant amount of it, especially the penal code, was based on judicial precedents of the Anglo-Muhammadan law of British India (N.M. Yasin 1994: 51-52).<sup>42</sup> As such, it served as a prelude to the official recognition of English law as law of the land, which was eventually realised in 1937 through the Civil Law Enactment for the FMS (Hooker 1983b: 172). In 1951, the application of the enactment was extended to the whole Federation of Malaya, formed in 1948 out of the former FMS and the UMS, and finally through a Civil Law Ordinance of 1956, the place of English law in the Malayan legal system was crystallised, covering all eleven states in the Peninsula (N.M. Yasin 1994: 57).

That under British rule, the *shariah* was relegated to an inconsequential position, even in the limited private sphere over which it had jurisdiction, is obvious from court decisions. In the infamous case of *Ainan v. Syed Abu Bakar* (1939), for instance, an infant delivered after less than six months of marriage was declared legitimate after recourse to the Evidence Enactment Act, when the *shariah* would have pronounced the child as illegitimate (ibid.: 56, fn. 54; Ahmad Ibrahim 1985: 219). In such cases affecting the family, decisions by civil courts could override that of *shariah* courts, such that, until today, the Malay procedures of marriage and divorce have been described as *"a mixture of Muslim law, adat and statute law"* (Yegar 1984: 195). In other cases, such as in matters affecting *waqf* (endowments), *zakat* (alms-giving) and *bayt al-mal* (treasury), the position of the *shariah* was completely usurped by English statute law (ibid.: 194). The secularisation of the legal system ran

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<sup>42</sup>Hooker explains the difference between *shariah* and Muhammadan law by contrasting their philosophical foundations; while the latter is *"culturally defined,"* Islamic law *"is derived from the Qur'an and Sunna.....,"* and while *"the Islamic element is included in all cultural manifestations of the Muhammadan laws,"* the latter *"are also sui generis to an important degree"* (1983b: 161).

deep in society, proceeding gradually through a series of statute enactments and judicial precedents of English or English-trained judges (N.M. Yasin 1994: 56). The British did not check the syncretic nature of Malayan Islam; on the contrary, they exacerbated it by further additions of unIslamic elements of their own legal system. As Hooker observes:

The only substantive Muslim principle dealt with were "offences against religion" i.e. attendance at mosque for prayers, fasting, teaching religion without authority, and unlawful proximity.<sup>43</sup> Matters involving public order, such as incest, the publication of books drawing religion into disrepute, and prostitution were reserved for the secular courts. Property and inheritance matters were also reserved for the secular courts..... In matters of religious observance, Islam was followed and special legislation was introduced to allow the courts to refer to certain standard texts of Islamic doctrine. In the awkward areas of marriage, divorce and custody and guardianship where religious and state interests merged, a judicial compromise was established. (Hooker 1983b: 173-174).

Not only was the legal role of Islam privatised, but its administration was also bureaucratised. *Shariah* courts and *shariah* committees, inferior though they were to civil and magistrate courts, were instituted to administer Muslim affairs; religious personnel such as *muftis*, district *qadis* and *imams* being elevated to the position of state functionaries whose salaries were paid from state coffers instead of having to rely upon their traditional sources of income, viz. donations, gifts and *zakat* and *fitrah* payments (Means 1969: 274, S.A. Hussein 1988: 81, Yegar 1984: 198-199). Through the State Council, the British were able to influence the appointment, suspension and dismissal of religious functionaries (ibid.: 199-200, N.M. Yasin 1994: 61, F.M. Jamil 1988: 26). Thus was born an official class of *ulama*, who, divorced from dependence upon the masses, equipped with a relatively colossal apparatus for governing Islam, and enjoying the enormous advantage given by advances in means of communication; led a religious administration characteristically authoritarian (Roff 1967: 72, Yegar 1984: 198). On top of the religious hierarchy of each state was now a *Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu* (Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Customs),<sup>44</sup> which supervised a *Jabatan Hal-Ehwal Agama Islam* (Department of Religious Affairs) (Roff 1967: 73-74, Means 1969: 274, S.A. Hussein 1988: 81). The *Majlis* eventually monopolised the right to religious instruction by offering a *tauliah* (letter of authority) to qualified religious teachers willing to abide by its rules, and had final

<sup>43</sup>In Malaysia, this offence is known as *khalwat*, taken specifically to mean the act of being in close proximity with a marriageable member of the opposite sex in a secluded place, such that might arouse suspicion.

<sup>44</sup>For each state, the specific name of such an institution could be different; for example, in Perak it was the Council of Chiefs and *Ulama*, but their functions were broadly similar across states (Roff 1967: 73-74).

say in the issuance of *fatawa* (legal rulings) (Roff 1974: 140-141). But its members being the sultan's personal appointees and disproportionately drawn from the aristocratic classes, the *Majlis* personified a newly-found alliance between the traditional elite and a nascent religious establishment (Roff 1967: 74). The *Majlis* almost always strengthened the position of the sultan (Roff 1974: 132-134); in one well-related case in Kelantan in 1916, the State *Mufti* had to resign after refusing to pass a court judgement in accordance with the wishes of the Sultan in an inheritance case involving members of the royal family (ibid.: 138-139, fn. 98; Muhammad Salleh Wan Musa 1974: 156-157, fn. 11). As Kessler (1978: 52-61) cogently argues in the case of Kelantan, the *Majlis* became a bastion of aristocratic power linked to colonial officialdom. Despite having initiated an "*indigenous social revolution*" (ibid.: 56, Roff 1974: 149), it was later to benefit mainly the upper echelons of society. This was amply shown by the variety of complaints against its handling of financial affairs (ibid.: 146), the priority it put upon the construction of an arguably extravagant new mosque (ibid.: 146-149), and the emphasis it gave in its educational programme to its elite English school (Kessler 1978: 56, Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 187-188), which prepared local Malays for positions in the official state bureaucracy.

Differential education was one of the cornerstones of British colonial policy. Not only did it further the secularisation of the social order, but it also led to the further stratification of Malay society. On the one hand, the British were content to leave the traditional *pondok* education unimpaired. Under the innovative leadership of such reformist *ulama* as Haji Wan Sulaiman bin Haji Sidek of Kedah<sup>45</sup> and Tok Kenali of Kelantan,<sup>46</sup> the *pondok* system progressed into the more organised *madrasah* system, adopting such radical reforms as the incorporation of modern methods of education, modern and vocational subjects, business training and examination-based assessment and promotion (ibid.: 185-189, Andaya and Andaya 1982: 233-235). On the other hand, the British promoted Malay vernacular education, to the extent of compelling Malay parents, by law, to send their children to Malay schools, as in Selangor in 1891 (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 184-185). It is believed that such schools got off to a slow start because the Malays deeply distrusted the British intentions in founding them, which could be used as an instrument for propagating Christianity; besides the real need of the Malay peasant for the labour of his children in the fields (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 16, 38: fn. 24; Andaya and Andaya 1982: 231). To raise attendance, the British were forced not to totally dispense with religious instructions as had initially been the case (Rauf 1964: 98, Yegar 1984: 196). But still, lessons in Islam were officially discriminated against and gradually weakened.

<sup>45</sup>On the life and achievements of Haji Wan Sulaiman (d. 1935), see Abu Arrabi' (1990).

<sup>46</sup>On the life, influence and educational reforms of Tok Kenali (real name Muhammad Yusof bin Ahmad), see Abdullah Al-Qari Haji Salleh (1974) and Abdul Ghani Said (1993: 101-132).

Richard Winstedt, the Assistant Director of Malay Education in 1916-21, made recommendations for the end to government provisions for Quranic instructions in schools (F.M. Jamil 1988: 60-61, fn. 84). Quranic lessons were thus only permitted in the afternoon, giving rise to the term *sekolah petang* (evening schools) (Yegar 1984: 196-197), and government allowances for their teachers were eventually phased out, forcing Malay parents to pay them from their own meagre resources, or else dispense with Quranic education (Rauf 1965: 20, M.N. Monutty 1989: 36). In the teaching of the Malay language, the Arabic script (*jawi*) was replaced by the Roman alphabet (*rumi*) (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 231-232). It is a misrepresentation of the facts to say that the British "*stimulated and strengthened*" religious education (Yegar 1984: 196), or to attribute the educational backwardness of the Malays to their "*indifference to government-sponsored schools*" (ibid.: 197). In truth, the purpose of Malay education was extremely unambitious: to train "*the sons of Malay fishermen to become better fishermen and the sons of Malay farmers better farmers*" (George Maxwell, the Chief Secretary, as quoted in M.N. Monutty 1989: 35; cf. Rauf 1964: 97, Andaya and Andaya 1982: 230-231). British colonial educationists never intended that Malay education be a vehicle for the inculcation of reformist ideas, which might predictably pose problems for future intellectual subjugation; hence their emphasis on 'practical' aspects of education (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 180). It had always been official policy that Malay-medium education be of lower quality than English-medium education, which was afforded only to the offspring of the Malay royalty and aristocracy, and symbolised at the highest level by the establishment in 1905 of the Eton-like Malay College of Kuala Kangsar (MCKK), essentially to prepare upper-class Malays for loyal service in the colonial bureaucracy (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 229-230). Later, room was opened for the acceptance of the cream of English-educated Malay students, including commoners, into the MCKK (F.M. Jamil 1988: 36-37).

Therefore, colonial educational policy directly contributed to the differing and conflictual ideological orientations held by the pre-War Malay intelligentsia. At one end, we have the *pondok* and *mudrasah*-educated Malays, many of whom were later responsible for the importation of reformist ideas from the Middle East, sparking off opposition to colonialism by expressing the cause in Islamic terms. Some were also coopted into the official religious bureaucracy, or served as administrators-cum-teachers at state-sponsored Islamic educational institutions such as the Muslim College in Kelang (founded 1955) and the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (founded 1956) (cf. Rauf 1965: 24ff). At the opposite end, we encounter the English-educated Malays, whose formal education had been devoid of Islamic content but given every opportunity for advancement, even higher education in

Britain; and whose future, as shaped by British colonial policy, was to be loyal servants of the Crown. Between them were the Malays educated in state-assisted vernacular schools; the high-fliers among them often pursuing a teaching career after graduating from the Malay College, Malacca (1900-1922) and its successor the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), founded in 1922. This last group was the precursor of radical Malay politics, as closely identified with socialistic aims and the achievement of political union between Malaya and Indonesia: *Indonesia Raya* (Greater Indonesia).

## 2.6 THE MALAY-ISLAMIC RESPONSE TO BRITISH COLONIALISM: RESISTANCE AND REFORMISM

Scholars of Southeast Asian Islam have never failed to point out the muted and belated nature of anti-colonial response from among the Islamic-oriented in Malaya, as contrasted with their Indonesian counterparts' vigorous resistance against Dutch imperialism. This is despite both countries having relatively similar pre-colonial socio-political structures and cultural norms. The history of anti-colonialism in Malaya enjoys no parallel militant movement with the religiously inspired Padri uprising in Minangkabau, Sumatra (1803-1837) or the long-fought Aceh rebellion (1837-1910) (Dobbin 1974, Reid 1967: 272-279); nor can it boast of any organisation with similar aims, methods and achievements to those of the politically-oriented Sarekat Islam and the reformist Muhammadiyah, both founded as early as 1912 (Johns 1987: 206-207, Deliar Noer 1973). Anthony Reid's discussion of nineteenth century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaya is conspicuous in its overwhelming focus on the former; he observes that throughout the period concerned, only one phenomenon in Malaya, viz. the Pahang rebellion (1891-95) led by Dato' Bahaman, bore any resemblance to the anti-imperialistic reactions of Islamic movements in Dutch Indonesia (Reid 1967: 277-278, fn. 48). Writing of Islamic reformism in early twentieth century Malaya, William Roff, contrasting it with its Indonesian equivalent, perceptively notes its failure to generate "*a political nationalism capable of attracting mass support*" (1967: 87, 1985: 123), or to initiate "*widespread social and political protest*" (ibid.: 124). In another paper, he analyses the politicising role of *Seruan Azhar* (Voice of Azhar), an avowedly anti-colonial journal launched in 1927 by Indonesian and Malay students in Cairo; admitting towards the end that its impact had been much less in Malaya than in Indonesia due partly to the "*different political climates*" (Roff 1970: 87). Fred von der Mehden (1993: 6-8) also detects the greater appeal of Turkish-centred Pan-Islamic ideas among Indonesian *vis-à-vis* Malayan

Muslims, and drawing upon previous commentators' observations, he outlines four reasons for the different situation in Malaya, viz. high economic growth, British control over sensitive religio-political issues, the aristocratic leadership of the Malays and more flexible colonial policy towards Malayan Muslims. However, it may be justifiably argued that all the factors mentioned above came about as a consequence, direct or indirect, of the overall colonial policy affecting Malayan residents. Significant aspects of this policy have been touched upon in the previous section; it is necessary at this juncture to stress on the success of the British in beguiling the Malays into believing that colonial policy actually benefited them.

It has been mentioned how in the short-term, all parties stood to gain from British intervention in the Malay states: the masses were liberated from their feudal oppressors, the sultans and traditional chiefs retained their positions and prestige, the ethnic minorities and British investment interests gained from the economic stability engendered by the restoration of peace. The policy of 'indirect rule' proved an instant success in assuring the Malays that they were still subjects of their rulers rather than of the 'infidel' colonialists; it never occurred to them that their *de facto* rulers were the British and their sultans merely 'puppets'. The measure of this success is obvious from the meagre popular response given to sporadic anti-British uprisings which colonial propaganda, obtaining royal decrees through coercion, skilfully stigmatised as *derhaka* (high treason) (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 182). In no significant sense did such uprisings constitute a threat upon British hegemony in the Malay states. Whenever signs appeared of parochial disturbances potentially developing into a state-wide or nationwide rebellion, British military superiority and their willingness to mete out the severest of retribution to insurgents easily cowed the Malay masses, effectively forestalling future attempts at political unrest (cf. Andaya and Andaya 1982: 163).

It is highly debatable as to what extent these early anti-colonial uprisings were inspired by the concept of *jihad* (religious resistance / holy war). Mohamad Abu Bakar claims that "*the Malays resisted the British by making references to their religion*" (1986: 156); this view seems in concurrence with that of Mohammad Nor Monutty (1989: 38). It is certainly true that there was evidence of Islam playing a role in imbuing the rebels with an anti-colonial spirit. A memorandum written to explain the cause of the murder of J.W.W. Birch, the Perak Resident, in 1875, anticipated difficulties to be exposed by an outburst of "*Moslem [sic] fanaticism*" (ibid.). Later in the year, Sungei Ujong became the venue of skirmishes between British troops and armed bands seen on one occasion carrying the Turkish flag - a clear indication of their Pan-Islamic aspirations (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 163). Dato' Bahaman's rebellion in Pahang (1891-95) owed its Islamic appeal to the involvement of a

Terengganu religious leader, Ungku Sayyid,<sup>47</sup> on the rebels' cause (Reid 1967: 278, fn. 48; Linehan 1936: 161-162, 166-167).

Nonetheless, to ascribe the anti-colonial uprisings wholly, or even primarily, to Islamic-related factors, is to greatly exaggerate the situation. In most cases, uprisings were instigated and led by chiefs enraged by the British usurping their traditional powers of tax collection.<sup>48</sup> Not only did they find that their revenues had declined as public salaries could not match that amount obtained in taxes, not to mention some who were excluded from the civil list and hence lost their source of income altogether; but they also could not face the humiliation of having to pay taxes as their subjects had to. The clash of interests was inevitable as British administrative reforms were so wide-ranging as to leave the traditional Malay state existing only in form but not in substance (Funston 1980: 25-26). Of the traditional elites, only the *Penghulu*, lowest in the political hierarchy, retained any significant degree of functional capacity; yet, as the new Malay education system expanded, even *Penghulus* began losing out as the hub of influence in Malay rural society increasingly centred around Malay school teachers and administrative officers (ibid.: 26, R. Soenarno 1960: 3). Therefore, Khoo Kay Kim's view of the various anti-British uprisings as no more than "*isolated attempts of orang besar*<sup>49</sup> to resist the encroaches of the British administration" (1974: 181) is tenable. According to such a perspective, the sporadic instances of unrest were the outcome of personal grievances of traditional chiefs who managed to amass a following among peasants by capitalising on their hardship, and involved the incitement of hatred of tax-imposing colonialists and local accomplices, the invocation of the tradition of Malay folk warriors and the manipulation of religious symbols. This is not to deny that some rebels did join the cause out of religious fervour, which in any case, as in Dato' Bahaman's insurrection, arrived late onto the scene (Andaya and Andaya 1982: 170). In other words, there was hardly any resistance movement launched with the express intention of defending the

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<sup>47</sup>Ungku Sayyid (real name Sayyid Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad Al-Idrus) (d. 1917), more popularly known as Tukku Paloh, was renowned in Terengganu as an orthodox *alim*, a sufi and principal advisor to Sultan Zainal Abidin III (reigned 1881-1918). Described as a "*fanatical holy man*" by Linehan (1936: 161), Ungku Sayyid's influence was instrumental in Terengganu's success in resisting British occupation and in secretly granting protection to the fleeing Pahang rebels, whom the colonial authorities never managed to apprehend. For details on Ungku Sayyid and his active involvement in anti-colonial activities, see Abdul Ghani Said (1993: 27-54).

<sup>48</sup>This connection between anti-British uprisings and the purely worldly motives of their leaders is clearly demonstrated in two detailed accounts of the Pahang and Kelantan rebellions by Linehan (1936: 139-168) and Ibrahim Nik Mahmood (1974) respectively.

<sup>49</sup>Literally meaning a 'big person', *orang besar* is a specific term used to denote an aristocratic chief in the traditional Malay political hierarchy.

dignity of Islam and the Muslims against the rule of unbelievers,<sup>50</sup> although most did acquire a religious colouring in due course.

In a few cases, religion hardly served as a motivating factor, despite popular history, often based on presumptions rather than hard evidence, claiming to the contrary. A detailed account of Tok Janggut's peasant rebellion (1915) in Pasir Puteh, Kelantan, for example, reveals that the revolt was instigated by a territorial chief, Engku Besar, intent upon avenging his loss of power by exploiting popular discontent against the strict rules of a new public revenue collection system (Ibrahim Nik Mahmood 1974). This constituted, more than anything else, an "*unwarrantable intrusion into their traditional way of life*" (ibid.: 84). Belying his posthumous reputation as a religious-cum-nationalist leader, Tok Janggut is portrayed by the author as a feudal warrior who enjoyed revelling himself in the unIslamic pastimes of gambling, cock-fighting, fish-fighting and bull-fighting (ibid.: 66). Furthermore, during the unrest, the masses were repelled by the rebels' resorting to such repugnant tactics as looting, burning, seizure of villagers' livestock and threats (ibid.: 75, 82). Despite such evidence, Tok Janggut is today hailed in Malaysia as a national hero; one scholar going so far as to name him as an anti-colonial fighter who to a certain extent was "*inspired by the concept of jihad*" (Safie Ibrahim 1978: 185).<sup>51</sup>

In retrospect, armed resistance launched by the Malays against British colonial rule never stood any realistic chance of success so long as such movements were led by their former feudal oppressors. Although some Malays admittedly joined in the rebellions out of a burgeoning religious-cum-nationalist spirit, having been moved by the increasingly Islamic flavour of the leaders' rhetoric; many others must have been equally deterred by the dreadful thought that victory would merely reintroduce pre-colonial socio-political norms which in their minds were identified with oppression. One needs only to reflect why such illustrious *pondok* figures as Tok Kenali preferred

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<sup>50</sup>This is with the probable exception of the uprising in 1928 in Terengganu, which has been mentioned as a centre of religious learning where "*Islam tenaciously defied British political control until the 1920s*" and which was last to accept a British Advisor (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 181). The uprising was led by Haji Abd al-Rahman Limbung, former principal student of the anti-colonial *alim* Ungku Sayyid (cf. fn. 47 above). Haji Abd al-Rahman condemned both the Sultan and his British allies for preferring to uphold English land law rather than the *shariah* in a legal dispute involving matters of individual property (Milner 1986: 55, M.N. Monutty 1989: 38-39).

<sup>51</sup>In his article, Safie Ibrahim fails to provide any evidence to justify his inclusion of Tok Janggut as an Islamic warrior. However, a similarly 'optimistic' interpretation of the Pasir Puteh rebellion of 1915 has been put forward by de vere Allen (1968), who is also inclined to believe that the uprising was a manifestation of a popular revolt inspired by *sayyids*, *hajjis* and *imams*. He further postulates connections between elements of this insurrection with the Pahang rebels of the 1890s and the Terengganu insurgents of 1928 (p. 255). However, insofar as de vere Allen himself admits towards the end of his article that his account "*is largely surmise*" (p. 253), and that as it turned out, the Pasir Puteh episode was not a big affair after all (although he contends that it might have been) (p. 255), the overall reasoning of his argument seems to rest on shaky foundations. His glaring inability to corroborate his arguments with hard facts renders his account to be speculative and presumptive rather than objective, and thus less than convincing.

to initiate peaceful socio-educational reforms to reawaken the Islamic consciousness of the masses, rather than joining in or even endorsing armed insurrection. They realised that such rebellions were not only launched by self-seeking chiefs intent on regaining their former privileges, but they were also doomed to failure, and considering the mental and spiritual slumber in which the Malays were, premature and inappropriate. Priority was consequently given by these *ulama* to the intellectual and moral regeneration of society.

This was perhaps the most accurate response, for as we have seen in the previous section, British colonial policy in Malaya, based as it was on a 'benign neglect' of the Malays, emphasised intellectual rather than physical subjugation. It was an arduous task trying to convince the masses that they had merely moved from one form of subordination to another, in the face especially of an extensive network of a British propaganda machine which adroitly manipulated the indigenous ruling elite, such that colonial policies were presented as pro-Malay and pro-Islam. The most important British success was in convincing the Malays that their religion and custom would not be interfered with; on the contrary, assisted as in the bureaucratisation measures already referred to (cf. section 2.5). Furthermore, during the nineteenth century, Britain enjoyed a fairly good reputation in her Muslim protectorates as an ally of Turkey, the long-standing centre of Pan-Islamism (Reid 1967: 283). In contrast to the restrictive Dutch policy on the *hajj* pilgrimage among Indonesian Muslims, British administrative reforms did much to facilitate the flow of pilgrims from Malaya to Makkah (Roff 1967: 38-39, 71; Yegar 1984: 196, von der Mehden 1993: 4). Documentary evidence of communication between the British and Dutch colonial governments reveals how the latter, who carried an especially unfavourable image in the Middle East as a diehard adversary of Islam (ibid.: 6), had incessantly tried to convince the former to be more wary of the dangers of creeping religious fanaticism among Southeast Asian Muslims (Reid 1967: 270-271). Among the wealthy and politically active migrant Arab communities in the East Indies, different perceptions of Dutch and British rule were such that their "*anti-colonial energies were directed exclusively against the Dutch, and never against the British*" (ibid.: 271). Even until the First World War, when Britain and Turkey fought on opposing sides, British propaganda campaigns in Malaya were so successful that open support was expressed for the British among the Malay ruling establishment, to the extent of organising public prayers to aid its cause (von der Mehden 1993: 7-8).

However, these observations should not lead one to under-estimate the magnitude of religious feelings among the Malays. Admittedly, the British worried less than the Dutch, but they nevertheless did worry of the consequences entailed by an increased attachment of the Malays to Islam. The main source of apprehension had

always been the interaction between the Malays and their Muslim brethren in the Middle East, which by the early twentieth century was undergoing intense ideological ferment in the form of a religious reformation extremely anti-colonial and nationalistic in tone. Three movements embodied this religio-political resurgence: firstly, the Egyptian Al-Manar circle led by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), former Rector of Al-Azhar University and Grand *Mufti* of Egypt, and his disciple Rashid Rida (d. 1935),<sup>52</sup> both of whom were deeply influenced by the pan-Islamic ideals of Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (d. 1897);<sup>53</sup> secondly, the *Wahhabi* reformation in Arabia out of which emerged a puritanical Saudi state which tried briefly to resurrect the caliphate;<sup>54</sup> and thirdly, the Turkish reformation led by Mustafa Kemal (d. 1938) which culminated in the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 and the proclamation of a secular Turkish state in 1937.<sup>55</sup> In Malaya, it was the Egyptian Manar movement which was to have the greatest and long-lasting impact (von der Mehden 1993: 13). Initial enthusiasm for the Saudi and Turkish movements swiftly disappeared after militant excesses and overt secularism respectively divested them of any Islamic legitimacy (ibid.: 8). The infusion of Middle Eastern reformist ideas into Southeast Asia and the consequent upsurge in anti-colonial nationalism became a much speedier process with improvements in means of communication and transportation. Anthony Reid refers to the tightening of bonds between the two peoples as "*creating a sense of common purpose as against their colonial masters*" (1967: 283). Internally, Malay-Muslims began to be aware of how much they had been left behind economically by the migrant non-Muslims, and how they had to

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<sup>52</sup>For a detailed exposition of the career, thinking and reforms of both Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, see Mortimer (1982: 237-250) and Hiro (1988: 53-59). On the doctrinal significance of Muhammad Abduh's reformist programme on Southeast Asian Islam, see Johns (1984: 132-140).

<sup>53</sup>Known as the 'sage of the East' in Arab literature, Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani was born a *Shiite* in Afghanistan (c. 1838-39) but travelled widely throughout the Islamic world (Turkey, Egypt, India, central Asia), where his advice was eagerly sought by Muslim rulers. However, his militant anti-imperialism earned him the wrath of their European advisors, leading to his frequent expulsions. Although his thinking reflects more traces of anti-colonial nationalism than outright Islamic reformism, he has been widely regarded as the progenitor of Islamic resurgence in the modernist-reformist mould, not least due to the impact of his thinking on Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. For details, see Mortimer (1982: 109-117) and Hiro (1988: 49-53).

<sup>54</sup>The basis of the first Saudi state was laid down in 1744 with the alliance struck between a local warrior, Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765), and a religious reformer, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), from whom the term *Wahhabi* was derived. Driven by a crusading zeal of *Wahhabi* puritanism, which strove to cleanse the Islamic faith from *shirk* (idolatry) and *bid'ah* (innovations), and which equated heretical Muslims with belligerent infidels, the tribal and religious forces united and expanded territories under their control to encompass most areas of present-day Saudi Arabia. Defeated by the Ottomans in 1819, the Saudi-*Wahhabi* alliance was quick to re-emerge in the 1820s, before being defeated again in 1891. The third Saudi state could properly be dated back to 1926, when the Saudis conquered the Hijaz, and in 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was proclaimed. For details, see Mortimer (1982: 159-169), Al-Yassini (1982) and Piscatori (1983a: 56-58).

<sup>55</sup>For details on the formation of the modern Turkish state, see Mortimer (1982: 126-147) and Bromley (1994: 121-126).

depend on the British even in the administration of their own religion (Yegar 1984: 200). This gradual change of attitude had been perceptibly discerned by a colonial administrator, R.J. Wilkinson, who could remark in 1906 that "*the native of the peninsula is becoming less of a Malay and more of a Mussulman*" (quoted in *ibid.*, cf. Milner 1986: 54).

Three main channels of core-periphery relations existed which led to the new sense of political consciousness. Firstly, the *hajj*, whereby it has been said that pilgrims, having been indoctrinated in the pure tenets of Islam from its original birthplace in Makkah, often returned with a purified zeal to cleanse Islam practised by their fellow countrymen of local accretions, not to mention the rejuvenating experience of being directly involved in communal worship in which distinctions of colour, nationality, race, wealth and social status become irrelevant (Roff 1984, von der Mehden 1993: 3-4). Through the *hajj*, the pilgrim directly exchanges experiences and ideas at a global scale, and for once witnesses the *ummah* at first hand. In explaining the increasing appeal of 'fundamentalist' ideas among Southeast Asian Muslims from the end of the eighteenth century, Snouck Hurgronje, who constantly warned the Dutch colonial government against the dangers of Pan-Islamism (Reid 1967: 282-283), emphasised first and foremost the strengthened connection with Makkah (Kostiner 1984: 213-214). While the colonial governments' *hajjiphobia* may have reflected an exaggerated fear in qualitative terms (cf. von der Mehden 1993: 11), they had enough reason to be wary of the impact of the *hajj* from the sheer quantity of pilgrims alone. For as has been pointed out by several scholars, Malay-Indonesian pilgrims have not unusually constituted the largest ethnic group during the *hajj* season in Makkah, the peak being in the 1920s (Abdul Kadir Haji Din 1982: 60-63, Roff 1984: 239, von der Mehden 1993: 4).

Secondly, the role of returning Malay students from the Middle East. In Makkah, students and sojourners alike became acquainted with the teachings of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, a Minangkabau scholar who had the distinction of being appointed the *imam* of the Shafii school of *fiqh* at the Grand Mosque towards the end of the nineteenth century (Roff 1967: 60-61, fn. 17; von der Mehden 1993: 14). However, as far as exposure to radical-nationalist ideas was concerned, it was Al-Azhar University in Cairo which played the major role. The different environment is reflected in what has become a famous remark by a contemporary student, "*In Mecca [sic] one could study religion only; in Cairo, politics as well*" (quoted in Roff 1970: 74). The anxiety felt by the ruling establishment at such political socialisation is testified by the open concern expressed by a number of sultans at the exposure of Malay students to 'undesirable ideas' as a result of mixing with other races (*ibid.*: 74-75, fn. 5). Among these other races, the sultans meant first and foremost the various

Indonesian nationalities, for as Roff (1970) shows, Indonesians such as Djanan Thaib, Muchtar Lutfi, Ilias Ja'kub, Mahmud Junus and others, many of whom had been involved in anti-Dutch revolutionary activities, played a prominent role in the launching and production of two politically aggressive journals, *Seruan Azhar* (1925-28) and *Pilehan Timor* (Choice of the East) (1927-28). Free from censorship regulations, these periodicals freely indulged in topics which were taboo back home, focusing on three cardinal principles, viz. Pan-Islamism, Pan-Malayanism (*Indonesia Raya*) and anti-colonial nationalism (Roff 1967: 87-89, 1985: 123-124, cf. R. Soenarno 1960: 8-10). It is interesting to note that the Malay and Indonesian students never saw themselves as belonging to separate ethnic nationalities; they were collectively termed the *Jawa* (Javanese) community and organised themselves into a single association (Roff 1970: 73). There is little doubt, however, that it was through this Indonesian connection that Malay students, many of whom would return as widely respected religious teachers, were introduced to the explicit association between religion, politics and anti-colonial nationalism. Yet, the impact of the two periodicals and of returning Middle East graduates was not so widespread as to rapidly politicise the Malay masses, to whom conservative interpretations of Islam still had far greater appeal than reformist ones (cf. *ibid.*: 87). This was despite both *Seruan Azhar* and *Pilehan Timor* enjoying unrestricted circulation in Malaya (Roff 1985: 128, fn. 13),<sup>56</sup> a fact which speaks a lot about the confidence of the British at having successfully indoctrinated the Malays towards an apolitical understanding of Islam.

The third source of the importation of reformist ideas into Malaya was the migrant Arab community, most of whom hailed from Hadramawt, Yemen, and had inter-married with local Malays, but retained intellectual and cultural links with their original motherland.<sup>57</sup> These Arabs had formed a distinctive, thriving merchant community based in the Straits Settlements, and they rapidly won the admiration of local Malays for their enterprise, contributions to social welfare and possession of religious knowledge, to add to the natural respect accorded to the *sayyids* and *sheikhs* as claimants of the Prophet Muhammad's descent (Roff 1967: 40-43). Together with

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<sup>56</sup>On the contrary, in Indonesia, the Dutch banned the journals, testifying to their political impact.

<sup>57</sup>Joseph Kostiner's detailed study (1984) of the impact of Hadrami emigrants in the East Indies reveals that not all of them necessarily harboured reformist inclinations. The clash between the reform-oriented and the tradition-oriented manifested itself in the protracted Alawi-Irshadi conflict, which came to the fore when the marriage of a *sharifah* (female equivalent of a *sayyid* - an honorific title to denote one who claims ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad) to an Indian Muslim in Batavia (present-day Jakarta, capital of Indonesia) in 1905 caused a furore as to its legality. When the matter was referred to the Egyptian reformist Rashid Rida, he unequivocally pronounced it *halal* (legal), much to the chagrin of the conservative Alawi community. The reform-oriented Irshadi community opposed the hierarchical interpretation of religion of the Alawis, who even had an exclusive *tariqah* of their own (S.N. Al-Attas 1963: 32), and founded organisations and schools to propagate modernist and anti-*sayyid* ideas. For further details, see Kostiner (1984: 211-218).

the *Jawi Peranakan* - local-born Indian Muslims who had similarly gained *entrée* into the Malay community through inter-marriage and charitable deeds, they started a flurry of newspapers and other publications which highlighted the material backwardness of the Malays in their homeland (ibid.: 47-49, Khoo Kay Kim 1981: 95-96). Common religious affiliation enabled these Arabs and *Jawi Peranakan* to write as Malays and identify themselves with Malay problems.<sup>58</sup> Operating mainly from Penang and Singapore, their penetrating writings escaped the strict censorship imposed in the Malay states by the religious authorities, under British auspices. It was through their journalistic efforts that reformist principles began to make their mark in Malay society, as articulated by the emergent *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) movement at the turn of the century. Among the *Kaum Muda* proponents, four were especially prominent, viz. Sheikh Mohd. Tahir bin Jalaluddin Al-Azhari (d. 1957), Sayyid Sheikh bin Ahmad Al-Hadi (d. 1934), Haji Abbas bin Mohd. Taha and Sheikh Mohd. Salim Al-Kalali.<sup>59</sup> All had been influenced by, and were in close contact with, the Al-Manar circle in Cairo, and through the journal *Al-Imam* (1906-08), modelled on the Arabic newspapers *Al-Manar* and *Al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* (The Indissoluble Link), they disseminated their ideas.

From their writings in *Al-Imam*, we know that the *Kaum Muda* were essentially Islamic modernists who sought solutions to the social and economic problems of the Malay-Muslims in Islam.<sup>60</sup> Their diagnosis concluded that the root cause of material backwardness of the Malays was laxity in adherence to the true principles of Islam as ordained in the Quran and the *Sunnah*. *Al-Imam* constantly urged the Malays to re-examine their religious beliefs and practices, allegedly replete with folk accretions classified as *bid'ah*, in the light of contemporary conditions. Emphasis was put upon the use of *akal* (reason) and *ijtihad* (independent judgement) as opposed to *taqlid* (unquestioning acceptance of intermediate authority) in interpreting broad religious principles as outlined in the Quran and *Sunnah*. References were made to past glories of Islamic civilisation in order to show that adherence to the faith was not inimical to progress. Heavy criticisms were levelled

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<sup>58</sup>In fact, 'Malay journalism' in this period was monopolised by Arab-Malay and *Jawi Peranakan* writers. Naturally, they went on to form the bulk of the leadership of Malay literary organisations, arousing resentment in some Malay quarters. This was made obvious by the late 1930s, when the derogatory terms *Darah Keturunan Arab* (DKA: of Arabic blood) and *Darah Keturunan Keling* (DKK: of Indian blood) was coined by Abdul Rahim Kajai, a prominent member of the Malay literary establishment, to denote 'Malays' of mixed ancestry (Roff 1967: 220, Khoo Kay Kim 1981: 105, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 21).

<sup>59</sup>For further detailed information on the lives and reforms of these four personalities, of whom the most outstanding were the first two, see Roff (1967: 59-65) and F.M. Jamil (1988: 63, fn. 115-118).

<sup>60</sup>The following account of modernist-reformist principles as articulated in *Al-Imam*, and to a lesser extent in other *Kaum Muda* publications as well, is based on Roff (1967: 56-59, 77-79), R. Soenarno (1960: 7-8), Khoo Kay Kim (1974: 191) and Hussin Mutalib (1990: 20). For a brief discussion of the impact of *Al-Imam*, see Roff (1967: 65-67).

against the *ulama* for their passivity and lack of concern at the Malays' distorted understanding and practice of Islam, against conservative Malay leaders for their failure to become role-models in the community and for their indulgence in irreligious acts, and against the colonial power for manipulating the indigenous ruling elite and perpetuating the myth of the inherent inferiority of eastern races. But *Al-Imam* fell short of calling for a political overthrow of the colonial government; the *Kaum Muda*'s prescribed panacea was education, not traditional *pondok* education but a modern *madrrasah* system which combined the best of both basic religious instructions and Western-introduced educational methods and technology (ibid.: 76). Early twentieth century Malaya thus witnessed a mushrooming of modern *madrrasahs*, running parallel with the penetration of *Kaum Muda* literature in society as represented not only by *Al-Imam* but also by other periodicals such as *Al-Ikhwān* (1926-31), *Saudara* (1928-41), *Neracha* (1910-15) and *Warta Malaya* (R. Soenarno 1960: 8, Khoo Kay Kim 1981: 97-98, F.M. Jamil 1988: 43-45). It was not until the 1930s, with the impact of the new generation of Middle-Eastern educated Malays associated with the type of ideas found in *Seruan Azhar* and *Pilehan Timor*, that the *Kaum Muda* movement became sufficiently politicised such that concern for liberty supplanted the need for education at the forefront of their cause (R. Soenarno 1960: 10, Roff 1967: 88-90).

The social impact of the *Kaum Muda* movement was such that a Malay bureaucrat observed, as of 1935, that hardly a village existed in Malaya where "*the Malays did not argue and discuss the teachings of Kaum Muda*" (quoted in ibid.: 87, Roff 1985: 123). *Kaum Muda* doctrines predictably aroused a hostile reaction among protagonists of *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction), as the traditional religious establishment was known, not in the least because of the former's vociferous attacks upon the orthodox *ulama* as 'hawkers of religion', hindrance to development and pawns of the ruling classes (Roff 1967: 85-86). The *Kaum Tua* retaliated by accusing the *Kaum Muda* as unorthodox, deviants and even communists; this last label echoes the situation in West Sumatra where a close association was perceived between communism and reformist-activist Islam (Schrieke 1985). As the religious bureaucracies in the Malay states were filled by *Kaum Tua ulama*, *Kaum Muda* preachers were given a hostile reception there: they were refused permission to speak in public, their doctrines were officially condemned as *kafir* (infidel), and some states even closed their doors upon 'new-style' Islamic literature imported from Penang and Singapore (Roff 1967: 79-81).

While the *Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua* split may have been the big issue of early twentieth century Malay society, to view it in terms of a hard-and-fast dichotomy between reform-oriented Islam on the one hand and tradition-bound Islam on the other, is a less than useful exercise. One needs only to look at the situation in

Kelantan, whose Malay intelligentsia had a thinking which was in many respects more advanced than their counterparts' in other Malay states (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 194). Here, even *Pengasoh* (The Educator) (1918-37), the official organ of the *Majlis Ugama*, and identified by Roff (1967: 79) as a standard-bearer of the *Kaum Tua*, developed a penchant for a reformist brand of Islam, notwithstanding the doctrinal differences it had with the *Kaum Muda* in a number of questions on theology and rituals.<sup>61</sup> Like *Al-Imam*, it berated indifferent rulers and abusive *ulama*, called for wider educational opportunities for both sexes, urged Malays to emulate the diligence of the Japanese and even spoke of independence in terms of a political unification of the Malay world (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 191, 1981: 97). This 'radical' orientation was doubtless due to the influence exerted by the reformist Tok Kenali, who out of his fame and wide learning, was appointed principal honorary editor of *Pengasoh* (Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi 1974: 172-173, Abdullah Al-Qari Haji Salleh 1974: 92-93). Khoo Kay Kim has concluded, at variance with Roff, that at the heart of *Pengasoh* was simply reform in Malay society; it "was not the voice of the *Kaum Tua* but neither did it claim to represent *Kaum Muda* thinking" (1974: 191). Later, Roff (1970: 78, fn. 15) himself admits that *Pengasoh* welcomed and praised the Cairo-based *Seruan Azhar*. Tok Kenali himself, belying his widespread reputation as a traditionalist scholar, had adopted extremely modern teaching methods and an innovative approach towards education; his *Pondok Kenali* in many ways rivalling the best of *Kaum Muda* *madrassahs* on the west coast of the Peninsula (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 187, Abdullah Al-Qari Haji Salleh 1974: 92). A perusal of the broad contents of other contemporary periodicals produced by the Kelantan Malay intelligentsia also reveals that a fair number of them, such as *Al-Kitab* (1920), *Al-Hedayah* (1923-26), *Putera* (1929-30), *Kenchana* (1930-31), *Majallah al-Kamaliah* (1930), *Al-Hikmah* (1934-41) and *Penyedar* (1947), developed a distinctively reformist and anti-colonial strand (Abdul Rahman Al-Ahmadi 1974: 174-183, cf. Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 192-194, 1981: 99-100). In Kelantan also, there developed another body of reformists whose ideas were based upon those of Shah Waliullah Al-Dihlawi (d. 1763)<sup>62</sup> (cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 39), as represented *par excellence* in the person of Wan Musa bin Haji Abdul Samad, the former State *Mufti* who resigned in 1916 out of a dispute with the Sultan and other religious authorities (Muhammad Salleh Wan Musa 1974, Johns 1984: 137-138).

For all the hullabaloo it created, Islamic reformism, whether of the urban *Kaum Muda* variety or the Kelantanese trend, never properly developed into a mass

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<sup>61</sup>For a discussion of doctrinal points of contention between modernists and traditionalist or orthodox *ulama* in the Malay world, see Deliar Noer (1975: 54-61).

<sup>62</sup>Widely regarded as the forerunner of Islamic resurgence in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, Shah Waliullah's revivalist ideas, especially his ideals of a caliphate, form a major thread of what is today known as the Deoband school of thought; for details, see Maududi (1981: chapter 4).

movement, even after graduating from the purely religious to the socio-political phase. By the 1940s, enthusiasm for it had largely died down. Several reasons have been put forward for this decline: it was unable to counter the adverse reaction of official Islam, backed by the British and the law, whose *fatawa* still held sway among the rural Malay folk; its condemnation of royalty was untimely as Malays saw this institution as an increasingly important bastion of political power in the face of bolder claims of non-Malays for equal rights; its own approach to Islam was frequently defensive and apologetic (S.A. Hussein 1988: 86-87). After the Second World War, its direct relevance to the Malays was eclipsed by the more pressing question of national independence. Yet, it represented an unprecedented attempt at mobilising popular opinion in support of a cause previously overlooked. It was perhaps premature, but assisted by adverse publicity, it managed to instil in the Malays a significant level of political consciousness by alerting them to the very real possibility of an insecure future. In openly calling for a defiance of authority and of the traditional elite, it was revolutionary. While it never elaborated an organisation of mass appeal, its success should not be gauged by looking at the numbers of avowed adherents alone. In fact, movement-organisation may never have been on its agenda. More importantly, by the very uproar it brought about, Islamic reformism prepared the Malays for active non-loyalist participation in public affairs. To an important extent, it had reawakened the Malays from their slumber and divested them of their complacency as rightful claimants of political power in Malaya. People may not have rallied to the reformist cause, but they were certainly sensitised by the issues and arguments put forward by the reformists. In many ways then, it fostered a kind of pre-nationalism (cf. Roff 1967: 87, 1985: 123); one writer could even speak of three distinct stages of Malay nationalism, viz. a religious phase (1906-26), when the great issues of the day were defined by the Islamic reformists, a social and economic phase (1926-37) and a political phase (1937-48) (R. Soenarno 1960).

## **2.7 ISLAM ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE: THE INTERTWINING OF ISLAM AND MALAY NATIONALISM**

Among present-day students and proponents of Islamic resurgence, it is common to speak of Islam and nationalism in mutually incompatible terms (cf. chapter 1: fn. 21 and 22). About half a century ago, however, the anti-colonial struggle in Muslim states was typified by a combination of Islamic and nationalist forces, lending the cause an aura of *jihad* and widespread popular support. Various anti-colonial forces were prepared to sink their ideological differences towards

achieving the common goal of independence, but once this was realised, the reins of government invariably fell into the hands of secular nationalists, not always without the covert approval of their former colonial masters. As the new nation took shape, the Islamists found themselves at best relegated to inconsequential positions in state affairs and at worst, persecuted for their religio-political convictions.<sup>63</sup> As the following analysis will show, the pattern above did not elude Malaya, although here, the situation was predictably more complex due to the unique racial mix of the population.

As we have seen in the last section, one could justifiably locate the provenance of anti-colonial Malay nationalism in the teachings of early twentieth century Islamic reformists. In fact, throughout the anti-colonial struggle, Islam and Malay nationalism fused relatively comfortably into a coherent political ideology emphasising the political liberation of Malaya and Malay political supremacy in the face of rising non-Malay ethnic assertiveness (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1986: 156-157). As of pre-1945, one could speak of three emergent streams of Malay nationalism, as led by the Islamic-educated, the Malay-educated and the English-educated respectively, each of which retained a significant measure of organisational separateness from the others (cf. Funston 1980: 29, 1976: 59). After the clampdown on *Kaum Muda* activities and publications, from which they were never to recover, Islamic reformists channelled their energies into the less politically sensitive areas of education and economic initiatives, and by the 1940s, their *madrasahs* were functioning as safe havens for radical Malay nationalists pursued by the colonial authorities (F.M. Jamil 1988: 44-45). Radical Malay nationalism, as spearheaded by the Malay-educated intelligentsia heavily influenced by socialism and Indonesian nationalism, had given birth in 1937 to the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM: Young Malays' Union). Under the aggressive leadership of Ibrahim Yaacob and Ishak Haji Muhammad, KMM developed a distinctively anti-imperialist and anti-aristocratic agenda, and operated under the rallying cry of liberating 'all the oppressed people of Malaya' (R. Soenarno 1960: 20-22). Despite having a secular platform and sharing contacts with the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), KMM enjoyed considerable support from Islamic-educated elements, particularly at grassroots level (Safie Ibrahim 1978: 186). By 1940, the British and their aristocratic allies had become sufficiently alarmed by KMM so as to pass a series of 'Defence Regulations', under

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<sup>63</sup>A perfect example could be found in the case of Egypt, where anti-colonial nationalism had their origins in the teachings of Muhammad Abduh and his disciples of the *Al-Manar* circle. Originally conceived in religious terms, Abduh's doctrines gradually acquired a secular flavour as the anti-colonial struggle was taken up by Arab nationalists. In independent Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, true inheritors of Abduh's Islamic reformism, found themselves subjected to the most intense persecution by the nationalist government of Gamal Abd Al-Nasser. See Mortimer (1982: chapter 8).

which 150 of KMM's leading activists were apprehended and incarcerated, hence practically crippling the organisation (R. Soenarno 1960: 22-23).

A world apart from the Islamic and 'leftist' strands of Malay nationalism was the English-educated Malays, who developed a 'rightist' ideology based on the slogan 'Malaya for the Malays'.<sup>64</sup> While sharing much the same Sinophobia as their more radical counterparts, these conservative nationalists were unabashedly loyalist, in the sense that unflinching faith was expressed in the established institutions: the sultans, the aristocratic elite and the colonial authorities, for the solution to Malay problems. Leadership of this group laid initially with the few appointed representatives to the various State Legislative Councils, before the urgent need for an organised expression of Malay interests led, within a short period of time, to the blossoming of Malay associations, beginning with the Singapore Malay Union (SMU) (1926), the *Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena* (Brotherhood of Pen Friends) (1937), and followed by other state-level Malay associations throughout 1937-39 (Khoo Kay Kim 1981: 105-106). A great step towards Malay unity was achieved with the convening in 1939 of two consecutive Pan-Malayan Conferences which gathered all existing Malay associations nationwide. In contrast with the harsh repression perpetrated on the Islamic and leftist strands of Malay nationalism, the British allowed the aristocratic-led Malay associations to flourish since they knew that such an elitist leadership, comprising Malay bureaucrats originally handpicked by the British to assist them in the colonial administration (in contrast with the 'self-made' Islamic and leftist Malay leaders), would lack the initiative and capability to think outside the British-designed paradigm of action (cf. Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 197-198). Their faith was justified when enthusiastic support for British efforts in the War was given tangible form by the associations' launching of Patriotic Funds.

Malay nationalism, in all its forms, was to acquire renewed vigour as a result of the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942-45.<sup>65</sup> The myth of British military invincibility was destroyed by the fall of Singapore and the relative ease by which the Japanese invaded the country. KMM was revived, its leaders received Japanese recognition for their anti-British activities, and Ibrahim Yaacob was even made Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese-sponsored army, *Giyu Gun* or *Pembela Tanah Ayer* (PETA: Defenders of the Motherland). Yet, being antithetical to any form of colonialism whatsoever, KMM's collaboration with the Japanese was no more than a tactical move designed to camouflage their subversive activities and simultaneous contacts with the Chinese-dominated MCP and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese

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<sup>64</sup>For a comprehensive account of this 'conservative' stream of Malay nationalism, see R. Soenarno (1960: 11-19) and Funston (1980: 33-34), both of which form the basis of the following discussion.

<sup>65</sup>The account of wartime nationalist activities in this paragraph is based upon R. Soenarno (1960: 23-26), Funston (1980: 35-36) and Safie Ibrahim (1978: 186-187).

Army (MPAJA). Despite officially banning KMM in 1942, the Japanese were prepared, out of expediency, to allow KMM's organisational coherence to be maintained under the guise of PETA, and later, the also-sponsored *Kesatuan Ra'ayat Indonesia Semenanjung* (KRIS: Union of Peninsular Indonesians). The pinnacle of wartime left-wing nationalism was the meeting between KRIS leaders, Ibrahim Yaacob and Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, and their Indonesian counterparts, Soekarno and Hatta, in Malaya on 12 August 1945, during which an agreement was reached, with the full consent of the severely weakened Japanese authorities, for the proclamation of a Declaration of Independence in the context of an *Indonesia Raya*. An abrupt Japanese surrender forestalled such an eventuality; the Republic of Indonesia was promulgated without Malaya and Borneo, both of which returned to British rule, and KRIS and PETA leaders were left bewildered until their mass arrests and temporary detention by the British Military Administration (BMA). Some, like Ibrahim Yaacob, absconded to Indonesia.

At grassroots level, the impact of Japanese occupation was to politicise the Malay masses such that their latent capacities were sufficiently harnessed for the purpose of post-War religio-nationalist mass mobilisation (Funston 1980: 35). For the first time, non-aristocratic Malays were exposed to invaluable administrative experience, during which their anti-European sentiments were intensified.<sup>66</sup> Their religion received official recognition from the Japanese, as shown by its patronage of two Pan-Malayan congresses of Islamic leaders (*ibid.*). This official pro-Malay attitude was in marked contrast to the stringent discrimination practised against the Chinese, leading to a heightened sense of ethno-nationalist identity among both communities; this gradually deteriorated into serious ethnic tension which exploded in a series of violent Sino-Malay clashes immediately after the Japanese left (September 1945-March 1946) (Cheah Boon Kheng 1981). Accounts of these conflicts demonstrate a significant presence of the religious factor: defence of Islam and the Muslims blended well with the call to protect Malay honour allegedly violated and threatened by the uncouth claims and overbearing antics of an ungrateful 'guest' Chinese population (*ibid.*: 109 and *passim*). Thus, it was events during and just after the Japanese occupation that enabled the 'primordial sentiments' of Malay society to be tapped for religio-political purposes, and not, as Means (1969: 277, 1982: 464-465) insists, due to the controversy surrounding the Maria Hertogh court case in Singapore in 1950<sup>67</sup> and the introduction of elections in 1955. This is not to

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<sup>66</sup>The Japanese operated indoctrination centres to inculcate patriotic feelings among the Malays, based upon the ideological framework of its Co-Prosperity Sphere and the slogan 'Asia for the Asians'; see Funston (1980: 35, 38: fn. 34).

<sup>67</sup>Known to the Malays as the 'Natrah affair', the case involved the civil court's controversial decision to order Maria Hertogh's adopted Malay mother, who had been entrusted with the Dutch girl's custody by her natural parents who fled to the Netherlands during the Japanese occupation, to return the thirteen-

deny the significance of these events; the first, for instance, belying the colonial authorities' view of it as an isolated incident, had repercussions throughout Malaya, and brought such prominent Malay nationalists as Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy to Singapore to orchestrate demonstrations which instantly acquired a 'Christianity versus Islam' dimension (Means 1969: 278, Funston 1980: 119). The ensuing riots, however, were early manifestations of, instead of reasons for, popular political Islam gaining a foothold in Malay society. Means might have well mistaken the effect for the cause.

The post-War years saw a further cementing of relations between Islamic reformism and the other two opposite tendencies of Malay nationalism. An unprecedented willingness to sink ideological inconsistencies towards achieving a common aim of Malayan independence was initially shown by all the disparate elements in their concerted opposition to the Malayan Union proposals in 1946.<sup>68</sup> Animosity towards the British reimposition of colonial rule had been simmering since the BMA's reversal of the Japanese pro-Malay policy (Cheah Boon Kheng 1981: 110). But having got so used to the notion of Malay passivity, the British never anticipated that their plans for a reorganisation of the colonial administration would provoke widespread anger and discontent among the Malays, who on their part were busy reviving their associations once the Japanese departed. In short, the plans would transfer the sovereignty of the sultans to the British Crown and confer equal citizenship rights to non-Malays, effectively overturning any past privileges and protection given to the Malay race and religion. The ultimate result would be the transformation of Malaya into a full-fledged British colony. A common fear of 'racial extinction' brought together, on 1 March 1946, forty-one Malay associations in a Pan-Malayan Malay Congress which formed the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), with the express purpose of defeating the Malayan Union. The focus of their opposition was the allegedly coercive manner in which the British obtained the signatures of the sultans, even employing threats of deposition in the cases of the Terengganu and Kedah rulers, and the fact that the British had not bothered to seek the consent of the rulers' subjects. While this stance represented a marked shift of attitude in the Malay conception of the ruler-ruled relationship, UMNO did not go so far as to disown the institution of the sultanate. This was not so surprising in view of

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year old to them. Whilst under her foster mother's care, Maria was brought up as a Muslim, renamed 'Natrah' and even married off to a Malay gentleman. The unwilling Maria was forcibly reunited with her non-Muslim parents and brought home to the Netherlands. This case clearly indicated the impotence of Muslim law when brought into conflict with civil law in colonial Malaya. The ensuing anti-Christian riot killed nine and injured twenty six. For details, see Means (1969: 277, fn. 41) and S.A. Hussein (1988: 104).

<sup>68</sup>The following information on the Malayan Union episode in this paragraph is largely based on Ishak Tadin (1960: 62-76) and Funston (1980: 75-79).

the fact that UMNO's leadership was overwhelmingly in the hands of the aristocratic elite, the rulers' traditional allies, as represented at the highest level by Dato' Onn bin Jaafar's chairmanship of the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress and his firm grip on the presidency of UMNO (1945-51).<sup>69</sup> It is uncertain as to what extent the UMNO-led campaign had influenced the British decision to reverse their plans; but after widespread boycotts of official functions to inaugurate the Malayan Union, the British acceded to UMNO's demand for exclusive negotiations to be held between UMNO representatives and Malay sultans on the one hand and the British authorities on the other. These negotiations gave birth to a new Federation of Malaya, under which the Malay states were centralised under one administrative unit, but which more importantly reaffirmed the sovereignty of the sultans and the special position of the Malays, despite minor citizenship concessions to non-Malays.

While UMNO's orientation had from the outset been biased towards the secular 'rightist' stream of Malay nationalism, evidence indicates that Islamic-educated elements played a far from peripheral role in the party during its formative stages. Prominent Islamic personalities were given key party responsibilities: Sayyid Alwi Al-Hadi, son of the reformist Sayyid Sheikh Al-Hadi, became UMNO Information Officer in 1947; Sayyid Jaafar Al-Bar was entrusted to the post of head of UMNO Information Section in 1956; the notable *pondok* figures Haji Ahmad Maliki and Haji Hassan Yunus, a former Johore *mufti* and student of Tok Kenali in Kelantan, were elected to the party's Central Executive Committee; Haji Ahmad Badawi bin Abdullah Pa'him, another noted Islamic scholar, served as Vice-President of UMNO Youth, and his father, the venerable Sheikh Abdullah Pa'him, chaired the UMNO Committee for Religious Affairs (Safie Ibrahim 1978: 189, 1981: 9). A *Dasar Pelajaran* (Educational Policy) approved at the 1947 General Assembly settled for a broadly Islamic educational system (Funston 1980: 84). The party constitution adopted in 1949 had as one of its objectives to maintain 'the excellence of the Religion of Islam and to propagate the same' (*ibid.*: 87). At the symbolic level, the

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<sup>69</sup>Dato' Onn bin Jaafar (d. 1962), offspring of a Malay-Turkish marriage, adopted son of the Sultan of Johore and scion of a prominent Johore aristocratic family which had produced no fewer than three state Chief Ministers, received secondary education in Britain and the MCKK and entered public service at the age of sixteen. Prior to his election as President of UMNO, he served in various capacities as, among others, member of the State Legislative Council, head of KRIS in Johore, District Officer of Batu Pahat and President of the Peninsula Malays Movement of Johore. His proposal to open UMNO's membership to non-Malays was vehemently rejected by party colleagues, after which he resigned from UMNO in 1951 to form the non-communal Independence of Malaya Party (IMP), which never really got off the ground. He did, however, manage to win a federal seat in the 1959 national elections under the ticket of the similarly ill-fated *Parti Negara* (founded 1954) - his last notable political venture. In passing, it may be mentioned that his son, Hussein Onn, was Malaysia's Prime Minister in 1976-81. For details on Dato' Onn, see Funston (1980: 109-111) and Ishak Tadin (1960), and for valuable information on his pedigree, see Mehmet (1990: 28-29).

green patch in the official party banner was supposed to embody Islam (Safie Ibrahim 1978: 189).

Finally, it is worth noting the vital role played by Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad alias Za'aba, who, as Organising Secretary or Chairman of the Planning Committee of the inaugural Pan-Malayan Malay Congress, had proposed adding the word 'national' to Dato' Onn's suggestion of 'United Malays Organisation' as the name of the parent body of all participating Malay associations, in order to emphasise the status of the Malays as not only a race but also a nation (Ishak Tadin 1960: 68, Funston 1980: 76). Venerated in post-independence Malaysia principally as a literary figure, Za'aba's distinctive contribution to the cause of Islamic reformism has been unduly marginalised, perhaps due to his secular education and shunning of publicity. Yet, as one researcher has recently argued, "*Za'aba was also a reformist supporter, if not disciple*" (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 25). By working through the 'Za'aba Files' in the National Archives, this author has invaluable revealed that Za'aba held the distinction of being the first Malay whose Islamic writings, overwhelmingly reformist in tone, were published for a Western audience, who also invited him on several occasions to deliver talks on Islam; that Za'aba's Islamic ideas were eagerly sought by leading Islamic figures of his era; that Za'aba was invited to figure in a leadership position of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP or PAS); and that Za'aba was a student of Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, a teacher to two sons of the renowned reformist and a close confidant of the other reformist, Sayyid Sheikh Al-Hadi (*ibid.*: 25-26, cf. Khoo Kay Kim 1981: 97).<sup>70</sup>

On the left-wing of post-War nationalist politics, the penetration of Islamic elements was evident in the presence of religious-educated individuals such as Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Musa Ahmad and Baharuddin Tahir in leadership positions of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP), established in October 1945 and was in many respects the successor of the now defunct KMM and KRIS, although MNP's own principal activists were fond of stressing its entirely new manifesto and character (Safie Ibrahim 1978: 187). In substance, MNP's programme hardly emphasised directly Islamic goals: its four avowed aims were independence under a democratic government, the recognition of Malay as Malaya's official language, the establishment of a single Malayan nationality and political union of Malaya and Indonesia (*ibid.*: 188). In view of MNP's strong socialist character, it was, to say the least, startling to see how disparate elements were ready to submerge their ideological differences in

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<sup>70</sup>It is important also to note that during the inaugural Malay Congress in 1946, Za'aba was President of the Singapore Malay Union (SMU) (Funston 1980: 76), which in 1951 had proposed that UMNO should, as a matter of principle, strive to establish an Islamic state (Funston 1976: 69) - a proposal flatly rejected. Although Za'aba may have relinquished the Presidency by 1951, his leadership must have had a significant bearing upon the character of SMU, which was relatively Islamic *vis-à-vis* other 'rightist' Malay associations.

pursuit of the broad aims above. MNP was even initially involved in the massive UMNO-orchestrated protests against the Malayan Union. After the defeat of the proposals, however, it withdrew from the UMNO-led alliance, ostensibly due to disagreement on details of the party flag but in reality reflecting the deep ideological cleavage between the 'right' and the 'left' of Malay nationalism, the former wanting to preserve the institution of the sultanate while the latter demanding its abolition and replacement by a republic (ibid.: 190, Ishak Tadin 1960: 77, fn. 53).

At its height, MNP and its affiliates were estimated to have attained a membership totalling between 60,000 and 100,000, indicating a level of popular support rivalling that of UMNO; MNP even received the backing of the influential *Utusan Melayu* newspaper (Funston 1980: 40, 1976: 60). In 1947, Malay left-wing activists were unified by the creation of the *Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat* (PUTERA: Centre for People's Power), and an alliance was subsequently effected between PUTERA and the non-Malay All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA), resulting in their joint-production of a ten-point People's Constitutional Proposals as an alternative to the constitutional terms negotiated by the British, the sultans and UMNO to replace the Malayan Union (ibid.: 60-61, Safie Ibrahim 1978: 192). Rising communist-inspired violence and the declaration of *Darurat* (Emergency) in 1948, however, led to a severe crackdown on all left-wing groups and subsequent large-scale arrests of their activists, culminating with the official banning of the MNP in 1950 (Funston 1976: 60-61). UMNO was thus presented with a golden opportunity, which it took in earnest, to claim the sole right to represent the Malays in negotiations for Malayan independence, which eventually materialised on 31 August 1957. As for the remaining left-wing nationalists whose ideological convictions did not allow them to join UMNO, hundreds of hardcore socialists followed the communists underground, indicating the partial success of the MNP-MCP fragile alliance in 1945-48 (Cheah Boon Kheng 1981: 117); while other secular-trained adherents devoted their efforts, not necessarily of a political nature, to other short-lived groups with varying degrees of success, among which were the *Angkatan Sasterawan '50* (ASAS: Generation of 50s Writers), the *Persatuan Melayu Semenanjung* (PMU: Peninsula Malays Union) and the *Parti Ra'ayat* (People's Party). In the mid-1950s, various anti-UMNO groups united in a temporary coalition, the All-Malayan Malay Youth Congress (AMMYC), which at its height gathered representatives from forty-four Malay associations (Funston 1980: 41-43, 1976: 67-68).

For the many graduates of Islamic reformist institutions searching for an outlet to pursue their anti-colonial struggle, MNP, especially its radical youth wings, *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API: Aware Youth Corps) and *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS: Aware Women Corps), served as a viable alternative to the 'pro-colonial'

UMNO, at least before the founding of an organisation of their own making.<sup>71</sup> From its very outset, however, MNP's Islamic wing found themselves over-shadowed by the socialist-oriented at the highest level of party decision-making. Despite efforts to conceal any rift, it came to public limelight when Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy was demoted to the ceremonial role of party 'Advisor' after one year in the Presidency, which was taken over by Ishak Haji Muhammad, the erstwhile KMM leader. MNP's Islamic elements, however, did not try to subvert the organisation from within; an action which would only benefit their ideological adversaries on the right. Instead, they embarked on a series of initiatives, under MNP auspices, to further their Islamic aspirations. This was manifested in a spectacularly-organised Pan-Malayan Economic-Religious Conference, held in the precinct of the reformist *Madrasah Al-Ehya Al-Sharif*, Gunung Semanggol, Perak in March 1947. It was this convention which gave birth to the *Pusat Perekonomian Melayu SeMalaya* (PEPERMAS: Pan-Malayan Malay Economic Centre), designed to assist Malays in terms of the pooling of capital for economic ventures, and the innovative *Majlis Agama Tertinggi SeMalaya* (MATA: Pan-Malayan Supreme Islamic Council), which sought to centralise the Islamic administration of the various states. MATA declared the sultans incompetent to oversee the affairs of Islam and the Muslims, and thus demanded their surrendering of such powers to bodies consisting of elected representatives. The reformists' continued pre-occupation with education was given tangible form with the formation, later in the year, of the MATA-sponsored *Lembaga Pendidikan Ra'ayat* (LEPIR: Council for People's Education) entrusted with the task of improving the quality of education in Islamic schools. Expansion was so rapid that by the end of 1947, MATA could boast of having a branch in every state.

The life-long ambition of Islamic reformists to pursue their struggle through their own organ came to fruition in March 1948 during the MNP-sponsored fourth MATA convention, reportedly attended by five-thousand people. This meeting gave birth to *Hizbul Muslimin* (HM: Party of Muslims), the first Islamic political party in Malaya, under the leadership of Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Baqir, principal of the *Madrasah Al-Ehya Al-Sharif*. HM's objectives were threefold: to achieve independence, to establish an Islamic society and to turn Malaya into an Islamic state. Despite this clear language of political Islam, HM did not forsake Malay nationalism. Clauses in its constitution paralleled MNP objectives, and one party leader went on to the extent of declaring the priority accorded to Malay nationalism, although this was probably intended to appease the socialist-oriented participants of the inaugural convention. Within a short period of time, HM expanded to all states and attracted the support of

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<sup>71</sup>Factual information in the following two paragraphs is largely based upon Funston (1980: 87-92), Funston (1976: 64-67) and Safie Ibrahim (1978: 190-192).

prominent Islamic figures associated with UMNO, the most notable of whom were Haji Hassan Yunus and Haji Hussin Dol, who had led the Kedah Malay Association at the congress which produced UMNO in 1946. The developments so alarmed Dato' Onn Jaafar, President of UMNO, that prompted him to issue a public statement warning the Malays of the danger which, previously arising from the jungle (an allusion to communists), now "*descends from the mountain in the guise of religion*" (*Utusan Melayu* 21.6.47). Similar expressions of anxiety did not fall into the deaf ears of the authorities; in a wave of repression more severe than that inflicted upon MNP, seven HM leaders were detained without trial in August 1948, after which HM effectively ceased operations.

From the foregoing account of events, it is clear that as the country verged towards independence, UMNO, overwhelmingly led by the English-educated bureaucrats, obtained the leadership of the Malay community purely by default, or more specifically, by a tacit collusion with the British authorities, who embarked on a witch-hunt of Malay nationalists of leftist and Islamic persuasions. Intellectually and politically, this was to the grave disadvantage of Malay society, for, as has been concluded by the foremost historian of modern Malaysia:

..... throughout the greater part of the twentieth century, the dynamic elements in the Malay society were to be found not so much among the English-educated intelligentsia but among the products of religious schools, Malay private schools and even Government Malay schools..... the non-English educated were distrusted especially those with strong religious feelings because their thinking quite obviously did not harmonise with the British pattern of thought and action..... (Khoo Kay Kim 1974: 197).

Given the time and opportunity, the 'radical' streams of Malay nationalism might have successfully competed for the loyalty of Malay society with the conservative strand as represented by UMNO, the party led by a reinvigorated Malay ruling elite. The post-War Malay political climate had developed to such an extent that independence became the ultimate goal to be achieved at all costs. As events unfolded, the Malays found themselves left with no choice as to the vehicle to accomplish their desired political freedom and the version of liberty offered to them by their representatives. The British, for their part, were not willing to concede independence to Malay leaders whose ideological worldview differed from theirs and who would thus jeopardise future British interests in Malaya. To the Malays at large, it was paradoxical that the long-sought independence was eventually accomplished by a group of nationalists who even as late as the 1950s still harboured serious reservations for demanding an end to colonial rule (cf. *ibid.*: 198). By their feat, nevertheless, these nationalists claimed an immortal place in the new nation's history.

Not until the tragic racial riots of May 1969 did the Malays start to realise the serious repercussions of their erstwhile national 'heroes' independence negotiations and post-independence policies upon the country's indigenous peoples and the Islamic religion.

As for the group who had originally voiced the idea of independence but who was discredited for alleged socialist-communist leanings: the Islamic reformists, temporary consignment to the political wilderness was to await them after the clampdown of the late 1940s. In the mid-1950s, a significant number of them began channelling their energies to the *Persatuan Islam SeMalaya* (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party: PMIP, or PAS, after its Arabic initials, and as henceforth referred to). Details surrounding the founding of PAS as an independent political party in 1951 have been subjected to extensive treatment elsewhere (cf. Funston 1976, 1980: 87-96, Safie Ibrahim 1981: chapters II-IV). Several facts, however, deserve attention.

First, the very establishment of PAS, engineered by reform-minded individuals within the breakaway *ulama* section of UMNO, reflects their disappointment of UMNO's increasingly overt pursuit of secular nationalist aims after a brief flirtation with Islamic concerns. Within UMNO, as they saw it, the Islamists never stood a chance of succeeding against the secularists' monopoly of decision-making, in their endeavour to put into effect genuine Islamic proposals. Second, in its early years, PAS was far from being a threat to UMNO's hold on the Malay masses; a fact which helps to explain why the colonial repressive machinery could afford to overlook it. In these initial stages, PAS was no more than a welfare body in which overlapping membership with UMNO was commonplace. In official circles, PAS was widely viewed as a tool of Dato' Onn, who was known to have a close relationship with Haji Ahmad Fuad, the first PAS President (Funston 1976: 71-72). Third, only with the influx of activists with an MNP, HM or anti-UMNO background into PAS in the mid-1950s, and the consequent enforcement of party reforms and discipline, did its fortunes and image change. This became of any significance to the public only with PAS' success in preventing a clean sweep by the UMNO-Malayan Chinese Association (MCA)-Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) alliance in the national elections of 1955, by which time the political atmosphere did not permit the authorities to resort to harsh repression (ibid.: 72-73). Under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy (PAS President 1956-69),<sup>72</sup> the party furthered its consolidation, and under the

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<sup>72</sup>Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy (real name Burhanuddin bin Mohamed Noor) (d. 1969), mentioned several times above in connection with the leadership of pre-independence left-wing organisations and with his involvement in the Maria Hertogh controversy in 1950, was arguably the ideal embodiment of the intertwining between Islamic reformism and Malay nationalism. A product of Penang's *Madrasah Al-Mashor*, where he had studied under the reformist Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin, Dr. Burhanuddin proceeded to equip himself with the best of Arabic, English and Dutch education before emerging as one of the greatest Malay politicians of all times (Funston 1980: 118-120, Safie Ibrahim 1978: 188). His radical nationalist activities and doctrines, as articulated in his two famous books, *Perjuangan Kita* (Our Struggle) (Penang: United Press, 1955) and *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu* (The Philosophical

twin creed of Islam and Malay nationalism (Safie Ibrahim 1981: chapters X-XI), it mounted a formidable challenge to UMNO at the national level.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

While it has been widely established that sufi missionaries played a central role in introducing Islam to the indigenous peoples of the Malay archipelago, most studies take the view that the sufis, by the nature of their teachings, also directly contributed to the syncretic trait of Malayan Islam, as is evident from the persistence of pre-Islamic cultural mores in traditional Malay society. This study, however, adopts a completely different perspective: that sufism had tolerated the existence of pre-Islamic indigenous traditions out of strategic expediency, and had been far from embracing them. In their strategy of propagation, the sufi missionaries emphasised first and foremost the inculcation of divine faith in the Creator in the hearts of potential converts; once this has been realised, major obstacles towards the acceptance of politico-legal aspects of the faith would have been removed. A priority of the material over the spiritual in the early stages of missionary activities would only repel prospective entrants to the new religion. The misinterpretation of the perceived sufis' flexibility in politico-legal matters derives from a misunderstanding of sufism as a deviation from orthodox Islam rather than an essential part of it.

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Basis of Malay Nationalism) (Djakarta: Tekad, 1963), has led to his being universally recognised as 'the father of Malay nationalism' (Muhammad Salleh Wan Musa 1974: 160, fn. 17). A number of scholars have tended to portray him as a Malay nationalist first and an Islamic reformist second (cf. Funston 1980: 120), or even as a nationalist who converted to Islamic reformism in the light of post-War political expediency, culminating in his election as President of PAS in 1956 (cf. Means 1969: 278). However, while it is true that Dr. Burhanuddin's political ideas conceived of Islam, nationalism and socialism as inseparable forces; this does not necessarily mean that Dr. Burhanuddin compromised his Islamic principles to suit the intense nationalism of the 1940s and 1950s. A close examination of Dr. Burhanuddin's political principles would reveal that nationalist-socialist elements were accepted by him only insofar as they conformed to the Islamic ideological framework, and even then, they were considered subordinate to Islam (Safie Ibrahim 1981: chapter X). In other words, nationalism and socialism were means, not ends in themselves. Hence, while he defined the roles of PAS and himself as "*in content, character and orientation, "Malay nationalists" with "Islamic aspirations"*" (quoted in Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 9), he also asserted that PAS' struggle was "*from the beginning to the end, to establish Allah's commandments*" (quoted in Hussin Mutalib 1993: 24). Dr. Burhanuddin's involvement in left-wing groups merely served as a platform for political activism within an atmosphere where unity between anti-colonial activists was essential. There exists no *a priori* reason to doubt Dr. Burhanuddin's sincerity in voicing Islamic aims; his involvement with the cause of Islamic reformism, in any case, predated his leftist actions. For example, it is on record that in 1937 he assisted the reformists, led by Kelantan's Haji Wan Musa Abdul Samad (cf. section 2.6), in a major public debate on ritual matters against the conservative *ulama* (Muhammad Salleh Wan Musa 1974: 160). More spectacularly, during his encounters with his tactical allies, the communist guerrillas, in the jungle, he even found the time and opportunity to propagate Islam to them (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 24). For a full study of Dr. Burhanuddin, see Kamarudin Jaafar (1980).

The sufis succeeded in penetrating into the ranks of the ruling elite, whose conversion sparked off an unprecedented diffusion of 'popular Islam' in the form of mystical orders and brotherhoods. The sufis' tireless efforts, however, were overwhelmed by the accelerating speed in which the conversion process took place and the ensuing mixture of indigenous elements with Islamic rituals. This process was sanctioned by local sufi masters, who, unlike their predecessors, were not sufficiently equipped to train their disciples in the orthodox tenets of the faith. The distorted understanding of sufism as a purely spiritual doctrine stems from contemporary observation of corrupt sufi practices during the declining stages of Malayan Islam; a period which coincided with the expansion of colonial rule into the Malay states. Decadent sufism, in effect, was a symptom rather than a cause of the decline of Islam: this phenomenon had become clearly evident in nineteenth century Malaya with the prevalence among the elites and the masses alike of unIslamic pastimes and practices which were never sanctioned by the orthodox sufis of the earlier generations.

The once-prevalent view that Islam had a relatively negligible impact upon Malay society and politics stems from the narrow methodological approach used by the Dutch orientalist, who monopolised early writings on Islam in the Malay world. By adopting an approach which differs in emphasis from that of scholars influenced by the Dutch orientalist tradition, it has been argued that Islam revolutionised the ideological worldview of pre-colonial Malay society. The intellectual process engendered by Islam was reversed by the advent of British colonialism which stressed the intellectual subjugation of indigenous peoples. Secularism became the basis of colonial policies at all levels, resulting in immense social stratification within and between resident Malayan communities. The deleterious long-term impact of such policies was initially over-shadowed by the apparent short-term benefits that accrued to all levels of society. As the position of Malay-Muslims and of Islam became increasingly insecure, voices of dissent began to emerge. The pathetic revolts led by self-seeking aristocratic chiefs were hardly inspired by Islam, but at grassroots level, and at least in one clear-cut case, participants did join the rebellions out of their Islamic convictions. Armed resistance was, however, parochial and hence easily subdued by the technologically superior colonial authorities. More effective was the nationwide anti-colonial propaganda launched by the Islamic reformists, who at the same time embarked on peaceful efforts of instilling Islamic consciousness among the spiritually and intellectually dormant. Except for their different target groups of propagation activities, the Islamic reformists conducted their struggle in the true tradition of the early orthodox sufis.

Although pre-independence Islamic reformism was a relative failure at the level of movement-organisation, the dissemination of reformist thinking was alarming

enough to the colonial authorities who, in collusion with the local aristocratic elite and the colonial-created religious establishment, launched a massive anti-reformist campaign which focused upon charging the reformists with propagating 'deviationist' teachings. While this counter-propaganda seemed successful enough in ensuring that the loyalty of the Malays remained with the conservative elites, no *coup de grace* was dealt to the reformists. They continued their efforts in less politically explicit endeavours, and later relaunched their political opposition to the colonial regime by aligning themselves with the leftists. In retrospect, this ideologically inconsistent coalition, although perhaps tactically expedient at the time, was counter-productive in the long-term, as it enabled the authorities to hoodwink the Malay masses into believing that the reformists were really communists, who were identified in Malay minds with the Chinese, or pro-Indonesian nationalists intent on subverting the sovereignty of an independent Malaya. Such distorted images of the reformists persisted even after the reformists had discarded their Indonesian connection and sympathies with the socialist-oriented Malay nationalists, as reflected by the different political platforms and parties through which they chose to pursue their respective struggles. Ideologically, however, principles identified with Malay nationalism and socialism were retained in the reformists' political dictionary, so long as they did not contradict Islam but were subordinated to it.

In pre-independence Malaya, the Islamic reformists were the most unfortunate losers in the competition for Malay political allegiance. Their political programme of anti-colonialism was hijacked by the conservative aristocracy, whose lip-service to the cause, which they were forced by circumstances to embrace, won them the support of the Malays. The gradual denigration of Islam in their political agenda testifies to their manipulation of religion for their selfish political gains. The following chapter analyses the fate of Islam in post-independence Malayan (later Malaysian) politics in order to provide a conceptual background to the emergence of Islamic resurgence movements, to whom the mantle of the early orthodox sufis - the pioneers of Islam in the Malay world, and of the Islamic reformists, who reinvigorated it with a novel spirit of anti-colonialism and political activism, properly belongs.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN THE PERIPHERY: THE MALAYSIAN SCENE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Major studies of contemporary Malaysian Islam have established the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence in post-independence Malaysia as dating from the 1970s (cf. Nagata 1984: 81, Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 5, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 73). After that decade, manifestations of the reawakening of Islamic consciousness became especially discernible among the highly educated and upwardly mobile Malay-Muslim youth in urban areas of the country (cf. Kessler 1980: 3). The ensuing public uproar against expressions of *dakwah*, as the Malaysian version of Islamic resurgence has come to be known,<sup>1</sup> could only be understood in relation to the minor role played by Islam in erstwhile determining political and socio-economic developments of the new nation-state. Islamic resurgence, widely perceived in negative terms by the official establishment, was far from being the expected outcome of the intensely secular policies pursued by early post-independence Malayan governments dominated by the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance.

#### 3.2 THE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF ISLAM

The denigration of Islam in post-independence Malaysian politics had its roots in the peripheral role designated to it in the Federal Constitution of 1957.<sup>2</sup> None of the parties responsible for framing this document visualised Islam to be the core defining characteristic of the newly independent nation-state. The Malayan delegation that negotiated for independence with the British government in 1956 comprised of representatives of state rulers and ministers of the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance, which had won an overwhelming victory in the 1955 general elections<sup>3</sup>. A Commonwealth Commission chaired by Lord Reid was duly appointed by the Queen and the Conference of Rulers to draft the Federation of Malaya's Constitution. Ironically, no

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<sup>1</sup>On the term *dakwah*, see chapter 1: fn. 6.

<sup>2</sup>This peripheral role for Islam in the 1957 Constitution is to be contrasted with its definitive role in the ideal Islamic state, as expounded by Islamic theoreticians (cf. chapter 1: fn. 5, fn. 14). The main criterion of such peripherality is the legal separation between *din* (religion) and *dawlah* (state).

<sup>3</sup>The Alliance won 51 out of 52 seats, the other one going to PAS.

Malayan citizen, who would presumably be sensitive to local conditions, was included in the Commission.<sup>4</sup>

The Alliance memorandum submitted to the Constitutional Commission proposed that "*the religion of the Federation of Malaya shall be Islam,*" but that this "*shall not imply that the State is not a secular State.*"<sup>5</sup> The Commission had made it clear that should any provision to the effect that Islam be made Malaya's state religion be included in the Constitution, it must not "*in any way affect the civil rights of non-Muslims.*" The state rulers initially opposed any declaration installing Islam as the established religion of the Federation, for they feared such an enactment would transfer any authority they wielded as heads of Islam in their own states to the proposed Head of Federation. The sultans finally relented after the Alliance explained to them that the purpose of making Islam the official religion, far from intending to usurp their powers, was:

primarily for ceremonial purposes, for instance to enable prayers to be offered in the Islamic way on official public occasions such as the installation of the Yang diPertuan Agong, Independence Day and similar occasions.

On the other hand, Mr. Justice Abdul Hamid from Pakistan managed to convince other members of the Commission to accept the insertion of a clause promulgating Islam as the state religion, pointing out that other Christian and Muslim countries have had such a constitutional provision without causing hardship to any section of the population. Eventually, the Commission settled for a Federal Constitution which gave recognition to Islam in form but not in substance.<sup>6</sup> Article 3(1) states: "*Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.*" State rulers retain their positions as heads of the Muslim religion in their respective states, while the *Yang diPertuan Agong*, elected as Head of Federation from among the state rulers every five years, continues to become head of Islam in his own state and assumes a similar role in Malacca and Penang, and later by a constitutional amendment, in the Federal Territory, Sabah and Sarawak. However, the Federal Constitution does not oblige the various states to proclaim Islam as their official religion, such that Penang, Malacca and Sarawak have not done so in their state constitutions.

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<sup>4</sup>Besides Lord Reid, who was Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, the other members were Sir Ivor Jennings, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Sir William Mckell, former Governor-General of Australia; B. Malik, former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court and Mr. Justice Abdul Hamid of the West Pakistan High Court (Suffian Hashim 1962: 9, fn. 3).

<sup>5</sup>Material in the following three paragraphs is taken from Suffian Hashim (1962: 8-11), Ahmad Ibrahim (1985: 213-216), Hamid Jusoh (1991: 31-34) and Rosenthal (1965: 289-290).

<sup>6</sup>This means that Islam was recognised only as a set of religious rituals, while its social, political, economic, moral and cultural facets were denied. The 1957 Constitution enshrined the secular doctrine of separation between religion and state (cf. fn. 2 above).

Article 8(2) guarantees "*no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority.....*" Hence, although the Head of Federation will necessarily be a Muslim, no provision in the Federal Constitution prevents him from appointing a head of government, a minister or a federal high official who is a non-Muslim. Consequently, post-independence state constitutions have been amended to enable sultans to appoint non-Muslims as Chief Ministers. Article 11 confers on every individual the right to profess, practise and propagate his religion, but the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among Muslims may be controlled or restricted by state law, or in respect of the Federal Territory, by federal law. Thus, not only are non-Muslim missionary activities subject to strict regulation or even prohibition in the states, but Muslim missionaries also must obtain a *tauliah* from state religious departments. Article 11 also authorises all religious groups to manage their own religious affairs, to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes and to acquire, possess, hold and administer property in accordance with the law. Article 12 extends such religious freedom to the purview of education, but specifies only Islamic institutions as lawful for the Federation or state to establish, maintain and assist in establishing or maintaining. The Federation or a state is also empowered to provide, or assist in providing, Islamic religious instruction and incur expenditure as may be necessary for the purpose.

A close examination of provisions relating to Islam in the Federal Constitution will reveal that the document treats Islam in no different light from other religions, that is, as a faith, externalised in a set of rituals, and embraced by the Malays who are recognised as the indigenous population of the country. The Constitution does not value Islam for its innate properties as a comprehensive socio-political and cultural system, but rather imposes upon it a secular-nationalist function as a boundary-marker of Malay ethnicity. The constitutional definition of a Malay, as embedded in Article 160(2), is "*a person who professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom.*" The exclusion of a distinctively racial or ethnic category in such a definition automatically gives Islam paramount importance as an assimilative mechanism into the Malay community (Siddique 1981: 77-79). As Nagata argues, as the Malay language becomes increasingly familiar to all Malaysians and as the measurement of the practice of Malay custom is rarely viable or seriously attempted, "*the boundaries of Malay identity increasingly revolve around religion*" (1978: 103). In practice, this identification of Malayness with Islam has been so entrenched in the popular mind, that the expression "*masuk Islam*" (to convert to Islam) has always been considered synonymous with "*masuk Melayu*" (to become a Malay) (ibid., Siddique 1981: 78, cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990: 31-32). The ethno-cultural

function of Islam becomes vital when deciding upon the rightful recipients of the Malay Special Rights (MSR) entrenched in Article 153 of the Constitution (Means 1978: 393-394, 1982: 473-474). Such privileges include measures to accelerate Malay economic and educational progress, protection of Malay land reservations and preference in the recruitment for public service. Recognition of these rights, together with provisions to ensure the positions of Islam as the official religion, of Malay sultans as heads of the various states and of Malay as the national language, constituted what the Malays gained from the so-called 'Bargain of 1957', through which non-Malay demands for relaxed conditions for citizenship, the continued use of the English language in official matters for ten years and the preservation of the free market economy were fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>

In short, constitutional provisions which apparently give Islam the edge over other religions do not indicate an appreciation of Islam as a value system per se; rather, they make Islam a tool to achieve nationalistic ends of a particularistic ethnic-based nature. Such a philosophical orientation violates the Islamic principle of universalism, which "*does not recognise an indigenous-non-indigenous dichotomy as the basis of any social system*" (Chandra Muzaffar 1985: 356). The impact of the formal legitimisation of the Muslim character of Malay ethnicity has been to crystallise the Malay pattern of thought and action *vis-à-vis* Islam in socially exclusive terms. In this light, Lee claims that since independence, Islamic exclusiveness has become "*a strategic necessity for the protection of their [Malay] economic and psychological interests*" (1986: 71).

Politically, the separation between religion and state is anchored in the Federal Constitution (Rosenthal 1965: 288). Executive authority is vested in a constitutional monarch, the *Yang diPertuan Agong*, who, despite declaring to "*protect the Muslim religion and uphold the rules of law and order in the country*" on assumption of the throne, is himself granted legal immunity by Article 32: a provision clearly contradicting the *shariah*, whose sovereignty in an Islamic state stands above all human beings (*ibid.*: 290-291). The legislature, following the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, consists of two chambers, viz. the *Dewan Rakyat* whose members are elected and the *Dewan Negara* whose members are appointed senators. No constitutional provision exists to make sure that laws passed by Parliament comply with the *shariah*. On the contrary, Article 162(1) specifies:

Subject to the following provisions of this Article and Article 163, existing laws shall, until repealed by the authority having power to do so under the Constitution, continue in force on or after Independence day, with such modifications as may be made therein under this Article

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<sup>7</sup>Never formally written down, the 'Bargain of 1957' was a 'gentleman's agreement' between the main ethnic groups in Malaya. On its implications, see Cho (1990: 32-34), Fisk (1982) and Zakaria Haji Ahmad (1982: 88-91).

and subject to any amendments made by Federal or State law. (Quoted in N.M. Yasin 1994: 87, fn. 91).

The net result has been that colonial legislation contrary to the *shariah* such as the Penal Code, the Evidence Act, the Guardianship of Infants Act and the Contract Act are, in essence, still in force (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the Constitution fails to give even implicit recognition to the *shariah* in its elaboration of the concept of 'law', which it defines as:

written law, the common law in so far as it is in operation in the Federation of any part thereof, and any custom or usage having the force of law in the Federation or any part thereof (Article 160, as quoted in *ibid.*: 89, fn. 97).

The dilemma of Islamic law in a secular Malaysian state is accentuated by the federal structure of government. Technically, the administration of Islam falls under the jurisdiction of states, such that, according to Ahmad Ibrahim, "*the provision that Islam is the religion of the Federation has little significance.....*" (1974: 6-7). Accordingly, through a series of Administration of Muslim Law Enactments, the various states have instituted Councils of Muslim Religion (*Majlis Agama Islam*) to aid and advise the sultans in their capacity as heads of the Muslim religion, Departments of Religious Affairs (*Jabatan Agama Islam*) to handle daily affairs of Muslims and *shariah* courts to adjudicate in Muslim matters (Hamid Jusoh 1991: 34-38, Ahmad Ibrahim 1985: 216). Although the federal government has endeavoured to coordinate the administration of Islamic affairs within the federation by setting up, on 17 October 1968, a National Council for Islamic Affairs<sup>8</sup> with the authority to issue *fatawa* through its National *Fatwa* Committee,<sup>9</sup> it is decisions at state level which are ultimately binding upon Muslim residents in a state. The measure of state autonomy is demonstrated by the refusal of the states of Kedah and Pahang to appoint representatives to the Council (*ibid.*: 218). Confusion arises whenever major inconsistencies in religious decisions across states occur, as in 1983 when the sultans of Perak and Johore proclaimed a different date for the start of the fasting month than the one issued by the federal authorities (Esposito 1987: 188).

Nonetheless, states are not free to implement the *shariah* even if they wish to do so. Firstly, they are bound by Article 75 of the Constitution, which states that in the event of any inconsistency between state law and federal law, the latter shall prevail

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<sup>8</sup>Set up via the Conference of Rulers, the Council cannot encroach upon any authority, rights and privileges of sultans as heads of Islam in their states. For the functions of the Council, see Hamid Jusoh (1991: 38-39) and Ahmad Ibrahim (1985: 218).

<sup>9</sup>The Committee consists of *muftis* of states which are Council members and five other *ulama* appointed by the *Yang diPertuan Agong* (Ahmad Ibrahim 1985: 218).

(Hamid Jusoh 1991: 34). Secondly, the jurisdiction of the *shariah* courts is extremely limited. Theoretically, it covers only Muslim personal law, successor of the Muhammadan Law of the colonial era, and therefore excludes non-Muslims. This includes family law, charitable property, religious revenue, places of worship and religious offences such as adultery and other forms of sexual misconduct, defamation, non-payment of alms and consumption of liquor (ibid.: 51-53, Abdul Majeed Mohamed Mackeen 1985: 229-231). Yet, in practice, even in these limited spheres, the authority of the *shariah* courts is circumscribed. Where *shariah* courts differ in opinion from civil courts, the verdict of the latter prevail. Legally, the Rule of High Courts 1980 and the Court of Judicature Act 1964 confer power upon High Courts to override decisions of lower courts (Hamid Jusoh 1991: 54-55, N.M. Yasin 1994: 88-89). In criminal matters, *shariah* courts can only try offences which involve no punishment beyond the stated maximum imprisonment or fine under federal law, making it impossible for them to impose *hudud* punishments<sup>10</sup> (Hamid Jusoh 1991: 52, Ahmad Ibrahim 1974: 13). Even a *fatwa* issued by the state *mufti*, and understood to be binding upon all Muslim residents in the state, can practically be rendered null and void by a simple recourse to a conflicting decision of the High Court (ibid.: 11-12, Hamid Jusoh 1991: 72-80).<sup>11</sup>

Although some Muslim leaders did express reservations at the retention of secular principles in early post-independence administrations,<sup>12</sup> the forces of secular-nationalism, as represented by UMNO leaders and top-level government officials, were too pervasive in all sections of a Malay population still unaware of the grievous political implications of the Independence Constitution. Having enjoyed British education and public administration training, Malay leaders who had won independence for their nation exhibited secularist tendencies no different from their colonial forefathers (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 34-35). Their favourite themes in opposing a greater role for Islam in managing the state affairs revolved around the supposed incompatibility of Islam with racial harmony and national economic development. For example, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister in 1957-70, once noted, ".....*unless we are prepared to drown every non-Malay, we can never think of an Islamic Administration*" (*Straits Times* 1.5.59, as quoted in von der Mehden 1963: 611). In opposing suggestions of making Friday a public holiday, he insisted that it

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<sup>10</sup>Criminal punishments as instituted by the Quran and *Sunnah*, after lawful conviction in a court of law, such as amputation of the hand for thieves, flogging of eighty lashes for consuming intoxicating liquor, flogging for libel, stoning to death for adultery and flogging of one hundred lashes for fornication.

<sup>11</sup>Some Western writers have contended that even with such limited jurisdiction, the provisions of Islamic law under Malaysia's constitutional arrangements are so stringent so as to restrict the religious liberty of both Muslims and non-Muslims; see for example Means (1978: 389-393, 1982: 467-473).

<sup>12</sup>Not only were colonial principles preserved, but high-level colonial bureaucrats were also retained, ensuring continuity at all levels of administration; see Rudner (1975).

was "*impossible to apply the Islamic religion in every way to the administration of the country*" (*Straits Times* 24.3.59, as quoted in *ibid.*: 613). When a Muslim member introduced in the Federal Legislative Council of 1958 a motion to prohibit the serving of alcoholic beverages in federal government functions, he unceremoniously retorted, "*.....this country is not an Islamic State as it is generally understood, we merely provide that Islam shall be the official religion of the State*" (quoted in Ahmad Ibrahim 1985: 217). The same sentiment was echoed by Mohamed Suffian Hashim, the first Lord Chief Justice of independent Malaya:

For many generations the various ethnic groups in Malaya have lived in peace and harmony and there was no overwhelming desire that the newly independent State should be an Islamic State. (Suffian Hashim 1962: 9).

At independence, the politico-legal system prepared for Malayan residents was the fruit of an ideological collusion between the secular-imperialists and their local proxies. Even aspects of the system relevant to Islam were a continuation of colonial practices. With the system and the political groupings acting in concert to further their secular ends, the consignment of Islam to a peripheral role in early post-independence Malaya was a foregone conclusion.

### **3.3 THE *DAKWAH* PHENOMENON: ORIGINS AND CAUSES**

In whatever way we choose to characterise the *dakwah* phenomenon, the impartial observer could only be startled by the extent of differences in ideological worldview between the typical pre-resurgence politically mobile Malay youth and his or her *dakwah* counterpart. For the former, Islam was at best one of several factors determining his or her ideological orientation and at worst a non-factor. For the latter, Islam was unambiguously the factor shaping his or her outlook on life and issues whether of a political, social, economic, psychological, moral or even scientific nature. In short, the resurgence had resulted in the Malay youth embracing the holistic concept of Islam as a comprehensive way of life covering all facets of human society, and simultaneously discarding the fragmented view of religion as being restricted to purely spiritual and ritualistic aspects of human life. This unequivocally all-embracing approach may be called doctrinaire-revivalism, as opposed to pre-independence Islamists' indigenous-traditionalist approach of tolerating the presence of endogenously derived *adat* and nationalism (cf. chapter 2: 2.4, 2.7).

In the 1960s, the typical Malay youth was widely described as one engrossed in a Western-imported sensual and hedonistic culture popularised in the entertainment

media (F.M. Jamil 1988: 83-84, cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 182-184). Among politically conscious ones, disillusionment with the neo-colonial trends of the country's post-independence leadership led to their seeking solutions to the acute socio-economic disparities in socialism, as articulated by such prominent Malay intellectuals as Dr. Syed Husin Ali, Kassim Ahmad and other former leaders of the secular wing of the defunct MNP (F.M. Jamil 1988: 95, 108: fn. 121). The sole voice of Islamic dissent against the liberal-capitalist orientation of the national government was represented by PAS, which, nonetheless, was unable to counter the vast political resources employed by the ruling elite, and thus never progressed sufficiently beyond its traditional strongholds of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah in terms of grassroots support.<sup>13</sup> Official state propaganda, and a large part of contemporary academic literature, portrayed PAS as a parochial party which thrived upon the communal antipathy harboured by the politically unsophisticated Malay peasantry against the economically advanced Chinese and Indian communities (cf. von der Mehden 1963: 610-612, Ratnam 1985: 144-145, Kessler 1972: 41-42, 1978: 32-33). Such a prejudiced view submerged the Islamic character of PAS' programme, and was strong enough to convince the majority of Malays to withhold support to a party allegedly driven by chauvinistic interpretations of Malay nationalism and hence extremely dangerous to inter-racial harmony and national security.

The political atmosphere in the early 1960s was dominated by issues related to the creation of an expanded Malaysian Federation in 1963. Although the consent of the populations of Sarawak and Sabah had been obtained through referenda, the amalgamation of these regions with Malaya was construed by the Indonesian and Philippine governments as a neo-colonial plot (Means 1970: chapters 16-17). A brief military confrontation with Indonesia enabled the Malaysian government to retain popular support and legitimacy by jingoistically appealing to considerations of external security. Several opposition figures suspected of contriving a 'pro-Indonesian' plot were arbitrarily arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA), including PAS' President, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, and Vice-President, Raja Abu Hanifa (ibid.: 339-341). Dr. Burhanuddin persistently protested his innocence, but the government was able to exploit his past as a pro-*Indonesia Raya* nationalist leader to throw doubt on his and PAS' loyalty to the new nation.

The Malaysian proposal had a direct bearing upon the communal balance as the country's Malay majority would disappear with the large-scale inclusion of Singapore's Chinese majorities and Borneo's non-Malay tribal peoples into the population count. The government sought to solve this by proposing to treat the

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<sup>13</sup>PAS formed state governments in Terengganu in 1959-61 and in Kelantan in 1959-78, during which it participated for nearly five years (1973-77) in the ruling National Front coalition (cf. fn. 21).

Peninsular Malays and the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and Sabah as one ethnic stock known as *Bumiputera* (ibid.: 404-406). The aggressive policies and statements of the Singapore-based People's Action Party's (PAP) leader, Lee Kuan Yew, however, unequivocally challenged any notion of Malay political supremacy and constitutional privileges for *Bumiputeras* (Lee Kuan Yew 1965, 1965a), resulting in counter-statements by 'ultra'-Malay UMNO leaders and a heightened sense of ethnic tension manifested in outbursts of Malay-Chinese clashes (Leifer 1964, Snider 1968, Means 1970: 342-348). The expulsion of Singapore from the Federation in 1965, contrary to expectations, did not soothe communal tension.<sup>14</sup> The 'Singapore episode' made the Malays extremely aware of their political vulnerability; they were now in a position not only to demand the rightful implementation of their constitutional privileges but also to criticise UMNO leaders for failing to do so. Such failure was apparently confirmed with the publication of statistics showing Malay economic and educational backwardness after ten years of independence (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 48). The passing in 1967 of the National Language Act, which made Malay the official language without altering current non-Malay language-usage patterns in some official capacities, exposed the government to charges of renegeing on its promise to recognise the special position of the Malay language after ten years, leading to widespread Malay protests (M. Roff 1967, Funston 1980: 63-67). The non-Malays, on their part, expressed disgust that after ten years of being equal citizens under the law, no review of the special position of the Malays was at hand. It was too simplistic of them to incriminate the UMNO 'ultras' for whipping up Malay chauvinism; the truth was that all major political parties, being ethnic-based, were equally guilty of playing the racial card to bolster their natural constituencies (cf. Snider 1968: 967, 970, Milne and Mauzy 1978: 76). The Alliance government was trapped between pacifying demands from 'ultras' of their constituent parties at the risk of further inflaming communal tension, and maintaining the present communal political balancing act but losing grassroots support to opposition parties. Within such an ethnically tense atmosphere, Islam hardly figured as a cardinal political issue (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 45).

Islamic resurgence in Malaysia blossomed after ethnic relations had been brought to its lowest ebb by the racial riots of 13 May 1969 - the pinnacle of a decade of communal politics. The immediate cause of the riots, which engulfed the capital city of Kuala Lumpur for four days, had been the collision between 'victory' demonstrations and counter-demonstrations organised by non-Malay opposition parties and pro-government Malay leaders respectively. Open exchanges of racial taunts later escalated into violence. The jubilation of the opposition stemmed from their success in preventing the Alliance winning a two-thirds parliamentary majority

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<sup>14</sup>For details of issues pertaining to Singapore's withdrawal from Malaysia, see Milne (1966).

in the 1969 elections and in toppling Alliance state governments in Perak and Penang. In Selangor, where tension was greatest, the state legislative assembly was equally divided between the Alliance and opposition parties (Means 1991: 4-8). What concerns us here, however, is not details of the incident, but the overriding importance of the episode as a major turning point for the blossoming Islamic resurgence in the 1970s.<sup>15</sup>

Directly, the episode quickly acquired a religious dimension not dissimilar to that during the crisis environment of previous Malay-Chinese clashes, as in the early post-War period (cf. Cheah Boon Kheng 1981). *Jihad* and other religious slogans became the rallying cry of the Malays, mosques assumed importance as strategic meeting places, special prayers and talismans obtained instant popularity, religious teachers acquired inspirational and leadership roles, and tales diffused of heroic deeds against 'infidels' in a manner emulating past Islamic warriors (S.A. Hussein 1988: 128-130). On why pre-1969 inter-ethnic clashes had less impact on the Malays, one could only surmise that the smaller scale of the confrontations and the continually apparent dominance of Malays in politics had beguiled them into a premature sense of security. In essence, the May 1969 episode manifested Malay fears of non-Malay 'imperialism' and heralded an unprecedented climate of self-assessment in which Islam was increasingly seen as the solution to Malay socio-economic and political problems. A general revival which would reaffirm the place of Islam in the Malay psyche was in the making, and represented formative stages of a reaction against an uneven pattern of capitalist development, accompanying foreign and non-Malay economic dominance, and degeneration of moral values associated with the processes of modernisation and urbanisation (Chandra Muzaffar 1986b).

In large measure, Islamic resurgence was a popular reaction against the traditional political and administrative elite's continual preference for secular-humanist values over Islamic principles as the guiding basis of the nation. After the suspension of parliamentary government and the assumption of power by a politically neutral National Operations Council (NOC), a Department of National Unity and a multi-racial, multi-party National Consultative Council (NCC) were established to devise policy initiatives dealing with communal problems. The major achievement of the NCC's reconciliation strategy was the formulation of a national ideology called the *Rukunegara* (Pillars of Nationhood), which formally consecrated constitutional provisions that had formed the basis of the 'Bargain of 1957' (Milne 1970, S.H. Alatas 1971). Intended to cut across racial divisions and other 'primordial loyalties' of a multi-ethnic population, the *Rukunegara* upheld five universal principles, viz. belief

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<sup>15</sup>For principal accounts of the May 1969 events and their implications, see Abdul Rahman (1969), Slimming (1969), Gagliano (1970), Goh Cheng Teik (1971) and von Vorys (1975).

in God, loyalty to the King and country, dedication to the Constitution, the Rule of Law and Good Behaviour and Morality. Apart from reiterating Islam's role as the official religion of the federation, the official commentary to the *Rukunegara* fails to mention any specific role for Islam (Means 1991: 12-13).

The post-1969 reconstruction of the national polity emphasised the dominance of Malay ethnicity over Islam. By means of constitutional amendments, restrictions were placed upon the scope of political discussion, so as to prevent any questioning of the 'special rights' provision for indigenous peoples (S.A. Hussein 1988: 136). Under the Premiership of Tun Abdul Razak, which started in September 1971 seven months after the restoration of parliamentary democracy, leading UMNO 'ultras' such as Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam, having been expelled from party and government posts towards the end of Tunku Abdul Rahman's administration for allegedly inciting racial animosities, were politically rehabilitated (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 55). In fact, many of their erstwhile 'radical' demands became government policy. In his speech to the 1973 UMNO General Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Ismail affirmed the position of the Malays as the "*basis of the nation*" (S.A. Hussein 1988: 135). Home Affairs Minister, Ghazali Shafie, one of the main reconstruction ideologues, went to the extent of declaring "*for the future, the politics of this country must be based on kebumiputeraan (indigenism)*" (quoted in *ibid.*: 136). In line with the official government view that the root cause of the riots had been Malay discontent against persistent economic deprivation (Milne and Mauzy 1978: 82-83), a New Economic Policy (NEP) was enunciated under the Second Malaysian Plan of 1971:

to eradicate poverty among all Malaysians and to restructure Malaysian society so that the identification of race with economic function and geographical location is reduced and eventually eliminated, both the objectives being realised through rapid expansion of the economy over time. (Government of Malaysia 1971: 7).

Although purportedly aimed to benefit all Malaysians, the NEP proved in time to be a kind of affirmative action designed to uplift the economic status of the Malays.<sup>16</sup> In other words, since its launching, emphasis in the implementation of the NEP has increasingly shifted from the first prong of poverty eradication to the second objective of wealth restructuring among the races. In concrete terms, this meant raising, by 1990, Malay share capital ownership to thirty percent, with non-Malay and

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<sup>16</sup>Information in this paragraph is based on the following sources on the NEP, on which an abundance of literature exists. For its formulation and implementation, see Milne and Mauzy (1978: chapter 10), Cho (1990: 34-40, 68-83), Faaland et. al. (1990: chapters 2-4, 305-328), Horowitz (1989: 257ff), Ahmad Idriss (1990) and Means (1991:23-27). For a critical assessment of the NEP strategy, see Mehmet (1988, 1990: chapter 7) and Jomo (1989, 1990).

foreign ownership to stand at forty percent and thirty percent respectively.<sup>17</sup> The NEP sought to do this by preferential policies in the granting of subsidies, concessional loans, licences, scholarships, investment holdings, credit and government contracts; by enforcing quotas in educational institutions and the labour market, and by creating financial 'trust' institutions to manage Malay corporate wealth.<sup>18</sup> This 'development by trusteeship' strategy, whose underlying philosophy was that the Malays were still ill-prepared and ill-equipped to compete unassisted in the economy, was in essence an attempt to create a Malay capitalist class based on the industrial sector. The state would assume a direct role in the allocation of resources and regulation of the economy by participating in the direct ownership of private enterprises. Through the trust agencies, the state would involve itself heavily in a programme of capital accumulation and acquisition in the corporate sector, supposedly acting on behalf of the Malay masses. The NEP represented a transition from 'spontaneous' to 'planned' or 'state' capitalism, marking the beginning of a 'redistribution with growth' policy (Lim Mah Hui 1980: 149).

The secular-materialistic philosophical basis of the post-1969 reconstruction of Malay society was made explicit in its *de facto* blueprint: a book edited by the UMNO Secretary-General entitled **Revolusi Mental** (Mental Revolution), which became the bible of Malay nationalists in the 1970s (cf. Shahrudin Maaruf 1984: 82-93). Lauding it as "*an important milestone in the thinking of our [Malay] intellectuals*," Prime Minister Tun Razak recommended **Revolusi Mental** to every Malay (Senu Abdul Rahman 1971: 1-2). Yet, **Revolusi Mental** displays a blatant acceptance of profane, materialistic conceptions of life. In the name of progress, it espouses the principle of accumulating unlimited wealth (ibid.: 95-96), to the extent of endorsing those who operate on the 'survival of the fittest' principle and find it wrong to be too honest (ibid.: 108). It castigates the traditional Malay methods of accumulating wealth

<sup>17</sup>In 1971, Malays stood to own 2.4 percent of the nation's corporate wealth, as compared with non-Malay and foreign ownership, which stood at 34.3 percent and 63.3 percent respectively.

<sup>18</sup>The most important of such 'trust' institutions were the Council of Trust for Indigenous Peoples (*Majlis Amanah Rakyat*: MARA), the Pilgrims' Management and Fund Board (*Lembaga Urusan dan Tabung Haji*: LUTH) and the National Equity Corporation (*Permodalan Nasional Berhad*: PNB), which operates the *Amanah Saham Nasional* (ASN), a national unit trust scheme for *Bumiputeras*. Under the NEP, a huge growth of the bureaucracy was legitimised, providing the Malays, who had traditionally made up the bulk of the civil service, with an opportunity for advancement out of rural and traditional life. In 1970-83, a fourfold expansion of the federal public service took place, especially among statutory bodies entrusted with the task of carrying out NEP-designed programmes. For example, the National Paddy and Rice Authority (*Lembaga Padi dan Beras Negara*: LPN) had a personnel expansion from 29 to 4974 within the time-period mentioned, and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA) similarly increased its personnel from 136 to 2900. Public enterprises such as the Bank Bumiputera and the national oil company, *Petroleum Nasional* (PETRONAS), made sure that NEP preferential recruitment policies were implemented in the public sector. The creation of new bodies with overlapping areas of operation inevitably led to duplication of functions and inefficiency. In 1974, a Ministry of Public Enterprise was established to coordinate although not to control the extensive public sector. See Mehmet (1988: 6-11).

which emphasise the collective good of the Malays and dependence on government and leaders (ibid.: 114-121), and urges the Malays to emulate the Chinese, Jews, Americans, Germans and Japanese, all of whose efforts are for individual self-gain (ibid.: 122-123). In outlining pre-requisites for success, **Revolusi Mental** presents John Paul Getty, the American billionaire, as the ideal hero, and naively claims that, in this modern age, a hero "*dresses stylishly, wears a necktie, carries a James Bond briefcase, drives a big Jaguar, works in an air-conditioned room, draws a monthly salary of over two thousand dollars and dwells in a large brick house*" (ibid.: 172). His personality "*need not be good by religious or moral standards*" (ibid.: 174). **Revolusi Mental** sees no contradiction between self-interest and the public good; it even quotes selected evidence from the Quran and *hadith* to demonstrate the compatibility of attitudes of great capitalists such as Rockefeller with Islam, and thus justify its materialistic philosophy from a religious viewpoint (ibid.: 108-111).<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, post-1969 Malaysian policy-makers had no intention of elevating the role of Islam above the ceremonial function assigned to it by the Federal Constitution. Ironically, it was the NEP-based reconstruction policies which partly, if not mainly, contributed to Islamic resurgence amongst the Malays. Firstly, the NEP as a whole created an environment in which Islam was given greater prominence in the basic search for Malay and national identity which followed the 1969 tragedy. Insofar as the Federal Constitution stipulated that, as a matter of definition, all Malays were Muslims, raising the awareness of a Malay's ethnic identity also increased the consciousness of his or her Islamic identity (cf. section 3.2). At the National Cultural Congress in 1971, it was agreed that as an integral component of Malay culture, Islam would automatically be an important element in shaping a Malaysian national culture, which was to be based upon indigenous culture (Siddique 1981: 79). A revised version of UMNO's ideology, completed by mid-1971, gave spiritual development an equal importance to material development (Funston 1981: 181). In 1972, Prime Minister Tun Razak declared that government actions had been guided by Islam, and that the NEP was guided by the Quran (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 66). Barraclough thus mentions "*the increased saliency of Islam in the years following the May 1969 crisis as the Malay identity of the Malaysian state was increasingly stressed*" (1983: 967-968).

Under the NEP, progress was registered in stressing the position of Islam as the official religion, although undeniably it was ceremonial aspects which received attention. Officially sanctioned Islamic institutions such as the Islamic Research

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<sup>19</sup>Shaharuddin Maaruf (1984: 87-88) has shown how the authors of **Revolusi Mental** misquote such evidence and interpret them out of context. See the whole chapter 5 of his book, **Concept of a Hero in Malay Society**, for a detailed exposition of abhorrent values propagated by **Revolusi Mental**.

Centre (*Pusat Penyelidikan Islam*) (1971), the Islamic Missionary Foundation (YADIM: *Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah*) (1974), the Islamic *Dakwah* and Training Institute (INDAH: *Institut Dakwah dan Latihan Islam*) (1974) and the Muslim Welfare Association of Malaysia (PERKIM: *Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam SeMalaysia*)<sup>20</sup> were established or rejuvenated (S.A. Hussein 1988: 145, Funston 1981: 180). Large sums of public funds were channelled towards highly publicised Islamic events such as the National Quranic Reading Competition and the *Maulid* (the Prophet's birthday celebration). After a staunchly pro-West foreign policy of the Tunku Abdul Rahman era (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 49), the 1970s saw significant cementing of relations between Malaysia and the *ummah*, as externalised in increased economic contacts with oil-rich Arab nations, declarations of support for the Palestinian and Filipino-Muslim causes and Kuala Lumpur's hosting of the Fifth Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in 1974 (*ibid.*: 65, Mohamad Abu Bakar 1990: 8-9). In Sabah, under Chief Minister Tun Mustapha Harun, the government showed solidarity with Filipino-Muslim refugees by offering them shelter, food and even citizenship; and through missionary efforts, effected large-scale conversions of pagan *bumiputeras* (Schumann 1991: 247-248). Further pressure was put upon the government to give a more Islamic tilt to its policies after the entry of PAS into the governing National Front<sup>21</sup> coalition in 1973 (Mustafa Ali 1993: 114). Under the influence of PAS, especially its Youth wing, the government-controlled media banned advertisements of liquor and gambling and introduced instead the *azan* (call to daily prayers), state-sponsored functions desisted from having alcoholic beverages served, and the government assumed direct responsibility of missionary and Islamic educational activities (*ibid.*: 115-116). Although these measures were more cosmetic than substantive, they were enough to indicate to the Malaysian population the improved direction of the post-NEP government with respect to Islam.

The second way in which Islamic resurgence in Malaysia can be attributed to the NEP was the increased educational opportunities offered to the Malays (Nagata

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<sup>20</sup>PERKIM became active only since 1975 despite having been founded in 1960 by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. Strongly associated with Tunku's compartmentalised view of Islam, PERKIM never ventured outside the scope of its official aim to propagate Islamic teachings, in the literal sense of the term (cf. chapter 1: fn. 6), and to generate socio-welfare activities for the public. Since its inception, PERKIM's activities have mainly revolved around converting non-Muslims, educating them in the basic tenets of Islam and providing socio-welfare services for them. Symbolically, apart from Tunku Abdul Rahman, who chaired PERKIM until his death in 1991, the other founding fathers of PERKIM were an Indian Muslim: S.O.K. Ubaidullah, a Chinese Muslim: Ibrahim Ma and a European Muslim: Mubin Sheppard. Despite some PERKIM figures showing interest in wider political developments in the past, Tunku's staunch opposition to mixing religion with politics has prevented PERKIM from displaying overt political tendencies. For details, see Hussin Mutalib (1990: 89-98).

<sup>21</sup>Successor to the Alliance, the National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) was an enlarged coalition, indicative of the post-1969 political atmosphere which emphasised national unity. It brought the formerly powerful opposition parties of PAS, Gerakan and People's Progressive Party into the government fold. See Funston (1980: 248-254).

1980: 411, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 58-60). At home, new universities were opened and enforced privileged quotas for Malays.<sup>22</sup> Efforts were made to ensure more Malay students enrolled in the science and engineering subjects, hitherto dominated by non-Malays. Scholarships were given to bright Malay students to pursue their studies abroad. At home and abroad, great numbers of them turned towards Islam. The explanation most favoured by analysts to account for this phenomenon has been the 'cultural shock' thesis: that transported from largely rural backgrounds to an urban, alien environment; and having to compete with non-Muslims under underprepared conditions, for instance deficiency in the English language; these students naturally found solace in religion (Nagata 1984: 56-59, Zainah Anwar 1987: 21-22). In local institutions, Islamic gatherings based around small discussion groups called *usrahs*<sup>23</sup> provided the Malay students with a sense of togetherness and a show of solidarity to cover their inferiority complex when facing the better-equipped non-Malays (ibid.: 45-47, Suhaini Aznam 1985, Nash 1991: 709). Abroad, among which British universities have been seen as the cradle of the *dakwah* movement, Malay students were introduced to the revivalist ideas of Hassan Al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati and Maududi by their Middle Eastern and Pakistani counterparts, many of whom came from countries where similar writings were considered seditious (Zainah Anwar 1987: 25-30, von der Mehden 1980: 169). As the *dakwah* fever spread to other overseas centres, Malay students became prominent in international Muslim students' associations (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1042-1043).<sup>24</sup> By 1976, *dakwah* activities of Malay students abroad were creating heated controversy, as evidenced by the largely negative reports in newspapers (ibid.). These *dakwah* students graduated, worked as professionals in private and public institutions and at the same time formed the backbone of independent *dakwah* organisations. A large number obtained teaching posts in universities and schools, combining their lecturing with spreading the message among Malay students in campuses (Lyon 1979: 41, Nagata 1980a: 131).

It was largely through the vociferous demands and activities of these cohorts of young, middle-class, educated Malays, that Malaysian society became conscious of the rising appeal and tide of Islamic resurgence. For instance, it was students who were conspicuous in the 1974 Baling demonstrations, which protested against peasant poverty (Zainah Anwar 1987: 23, S.A. Hussein 1988: 157-158). Locally, restrictions

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<sup>22</sup>Prior to the NEP, the only university in Malaysia was the University of Malaya, in which Malays were under-represented (20.6 percent of the student population in 1963) and were concentrated in the Arts Faculty; see Hussin Mutalib (1990: 58).

<sup>23</sup>Directly translated from Arabic, *usrah* means 'family'.

<sup>24</sup>Until today, Malay students have never failed to figure prominently in leadership positions in British universities' Islamic societies, and in the executive committee of the Federation of Students' Islamic Societies (FOSIS). According to Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, about forty Malaysians have been appointed as *imams* (prayer leaders) in several district mosques in the United Kingdom (*Berita Harian: BH* 1.7.96).

imposed on student activities by the Universities Act of 1971 and the Universities and University Colleges Act of 1975 made Islam, not considered a 'sensitive' issue by the constitutional amendments of 1971 (Milne and Mauzy 1983: 632), the only effective channel to express grievances (Lyon 1979: 42, Zainah Anwar 1987: 23). Abroad, Malaysian High Commissions admitted the hostility many Malay students harboured against NEP's racial bias (Barraclough 1983: 963). From the government's point of view, these students were an ungrateful lot whose behaviour did not conform to the moral code expected of beneficiaries of the NEP (Nagata 1980: 429, 1984: 224).

Within the on-going process of economic development triggered by the NEP, the central involvement of the Malays in large-scale rural-urban migration and other aspects of economic modernisation exposed them to challenges of an urban-industrial society which they were not necessarily prepared to face (cf. Chandra Muzaffar 1986b: 64ff, 1987: 13-22). According to one estimate, by 1979, one-third of Malays had moved towards the inner cities (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 29).<sup>25</sup> The alien environment of city life arguably led young migrants to a profound sense of disillusionment, having observed or experienced at first hand symptoms of moral decadence, grave social inequities reflected in the growth of pockets of Malay slums, loss of family life, excessive individualism and spiritual vacuum (Chandra Muzaffar 1986: 18, 1986a: 22-23). The composition of these discontented urbanites cut across class boundaries; there were the new middle class of technocrats and professionals, the upcoming small-scale Malay entrepreneur and the dispossessed working class labourer (Kessler 1980: 9-10, Chandra Muzaffar 1986: 8-9, 1986a: 12-13). In their rediscovery of identity, often following social alienation and personal crises, they found personal redemption in the Islamic emphasis on communal solidarity and mutual camaraderie. Islamic promises for a better life for the righteous in the Hereafter compensated for their unfulfilled expectations. Consequently, Islam became an alternative youth culture (Nagata 1980a: 132). But far from exploiting Islam as a means of escapism and retirement from urban life, they appealed to its emphasis on social justice to mobilise their peers towards combating the debilitating aspects of capitalist development and modernisation (von der Mehden 1988: 256-258). These young Islamists never desired a return to traditional bucolic life in the manner of Prophet Muhammad's seventh century Arabia or Malay *kampong* life, as alleged by the establishment media and spokesmen (cf. Tasker 1979, Milne and Mauzy 1983: 633); rather, they sought to reconcile the complexities of an urban-industrial society

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<sup>25</sup>For facts and figures on urbanisation and migration in post-NEP Malaysia, and the heavy involvement of the Malays in such population redistribution, see Ahmad Idriss (1990: chapters 4-5). For specific case-studies of Malay urbanisation, see Clarke (1978) and Mohd. Razha Rashid (1978) on the cities of Kota Bharu and Alor Setar respectively. For statistics on growth, income distribution, poverty and inflation throughout the 1970s, see S.A. Hussein (1988: 162-167).

with eternal Islamic tenets. They presented Islam not as a regressive and retreatist ideology, but as a dynamic way of life which has offered solutions to universal problems of mankind since time immemorial. As one writer has explained of such doctrinaire-revivalism:

The new view of Islam and the increasing emphasis on Islam as *deen* [sic], as a total system, as an alternative to Western materialism and secularization, makes it a channel within which basic social and political questions can be articulated in a new way. The development of groups of educated, urban Malays who are concerned with and wish to articulate issues such as those having to do with interests of both the rural and urban poor, or with corruption, etc., is one of the most interesting aspects of the *dakwah* movement..... They are seeking to contextualise the issues which face them today in terms of more fundamentalist Islamic principles, seeing Islam as an important source of new ideas and new ways of talking about things. The *dakwah* movement might be said to represent an example of religious change serving to redefine fundamental political and social issues. (Lyon 1979: 45).

While the origins of Islamic resurgence in modern Malaysia are unmistakably located within the context of the NEP-boosted development, one cannot rule out the role of external linkages and global Islamic revivalism as catalysts to the phenomenon. For local Islamists, common identification with the *ummah* adds legitimacy to their cause by convincing them that they are part of a mass movement fighting global forces of secularism and Westernisation. Mention has been made above of the vital role of Western educational institutions, where Malay youngsters not only acquainted themselves with the writings of Middle Eastern and South Asian revivalist ideologues, but were also able to sow contacts with overseas representatives of international Islamic movements, chiefly Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1991: 222-224). Through such enduring relationships, their facility in English, wide exposure to international media coverage and improvements in communications and information technology, Malaysian Islamists have been kept well aware of developments affecting their ideological comrades in other parts of the world. International events such as the Arab-Israeli wars (1967, 1973), the Libyan revolution (1969), the Iranian revolution (1979), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the siege of the Grand Mosque in Makkah (1979) need not wait long to impact on local Muslims by galvanising their Islamic sensitivities. Of these, the Iranian revolution had the most serious repercussions, particularly by implanting the conviction that the revolutionary overthrow of secular-nationalist governments propped up by infidel superpowers was a viable endeavour (Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 35-37, Mehmet 1990: 110). In their Iranian counterparts' success, an inspiration for Islamic movements was instantly

discovered; whether Iran's model of the Islamic state was worthy of aspiration and would stand the test of time were separate issues. Sunni-Shiite theological differences were temporarily submerged in the name of Islamic solidarity. The prevailing atmosphere of optimism was reflected in a statement by Anwar Ibrahim, then leader of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), upon returning from a visit to Iran: "*the greatest achievement of the Iranian revolution is that it has brought back dignity and self-respect to the people after living in fear under oppression. It has also restored dignity to Islam and the Muslims*" (*Bintang Timur* 8.5.79, as quoted in von der Mehden 1986: 231, fn. 21).

External events had their domestic variations. Solidarity with the Palestinian cause had parallels with the Malay-Muslim struggle for survival against the economic domination of the Chinese, whose aggressive economic behaviour has led them to be identified by the Malay-Muslims with the Jews (Kessler 1980: 4, S.A. Hussein 1988: 118).<sup>26</sup> The upper-hand that Arab countries wielded in the international politics of oil in the mid-1970s enormously boosted Muslim self-confidence worldwide (Chandra Muzaffar 1986: 19-20). The concomitant discovery of oil on Malaysian shores convinced Malays even further that material wealth was destined for them in the pursuit of their Islamic struggle (Nash 1984: 74). Middle Eastern oil wealth has also resulted in the channeling of financial assistance, either through governmental or independent organisations, to further the cause of Malaysian *dakwah*; funds were allegedly forthcoming from Saudi Arabia and Libya (Peiris 1979, Chandra Muzaffar 1986a: 21, Gunn 1986: 39). While the Middle Eastern-South Asian connection has been well documented, observers have not failed to point out that Indonesia probably commanded more significance in revitalising locally educated *dakwah* protagonists by supplying a constant stream of literature and missionaries who organised cadre-training courses (Kessler 1980: 4, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin 1983: 401). On the whole, however, external influences only added fuel and enthusiasm to an Islamic resurgence which had been well under way in the form of re-education and reinvigoration of individual and collective Islamic duties. In rejecting the centrality of external linkages in bringing about the rapid Islamisation of Malaysian society, Mohamad Abu Bakar (1991: 221) has contended that external events served only to dramatise Malay-Muslim views, besides lending a fresh perspective to their Islamic idealism. The endurance of psychological and material boost of the international

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<sup>26</sup>In the Malay-Muslim psyche, there exists a conception of Jews as immoral economic agents. See for example Ahmad Faiz Abdul Rahman, 'IKIM Views: Economic holocaust by Jews', *The Star*, 3.12.96.

connection is questionable, but its intellectual contribution has proven valuable in the nascent stages of Islamic resurgence.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.4 THE *DAKWAH* PHENOMENON: MANIFESTATIONS

The social and personal manifestations of Islamic resurgence outlined in this section have emerged as an organised endeavour, as represented by independent *dakwah* movements, to re-enact the Islamic way of life. Individual piety alone has often been insufficient to prepare oneself psychologically for the position of virtual social outcasts within a social and family environment antithetical to *dakwah* ideals. Since the manifestations of Islamic resurgence have come about directly or indirectly through the efforts of the *dakwah* movements, it is not unreasonable to suggest that their emergence in the Malaysian socio-political milieu has been the most significant and enduring expression of the resurgence (F.M. Jamil 1988: 127, Hussin Mutalib 1990a: 887). The movements will be analysed separately in Chapter Four.

While Islamic resurgence as a social phenomenon has affected Malay-Muslims of all backgrounds, the backbone of an organised endeavour to establish the superiority of Islam in the national polity is invariably made up of upwardly mobile professionals and graduates (Zainah Anwar 1987: 2). Public expressions of a renewed commitment to Islam are most conspicuous among these cohorts of highly educated Malays. Consequently, the visible impact of Islamic resurgence is most strongly felt in urban areas where most of them reside, work and build networks. In addition, pre-existing connections with their *alma mater* are effectively maintained, as is evident from the persistent appeal of Islamic resurgence in secondary schools, local universities and overseas pockets of Malay student populations. There is little doubt that insofar as manifestations of Islamic resurgence are today observed among the Malay rural folk and urban proletariat, they benefit from the leadership and example of their better-qualified middle-class counterparts.

The strength of initiating social change via group solidarity has enabled the resurgent Muslim youth to weather opposition against their newly discovered crusade from families, friends and traditional religious teachers. Within the context of the traditional Malay family system,<sup>28</sup> the most critical test of a *dakwah* member's commitment to a new Islamic ethos often comes at the time of marriage. One's

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<sup>27</sup>Chandra Muzaffar (1986b: 28) claims that Malaysian Islam is devoid of an intellectual tradition, while Mohamad Abu Bakar (1991: 227) holds that as a result of external intellectual influences, the idea of Islam as a comprehensive way of life has now been embraced by the majority of Malays.

<sup>28</sup>On the traditional Malay social value system, of which the family is an integral institution, see Abdullah Taib and Mohamed Yusoff Ismail (1982: 108-113).

steadfastness in sticking to a fellow *dakwah* activist as the preferred spouse despite parental disapproval, and their persistent refusal to undergo traditional marriage rites regarded as unIslamic, often bring them into conflict with the extended family (Nagata 1984: 139, 144). From this perspective, Islamic resurgence has resulted in a reordering of religious loyalties from one based on kinship structure and the village *ulama* institution, to one centred upon the urban-based *dakwah* machinery whose leadership is not unusually held by secular-educated revivalists (ibid.: 133-150).

The shift in the flow of religious influence, now operating from the urban and towards the rural areas, has been due not only to *dakwah* enthusiasts who return to their villages in holidays and preach the message of Islam to peers and families, but also to the effective machinery of *dakwah* organisations which operate free or cheap social services and religious classes to rural communities and government funds channelled into Islamic projects such as mosques and religious education.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, different from countries in the Middle East where the rural folk have been largely isolated from the revivalist hullabaloo (cf. Munson 1988: 103-104, Ayubi 1991: chapter 7), Malaysia has had an exceptional rise of resurgent Islam in rural areas. For example, research by Rogers has revealed that in the village of Sungai Raya in Johore, "*villagers had become more devout during the past decade as their knowledge of Islam grew,*" such devoutness being reflected in the increased importance attached to Islamic institutions, rituals and symbols in their daily lives (1989: 772-774). In successive fieldworks in the rural Pasir Mas district of Kelantan, Nash notes that "*in 1964, 1966 and 1968 there was no organised Islamic militant or fundamentalist group or party.....,*" but when he returned in 1982, "*fundamentalist Islam was an organised entity in two kampongs just outside the town of Pasir Mas*" (1984: 74). However, lacking the intellectual sophistication of its urban counterpart, rural *dakwah* has been selective in what to accept from outside. Its emphasis is overwhelmingly on rituals, and its more orthodox adherents have taken to question the religious legitimacy of the urban Islamists, who are resented for displaying a sense of moral superiority over the *pondok*-educated village *ulama* (cf. Nagata 1982).

A casual visitor to Malaysia during the past twenty five years would have noticed the rapid move among Malay-Muslims towards forms of dress which conform to the Islamic rules of modesty and chastity; a development recognised by observers as the most prominent external manifestation of *dakwah* as a social force (cf. Nagata 1980: 414, Nash 1984: 77, Md. Salleh Yaapar 1993: 129). The donning of apparel

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<sup>29</sup>On the effort of *dakwah* organisations in rural areas, see for example Mohd. Anuar Tahir (1993: 8-13) for a list of rural projects conducted by ABIM. In the same light, Nagata (1984: 113) acknowledges the influence of Darul Arqam in rural areas, while Nash (1991: 712) claims that Jamaat Tabligh has been the most successful movement in reaching out to rural communities. For accounts of Darul Arqam, ABIM and Jamaat Tabligh as *dakwah* organisations, see chapter 4. For an example of government funds bolstering *dakwah* in a rural Malay community, see Rogers (1989: 772).

which covers the *awrah*<sup>30</sup> has become common sight in Malaysia (cf. Keddie 1988: 21). *Dakwah* adherents often rise above this minimum requirement and wear attire which in pre-*dakwah* days was ridiculed as 'Arabic' clothes. Males do not normally discard their long-sleeved shirts and loose trousers, but indicate their commitment to *dakwah* by growing beards, wearing skull-caps or other forms of headgear, and, except in compelling circumstances, by refusing to put on Western-style suits and the neck-tie. Some enthusiasts have chosen the turban and usually white or green robe as daily attire, or at least during prayers, in what they see as an attempt to emulate the Prophet's practice. For females, preference has been shown for the *jilbab*<sup>31</sup> or *tudung labuh*<sup>32</sup> worn over a dull-coloured robe, instead of the more conventional triangular *mini-telekung*<sup>33</sup> and *baju kurung*.<sup>34</sup> Due in no small measure to its powerful visual impact, the observance of the Islamic female dress code has acquired symbolic importance as a measure of the potency of *dakwah* (cf. Ong 1990: 269-271). In the late 1970s, Prime Minister Hussein Onn had reprimanded Muslim 'extremists' who "*insist on women going around with a lot of curtains around them*" (Tasker 1979), only to be flabbergasted by the sight of his own daughter returning from Britain draped in *dakwah* clothes (Zainah Anwar 1987: 30). According to one analyst, sixty to seventy percent of adult Malay-Muslim females had, by the mid-1980s, chosen to wear Islamic garb (Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 3); Malaysia being perhaps the only place where "*there has been such a rapid adoption of Islamic female attire in such a short while*" (ibid.: 22).

Correspondingly, social and personal behaviour have undergone significant metamorphoses.<sup>35</sup> There has been a noticeable reduction in overt male-female

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<sup>30</sup>Literally meaning 'disgrace' or 'shame' in Arabic, *awrah* here refers to body parts forbidden to be publicly exposed by those who have reached puberty age. While various interpretations of what constitutes the *awrah* have been issued by the *ulama* depending on their schools of thought and social conditions, the most lenient requirement has taken it to cover, for men, all body parts between and including the navel and the knee, and for women, the whole body except the face and hands. For details, see Wan Muhammad Wan Muhammad Ali (1979: 1-7, 84-87).

<sup>31</sup>A loose chador with face-veil which when worn, exposes only the eyes. In Malaysia, it is popularly known as *pardah*: a Persian term which means 'isolation'.

<sup>32</sup>A face-exposing form of loose chador covering the body from waist upwards.

<sup>33</sup>A headscarf, tied or pinned at the neck, long enough to cover the shape of the bosoms.

<sup>34</sup>A loose female Malay dress, often adorned with colourful flowery patterns.

<sup>35</sup>Information on changes in social and personal behaviour is derived from the author's experience as a first-hand observer of the educated Malay youth, in his capacity as a student in a top Malaysian residential school, the MCKK (1982-87), in Britain (1987-92, 1993-present day), where he has been a member of Malay student communities in Oxford, Leeds and Newcastle upon Tyne; and as a teacher in two local universities where he taught for a short while in 1993. The author has greatly benefited from personal discussions and communication with *dakwah* activists of various groups, and from visits to *dakwah* centres and gatherings in Malaysia and Britain. During his academic sojourn in Britain, he also managed to take time off to visit Malay student communities in the Republic of Ireland, France, Turkey and Egypt. For similar perspectives on changes in Malay social behaviour, see Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 3-5), F.M. Jamil (1988: 123-126) and von der Mehden (1988: 254-255). For case-studies of *dakwah* individuals, see Zainah Anwar (1987: chapter 4).

communication, as evidenced by the voluntary segregation observed in lecture halls, public functions and public transport. Islamic greetings have replaced their Malay equivalents such as '*selamat pagi / petang*' (good morning / evening) and '*apa khabar*' (how are you) in daily conversations and public speeches. A renewed emphasis on Islamic dietary rules has forced food manufacturers to upgrade efforts to convince consumers of the *halal* status of their products in terms of ingredients used and methods of preparation. Islamic rituals and religious forms of entertainment have flourished and supplanted Western pop music at the heart of youth culture. Mosques and public venues often experience a carnival-like atmosphere whenever congregational occasions such as the Prophet's birthday celebrations, the breaking of fast and the *tarawih* prayers during the fasting month, take place. Encouraging attendance has been registered at Islamic conferences, gatherings and talks, prompting the organisers to hold them more frequently. Today, virtually all public buildings and an increasing number of private offices provide facilities and intervals for prayers. Makkah and other places of Islamic heritage have rivalled Europe and America as holiday destinations for affluent Malays. Demand for reading materials on Islam and cassette tapes of Islamic talks, *nasyeeds* (Islamic songs) and recitation of the Quran have risen so dramatically that retail outlets specialising in such Islamic items have proliferated (cf. S.A. Hussein 1988: 130).<sup>36</sup> The dearth of religious works such as *tafsirs* in Malay has been made up by the importation of such publications from Indonesia (Federspiel 1991: 159-160). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Islamic themes had earned such a meaningful place in Malay literature that the notion of a distinctive Islamic literature (*Sastera Islam*) gained widespread popularity among leading literary figures such as Shahnon Ahmad and Keris Mas (Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir 1989, 1989a; Banks 1990). That Malay novelists increasingly chose religion as the pivotal theme in their works depicting contemporary Malay society is itself a testimony to the growing appeal of Islamic resurgence.

Politically, the decision of PAS to join the multi-ethnic National Front coalition in 1973 forced Islamists to find other outlets to express dissenting opinions against the regime's secular-nationalist orientation, hence directly contributing to the flourishing of independent *dakwah* organisations (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 849). In due course, four main *dakwah* movements emerged, viz. the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Islamic Representative Council (IRC), Jamaat Tabligh and Darul Arqam (cf. chapter 4). Facing different movements with varying styles and approaches, the government was compelled to utilise an all-embracing strategy to counter any oncoming challenge posed to the regime's Islamic legitimacy.

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<sup>36</sup>One bookshop in Kuala Lumpur, responding to research conducted by Syed Ahmad Hussein, reported a 5000 percent rise in sales between 1969 and 1976 (S.A. Hussein 1988: 179, fn. 20).

### 3.5 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO *DAKWAH* (c. 1974-92): COERCION, COOPTATION AND ISLAMISATION

Malaysian *dakwah* being a heterogeneous phenomenon in terms of approaches and methodologies used by adherents, the experience of *dakwah* activists with respect to relations with the government has correspondingly differed from one movement to another. Movement-specific analyses, with a slanting focus on Darul Arqam, is the subject of the following chapter. In this section, a broad paradigm of government response to *dakwah* in all its manifestations is presented.

Until the early 1990s, official reaction to *dakwah* has been mixed. Being dictated in large measure by electoral considerations, the government has employed a two-prong strategy against its Islamic rivals. On the one hand, the UMNO-dominated government could not afford to lose the support of the Malays who have become more aware, in an Islamically-inclined direction, of their identity and future in a multi-ethnic polity since the drastic events of 1969. Independent *dakwah* groups have been rapidly gaining adherents among the educated urban Malay youth at the expense of UMNO, whose prevalent image remained that of a secular nationalist party which had failed the Malays. In such a mood, attacking Islam was to commit political suicide. Thus the launching of a conscious policy of Islamisation identified most readily with the Premiership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1981-present day).

On the other hand, the government, being a coalition of several parties comprising different ethnic groups, could not be seen to be excessively promoting Islam such that non-Malay fears of their position rose and their political loyalties transferred to rival non-Malay parties. To non-Malays, the government has to project itself as a bastion against religious extremists. Supporting the government has thus been portrayed as the sole avenue to maintain racial harmony, political stability and economic prosperity, while depicting the government's promotion of 'official Islam' as not inimical towards non-Malay interests and rights. The government's perennial dilemma has been one of maintaining balance between a self-defined religious zeal and a conscious rejection of religious extremism. Sometimes, the line of demarcation has not been all too clear, leading to intermittent outbursts of dissatisfaction against the regime, for contradictory reasons, by secular-oriented Muslims and wary non-Muslims on the one hand and by religiously-inclined Muslims on the other. Whenever polemic between both these camps, or between either of them and the regime, intensifies to levels arbitrarily interpreted as 'threatening national security', the authorities have not hesitated to apply coercive measures to silence critics.

### 3.5.1 COERCION

Coercion, coupled with alleged associations with internal and external enemies of the state, have been used against groups which have dared to mount an overt political challenge, either as parties competing in the electoral arena or as pressure groups issuing politically sensitive statements, and against fringe groups which have shown readiness to adopt violence to achieve extremist ends. Inheriting the legacy of communist insurgency during independence, the Malaysian state has a variety of internal coercive instruments at its disposal, making it a popular target of criticisms from international human rights organisations. The ISA (1960) authorises the Home Minister to detain anybody who "*has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia*" (Amnesty International 1991: 7). The situation has been made worse since June 1989, when an amendment barred judicial review of ministerial or regal actions in the exercise of their discretionary powers under the ISA, hence effectively divesting detainees of their legal right to challenge their detention through *habeas corpus* applications (ibid.). For purposes of investigation, the detainee is held for a preliminary period of sixty days, which may be followed by a two-year confirmed detention, renewable indefinitely on a two-yearly basis, subject to recommendations from the Special Branch and an appointed Advisory Board (Lent 1984: 443-444). This Board undertakes reviews of cases on a half-yearly basis and, in the absence of a proper legal trial, listens to appeals from detainees. It has, however, been criticised as a superficial measure designed to give a semblance of legitimacy to the system; its recommendations are often ignored, it does not guarantee the right to representation by a counsel, and even when such a right is granted, the rule of confidentiality between lawyers and clients has been openly flouted (ibid.). Upon release, detainees may be further imposed with a remand or restriction order, which effectively confines their movements within a designated locality and circumscribes their public role (Barraclough 1985: 808). The ISA has been regularly used in conjunction with the Essential (Security Cases) Regulations (ESCAR) (1975), which enables the government to circumvent established judicial procedures for cases involving national security, and whose enactment prompted the Malaysian Bar Council to call on lawyers to boycott trials held under 'oppressive' regulations which flagrantly flouted the rule of law (Lent 1984: 445, Means 1991: 143).

Among established Islamic movements, ABIM and PAS have borne the brunt of the government's repressive legislation, at least until the early 1980s for the former and the late 1980s for the latter. This was not surprising for ABIM was arguably the most vocal critic of government policies among NGOs and the epitome of the new socio-political force of *dakwah*, while PAS was an open competitor against UMNO for

Malay-Muslim votes and had, since its reorganisation and leadership takeover by Iranian-inspired Young Turks in 1982 (cf. chapter 4: 4.7.4), become a formidable political threat. However, the authorities were hardest upon groups allegedly harbouring violent designs to overthrow the established order. In March 1980, the ISA was used to arrest several Kedah PAS leaders accused of mobilising thousands of paddy farmers in mass demonstrations demanding rises in the price of rice and payments of subsidies in cash. Despite the obvious economic overtones of the unrest, the government insisted that it was masterminded by a clandestine organisation, *Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabilullah* (Organisation of the Soldiers of God), intent upon erecting an Islamic government by revolutionary means; an allegation apparently corroborated by the confession of one of the detainees after weeks of interrogation (Barraclough 1983: 962). The government's concern at the activities of fringe Islamic extremists intensified after bloody incidents in Kerling, Selangor in 1978 and Batu Pahat, Johore in 1980. In the former case, temple vigilantes butchered five young Malay-Muslims, only one of whom survived, who were on a self-professed mission to desecrate Hindu shrines. In the latter event, a police station was viciously attacked by twenty sword-brandishing religious zealots who had reportedly planned a violent takeover of the country; eight of them were killed in the ensuing confrontation (ibid.: 960-961). Throughout the 1980s, several fringe groups suspected of para-military activities, bearing such names as the Islamic Revolutionary Forces, the Spiritual Group and the Crypto were uncovered and their leaders arrested under the ISA (ibid.: 962, S.A. Hussein 1988: 185-188). Actual outbursts of violence, or evidence of intended attempts, provided justification for the government's tightening of security measures and enabled it to discredit the mainstream *dakwah* movements by lumping Islamists together as 'fanatics', 'deviant extremists' and proponents of *dakwah songsang*<sup>37</sup> (ibid.: 188-189, 560-564; Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1052).

While the invocation of security powers against fringe groups effectively leads to their demise, similar action against mainstream socio-political movements may have the opposite effect of arousing public sympathy and support. In particular, detentions of their charismatic leaders may create a 'martyrdom syndrome', by which the government's high-handedness becomes an instant liability by justifying allegations of government's authoritarianism and injustice. It is an established fact, for instance, that the political stature of Anwar Ibrahim, President of ABIM 1974-82, was considerably enhanced following his two-year ISA detention for his role in orchestrating the 1974 student demonstrations (Funston 1981: 177, Barraclough 1985: 804-805). ABIM's anti-establishment views, which included opposition against the

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<sup>37</sup>Literally meaning 'upside-down *dakwah*', the term *dakwah songsang* is used by the authorities to refer to false or deviant forms of Islamic activities.

NEP for its racial bias, acquired such enormous popularity in student campuses that student activities had to be consequently placed under the direct control of university authorities (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 854). ABIM-inclined civil servants were inconvenienced by transfers to remote areas without ABIM branches (S.A. Hussein 1988: 544-545). The government became increasingly alarmed at the potential threat posed by a PAS-ABIM alliance; informal grassroots links between both groups had been steadily developing since the withdrawal of PAS from the National Front in December 1977. The unwritten pact was mutually beneficial. Taking the advantage of PAS' network, ABIM managed to spread its wing into rural areas, while at the same time supplying PAS with highly educated recruits who were able to inject new ideas, especially in terms of cadre training, organisational skills and mobilisation capacity (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 850-851). Tacit cooperation turned into outright support during the 1978 general elections, when not only did ABIM activists campaign fiercely on behalf of PAS, but former ABIM leaders such as Fadhil Nor, Nakhaie Ahmad and Abdul Hadi Awang also decided to become candidates on the PAS ticket (ibid., Funston 1981: 178). With respect to Kelantan, where snap elections were called to end the state of Emergency and rule by decree triggered by the 'Kelantan crisis of 1977',<sup>38</sup> political commentator Alias Muhammad has castigated ABIM leaders for pronouncing that "*PAS' defeat will usher the start of an era of darkness for Islam,*" thus falling into the "*religious trap set up by PAS from time to time*" (1978: 47). In July 1978, Prime Minister Hussein Onn, in allusions to ABIM, issued post-election statements accusing *dakwah* groups of manipulating Islam for the political interests of PAS (Barraclough 1983: 964).

Increasingly irritated by ABIM's bold venture into pro-opposition politics, the government pushed the Societies (Amendment) Bill through Parliament in 1981.

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<sup>38</sup>The 'Kelantan crisis in 1977' had its origins in Prime Minister Tun Razak's appointment of Mohamad Nasir as the new Chief Minister of Kelantan in June 1975, against the wishes of the latter's party, PAS, which had been ruling the state since 1959. PAS' preferred candidate was incumbent Deputy Chief Minister Wan Ismail Wan Ibrahim, an ex-ABIM activist who had been PAS President Mohamad Asri's political secretary in the latter's capacity as federal minister. Irreconcilable differences inevitably surfaced between Mohamad Nasir's state government and the PAS-controlled state legislative assembly, culminating in Mohamad Nasir's expulsion from PAS and a successful motion of no-confidence against Mohamad Nasir in October 1977. Mohamad Nasir's deposition immediately provoked thousands of his supporters to organise mass demonstrations, which escalated into ugly violence and destruction of property of PAS leaders. When the disturbances began to show signs of assuming racial proportions, the federal government invoked its emergency powers under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution, thus suspending democratic procedures in Kelantan for ninety-five days. PAS was consequently expelled from the National Front coalition for failing to support the Kelantan Emergency Bill in Parliament. In the ensuing state legislative elections in March 1978, PAS was comprehensively beaten by an electoral pact between UMNO and *Barisan Jamaah Islamiah Malaysia* (BERJASA), a splinter party from PAS representing Mohamad Nasir's faction. PAS won only two seats, to UMNO's twenty three and BERJASA's eleven. Mohamad Nasir was subsequently made Minister in the Prime Minister's Department. For details, see Alias Muhammad (1978), Alias Mohamed (1978: 170ff) and Kamarudin Jaffar (1979).

Although the effect of the Act was to impose stringent regulatory measures on all 'friendly societies', observers have noted that its principal target was ABIM, which was at the pinnacle of success in terms of popular support (ibid.: 971, Milne and Mauzy 1983: 623, von der Mehden 1986: 230, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 854). Appropriately, ABIM was accepted as the coordinator of the protest campaign, which united 115 NGOs, representing a cross-section of the Malaysian population, under the banner of the Societies Act Coordinating Committee (SACC) (Barraclough 1984: 457, Lent 1984: 450). In essence, the Societies (Amendment) Act (1981) severely curtailed the freedom of voluntary organisations to act as pressure groups by allowing arbitrarily-defined 'political societies' the sole right to issue public statements intended to influence government policies and activities. The Registrar of Societies was given sweeping powers of regulation, including arbitrary powers to deregister organisations which transgress the Federal or state constitutions, or act beyond their professed aims. Links with foreign associations were placed under unprecedented scrutiny. Non-citizens were expressly prohibited from membership and written permission was required from the Registrar before material assistance could be obtained from abroad. Even the positions of office-holders lay at the behest of the Registrar, whose decisions were placed beyond judicial review (Barraclough 1984: 451-452, Lent 1984: 449-450). In explaining the rationale for the Act, acting Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir expressed his disapproval of people who used 'friendly societies' as a front for political gains, characterising such suspicious behaviour as that befitting of communists (Barraclough 1984: 453).

In the mid-1980s, a PAS revival, indicated especially by burgeoning audiences at PAS-organised lectures, prompted the government to step up security measures against the party. Amidst rumours that PAS members were preparing themselves for a military *jihad*, a ban was imposed in August 1984 upon PAS gatherings in its four stronghold states (*FEER* 23.8.84). This followed the previous month's ISA detentions of three PAS Youth leaders, viz. Abu Bakar Chik, Bunyamin Yaakob and Muhammad Sabu (ibid.). A live television debate, which would have pitted three UMNO leaders against three PAS stalwarts on the issue of *kafir-mengkafir* i.e. trading of accusations of one another's infidelity, was eventually cancelled by the *Yang diPertuan Agong's* intervention.<sup>39</sup> Following this, the government issued a White Paper entitled 'The

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<sup>39</sup>In many of their gatherings and lectures, PAS speakers allegedly grew fond of branding their UMNO opponents as *kafir*. Consequently, PAS members were discouraged to offer prayers behind and solemnise marriages with UMNO *imams*, to attend *kenduris* (religious feasts) organised by UMNO family members and villagers, and to eat meat slaughtered by UMNO people. To answer PAS' charges of UMNO's infidelity, Dr. Mahathir challenged PAS to a public debate scheduled for live television broadcast on 11 November 1984. See 'Malaysia: Islam on the screen', *The Economist* 27.10.84; 'They shall not Pas', *FEER* 18.10.84; 'The great non-debate', ibid. 22.11.84; Keddie (1988: 21) and Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 85-86).

Threat to Muslim Unity and National Security', which implicated PAS members in the subversive activities of extremist Islamic groups, and created the spectre of the communists manipulating PAS-inspired rifts to achieve their anti-democratic aims (ibid., Gunn 1986: 40). In 1985, two bloody incidents astonished PAS members into realising how far the government was prepared to resort to blatant physical repression. Firstly, a PAS supporter was killed when UMNO-paid thugs attacked a PAS pre-by-election gathering in Lubok Merbau, Kedah. A PAS leader who wrote a pamphlet disclosing the event was consequently held under the ISA and expelled to district confinement (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 862). In Memali, Kedah later in the year, police stormed upon a community of primitively armed PAS villagers resisting the arrest of their leader, Ibrahim Libya. In the ensuing showdown, four policemen and fourteen villagers including Ibrahim lost their lives (ibid.: 863, Milner 1986: 48). PAS has since commemorated the event by declaring, to the government's disapprobation, the day of the Memali tragedy as 'Martyrdom Day'. In October 1987, nine PAS leaders were among the 106 detainees held under the ISA during a widespread crackdown on the government's political opponents, ostensibly for inflaming racial divisions. Others arrested included Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, the well-known government critic, academic writer on Islamic affairs and Indian-Muslim leader of the non-communal social reform organisation, ALIRAN,<sup>40</sup> and Ibrahim Ali, an UMNO leader associated with the anti-Mahathir faction and former student leader detained under the ISA in 1974 for mobilising campus demonstrators (Means 1991: 212).

Another legal instrument which has been used to cow Islamists is the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984), which authorises the censorship and proscription of writings "*prejudicial to the national interest*" and imposes penalties for operating "*publications without government permit*" (Means 1991: 139). Under this Act, ABIM's periodical *Risalah* was refused printing permit for several years (von der Mehden 1986: 229). Similarly, PAS' bi-weekly newspaper *Harakah* has been consistently denied the right to public circulation since beginning publication in 1987 (Case 1993: 202). Not exempt from the government's peering eyes have been newspapers known to have given sympathetic treatment to Islamic movements or the cause of *dakwah* in general. For example, *Mingguan Waktu*, which reserved special pages and columns for articles by Darul Arqam leaders, was banned in 1992 for apparently publishing an article declaring Dr. Mahathir's ten-year tenure as Prime Minister 'a failure' (ibid.,

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<sup>40</sup>In her typology of Malaysian *dakwah* movements, Nagata (1984: 122-125) has included a discussion on ALIRAN which promotes a "*progressive Islam..... uncontaminated by ethnic particularisms and divisions*" along the lines of such modernist thinkers as Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Abduh and Al-Afghani. The impact of ALIRAN as a source of irritation to the government is mentioned by Milne and Mauzy (1983: 623), Barraclough (1984: 455-456) and Lent (1984: 450) in relation to opposition to the Societies (Amendment) Act (1981).

Alattas 1992: 13-18).<sup>41</sup> Immediately after the massive ISA arrests in 1987, the government revoked the publishing licences of the English-language and Chinese-language dailies, *The Star* and *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, and the Malay bi-weekly tabloid, *Watan*. All were known to have highlighted anti-establishment views of Dr. Mahathir's political adversaries from within and outside UMNO; in *Watan's* case, this included prominent coverage of PAS (Means 1991: 213).

Restructuring of the ownership of the mass media in the 1970s and 1980s has ensured that the country's main newspapers and television stations are controlled directly by the government or indirectly via share acquisitions by investment subsidiaries of UMNO and other National Front component parties (ibid.: 137, Zaharom Naim 1996, Lent 1984: 452). Dr. Mahathir is himself notorious for antipathetic views on press freedom. In an article written for the *New Straits Times* (*NST*) (9.7.81), he lambasts journalists who employ their self-professed righteousness as "*a gimmick..... not for democracy.*" While admitting that the press has a role to play in a democracy, he asserts that such a role "*is not as absolutely critical*" as pressmen claim it to be and is often misplaced in the wrong hands so as "*to destroy democracy*" (quoted in Lent 1984: 451). In a speech to ASEAN journalists in 1985, Dr. Mahathir was candid in his definition of a 'responsible press' as one which "*is conscious of itself -being a potential threat to democracy and conscientiously limits the exercise of its rights,*" thus deserving the right to "*function without government interference;*" if however the press abuses its rights, "*democratic governments have a duty to put it right*" (quoted in Means 1991: 138-139).

To add justification to its use of repressive legislation against Islamic activists, it has become customary for the government to charge them with having been influenced by undesirable foreign elements. Government spokesmen have further pin-pointed the communists, operating through front organisations such as the *Persatuan Persaudaraan Islam* (PAPERI: Muslim Brotherhood Association) supposedly active in Kelantan, as the elusive nemesis constantly prepared to exploit foreign-induced divisions among the Malays (Barraclough 1983: 961).<sup>42</sup> As early as 1976, Finance

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<sup>41</sup>Dr. Mahathir denied that the article was the reason for *Mingguan Waktu's* proscription and referred instead to its reports which were of "*no use to the nation.*" But when asked for examples, he confessed to have never read the newspaper (*The Star* 30.12.91).

<sup>42</sup>Government worries were not totally without justification: according to Musa Ahmad, the former Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) chairman who surrendered to the authorities in 1981, the CPM had resolved since 1961 that religion provided the best avenue of obtaining mass support. As such, the CPM had sought to infiltrate religious organisations through highly trained cadres who would use leadership positions to spread communism, under the guise of religious extremism, among rank-and-file members. Musa also disclosed CPM's tactics of playing on religious and nationalistic sentiments to attract Malay intellectuals; see Sebastian (1991: 276, 294: fn. 10). However, apart from confessions made under duress, the government has presented little, if any, concrete evidence that mainstream Islamic movements had been subject to communist infiltration, as its exaggerated propaganda consistently implied (cf. Barraclough 1985: 803).

Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had warned of foreign powers which used missionary organisations as "*tools to penetrate the Malay community*" and "*ultimately lead them to communism*" (NST 15.5.76, as quoted in *ibid.*). Since 1979, government rhetoric against alleged foreign involvement in Islamic movements has focused upon Iran's conscious attempt to export its revolution abroad. The manifest excitement surrounding Islamists of all persuasions after the February revolution prompted the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Mohamad Nasir, to declare: "*The struggle of the Iranian people has nothing to do with our country*" (Bintang Timur 13.8.79, as quoted in S.A. Hussein 1988: 585). ABIM's decision to observe a 'Solidarity Day' in conjunction with the liberation of Iran and Anwar Ibrahim's cordial visits to Khomeini's Iran and 'fundamentalist' Pakistan under Zia ul-Haq seemed to vindicate accusations of ABIM's predilection for a revolutionary Islamic government (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1048). During the 1980 and 1981 UMNO General Assemblies, vociferous attacks against groups "*attempting to import the Iranian revolutionary ideology*" were followed by specific demands by some delegates to proscribe ABIM altogether (S.A. Hussein 1988: 585-586). Also alleged to have links with Gadhaffi's Libya (Nagata 1980: 430, Gunn 1986: 41), ABIM has nevertheless denied receiving finance from abroad (Funston 1981: 176). The question of funding aside, it was ABIM's aggressive commitment to Islamic internationalism and success in winning praise from Muslim countries and international Islamic bodies, as signified by Anwar Ibrahim's appointment as the Asia-Pacific representative to the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), that made it a cause for legitimate concern (*ibid.*, Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1048).

As for PAS, Iranian influence has certainly been discernible in the language of its post-1982 rhetoric, for instance the portrayal of its struggle as representing the *mustazaffin* (oppressed) as against the *mustakbirin* (oppressors) (Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 85-86, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 862). PAS-sponsored schools have been known to send their graduates to Iranian universities for further studies (FEER 8.5.86). But contrary to government claims, no evidence exists to indicate that PAS-Iran relations have ever gone beyond ideological and educational aspects. Charges of Iranian interference in Malaysian politics peaked at the height of the government's coercive measures against PAS in the mid-1980s. In his 1984 National Day address, Dr. Mahathir harped upon the theme of groups aiming to forcibly establish a "*government by mullahs*" and on another occasion, claimed to have seen evidence of PAS' plans of setting up 'suicide squads' for whom "*the shedding of UMNO blood is halal*" (*ibid.* 18.10.84). The government has attempted to reduce movements' international links not only through closer supervision, but also by sowing contacts with countries suspected of assisting them, such that funds to promote the cause of

*dakwah* is channelled only through government-approved outlets (cf. Gunn 1986: 39). Malaysia has taken definite steps to rival *dakwah* movements' international Islamic credentials by improving economic and cultural ties with the Islamic world (*FEER* 31.1.85). That Iran has appeared to accept the danger that close ties with radical Islamic elements pose to its diplomatic relations with Malaysia, as reported by James Clad (*ibid.* 9.8.84), is testimony to the success of the government's strategy of neutralising the international influence of *dakwah* movements.

The government would have been embarking on a dangerous course if it had relied solely on coercion in facing the challenge of Islamic movements. For coercion, and the threat of its use, is a double-edged sword. While it may be successful in intimidating Islamists whose activities may be justifiably portrayed to the public as constituting a security threat, its protracted use against legitimate critics of the government and peaceful expressions of Islamic resurgence presents long-term political costs. For example, by denying legitimate channels of dissent to political adversaries, coercion might radicalise their supporters and drive them into clandestine activities, thus recreating the problem in another form. Coercion may also trigger criticism from other countries and reputable international organisations; this may prove extremely damaging from the perspective of international prestige, diplomatic relations and trade and investment opportunities. Finally, coercion might alienate especially the middle class and educated elements of the population, and invite an electoral backlash in the form of 'protest votes' for opposition parties or simply refusal to vote in disillusionment against an increasingly authoritarian political system (Barraclough 1985: 802-806).

Despite the government's repeated insistence that coercion in the Malaysian context has served only as a 'preventive' and 'corrective' mechanism, evidence indicates that punitive motives have surfaced no less significantly in determining its actions against legitimate political opponents (cf. *ibid.*: *passim*). In full realisation that the Islamic constituency has greatly expanded with the oncoming Islamic resurgence, the government has launched a policy of Islamisation to outwit its Islamic rivals, whether Islamic political parties competing for votes or non-electoral *dakwah* bodies competing for influence. As Nagata has asserted, "*The antidote to an "excess" of religious zeal then, is paradoxically more of the same*" (1984: 158). In this endeavour, the government has been surprisingly frank as to its political motives. Since PAS left the ruling coalition in late 1977, the government has constantly feared that PAS would capitalise on the new force of Islamic resurgence by presenting itself as the sole political alternative to realise the overriding ambitions of independent *dakwah* organisations (Kamarudin Jaffar 1979: 216, Funston 1981: 185). Such a foreboding was transformed into reality with the formation of the PAS-ABIM alliance during the

1978 elections. Ironically, the PAS-UMNO break-up apparently intensified the government's commitment to Islam. The immediate official response to a possible alignment of political and non-political forms of *dakwah* were major steps to streamline the national Islamic administration so as to be able to monitor nationwide *dakwah* activities, and the launching of a National *Dakwah* Month in December 1978, when government-paid *ulama* toured the country to enlighten the youth to the dangers of *dakwah songsang*, drug-addiction and communism, while explaining the correct forms of *dakwah* as propagated by themselves (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1050, Barraclough 1983: 970). In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*), Prime Minister Hussein Onn explained:

You may wonder why we spend so much money on Islam. You may think it is a waste of money. If we don't, we face two major problems. First, Party Islam will get at us. The party will, and does, claim we are not religious and the people will lose faith. Second we have to strengthen the faith of the people, which is another way to fight communist ideology. (Tasker 1979).

### 3.5.2 COOPTATION: PRELUDE TO ISLAMISATION

It was since the ascendancy of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to the Premiership in July 1981 that the government's turn towards Islam has become more resolute. Observers have noted that while his predecessors' Islamic policies represented no more than symbolic and defensive concessions to Islamists, Dr. Mahathir has gone further by adopting some of the Islamists' more significant demands, thus effectively hijacking the Islamist agenda (Milne and Mauzy 1983: 638, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 855, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 133). As one Chinese political leader, Dr. Goh Cheng Teik, noted in 1982, what was extremist ten years before had now become government policy (*NST* 4.4.82). Looking back on Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation policies until 1992, Hussin Mutalib verifies the Prime Minister's seemingly genuine commitment "*to practise the universalistic Islamic values and principles in his governance of the country,*" despite "*using Islam as a legitimating instrument*" (1994: 160). He admits, however, that,

..... a primary motivating factor for the breadth of Islamic programmes under his [Dr. Mahathir's] administration must be the pressures coming from the collective force of the *dakwah* movements, Islamic intellectuals, and most understandably, the Islamic Party, PAS. (ibid.)

A discussion of Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation programme is incomplete without mentioning his cooptation in 1982 of Anwar Ibrahim, until then ABIM President and

arguably the most prominent figure among *dakwah* leaders during its formative years in the 1970s. Dr. Mahathir's success in persuading Anwar Ibrahim to join UMNO instead of PAS - the latter's widely rumoured choice, shows Dr. Mahathir at his best as a political strategist. PAS was then experiencing an acute leadership crisis between President Mohamad Asri's 'old-guard nationalist' camp and the reformist 'Young Turks' led by Anwar Ibrahim's ex-ABIM colleagues. Mohamad Asri had personally initiated a campaign to bring Anwar Ibrahim into PAS, by which it was hoped that the 'Young Turks' would be pacified and Mohamad Asri's flagging credibility restored (S.A. Hussein 1988: 598). Despite his family's strong UMNO credentials,<sup>43</sup> Anwar Ibrahim's joining UMNO had seemed to be against all odds. Since his student days, he had consistently rejected opportunities to strive for his Islamic ambitions from within the establishment. Such overtures included Prime Minister Tun Razak's offer of a cabinet post and later as Food and Agricultural Organisation representative to the United Nations (Barraclough 1985a: 315, M.N. Monutty 1989: 101). He reiterated his anti-UMNO position during the period of PAS-ABIM cooperation, and once even compared UMNO to a septic tank "*that could not be cleaned from the inside*" (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 857). In 1976, he reportedly told a group of students to wait until ABIM registered as a political party before launching political careers (S.A. Hussein 1988: 597).

Yet, analysts have pointed out that Dr. Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim did enjoy amazingly similar political inclinations, making their eventual rapprochement not altogether surprising. Anwar Ibrahim the 'Islamic-Malay nationalist' and Dr. Mahathir the 'ultra-Malay nationalist' had maintained close contact with each other since their common opposition to Tunku Abdul Rahman's policies in 1969; Anwar enjoying direct access to Dr. Mahathir's home and office (*ibid.*: 596). Both subscribed to modern interpretations of Islam without renouncing the Malay cause, although presumably Anwar's version was essentially more 'Islamist' in important respects (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 858). On reasons why he eventually chose UMNO as his political platform, Anwar Ibrahim has variously stated that besides the special friendship he had cultivated with Dr. Mahathir, he was above all impressed by policy changes brought about by Dr. Mahathir's administration in the defence of Islam and Malay interests, and by Dr. Mahathir's determination to weed out poverty and corruption (Barraclough 1985a: 316, S.A. Hussein 1988: 597). In addition, he expressed misgivings about present divisions in PAS, reaffirmed his belief in UMNO's commitment to Islam and resolved that he would be more effective in the government

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<sup>43</sup>Anwar Ibrahim's father was former UMNO member of Parliament for Permatang Pauh in Seberang Perai, Penang. Without her son's knowledge, Anwar Ibrahim's mother had been remitting his UMNO membership fees for several years. See Jomo and A.S. Cheek (1988: 856).

party (Milne and Mauzy 1983: 636, fn. 62; M.N. Monutty 1989: 104-105).<sup>44</sup> Under Dr. Mahathir's patronage, Anwar Ibrahim has risen swiftly through the ranks of UMNO and the government.<sup>45</sup> Upon election to Parliament in 1982, Anwar Ibrahim was immediately appointed Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department responsible for Islamic affairs: a post which catapulted him to the forefront of the government's Islamisation policies, which he himself, besides Dr. Mahathir, took privilege to declare. While the true extent of Anwar Ibrahim's influence in the actual shaping of policy is uncertain, his presence in the government has been attributed as a major catalyst to the new Islamic direction pursued, not least by bolstering its Islamic image (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 139-141).

Politically, the 'Anwar factor' broke the unity of Dr. Mahathir's Islamic rivals by ending the tacit alliance between ABIM and PAS. The pro-government press was quick to applaud the cooptation of Anwar Ibrahim as Dr. Mahathir's "*biggest political coup*" and "*a historical victory for UMNO*" (S.A. Hussein 1988: 599). The Islamic opposition did not hide their disappointment at having being outmanoeuvred in the 'battle for Anwar', PAS speakers generally attacking Anwar Ibrahim as a renegade who had sold out for opportunistic gains (ibid.: 600). Subky Latiff, a well-known PAS columnist, declared Anwar Ibrahim's decision to join UMNO as spelling the "*effective separation of ABIM from PAS*" (*Watan* 27.7.82). Anwar Ibrahim's decision to leave ABIM was made without consultation with its fellow-leaders. It divided ABIM into a 'pro-Anwar' faction, whose spokesmen claimed that Anwar Ibrahim's decision was a calculated long-term strategy to infiltrate UMNO and Islamise the state from within, and an 'anti-Anwar' faction, many of whom drifted into PAS and feared that Anwar Ibrahim had fallen into Dr. Mahathir's trap by willingly heading UMNO's subsequent election campaign against PAS (S.A. Hussein 1988: 646, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 856-857).<sup>46</sup>

The cooptation of Anwar Ibrahim, by removing one of the regime's most ominous critics, was undoubtedly a *tour de force* for Dr. Mahathir and UMNO (Barraclough 1985a: 316). But it was neither the first nor the last time that cooptation was successfully used as a political strategy against its Islamic rivals. In 1974, Sanusi Junid, ABIM's first Vice-President, joined UMNO to the loud chorus of disapproval from fellow ABIM leaders including Anwar Ibrahim. Later, as Deputy Home Affairs

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<sup>44</sup>In a recent public function, Anwar said that he rejected PAS in 1982 because of the party's impetuous approach, which "*evaluates a leader's aptitude on how far he could brand a fellow-Muslim an infidel*" (*Utusan Malaysia: UM* 12.4.95).

<sup>45</sup>Today he is UMNO Deputy President, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister-cum-Finance Minister and generally accepted as Dr. Mahathir's heir-apparent. Before reaching the 'Number Two' position in UMNO and the government, Anwar Ibrahim was successively elected as President of UMNO Youth and UMNO Vice-President, and held cabinet portfolios as Ministers of Culture, Youth and Sports; Agriculture, Education and Finance.

<sup>46</sup>More on post-1982 developments in PAS and ABIM will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Minister, Sanusi was directly responsible for the Societies (Amendment) Act (1981) against which Anwar Ibrahim as ABIM President had vehemently campaigned (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 857, cf. Barraclough 1984: 453).<sup>47</sup> In 1978, the government successfully brought Mohamad Nasir, the erstwhile PAS Chief Minister of Kelantan, into its fold. Long suspected by his party of being an UMNO sympathiser (Alias Muhammad 1978: 148-186, Alias Mohamed 1978: 178), Mohamad Nasir was ousted by fellow PAS state assemblymen and stripped of party membership. He eventually formed a splinter party, BERJASA, which cooperated with UMNO in the state elections to end PAS' eighteen-year rule in Kelantan (cf. fn. 38 above). When the BERJASA Supreme Council declined to join the National Front, Mohamad Nasir resigned as party leader and was eventually appointed senator and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department responsible for Islamic affairs (Kamarudin Jaffar 1979: 219). Mohamad Nasir's ideological turnabout was depicted by his statements intending to raise the regime's Islamic legitimacy, such as that defining an Islamic state as "*one that has a Muslim as the head of state and has implemented more than ten percent of the laws of Islam,*" implying that Malaysia qualified as one (quoted in S.A. Hussein 1988: 623). In 1986, another PAS splinter party led by ex-President Mohamad Asri, *Hizbul Muslimin* (HAMIM), was admitted into the National Front to counterbalance the expected growth in support for PAS in the forthcoming elections (Means 1991: 183). PAS sources have claimed that their ISA detainees have been constantly persuaded by various inducements to defect to UMNO (*FEER* 21.4.88). In April 1989, UMNO scored another morale victory over PAS when former PAS Vice-President and ex-ABIM stalwart, Nakhaie Ahmad, joined UMNO, having resigned all posts in PAS seven months earlier (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1992: 102). Nakhaie has since enjoyed posts in UMNO and the regime's Islamic bureaucracy, while being extremely critical of PAS.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.5.3 ISLAMISATION

Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation programme can be analysed by means of substantive achievements and policy declarations. Among the government's major accomplishments have been the introduction of Islamic banking, insurance and pawnshop systems (1981-83), official sponsorship of an Islamic Medical Centre

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<sup>47</sup>Having enjoyed lengthy stints as UMNO Secretary-General, UMNO Vice-President and Agriculture Minister, Sanusi Junid was appointed Chief Minister of Kedah in June 1996, after about a year in the political wilderness; see reports in Malaysian national newspapers on 11.6.96.

<sup>48</sup>cf. 'Tembelang PAS didedah' (PAS' lies exposed), *UM* 7.12.94, and 'Perjuangan PAS ikut emosi - Nakhaie' (PAS' struggle is emotional - Nakhaie), *ibid.* 15.4.95.

(1983), the expansion of the Islamic Centre to cover seven principal units including distinctive *Dakwah* and Quranic Institutes (1984), an official declaration of 'instilling Islamic values into the government machinery' based on the slogans *kepimpinan melalui teladan* (leadership by example) and *bersih, cekap dan amanah* (clean, efficient and trustworthy) (1984), the upgrading of the status of *shariah* courts and judges so as to be at par with their civil judiciary counterparts (1988) and the establishment of an Islamic think-tank, the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM: *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia*) (1992) (Milne and Mauzy 1983, F.M. Jamil 1988: 235-241, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 134-139, 142-144; N.M. Yasin 1994: 128-143, Mohd. Rais Abdul Karim 1993, *FEER* 20.5.93: on IKIM). Islamic language was increasingly used to justify government actions such as the assault on the sultans' constitutional powers in 1983 and 1992-93 (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 141-142). In foreign policy, closer relations have been forged with Muslim countries including the PLO, and Malaysia assumed an active role in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) (*ibid.*: 128-133). The previous policy of attaching importance to Islamic symbols was intensified. There have been increased allocation of Islamic programmes aired over radio and television, more sections on Islam in the government-controlled press, more money pumped into mosque-building and Islamic infrastructural facilities, and generous publicity given to the hosting of sumptuous Islamic occasions such as the Annual Quranic Recitation Competition, the International Islamic Youth Camp in 1981, the International Seminar on Islamic Thought and the Islamic Civilisation Exhibition, both in 1984 (Hussin Mutalib 1990: *loc. cit.*, 1993: 31).

In the sphere of education, arguably the cornerstone of the Islamisation programme, the Mahathir era has witnessed a major revamp of school curricula at all levels to reflect religio-moralistic conceptions of life, the introduction of compulsory Islamic Civilisation courses at tertiary level, the founding of the International Islamic University (IIU) in 1983 and the establishment in 1987 of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), a major research institute headed by the renowned Malay-Islamic philosopher Professor Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas (*FEER* 31.5.84, Kamal Hassan 1986: 53-57, 70-77; G. Basri 1988: 108-109, Roald 1994: 233-251). As Education Minister in 1975, Dr. Mahathir had warmly accepted ABIM's Education Memorandum for scrutiny by a cabinet committee designed to review the National Education Policy. The memorandum owed most of its ideas to Professor al-Attas and stressed aspects of human development such as spiritual, moral and mental education; without discarding the secular aim of producing good citizens with expertise in various fields of knowledge (Osman Bakar 1993: 49). Some of these ideas were put into effect after Anwar Ibrahim became Education Minister in 1987.

Anwar Ibrahim's educational reforms revolved around seven issues, viz. the coining of a national philosophy of education, the role of the Malay language as the medium for acquiring knowledge at all levels, the emphasis on national unity, human resource development, democratisation of access to quality education, the goal of a continual supply of productive labour to run alongside the National Agricultural Policy and the Main Industrial Plan, and the replacement of narrow-mindedness with intellectual tolerance or 'globalisation' (Anwar Ibrahim 1989: 63-75, Wan Zahid Mohd. Noordin 1993). Underlying such reforms has been a national philosophy of education pronounced by Osman Bakar, academic and former ABIM secretary-general and chief of its Education Bureau,<sup>49</sup> as "*in line with Islamic teachings*" and "*cannot now be treated as secular*" (1993: 51). This philosophy proclaims:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. (Anwar Ibrahim 1989: 65, Roald 1994: 234).

Osman Bakar's comment above is reflective of the post-1982 mellowing and practical cooptation of ABIM (cf. chapter 4: 4.7.1). PAS too had serious difficulties in confronting Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation programme. Deprived of any legitimate argument to question its success, PAS could only afford to dispute the government's sincerity whilst claiming the policies had not gone far enough (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 861). To the UMNO 'old guard', the implications of the Islamisation drive were so alarming that by 1983, former Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman and Hussein Onn were publicly calling for a halt to the Islamisation process (Milne and Mauzy 1983: 631). Party enthusiasts, echoing their leaders, have unashamedly referred to UMNO as Malaysia's oldest and the world's third largest Islamic party (ibid.: 636, fn. 60; Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 855, S.A. Hussein 1988: 624). In his opening speech at the 1982 UMNO General Assembly, Dr. Mahathir defined UMNO's struggle as one "*to change the attitude of the Malays in line with the requirements of Islam in this modern age*" and "*to enhance Islamic practises and ensure that the Malay community truly adheres to Islamic teachings*" (NST 11.9.82). Undoubtedly, one of the most significant legacies of Dr. Mahathir's leadership of UMNO has been the acceptance by the party rank-and-file that UMNO and Islam share the same fate and interests.

Despite the Islamists' excitement and the secularists' apprehension of Dr. Mahathir's Islamisation policies, a broad examination of policy statements issued by

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<sup>49</sup>One of ABIM's principal ideologues in its formative years, Professor Osman Bakar obtained his doctorate in Islamic philosophy from George Washington University, USA, under the supervision of the famous Iranian-Islamic scholar Sayyed Hossein Nasr, and is presently deputy vice-chancellor (academic affairs) of the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

government spokesmen reveals that they stop short of endorsing the transformation of Malaysia into an 'Islamic state', as the term is understood by contemporary Islamists in terms of the adoption of the *shariah* as the country's Basic Law and guiding principle (cf. N.M. Yasin 1994: 143-152). Having neutralised its Islamic political rivals and forced the pro-establishment secular-nationalists to accept the new Islamic idiom, the government has ruled out the possibility of implementing Islam in the politico-legal sphere, which hopeful Islamists earnestly see as the eventual outcome of present policies. The multi-racial character of the Malaysian polity has served as the government's favourite alibi. For example, Dr. Mahathir has said, "*We practise Islam within our means and it is not possible to practise it to the extent of 100% when the country has a sizeable non-Malay population*" (FEER 3.3.83). In 1983, Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam rejected claims that the government's emphasis on Islamic values was an Islamisation process per se or a response to the PAS challenge; rather, it was merely an endeavour to achieve a healthy balance between spiritual and material development (Milne and Mauzy 1983: 631, fn. 48). In an interview, he later echoed the Prime Minister's contention that Malaysia was already an 'Islamic nation' (ibid.: fn. 49). Amidst such ambiguity, Dr. Mahathir finally clarified the government's understanding of Islamisation in an interview with *Utusan Melayu* in October 1984:

What we mean by Islamisation is the inculcation of Islamic values in government administration. Such an inculcation is not the same as implementation of Islamic laws in the country. Islamic laws are for Muslims and meant for their personal laws. But laws of the nation, although not Islamic-based, can be used so long as they do not come into conflict with Islamic principles. Islamic laws can only be implemented if all the people agree to them. We cannot force because there is no compulsion in Islam. (quoted in Hussin Mutalib 1990: 142-143).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Anwar Ibrahim in a public speech on 'Islamisation and Nation-Building' in October 1985:

The Islamisation process should be seen from the Malaysian context. Although it is more of the reaffirmation of faith and the reaffirmation that the Islamic religious and moral values are comprehensive, measures are being taken for national development, politics and administration; in so doing we must acknowledge the Malaysian reality of a multi-religious, multi-racial society. Therefore the Malaysian Islamisation process must take into consideration the views of both Muslims and the non-Muslims..... Islamisation should be shared by all the various religious groups in the country..... When we talk about 'universal values' why label them 'Islamic', as these values are values that are good for mankind..... Islamisation will not compromise with any form of narrow religious fanaticism and chauvinism such as over-politicising of Islam by some quarters of the Muslim populace. (quoted in G. Basri 1988: 110-111).

On the future of the Islamic financial system, which has made considerable inroads into Malaysian economic life since the 1980s, Jaffar Hussein, Governor of the country's Central Bank, emphatically made clear, in a public lecture at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in March 1990, that:

..... the decade of 1990s would not be the decade for replacing the Malaysian financial system with the Islamic financial system. The conventional financial system will continue to play its role of fostering economic growth and influencing monetary policy in Malaysia. The non-Muslims, should therefore, not be alarmed. They would have a choice. They should, however, also strive to study the Islamic financial system, so as to enable them to choose between the two alternatives so as to maximise their benefits..... My dream is that Malaysia will one day have two comprehensive financial systems, namely the conventional financial system and the Islamic financial system. And Malaysians, especially the non-Muslims, would choose the Islamic financial system for their operations. (quoted in Aidit Ghazali 1990: 141).

Such policy statements as above were clearly intended to allay the fears of non-Muslims, whom the regime fears would transfer their political allegiance to opposition parties which may exploit issues brought forth by Islamisation so as to inflame communal passions. More effectively, the government also used non-Muslim ministers to reassure their respective communities that Islamisation policies mean no harm to the politico-legal rights and socio-economic freedom of religious minorities. For instance, in April 1984, Rosemary Chong, the Chinese-Christian Deputy Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, issued the following statement during the closing session of a national seminar on 'The Role of Religion in Nation-Building':

..... the government of Malaysia has no wish to impose Islamic law on non-Muslims. Islamic values, however, are different from Islamic rules and laws. In actual fact, Islamic values are similar to the concept of universal values of good and evil. What are regarded as good values by other religions are considered desirable in Islam too. This means that absorption of Islamic values will not destroy other values in Malaysia. (quoted in G. Basri 1988: 111).

On the whole, the Malaysian government's reaction to Islamic movements from around 1974, when tangible response really began, until 1992, oscillated between coercion on the one hand and cooptation, with a view towards effecting a moderate pace of Islamisation, on the other. The dominance of one strategy over another depended on the extent of the danger that a targeted movement posed to the political influence of the country's ruling elite. Such a political threat was often masked by the government's misrepresentation of it, either deliberately or out of ignorance, as 'religious extremism'. When vociferous attacks by ABIM in student circles and by PAS in political rallies were feared as potentially erosive on its Islamic legitimacy, the

government's response to them was unequivocally coercive. Coercion had a moderating impact on Islamists, the more accommodative of whom chose to further their aims from within the established political structures. The government consequently relented in its coercive pressures, and reserved its occasional use in case hostile manoeuvres, perhaps from the more hardline Islamist elements, resurface. The appearance of erstwhile Islamist figures as voices of the establishment gave tangible effect to, or at least justified, its Islamisation policies designed to outflank Islamic rivals of all persuasions. The turning point in the government's response to ABIM was the cooptation of Anwar Ibrahim in 1982 and ABIM's evident support for subsequent Islamisation measures. Whether Anwar has succeeded in his Islamisation efforts is debatable (cf. chapter 8: 8.2.2). PAS' relenting its political approach came about in the wake of the necessity of cooperating with the federal government in its administration of the state of Kelantan since 1990 (cf. chapter 8: 8.2.1). The above pattern of relenting response was ultimately broken by the treatment meted out to Darul Arqam, which was largely ignored as a target of coercion and cooptation in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. chapter 5).

### **3.6 NON-MUSLIM RESPONSE TO *DAKWAH* AND ISLAMISATION**

It is highly improbable that any major social metamorphosis affecting Malay-Muslims in modern Malaysia will neither have any impact nor elicit any response from other ethno-religious groups. As the core ethno-religious group, Malay-Muslims wield tremendous political clout in their voting potential and economic significance in their consumer power. Presuming that social changes alter political and economic tendencies, non-Muslims may thus be affected by changes in Malay social behaviour as the party at the receiving end of decisions by a Muslim-dominated government, or as producers of goods and services for the Muslim public. We may expect, for instance, that non-Muslim youth be perturbed by rumours that Islamic morality laws might be extended to cover non-Muslims, that non-Muslim writers and film-makers be increasingly aware of Muslim religious sensitivities lest they be subjected to censorship regulations and criminal prosecution for distributing offensive materials, and that non-Muslim food manufacturers be more conscious of whether the ingredients they use are genuinely *halal* or not (cf. Means 1978: 390-392, Ahmad Ibrahim 1974: 14). As the *dakwah* phenomenon has risen simultaneously with the penetration of Malay-Muslim socio-economic activity into residential areas and occupational categories traditionally dominated by non-Muslims, we may also expect

that *dakwah* has some impact on the predictably greater social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Hardly any substantive research has been done on non-Muslim attitudes and perspectives about their Malay-Muslim neighbours' turn towards religion. The best source of non-Muslim views on the matter are statements from religious personalities and politicians representing their respective communities. The few scholars who have dwelled on the subject of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in the light of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia have tended to view the *dakwah* phenomenon as reflecting, above anything else, the Malay-Muslim desire to preserve their ethno-cultural identity in the midst of radical socio-economic transformations. For instance, in asserting that the contemporary Islamic resurgence does not reflect "*the emergence of a genuine Islamic consciousness*" but instead is "*clothed in communal garb*," Chandra Muzaffar (1985: 357-358) has criticised young Islamists for deliberately choosing to emphasise aspects of Islam which help maintain their distinctiveness and separateness. Hence the proliferation of Islamic symbols and characters in the non-Muslim dominated environment. He has suggested that the incessant demands for an Islamic socio-political order stem from the stronger Malay political position; this fact, and the Islamists' "*lack of interest in the position and status of non-Muslims*," together expose their allegedly real political aim of "*preserving Malayism*" (ibid.: 359). Extremely sceptical of the possibility of non-Muslims evaluating Islamist demands outside the scope of communal politics, Chandra Muzaffar has further claimed that as a Malay religion, Islam "*tends to evoke negative, even hostile, reactions from a lot of Chinese and non-Muslims*" (1987: 94). In the same mould, Judith Nagata, who arguably pioneered Western-based comparative research on Malaysian Islamic movements, has argued:

In its new, revitalistic role under *dakwah*, Islam is seen as the last bastion of ethnic exclusiveness and political mobilisation..... In its first incarnation, as an identity resource, the *dakwah* revitalisation was, and continues to be in large measure, a closing of the ranks against the non-Malay. Aside from its internal political implications, *dakwah* participation for the average follower (always allowing for different levels of sophistication of interpretation between grassroots and leaders) is a nativistic reaffirmation of Malayness in a new form. It has provided a rich new repertoire of rituals, such as style of dress, certain Arab customs, conspicuous withdrawal from inter-ethnic dining and other activities, so that non-Malays are intimidated and fear to approach. (Nagata 1984: 233-234).

Both Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 98-99) and Nagata (1984: 205) have extrapolated that the *dakwah* phenomenon would necessarily antagonise non-Muslims and aggravate ethnic relations by sparking off an ethnic-based religious polarisation.

But the validity of such pessimistic conclusions depends on the sources and assumptions used. Neither of the authors' case for a hostile non-Muslim reaction against *dakwah* has resulted from empirical research done within non-Muslim communities.<sup>50</sup> From a set of beliefs which they hold about the *dakwah* phenomenon after an examination of *dakwah* movements, they have rather presumed that parallel non-Muslim reaction in the form of religious revivals of their own, of which evidence certainly exists (Nagata 1984: 205-212), would assume the same pattern of thought and action as in the Malay-Muslim society, thus reinforcing ethnic cleavages. The crux of their argument is that in the Malaysian context, religious resurgence reflects, more than anything else, the endeavour by separate ethnic groups to preserve their narrow communal interests. Yet, this value-laden characterisation of religious resurgence has been fervently disputed by others. One scholar has specifically rebutted Nagata's contention that the *dakwah* phenomenon is merely "*a reaction to the supposed Malay 'crisis of ethnic identity'*" through a correspondence article, in which Nagata is reprimanded for failing to refer to previous relevant works by Malaysian scholars and resorting instead to "*simplistic argument*" and "*inaccurate data*" (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin 1983: 399-400).<sup>51</sup> Another has admitted the difficulty of agreeing fully with "*Nagata's generalised statement that dakwah itself is a manifestation of 'a closing of ranks against non-Malays'*" (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 160). Relying on the experience of ABIM and citing well-known Malaysian scholars, Mohammad Nor Monutty (1989) has questioned the veracity of Chandra Muzaffar's sociological analysis of Islamic resurgence as driven by the overriding concern to preserve Malay ethnic identity. In fact, one entire chapter of his doctoral dissertation was devoted to refuting Chandra Muzaffar's arguments in **Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia** (1987), which he concludes had offered "*a narrow description rather than a broadly-gauged understanding of Islam and the dialectic of Islamic movements in contemporary Malaysia*" (M.N. Monutty 1989: 197).<sup>52</sup> Even Zainah Anwar, a sceptical observer of *dakwah*, while apparently endorsing many of Chandra Muzaffar's and Nagata's suggestions, has cautioned against overstating the significance of identity in an ethnically divided society:

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<sup>50</sup>Although Chandra Muzaffar (1987) does use communication with non-Muslim figures as sources, his sample is heavily biased towards opposition political leaders, who, in a political culture in which ethnic cleavages tower in importance over others, are likely to have vested interests in boosting political support by exploiting religious issues and inflaming communal passions.

<sup>51</sup>Nagata has answered Shamsul Amri Baharuddin's comments on her through a short article (1984a), in which she stoutly defends the dominance of ethnic cleavages in determining the character of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. Note that the works attacked by Shamsul Amri Baharuddin was not Nagata's major study entitled **The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam** (1984), but smaller articles (Nagata 1980, 1980a, 1982) which were precursors of **The Reflowering**.

<sup>52</sup>For a non-Muslim response to Chandra Muzaffar's **Islamic Resurgence**, see Batumalai (1989).

But the importance of Islam for the Malays should not be underestimated to the point where it is reduced to merely an ideology in the service of ethnicity..... Scholars and writers on Islamic revivalism often tend to look at only external factors, denying, or shying from admitting the transcendental appeal of religion, the primacy of the spiritual over the material in this modern, secular, and materialistic society. Islam's holistic vision of life which sees a relationship between the eternal and temporal, the moral truth and the contemporary socio-political reality, makes faith a central point of Islamic revivalism. (Zainah Anwar 1987: 82-83).

Non-Muslim religions have undeniably undergone their own resurgence in the past two decades. Christians have had their Charismatic Renewal which emphasises ecumenical beliefs and personal spiritual experiences, Buddhists have had their religious reawakening through the missionary efforts of modern-oriented *Theravada* organisations, Hindus have enjoyed their own *bhakti* movements which stress innovative worship, spiritual healing and total devotion to a guru; and Sikhs have experienced a revitalisation of *gurudwaras* (temples) and associations since the rise of the Sikh separatist movement in India (Lee 1986: 74-75, 1988: 406-410). However, as Lee has testified, "*none of the non-Muslim revivalist movements described above is explicitly motivated by political interests*" (ibid.: 410). Many of these movements had been initiated as part of the various faiths' global effort to inject religious values into the lives of the spiritually empty urban youth (ibid.: 406). Therefore, Islamic resurgence has indirectly accelerated rather than directly given rise to non-Muslim participation in revivalist movements (cf. Lee 1986: 74). The case against religious polarisation along ethnic lines is buttressed by Lee's observation that "*the non-Islamic [religious] field is structurally less cohesive and lacks an integrated network that strengthens non-Malay ethnic bonds*" (ibid.: 75-76). With evidence of increasing patronage offered by non-Muslim politicians to the new movements (Lee 1988: 408), the apolitical situation might admittedly change. The danger henceforth lies in the possibility of the movements being exploited as vehicles of political mobilisation to further the communal ends of politicians. In twisting religious issues to magnify ethno-cultural dimensions, political leaders realise that "*because non-Muslim religious groups lack political clout, they will necessarily seek assistance from established non-Malay political parties*" (ibid.: 418), once they accept the extraneously imposed political ends.

It is not the *dakwah* phenomenon per se that raises non-Muslims' anxiety of Islam, but rather fears that the government's Islamisation policies may lead to an erosion of their rights. In its effort to pacify demands from the Islamic camp, the government has overdone itself to the extent of igniting the fears it seeks to extinguish. On the urgency among non-Muslims to face the challenge of rising

Islamic demands through a countervailing mechanism, Raymond Lee, a Chinese-Malaysian academic, has remarked:

Fear of being overwhelmed by increased Muslim activities has alerted many non-Muslims to reviewing their religious defences. In other words, the spiralling effects of religious conflict within the Muslim community have indirectly contributed to the non-Muslims' heightened awareness of their rights..... **They do not consider *dakwah* groups to be an immediate threat** since many of them lack government patronage or legal recognition. Their concern with the encroachment of government religious policies on non-Muslim freedom has resulted in the establishment of a non-Muslim religious pressure group, an event that is unprecedented in modern Malaysian history. (Lee 1986: 81-82, emphasis mine).

Non-Muslim apprehension of *dakwah* has largely resulted from government propaganda against the cause of Islamists. For instance, in 1984, UMNO Secretary-General Sanusi Junid reassured non-Muslims that "*Islamic laws and Islamic institutions are for the Muslim community only*," duly reminding them to "*fear PAS, not UMNO*" (*Asiaweek* 14.9.84). PAS' attempts to woo non-Muslims via the formation of its Chinese Consultative Committee (CCC) and constant appeals to Islam's universal nature, despite an initially encouraging response, failed to match the government's propaganda depicting it as a Malay chauvinist party which would usurp non-Muslim rights upon assuming power (cf. *FEER* 29.5.86). This was amply demonstrated by PAS' dismal showing in the 1986 general elections, in which it won only one parliamentary seat, and the consequent dissolution of the CCC.

Religious mobilisation among Malaysian non-Muslims has been spearheaded by the Christians. Despite comprising only 6.5 percent of the total population (G. Basri 1988: 46, Schumann 1991: 253), the Christians possess symbolic importance to Muslim-non-Muslim relations by virtue of their multi-racial composition and firm socio-economic position. Even before emerging as the *de facto* spokesman for all minority religions, Malaysian Christians have made considerable progress in the fields of education, media publications, health, social services and ecumenical cooperation (G. Basri 1988: 92-95). But Christians have been pressured by several restrictive measures, including restrictions on land allocation for non-Muslim places of worship, reservation of Arabic religious terminology for exclusive Muslim use such that the circulation of *Al-Kitab*: the Indonesian-language version of the Bible, had to be stopped; and hostile press reports implicating Malaysian Christianity with a Zionist plot to undermine Islam and alleging widespread conversion to Christianity among the Malay-Muslim youth (Lee 1988: 410-413, Schumann 1991: 254-255, Northcott 1991: 62-63). In periods of social tension, Christians have not been spared from a security crackdown on their activities. Fourteen Christian evangelists were among victims of

the mass ISA arrests in October 1987 (ibid.: 62), and *Al-Kitab* has been pronounced as prejudicial to national security (G. Basri 1988: 96). Two important landmarks in Christian leadership of non-Muslim agitation against Islamisation have been the founding of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) in August 1983 and the coming together of all Christian denominations under the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), which was formally registered in 1986 after years of informal operation which paved the way for inter-religious dialogue (ibid.: 89, Schumann 1991: 256-258, Northcott 1991: 58-59). The MCCBCHS, whose leadership has been dominated by the Catholic clergy (Lee 1986: 82, G. Basri 1988: 90), has been described as a non-Muslim inter-religious body which "*projects an image of a united non-Muslim front against Islamic domination*" (Lee 1988: 414). Its first public event, a well-attended national seminar on 'Common Religious Values for Nation-Building', successfully aired non-Muslims' demands and "*deep-seated grievances*" (G. Basri 1988: 91), and practically marked "*the beginning of a national effort by non-Muslims to monitor and meet the challenge of increased Islamisation in the country*" (Lee 1986: 83).

Since then, Christian leaders have been at the forefront of non-Muslim voices of concern at the rapid pace of Islamisation. The Reverend Dr. Paul Tan, Director of the Catholic Research Centre, has publicly lamented the alleged "*spread of racial and religious polarisation among our [Malaysian] young people as a result of Islamisation*" (quoted in G. Basri 1988: 115). In questioning the government's manipulation of religious terminology to promote Islamisation among non-Muslims, he has asked:

If the government really means that Islamic values are universal values also found in other religions, why cannot it use the term 'universal values' since the government is the government for everyone and not just for Muslims who make up half of the population? Why is the opinion of half of the population being ignored? (ibid.: 112).

In a keynote nationwide address, Bishop A. Selvanayagam, Catholic Bishop of Penang, has warned Malaysian Christians against the adverse effects of "*rampant government-sponsored Islamisation*" (ibid.: 115). In 1985, another clergyman, Francis Xavier, wrote an open letter challenging Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to hold a plebiscite to determine if there really had been little non-Muslim objection to "*the profession of the government that it will implement Islamic values in the country,*" as claimed by the latter over a BBC World Service Programme (ibid.: 114, 130: fn. 48). In September 1986, the MCCBCHS issued a press statement expressing deep concern over ABIM President Siddiq Fadiq's uncompromising support for a comprehensive Islamisation of the legal system, the demand for which was neither

'extreme' nor 'fanatical' in his eyes (ibid.: 404). According to official research conducted in 1985, the rate of non-Muslim acceptance of the government's policy of instilling Islamic values into the national administration system has been low, standing at 48.5 percent for Christians, 49.4 percent for Hindus, and 41.1 percent for both Buddhists and other religious groups (Mohd. Idris Jauzi 1993: 74). This has been despite most non-Muslim administrative officers understanding the universal nature of the policy (Mohd. Rais Abdul Karim 1993: 81).

Muslim-non-Muslim dialogue at the institutional or organisational level has been admittedly rare (Northcott 1991: 64). According to Schumann, the primary obstacle towards a more amicable Muslim-non-Muslim relationship has been "*the lack of openness in mind and attitude towards others*" (1991: 263). Both Schumann (1991: 263-264) and Northcott (1991: 66) have suggested the brand of 'progressive Islam' advocated by Chandra Muzaffar and ALIRAN as able to pave the way towards more meaningful inter-faith dialogue and mutual understanding between different religious groups. The problem which arises is that such 'progressive Islam' has been rejected by Islamists as too modernistic and apologetic, and suppressed by a government which is perennially jealous of any attempt at bridging the communal gap on which its politics thrives.

Amidst the general picture of gloom and despair for the future of Muslim-non-Muslim relations in Malaysia, assuming a persistence of government-initiated Islamisation and Islamists' support for it, there are solitary voices of optimism which refuse to yield to the seemingly inevitable communal political trends.<sup>53</sup> Despite her overall pessimism, Nagata (1984: 210) has been honest enough to admit there being Chinese and Malay politicians who exhort their respective communities to cling steadfastly to their own religions in the belief that parallel experience of religious resurgence would be conducive to harmonious inter-communal adjustment. Realising that their cause would be endlessly discredited by the government for political ends, Islamists would better place hopes for a better non-Muslim understanding of their quest for Islamisation on the effort of intellectuals like Aidit Ghazali, who not only embraces an unapologetic stance on Islamisation, but also urges Muslims to end the exclusive identification of Islam with the Malay race and to resolve non-Muslim misconceptions about Islamic resurgence and Islamisation by means of consultation in the form of regular and useful dialogue (Aidit Ghazali 1990: 142-144). On the non-Muslim side, an objective effort, free from government influence, at understanding Islamic resurgence and its participants' espousal of Islamisation has already been

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<sup>53</sup>On this point of an inevitable overlapping between religious and racial issues in Malaysia, Breiner has perceptively noted: "*Given the tendency for religion and race to be coterminous in Malaysia and given the close relationship between Islam and Malay identity, it was perhaps inevitable that the communal frictions in Malaysia should come to have a religious dimension as well*" (1991: 272).

shown by a handful of religious and political leaders. Consider for example the following statements by the Reverend Dr. Batumalai Sadayandy, Dean of the Malaysian Theological Seminary in Kuala Lumpur, and Tan Chee Khoo, former opposition leader in parliament:

..... we need to understand our Malay neighbours primarily as religious neighbours..... His way of life may be perceived as Islamisation, and his goal is towards an Islamic state..... Non-Muslims would like to encourage Islamisation if it could bring about justice and ensure the abolition of corruption and other evils, as claimed by the Muslims..... Our aim is to develop a good relationship with Muslims. We are aware of various divisions in the country between various communities, various forms of injustice and other problems. We need to understand the government's aspirations and the government must know about our concern for a joint programme..... The challenge is how we may express our political role. At present we have communal politics. We need to transcend the existing communal parties (e.g. MIC, MCA) in order to bring about a multi-racial party. (Batumalai 1988: 217, 226, 234)

Islam is not a big problem in this country. The Chinese for instance, do not care so much about what is happening as long as they can continue to do business and are not deprived of the kinds of things they have been doing all this while in this country. Of course, in recent years, with government support for Islam, racial polarisation of our people has led to religious polarisation too. But with a careful approach to the whole matter, Islamisation in Malaysia does not necessarily mean worse things to come..... to non-Malays generally, Islam is the same as Malay..... their fear has to do with a combination of lack of knowledge and lack of reassurance..... What the Islamic tide in Malaysia means to them has not yet been well explained..... If people want to have an Islamic State, let them talk about it - but I would say, please don't upset non-Malays and don't deprive them of their livelihood and their business. The incidents in Batu Pahat and Memali are still fresh in the minds of many people. The problem is that these incidents were conveniently exploited by many non-Muslims to criticise the Islamisation trends in this country. [Tan Chee Khoo, from excerpts of interview reproduced in Hussin Mutalib (1993: 101-102)].

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

Upon independence in 1957, the Federation of Malaya retained the colonial framework of political, economic and social institutions manned by the secular-nationalist elites of the three major communal groups. The Federal Constitution effectively reduced the role of religion in nation-building to the private sphere. Despite intermittent calls for Islam to be accorded a more than peripheral role in

administering the new nation-state, such solitary voices were overshadowed by the prevailing need to maintain political stability under threats of internal communist subversion and external invasion following the birth of Malaysia in 1963. Increasing communalist tendencies of politicians from all sides failed to convince leading government figures that the political status quo needed an urgent revamp to prevent serious conflicts. It was not until the May 1969 riots that the fragility of a political system highly dependent upon maintaining an unwritten pact of understanding between the ethnic groups was exposed. All parties were consequently overwhelmed by the imperative to reinterpret the inter-communal political and economic boundaries in concrete terms. This was realised in the *Rukunegara* and the NEP. At the highest level, the downfall of Tunku Abdul Rahman after thirteen years as Prime Minister was symbolic of the abandonment of the old order. With the reinstatement of ultra-Malay leaders such as Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam into positions of influence in UMNO and the government, and the unity of major communal parties in the National Front, a new era of Malaysian politics was inaugurated. The Malays' clamour for change was finally answered. But it was not to be enough as a new dimension, represented by Islam, was to be added to their worldview at grassroots level.

For the Malay-Muslims, the 1969 riots essentially embodied a protest against the political and economic status quo from which they had derived minimum benefit. The community's self-appraisal of the early 1970s externalised itself in two different efforts at self-improvement. First, through the state-imposed NEP, representing a 'top-down' approach to improve the lot of the Malays and strongly based on a secular conception of acquisition of material wealth. Notwithstanding the questionable motives and credentials of its framers from an Islamist's point of view, the NEP proved in time to be the pivotal cause of Islamic resurgence in contemporary Malaysia. In policy-making terms, NEP's practical role lay in its crystallising the position of Islam as a defining characteristic of indigenous and Malay identity. At grassroots level, the NEP broadened the Islamic horizons of the Malay-Muslim youth through lengthy stints of overseas education, enabling the students to identify themselves with the wider *ummah*, which was also undergoing a similar Islamic reawakening. Without downgrading the role of contacts with foreign Islamists and ummatic causes in revitalising Malaysian Islam, however, it is believed that such external linkages could not have been effective without the causal precedence of domestic political and socio-economic changes. Such drastic changes affecting Malay-Muslims have to be situated within the context of rapid economic development which uprooted traditional communities and socially alienated individuals. In their search for solutions to contemporary problems, they eventually perceived Islam as an

attractive choice for reconciling the demands of modernisation, community life and eternal salvation.

Second, the popular reawakening was represented by the emergence of independent *dakwah* organisations. They provided the fledgling Islamists with channels to articulate their newly discovered ideals. Operating a 'bottom-up' approach to development and emphasising spiritual as well as material aspects of progress, these *dakwah* groups not only reacted against the failure of *laissez faire* development strategies of the 1960s, but would also react critically against any future development policy based on a purely materialistic conception of life (cf. Lee 1986: 81). In their perspective, substituting the interventionist NEP for the pre-1970 *laissez faire* approach to development was futile, for the crux of the dilemma of the Malay-Muslims lies in their emptiness of faith, not only in terms of laxity in the ritual observance of religion, but also in their failure to comprehend and implement Islam as a comprehensive way of life covering social, economic and political aspects. Insofar as this all-encompassing worldview was antithetical to the secular authorities' fragmented view of religion, the *dakwah* organisations would stand critical of the NEP. As such, the government would regard them as a threat and suppress them accordingly. This was particularly if the *dakwah* groups exhibited political inclinations, either overtly through participation in the electoral system or covertly as pressure groups. Movements which apparently disavowed political tendencies were invariably spared from coercion.

As a special case of a country affected by the global Islamic resurgence, Malaysia's uniqueness lies in two features. First, the government's response to *dakwah* best described as 'ambivalent'. Whereas Muslim governments in the Middle East have unequivocally resorted to overtly repressive policies to outflank religious opposition, for instance by banning Islamic parties and launching 'police and security' measures with complicated surveillance techniques,<sup>54</sup> the Malaysian government's response to Islamic resurgence has typically been a mixture of cautious encouragement of *dakwah*, albeit in an officially recognised and regulated version, and of checking activities of independent *dakwah* groups such that vaguely-defined 'fanaticism' is kept to a minimum. Although coercion was employed c. 1974-92, it was used sparingly, often as a temporary measure until such a time when the Islamists, or at least the most influential among them, relent in their approach and seek accommodation with the

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<sup>54</sup>On Middle Eastern Islamic movements and the harsh governmental response to them, see Munson (1988: 41-94), Ayubi (1991: chapters 4-5) and Owen (1992: 178-188). The only parallel case to Malaysia in the Middle East is probably Jordan, where the "*controlled incorporation of some Islamic elements within the Hashemite Establishment*" and "*relative prosperity and dynamism of the Jordanian economy*" have been responsible for the Islamic movement's "*restrained militancy against the State*" (Ayubi 1991: 98). For a comparative study of Islamic movements in Malaysia and Jordan, see Roald (1994).

government. This pragmatic government response may itself have been applied in response to the *modus operandi* of Malaysian *dakwah* movements, which in their mission have by and far adopted peaceful methods (cf. chapter 4). Profiting from a buoyant economy, the government has not had to grapple with problems of mass demonstrations, riots, 'terror' campaigns and assassination attempts which have engulfed Middle Eastern governments for decades. The government has, to its credit, responded heedfully and leniently, though not always cooperatively, to Islamists' pressures. Such accommodative response has, in turn, obviated the need for Islamic movements to change tactics and go 'underground', hence bolstering further the non-violent character of Malaysian-style Islamic resurgence.

The government's twin strategy of coopting major Islamists and committing itself to an Islamisation programme has presumably, in an increasingly Islamic social environment, added to the regime's legitimacy. Islamists, having been outwitted by the shrewd government response in the competition to secure the loyalties of the Islamically inclined masses, has consequently been left in a quandary. They realise that the government would not go so far enough as to implement an Islamic state in the juridical sense of the term, such that under current conditions, the possibility of Malaysia becoming an Islamic state in the near future remains remote despite the various scenarios suggested, for example, by Hussin Mutalib (1993: 81-91). Yet, they are left optionless as to whether to support or oppose the Islamisation initiatives. Opposition may only invite a higher degree of coercion which they may not be prepared to weather, having observed with trepidation the use of enormous security resources during crackdown operations against the government's political opponents. Furthermore, *dakwah* activists have to admit that the Islamisation measures concur significantly with their erstwhile demands, and they themselves are not able to translate such demands into reality in their capacity as pressure groups or opposition movements. In any case, *dakwah* movements' verbal and tacit espousal of Islamisation signal the fruition of the government's accommodationist strategy. Some *dakwah* activists have even decided to discard altogether their anti-establishment image and pursue their Islamic struggle through channels acceptable to the dominant political elite. Those left in the *dakwah* movements have continued to harbour hopes that an Islamic state may somehow materialise in the future, but as far as practical realisation of such hopes is concerned, formal government channels still provide the primary avenue for change. As for the government, the mellowing of mainstream *dakwah* trends have convinced it that the continuance of piecemeal Islamisation features, coupled with ambiguous assurances as to its long-term intentions of guiding the nation towards some kind of a modern-oriented Islamic polity, are sufficient to contain the socio-political influence of *dakwah* movements and retain their electoral backing.

Secondly, the uniqueness of the Malaysian case is found in the extent to which the complexities of a multi-ethnic polity has conditioned the Islamic resurgence. Different from the Middle Eastern situation, where Muslims account for an overwhelming majority of the population and Islam has been pitted head-on with secularism, Malay-Muslims command only a slight majority over non-Muslims, such that Islamic consciousness inevitably coincides with Malay ethnic consciousness whenever the question of the political destiny of the Muslim population is discussed. The 'Islamist versus secular-nationalist dichotomy' is characterised by the ordering of priorities rather than exclusive separation: it has been impossible for the UMNO nationalists to ignore Islam, as it has been for the *dakwah* groups to ignore entirely Malay ethnic consciousness (cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990: 158-161). Malaysia's unique racial composition has meant that it is impossible to govern with stability by exclusively relying on the support of one ethnic group. Malay nationalists, who have ruled Malaysia since independence, have incorporated non-Malays into the Malaysian polity by accepting them as mutual partners in the governing coalition. Being comprised of ethnic-based component parties, the government has a vested interest in preserving the nation's communal political trends and will persistently thwart independent attempts at bringing the communities together in a political framework free from National Front hegemony. But as aspirants to political power, *dakwah* groups must convince the non-Malays that their position will not suffer in an Islamic state. Amidst consistent government propaganda against the Islamists, *dakwah* movements have yet to successfully portray themselves in a benevolent light to non-Muslims. Despite encouraging signs that certain non-Muslim quarters have gradually begun to understand the nature of Islamic resurgence outside the scope of the 'Malay versus non-Malay' ethnic dichotomy, the *dakwah* movements' endeavour to reach out to non-Muslims will be practically ineffectual so long as the government-imposed view of Islamists as religious bigots persists among non-Muslims.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA: DARUL ARQAM 1968-94 AND THE OTHER MOVEMENTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION TO DARUL ARQAM

Historians would testify that a *dakwah* organisation by the name of Darul Arqam existed in Malaysia from 1968 until 1994, when it became the victim of a wholesale proscription by the Malaysian government. Paradoxically, despite impacting significantly upon the cultural and socio-political milieus of the Malay-Muslims, Darul Arqam was legally non-existent. Having been founded as a religious study group, Darul Arqam was not legally required to register with the Registrar of Societies. It remained unregistered throughout its operational years, although its projects were legally registered under the names of individual members (Darul Arqam 1993: 151). This fact underlay Darul Arqam's separateness from the Malaysian state; indeed, Darul Arqam's policies and practices *vis-à-vis* those of other state-supported and non-governmental voluntary organisations may be depicted as expressing 'distinctiveness' and 'disassociation'. As will be seen later, this description displays truth even when Darul Arqam is compared with the other *dakwah* movements. Exempted from legal registration and experiencing minimum surveillance from the authorities, Darul Arqam was allowed to evolve independently through informal channels, moulding itself with its own worldview in an almost uncontrolled manner during its formative years.

#### 4.2 BACKGROUND AND INCEPTION

Darul Arqam was established in Kuala Lumpur in 1968 by an Islamic religious teacher (*ustaz*), Ashaari Muhammad, who led the movement until its demise in 1994. Son of a pious customs officer, Ashaari Muhammad was born in 1937 in the rustic village of Pilin in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan. His childhood combined a strict religious upbringing within traditional family values, with formal education in local Malay and regional Islamic schools. While still furthering his studies in standard seven at Maahad Hishamuddin in Kelang, Selangor, Ashaari Muhammad was appointed as a government *ustaz*. To have been offered, at the very young age of eighteen, what was then a prestigious post in Malay society, was a testament to

Ashaari's educational ability. But circumstances did not permit Ashaari to fulfil his educational ambitions; having abided by his father's insistence that he got married at twenty-one, he settled down with a teaching career which he was to pursue until 1976.<sup>1</sup>

Darul Arqam was very much Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's own invention; a reflection of his Islamic hopes and inclinations. Darul Arqam sources trace the birth of the movement to Ustaz Ashaari's burning desire to combat the moral, political, economic and cultural degradation befalling the Malay-Muslims of the 1960s, and the apparent unwillingness of political and religious leaders to redress the deteriorating situation (Darul Arqam 1992a, 1993: 17). Before pioneering Darul Arqam, Ustaz Ashaari was actively involved in PAS (1958-68), among whose leaders he admired were the President, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, and the Vice-President, Zulkiflee Muhammad (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 86, Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1993: 7). Despite enjoying various leadership responsibilities, including membership of the Selangor PAS Executive Committee, Ustaz Ashaari grew disillusioned with the party and its methods. Pahrol Mohamad Juoi (1993: 161) has related how Ustaz Ashaari left PAS after being disgruntled at the leadership's emphasis on political considerations over Islamic regulations in deciding upon the fate of a party member found to have been involved in corruption. Ustaz Ashaari himself explained his decision in terms of methodological differences in pursuing the Islamic struggle:

I am convinced by the end, but I do not deny the importance of the means, which are techniques to achieve the sole objective of glorifying the words of Allah. In analogy, if we were to cross a river, we could row a boat, swim or construct a bridge. The techniques vary, but the objective remains one, namely to get across the river. Similarly, in the Islamic struggle, one may have one's own techniques or means. As the techniques or means of the organisations I participated in differed from mine, I left and pioneered my own struggle. (*Al-Munir*, June 1983).

Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's irregular opinions on the means of striving for Islam had manifested themselves even during his PAS days. The PAS branch he led in Sungai Leman, Selangor, for example, reportedly exhibited distinct traits from the other branches still obsessed with electoral politics. Its community had begun enacting an exemplary Islamic way of life in miniature, with its own shops, agricultural farms and social services run on Islamic principles (Pahrol Mohamad Juoi 1993: 162). Although he also joined other Islamic organisations, such as the *Jamiah al-Dakwah Islamiah*, in which he served for five years on the Information

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<sup>1</sup>A reliable biography of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad has yet to be written. For accounts of his early life, see Darul Arqam (1992, 1992a), Mohd. Sayuti Omar (1993: chapter 1) and his poem 'Biografiku' (My Biography) in Ashaari Muhammad (1985: 1-2).

Committee, and ABIM, in which he held the post of the *Dakwah* Chief of the Federal Territory branch, similar dissatisfaction drove him to concentrate his energy fully on Darul Arqam (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 100). In short, Darul Arqam was the practical realisation of one man's Islamic ambitions, conceived independently not only from the secular-humanist orientation of the political establishment but also from prevalent currents of thought among Islamic movements and organisations. As a Darul Arqam source proclaims:

He [Ustaz Ashaari] infuses his visions into Darul Arqam's movement in stages, since its beginning until now. His mind being also the mind of the *jamaah* [organisation] is central, whether Darul Arqam survives or expands. (Darul Arqam 1992).

Amidst deep-seated secular beliefs among the Malay-Muslims, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's call was not greeted with enthusiasm. A Darul Arqam publication recalled that the public initially guffawed at Ustaz Ashaari's ideas on improving the plight of his co-religionists (Darul Arqam 1992a). A group of ten young disciples taught and guided directly by Ustaz Ashaari in the essentials of the faith, formed the first Darul Arqam community based in a rented house, affectionately known to them as the 'White House', in the Kuala Lumpur suburb of Dato' Keramat. These early adherents were mostly rural migrants engaged in lower middle-class occupations (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 101). Organised at this stage as a study group, members' activities consisted of lectures, religious chantings (*tahlil*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), melodic readings of episodes from Prophet Muhammad's life (*maulid*), night vigil (*qiyam al-lail*) and informal visitations (*ziarah*) (Darul Arqam 1992a, Mohd. Rom Al Hodri 1992: 190). Members were also taught to adhere steadfastly to the Prophet's lifestyle, even to the extent of imitating his clothes and eating practices. After two years of a low-profile existence, Ustaz Ashaari sought to widen the audience of his message by organising public lectures in venues such as mosques, schools, offices and institutes of higher learning, as well as fulfilling personal invitations (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 101-102).

It was only in 1971 that the name 'Darul Arqam' was adopted as a formal name for the 'White House Group', on the suggestion of an early member, Zakaria Ansari (Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah 1992: 71). This name was chosen in memory of the Prophet's companion, Al-Arqam ibn Al-Arqam, who made his house a meeting place and an Islamic propagation centre for early Muslims in Makkah.<sup>2</sup> This reorganisation of activities under a formal banner enabled the movement to spread its wings beyond

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<sup>2</sup>Consistent transliteration requires 'Darul Arqam' to be spelt as 'Dar al-Arqam'; *dar* being the Arabic term for 'house', 'abode', 'country' or 'land', depending on context. However, it has been decided to retain the spelling commonly used in Malaysia to avoid confusion should the reader decide to refer to the primary sources. In Malaysia, Darul Arqam was also known as 'Al Arqam' or only 'Arqam'.

the restricted circle of Ustaz Ashaari's personal friends and neighbours. The name 'Darul Arqam' thus signifies a change towards a more outward-oriented policy, rather than being indicative of a 'symbol of secrecy', as suggested by Hussin Mutalib (1990: 85). After a few years of shifting bases and participating in programmes of other Islamic groups, including Jamaat Tabligh and ABIM, in 1973, Ustaz Ashaari and his disciples pioneered Darul Arqam's first model Islamic village on a five-acre land in Sungai Penchala, a remote area twenty kilometres from Kuala Lumpur (Mohd. Rom Al Hodri 1992: 192-196). The purchase of the settlement was made possible by members' personal savings and donations; an indication of the intense sense of solidarity, commitment and sacrifice ingrained during the first few years of self-purification through other-worldly activities (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 102).

### 4.3 EXPANSION AND MATURATION<sup>3</sup>

As an Islamic movement, Darul Arqam saw itself evolving through four distinct stages. The preliminary stage, during which efforts at self-correction were made through an intense programme of spiritual training and material sacrifice, conducted in congregation to nurture brotherly love, was called the era of self-development (1968-72). Darul Arqam's early image as an isolationist group that rejected life in this world seemed to have been confirmed by the pioneering of its first village in Sungai Penchala, a rustic area apparently suitable as a religious retreat.

On the contrary, with the strength offered by this new base, as manifested by the increasing acceptance of Darul Arqam's message among students and the upcoming new middle class of professionals and technocrats, the era of social services (1973-79) was heralded. This era was characterised by an expansion of activities into the public sphere, with heavy priority being given to socio-welfare services. *Dakwah* activities were intensified at all levels of society through talks, visits and various forms of social interaction programmes. Darul Arqam's village in Sungai Penchala assumed the role of a centre of public interaction as local and foreign visitors came in huge numbers; their interest having been no less ignited by the mostly adverse publicity beginning to be received by Darul Arqam in the media (cf. Ali Haji Ahmad 1985: 1-44). Those attracted by Darul Arqam's message would enrol in the movement's Islamic Understanding Courses, the second occasion of which, in 1977, witnessed over two thousand participants gathering in Sungai Penchala. The Al Arqam Foundation was set up in 1975 to cater for the education of members' children by organising schools which offered an integrated curriculum

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<sup>3</sup>Except where specifically indicated, information in this section is drawn from Darul Arqam (1993a).

different from that in government-sponsored secular and religious schools. In 1977, economic projects, mainly food industries, were initiated under the *Ummah* Services in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. The publication of the first *Al Arqam* newspaper shortly inaugurated *dakwah* via the mass media. Successful recruitment of highly-qualified graduates enabled Darul Arqam to open its first Medical Centre in Gombak in 1978. By the end of the 1970s, the whole country would have heard of Darul Arqam, and Darul Arqam's branches and villages were subsequently founded outside its birthplace of Kuala Lumpur (Mohd. Rom Al Hodri 1992: 198-203).

The third stage: the international era and the era of the 'New World of Islam' (1980-90), was characterised by massive expansion abroad, while at home, strong grassroots support was evident by the ever-increasing demand for Darul Arqam products, services and publications. Despite the highly competitive market in Islamic literature, Ustaz Ashaari's recorded public lectures and books, which by 1990 had reached over forty in number, attracted enormous popularity (cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990: 86). International branches mushroomed as Darul Arqam started gaining adherents worldwide, pioneered by Malaysian students abroad, particularly in Britain, the USA, New Zealand, France and Australia. Darul Arqam itself began sending its students overseas i.e. to Pakistan, Jordan and Egypt, while making its mark in newspapers of neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Australia, Indonesia and Thailand (cf. Darul Arqam 1989). The international drive took on a new turn in 1988 when Ustaz Ashaari travelled abroad on a more or less permanent basis.<sup>4</sup> Rationalising his decision, Ustaz Ashaari appealed to the role of Islam as a "*global religion*" and an "*international religion..... not only for the Malays but also for the whole mankind*" (quoted in Yusof Harun 1990: 349). In an interview with an Indonesian magazine, he explained:

I went [overseas] for the purpose of *dakwah*, not meaning that Arqam in Malaysia is already strong. It was the similar case during Prophet Muhammad's time. He did not wait for Islam to be strong in Makkah, but he went to Madinah. This is called strategy. (Editor, June 1990)

In 1991, Darul Arqam struck a bold and confident note by declaring it had entered the era of perfecting the *thoifah* (*jamaah* / organisation) into an *ummah*, the state being prepared as the foundation. Ustaz Ashaari's books of the 1990s had a more distinctly political flavour to them, and were unashamedly critical of Western civilisation, of the Malaysian political and religious establishment and of fellow

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<sup>4</sup>From 1988 to 1994, Ustaz Ashaari spent most of his time in virtual exile in Thailand, although from time to time he conducted *dakwah* expeditions with his followers to Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, China, Jordan and Egypt. He came to Britain in 1990, during which the author, then an undergraduate at Oxford University, took the opportunity to meet and discuss with him.

Muslim states who bowed to Western patrons.<sup>5</sup> By 1992, the struggle of Darul Arqam had been interpreted by Ustaz Ashaari as fulfilling promises in the 'Schedule of Allah': an agenda for Muslims of the fifteenth century of the Islamic *Hijrah* (H.) calendar to reclaim its past glory. By a careful interpretation of a number of *hadiths*, Ustaz Ashaari expounded his theory of Islam's accomplishing its Second Glory (Second *Ummah*) in the reverse order to which it had begun (Ashaari Muhammad 1993). He specifically predicted a great Islamic revival starting from 'the East', by which he meant no other than Malaysia. Khurasan, an ancient region in the old map of Islam,<sup>6</sup> was to be the backbone of this revival, which was to end in Makkah, where a messiah, the Imam Mahdi, would be proclaimed (Darul Arqam 1993: chapter 12). With the alarming political implications of such an agenda, small wonder that as the decade progressed, the Malaysian secular authorities would intensify their campaign of heavy-handedness against Darul Arqam.

#### 4.4 AIMS AND METHODS

From its nascent phase as a pure religious group, seemingly nonchalant about worldly pursuits, Darul Arqam had by the 1990s burgeoned into a self-styled business empire with significant influence in mainstream socio-political circles (cf. Vatikiotis 1994). Paradoxically, the much-admired economic clout of Darul Arqam had been built upon an ideological worldview which stressed life in the Hereafter over life in this world. According to this worldview, as drawn almost exclusively from the voluminous writings and recorded public lectures of Darul Arqam's founder-leader,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Among titles that fall into this category are, *Perang Teluk: Islam Akan Kembali Gemilang* (The Gulf War: Islam Will Be Glorified Again) (1991), *The West on the Brink of Death* (1992), *Ulama Dalam Pandangan Islam* (The *Ulama* According to Islam) (1992), *Falsafah Perlaksanaan Hukum Hudud Dalam Masyarakat* (The Implementation of *Hudud* Law in Society) (1992), *Keadilan Menurut Islam* (Justice According to Islam) (1993) and *Meninjau Sistem Pemerintahan Islam* (Exploring the Islamic Administrative System) (1993). Another book which alarmed the authorities for its direct political connotations was *Panduan Membina Empayar Islam di Asia Tenggara* (Guidelines to Building An Islamic Empire in Southeast Asia) (1991), written by Ustaz Ashaari's deputy, Ustaz Haji Abdul Halim Abbas.

<sup>6</sup>Ustaz Ashaari interpreted Khurasan as the area covering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, parts of Iran and Pakistan, and extending until the Yunnan region of China (Darul Arqam 1993: chapter 12).

<sup>7</sup>By the time Darul Arqam perished in 1994, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had written sixty-two books, and had hundreds of his speeches, lectures and dialogues recorded on cassettes and videotapes. His books covered such diverse topics as basic Islamic teachings, techniques and tribulations of the Islamic struggle, Islamic spirituality and contemporary issues. His collections of poems and sayings were also published; many of these were later converted into *nasyeeds* sung by Darul Arqam's artists and sold in cassette form. It is the contents of these numerous works, which Darul Arqam members were required to imbibe, comprehend, digest and if possible preach to others; that constituted a specific 'Darul Arqam doctrine' (Abdul Halim Abbas 1990a). For a complete list of Ustaz Ashaari's books, see Ashaari Muhammad (1994: appendix).

the development of mankind was the fruit of worship (*ibadah*) to God. Worship was divided into basic worship (*ibadah asas*), paramount practices (*amalan utama*), intermediate worship (*ibadah cabang*) and general worship (*ibadah umum*) (Ashaari Muhammad 1989a: 12-15, 1990b: 128-129). Basic worship meant every adult Muslim's doctrinal and ritual individual obligations (*fard 'ain*), encompassing the six pillars of faith (*iman*), viz. beliefs in Allah, His Messengers, His Angels, His Books, the Day of Judgement and human fate and destiny (*qada'* and *qadar*); and the five pillars of Islam, viz. attestation of faith to Allah and His Messenger (*kalimah shahadah*), the five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan, alms-giving (*zakat*) and pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Makkah. Paramount practices covered non-obligatory but highly commendable (*sunnat*) actions such as supplementary prayers, *dhikr*, voluntary charity and recitation of the Quran. Intermediate worship consisted of Muslims' collective obligations (*fard kifayah*) i.e. duties that must be observed by at least one unit of a group of believers so as to exempt the others, such as performance of funeral rites, and the establishment of Islamic educational, administrative, economic and medical systems. General worship comprised optional practices of our daily lives such as eating, sleeping, walking, playing and trading.

The four levels of worship could be further classified into the domains of *hablumminallah* (man-Creator 'vertical' relationship) and *hablumminannas* (man-man 'horizontal' relationship) (Ashaari Muhammad 1989a: 17-20).<sup>8</sup> *Hablumminallah*, involving basic worship and paramount practices, entailed self-purification towards the achievement of *iman* and *taqwa* (piety), as performed by an obliteration of *mazmumah* (evil attributes) and its replacement by *mahmudah* (virtuous attributes). *Hablumminannas*, on the other hand, encompassed social relations and the administration of human collective affairs, ranging from seemingly minor forms of general worship such as eating and dressing, to such major intermediate worship as family organisation and the implementation of various Islamic systems. While *hablumminallah* generated spiritual development, *hablumminannas* was conducive to material development (Ashaari Muhammad 1984: 88). Priority was given to *hablumminallah*, since self-purification must be addressed before individuals committed themselves in society (Tajul Ariffin 1986: 48-49, 90). But once set in motion, material development and spiritual development, being interrelated and interdependent, must be concomitantly endeavoured for and healthily balanced; for even pious individuals could not withstand perennially corrupting influences of unIslamic systems (Ashaari Mohammad 1982: 77). Such a development strategy, integrating secular and religious pursuits, was conducive to the creation of a unique

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<sup>8</sup>Drawing upon the Quranic verse (translation): "Shame is pitched over them wherever they are found except under a Covenant from Allah (*hablumminallah*) and from men (*hablumminannas*)...." (Quran III: 112).

Islamic culture and civilisation (Ashaari Mohammad 1981: 54-55, Ashaari Muhammad 1984: 92, 1989a: 37-48). Without spiritual development, a materially developed society would be carried away in excesses and physical destruction, as was obvious from the chaotic state of contemporary Western civilisation (Tajul Ariffin 1986: 9-11, Ashaari Muhammad 1992). Without material development, a spiritually refined Islamic society would become passive and dependent, leading ultimately to the subjugation of Muslims by non-Muslims (Ashaari Muhammad 1991a: 227-228). Neglect of either *hablumminallah* or *hablumminannas* would consign Muslims to divine wrath and humiliation. The balance struck between spiritual and material development presented an innovative, dynamic approach to religion, previously seen by some as a prime cause of Malay underdevelopment (cf. Parkinson 1967: *passim*, Means 1969: 282-283). Hence, amidst constant emphasis on the importance of the Hereafter over the importance of the world,<sup>9</sup> Ustaz Ashaari explained:

The Islam which Darul Arqam tries to put forward is one within the context of upholding *hablumminallah* and *hablumminannas* (relationships with Allah and amongst mankind). Darul Arqam does not invite people to leave the world for the Hereafter, to become recluses in mosques. Nor does it call solely for participation in economic, political, educational and social affairs. Darul Arqam persuades people to practise Islam in all aspects of life. It is no exaggeration to say that Darul Arqam aims to emulate the way of life practised by the Madinan society under the leadership of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). (Ashaari Muhammad 1990b: 140).

The implementation of both *hablumminallah* and *hablumminannas* were subject to five basic rules of the *shariah*, viz. the obligatory (*wajib*), the commendable (*sunnat*), the optional (*mubah*), the detestable (*makruh*) and the forbidden (*haram*). While obligatory and commendable commandments were directly related to Islamic worship, detestable and forbidden practices could never be made into worship (Ashaari Muhammad 1989a: v). In essence, the objectives of Darul Arqam's struggle were to establish goodness (*ma'rufat*) in individuals and society by implementing the obligatory and commendable tenets, and to prohibit evil (*munkarat*) by preventing and discouraging detestable and forbidden actions (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 68-69). As for the optional practices, effort should be made towards transforming them into acts of worship by adhering to five specific conditions, viz. that the intention was for the sake of God, that the execution complied with the *shariah*, that the status of the action itself was Islamically permissible, that the consequence or conclusion was

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<sup>9</sup>In his writings, Ustaz Ashaari was fond of stressing that life in this world should be a means towards eternal life in the Hereafter, rather than an end in itself. See for example chapters 14 and 26 of his book **Renungan Untuk Mengubah Sikap** (Thoughts to Change Attitudes) entitled 'Dunia Laksana Anak Gadis' (The World Resembles a Maiden) and 'Dunia Penipu' (The Deceptive World) respectively.

beneficial for Islam, and that basic obligatory injunctions were observed throughout the action (ibid.: 14, Ashaari Muhammad 1989a: 21-27).

As a whole, Darul Arqam's struggle could be portrayed as one to uphold 'the words of Allah' (*ahkamullah*) with the ultimate objective of achieving Divine Pleasure (*mardatillah*) (Ashaari Muhammad 1984: 16-18, 1990f: 8, 33-34). While the end of such pleasure would be entrance to Paradise in the Hereafter, it would be manifested in this world in the form of exemplary moral character (*akhlaq*) governing human conduct with their Creator and amongst themselves. Examples of such behaviour were patience (*sabar*), full reliance on God (*tawakkal*), wholehearted acceptance of God's will (*redha*), thankfulness (*syukur*), contentment (*qanaah*), benevolence, humility, forgiving, tolerance, amicability and ultimately, love and care (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 72-81). Such attributes, being the beacon of souls liberated from purely worldly motives, would together create a temporary heaven (*al-jannah al-'ajilah*) on this earth, as envisaged by the Quran (XXXIV: 15): "*A territory fair and happy, and a Lord Oft-Forgiving!*" (Ashaari Muhammad 1984a: 36-37, 1994: 6, 96-101, Mohamad Mahir Saidi 1992: 61-63).

From a wider perspective, the emergence of Darul Arqam as an Islamic movement may be seen as an indigenous grassroots reaction against the manifest failure of overtly materialistic 'pseudo-solutions' offered by culturally paternalistic exogenous models of socio-economic development and conventional modernisation strategies, as implemented by the Malaysian state (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 91). In practical terms, this response took the form of erecting a self-sustaining and comprehensive socio-economic order, based on Islamic values and principles, by operating systems of life totally disengaged from Malaysia's liberal-capitalist system. The Darul Arqam model thus represented a model of development which enabled Malays to recover their original cultural values as Malay-Muslims.<sup>10</sup> One study has accurately described Darul Arqam's fundamental aim as "*to recover, and then practise, the original cultural values of the Muslims, operating initially on a local grassroots level, and subsequently on a wider national level*" (ibid.: 83). As such values were to be constituted "*within an Islamic worldview which offers a comprehensive way of life,*" Darul Arqam's cardinal aim may be summarised as "*to revive Islamic religious belief and values and practise them in a comprehensive pattern of living*" (ibid.: 84).

The methods employed by Darul Arqam were, from its outset, tailored towards realising spiritual development. From the premise that problems and crises

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<sup>10</sup>Although Darul Arqam's model purportedly stressed Islam over Malayness, in practice, Malayness was not discarded per se. In fact, several observers have gone to the extent of labelling Darul Arqam as the most chauvinistic of Islamic movements in Malaysia (cf. Nagata 1984: 111-112, 191; von der Mehden 1986: 223-224).

affecting present-day Muslims stem from a larger spiritual malaise (Ashaari Muhammad 1982: 27-39, Ashaari Muhammad 1987a: 9, n.d.a), Darul Arqam perceived life as a ceaseless struggle against two spiritual adversaries, the devil (*syaitan*) and the baser self (*nafs*),<sup>11</sup> under both of whose influence the soul (*roh*) had been veiled from sensitivity to God and the Hereafter, as externalised in the prevalence of *mazmumah* in one's behaviour with God and fellow humans (Ashaari Muhammad 1990c: 18-24, 1990d: 30-38). Darul Arqam therefore emphasised steadfast observance of basic worship and paramount practices such as prayers, *dhikr*, recitation of the Quran, supplication (*do'a*) and meditation (*tafakur*) as part of the incumbent process of *tazkiyah* or *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-purification) (ibid. 38-53). This process was considered more urgent than *jihad* against Islam's two foremost physical enemies identified by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1988a: 2-7), viz. the infidels (*kafir*) and the hypocrites (*munafiq*).<sup>12</sup> *Mujahadah al-nafs* was an arduous and lengthy task involving three stages, viz. *takhalli* (divesting the heart of *mazmumah*), *tahalli* (filling the heart with *mahmudah*) and *tajalli* (instantaneous peace of the heart deriving from unceasing concentration upon God) (Ashaari Muhammad 1983: 78-95, 1990d: 60-65). During this final phase, one should have at least attained a specific level of *nafs* called *nafs mutmainnah* (the righteous / peaceful self) which corresponded to the level of faith called *iman 'ayyan*,<sup>13</sup> or even become a *wali* (saint) on condition that he received spiritual instructions from a righteous guide (*mursyid*).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Drawing upon the Quranic verses (translation): ".....For Satan is to man an avowed enemy!" (Quran XII: 5) and ".....The (human) soul is certainly prone to evil" (Quran XII: 53).

<sup>12</sup>In his writings, Ustaz Ashaari often quoted a *hadith*, related by Baihaqi, in which the Prophet Muhammad reminded his companions, on their return journey from the Battle of Badr against the Makkan idolaters, that they were coming back from a small *jihad* to face a bigger *jihad*, which was "*jihad of the heart or jihad of the nafs*" (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1987a: 32-33, 1988a: 18, 1990c: 33-34, 1990d: 61).

<sup>13</sup>Drawing upon classical sufi terminology, Ustaz Ashaari divided the *nafs* into seven categories, viz. *ammarah* (the vicious), *lauwamah* (the defective), *mulhamah* (the guided), *mutmainnah* (the serene), *radhiah* (the surrendered), *mardhiah* (the accepted) and *kamilah* (the perfect); with only the *mutmainnah*, *radhiah*, *mardhiah* and *kamilah* attaining Eternal Salvation (Ashaari Muhammad 1983: 81, 1990c: 30-31). For a thorough discussion of these spiritual concepts, see Abdul Halim Abbas (n.d.), Muhammad Hamim Hj. Rahmat (1992: chapter 2) and Al-Jiasi (1976: 30-41). Ustaz Ashaari also classified *iman* into five categories, viz. *iman taqlid* (imitative faith), *iman ilmu* (knowledge-based faith), *iman 'ayyan* (convinced faith), *iman haq* (truthful faith) and *iman haqiqah* (faith of Reality); with only *iman 'ayyan*, *iman haq* and *iman haqiqah* gaining success in the Hereafter. For details, see Ashaari Muhammad (1983: chapter 4).

<sup>14</sup>According to sufi teachings, a seeker (*salik*) of Ultimate Truth goes through four stages known as *shariah* (laws of physical obligations and prohibitions), *tariqah* (the Way of reaching Divine Pleasure), *haqiqah* (Divine Reality) and *ma'rifah* (Divine Understanding). One who has reached *haqiqat* or *ma'rifat* qualifies for the status of sainthood; a fact known only to God and fellow saints. A saint has attained the state of the *muqarrabin* (friends of God / those who enjoy intimacy with God) and may be endowed with *karamah* (miracles). For details, see Ashaari Muhammad (1990e: 28-54) and Abd Halim Abbas (1991a: 15-38, *passim*). The necessity for the seeker to be guided by a spiritual mentor has been universally accepted by proponents of sufism; consider for example the following assertion in a classical treatise by the great Andalusian sufi, Ibn 'Arabi: "*And as for him who has not attained (understanding of the Nature of Existence), he would not attain by teaching (ta'lim), nor instruction, nor by reiteration,*

Only at this level would the soul receive Divine blessings in the Hereafter, as portrayed by the Quranic verses: "(To the righteous soul will be said:) 'O (thou) soul, in complete rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, then, among my Devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!'" (LXXXIX: 27-30), and "The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart" (XXVI: :88-89) (cf. *ibid.*: 62, 66, 160).

Although supposedly not founded as a sufi order, spiritual training in Darul Arqam involved systematic practice of *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, a *tariqah*<sup>15</sup> founded in Makkah by an early twentieth century Islamic scholar of Indonesian origin, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi, who later came to settle in Singapore and then Malaya.<sup>16</sup> This no doubt arose from the fact that Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had served as head of the *tariqah* ever since the founding of Darul Arqam, having been initiated into the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* at the age of sixteen by his uncle, Lebai Ibrahim (Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 13). *Aurad Muhammadiyah* consisted of the recitation, individually after each daily prayer and preferably in congregation on Thursday nights, of seven verses in the correct order, preceded by reading the first chapter of the Quran. These verses, four and three of which were to be read ten and fifty times respectively, were together a collection of Quranic verses, the *kalimah shahadah* and a salutation of peace upon the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*) (*ibid.*: 58-63). Practitioners were also urged to supplement this practice with the chanting of five more Quranic verses, of *tahlil* and *maulid* on Thursday and Sunday nights, of specific supplications for avoidance of contagious diseases, repentance and *jihad* after daily prayers; and a specific pre-prayer *salawat* coined by Sheikh Ahmad Badawi, the great Egyptian saint (*ibid.*: 64-66, 109-142). Despite never having been explicitly spelt out as a cardinal principle of Darul Arqam, *Aurad Muhammadiyah* assumed such major importance in Darul Arqam's worldview that its accomplishments, despite adverse publicity and great opposition from foes, were firmly attributed to the *barakah* (blessings) of *dhikr* via the *Aurad* (Ashaari Muhammad 1989: 203, Darul Arqam 1993: 103). Although initiation into the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was entirely voluntary, "practically every member of Darul Arqam practise[d] this *tariqah*" (*ibid.*: 101). The *Aurad's* influence in Darul Arqam was such that by 1988, its leadership

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*nor by learning, nor by intellect; but only by the attraction of a shaikh who has attained and an intelligent instructor, travelling on the Path, being guided by his light, and walking in his strength, and so attaining to the end, if it be the will of God (whose name be exalted)"* (1976: 26).

<sup>15</sup>Literally an Arabic term meaning 'the way', *tariqah* involves systematic chanting of *dhikr* as practised by sufis i.e. practitioners of *tasawwuf*: the branch of knowledge in Islam enjoining the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) to attain the true meaning of God and the self (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 10, 1990e: 42; Darul Arqam 1993: 101).

<sup>16</sup>For details of the life of the founder of *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, see Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1990) and Ashaari Muhammad (1986: chapter 4).

thought it appropriate to rename the movement as *Jamaah (Aurad) Muhammadiyah* (Ashaari Muhammad 1988: xi).

In Darul Arqam's perspective, the comprehensiveness of Islam was to be implemented in stages: beginning with the individual, then proceeding to the level of the family, *jamaah* (organisation), society, state until ultimately reaching the global level (Ashaari Muhammad 1981a: 45, 1990a: 183, 1990f: 9; Darul Arqam 1993: 59). Religious duties did not end with the inculcation of spiritual development in individuals, for "*fard kifayah, a domain of obligatory worship, was also a spiritual endeavour towards inculcating iman and taqwa in Muslims*" (Ashaari Muhammad 1982: 76). But carrying out collective responsibilities necessitated the establishment of a *jamaah* as ordained by the Quran (III: 104): "*Let there arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity*" (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 5, 9).<sup>17</sup>

According to Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1984: 51), a *jamaah* was the most important means to achieve the objectives of the Islamic struggle. The secondary means include knowledge, wealth, position, nation and the state. While he admitted that principles of *fiqh* implied that the struggle to accomplish those means was parallel and complementary to the Islamic struggle (ibid.: 53-54), he was extremely critical of contemporary Islamic movements which, in his impression, had put priority for such means over the real objectives, as a result of confusion and misunderstanding of means for ends (ibid.: 93-95, 1990f: 146-147; Ashaari Muhammad 1981a: 40-42). Darul Arqam followers were taught that the basis of a movement's strength lay in *iman*, brotherhood (*ukhwah*), and uniformity and conformity among and within members and leaders (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 42), and that they had to withstand twelve obstacles, viz. unbelievers, political parties, people who aim for self-glory, anti-Islamic ideologies, multi-national corporations, interest-based economic systems, Western culture, man-made laws and regulations, atheism, free-thinkers, weak leadership and secular education (ibid.: 85-88). Darul Arqam believed that an Islamic state and *ummah* would naturally arise from an intensive programme of *dakwah* in society and education (*tarbiyyah*) by an Islamic *jamaah* (Ashaari Muhammad 1988: 198-204).<sup>18</sup> As Ustaz Ashaari said, "*For those who have yet to come, we call upon*

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<sup>17</sup>Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1990a: 192) defined a *jamaah* as "*a congregation of families also known as a small society.*" An Islamic *jamaah*, the setting up of which was an obligation on Muslims as a collective entity (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 6), was defined as "*an assembly of Muslims who truly take Islam as their aspiration in life..... an association of Muslim individuals who unite under the banner of Islam*" (ibid.: 2). A *jamaah* may be formed out of a merger of smaller assemblies called *thoifah*, and may expand until reaching the status of an *ummah* (ibid.).

<sup>18</sup>For specific methods of *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah* enjoined by Darul Arqam for use by Islamic workers, see specific manuals on the subjects, respectively entitled **Politik Dakwah** (The Politics of *Dakwah*) - a compilation edited by Yusuf Din, Vice-Director of Darul Arqam's *Dakwah* Department (Kuala Lumpur,

*them (da'wa) [sic]. For those who have come, we guide them"* (Darul Arqam 1993: 19). Once the comprehensiveness of Islam had been effected in the *jamaah*, transition to the Islamic state would take the form of expanding the scope of its social systems so as to be able to encompass the whole population of a country (Ashaari Muhammad 1990a: 197). Eschewing conventional electoral or pressure group politics, Darul Arqam relied instead on a unique political strategy of *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah*, of capturing people's minds and hearts rather than their votes. Ustaz Ashaari clearly stated in an interview:

.....we wish to conquer not seats, but hearts. We do not want to change the rulers, we only want to change their minds and hearts. If their minds and hearts turn towards Islam, their attitude and actions will automatically change and so will their administration. Thus political transformation is effected..... The present political system is from the West, not from Islam. Thus we follow the Islamic way: through *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah*. To us that is politics, since political transformation comes about when spirits and minds are transformed. (Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 102-103).

Despite obvious spiritual inclinations, to Darul Arqam, "*sufism [was] not a creed advocating seclusion from society, progress and modernisation*" (1993: 103). Unlike most of its sufi contemporaries, Darul Arqam did not perceive sufism as a separate discipline to be pursued for its innate spiritual value and mystical experiences. Instead, sufism was seen as a vehicle to transform individual selves towards the perfection of a society which abided by the comprehensive notion of Islam as a *din al-hayah*. The process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* was stressed as a means towards an ummatic larger end, reflecting the movement's holistic view of Islam.<sup>19</sup> Darul Arqam represented a novel strand of Islamic thought; its ideological approach integrated the spiritualism of the traditional sufi with the intellectual pragmatism of the modernist-reformists. In this respect, it eschewed the compartmentalisation of Islamic sciences implicitly embraced by both groups. It shared the reformist impulse of the modernists, but instead of categorically denying the place of sufism in Islam, as the modernists were prone to do, sought to purge sufism of corrupt excesses. Neither restricting itself to spiritual discipline nor closing its activities to non-members, Darul Arqam embodied the progressive strand of sufi movements, as represented in Islamic history by the revivalist endeavours of Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi (d. 1763) in India,

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1992), and **Panduan untuk Murabbi** (Guidelines for Educators), written by Abdul Halim Abbas, Ustaz Ashaari's deputy (Kuala Lumpur, 1990).

<sup>19</sup>Consider for instance the following statement by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad: "*Likewise, if we possess spiritual strength, we must use it in the relevant fields. A person with spiritual strength has greater resilience than those with strength of [mental] faculty and strength of emotion. He is therefore suited to become defenders of Islam, soldiers, welfare workers, preachers, leaders, etc. who are always subjected to hardship and adversities*" (1990c: 29).

Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tijani (d. 1815) and Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837) in Morocco, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi (d. 1859) in Libya and Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahdi (d. 1885) in the Sudan (Mortimer 1982: 64-79). Darul Arqam could neither be described as modernists nor as traditionalists; the designation 'sufi-revivalists' or, for want of a better term, 'sufi-fundamentalists' would better suit it.<sup>20</sup>

## 4.5 ORGANISATION

As a nationally organised entity, Darul Arqam's administrative structure served both *hablumminallah* and *hablumminannas*.<sup>21</sup> Darul Arqam branches in each Malaysian state had an *Amir* (leader) who was responsible for *hablumminallah* activities in his state. He was assisted in his task by regional *Amirs*, and was himself responsible to the *Amir* of his zone. One zone comprised four to five states, inside and outside Malaysia. Geographically, Darul Arqam was divided into six zones, viz. the Eastern Zone, Northern Zone, Western Zone, Central Zone, Southern Zone and Borneo Zone.

To coordinate its *hablumminannas* activities i.e. social services, Darul Arqam set up specialised departments (*shukbahs*), which by 1993 had numbered twelve, "each of which ha[d] its own philosophy, role and progress to achieve" (Darul Arqam 1993: 35) and was supervised by a *Mudir* (Director). These were the Departments of Guidance and Education (*Tarbiyyah wa Ta'lim*), Propagation and International Relations (*Da'wah wa Kharijiah*), Information (*Isti'lamat*), Agriculture (*Zira'ah*), the Economy and Trade (*Tijarah wa Sina'ah*), the Treasury (*Mal*), Welfare (*Ijtima'iyah*), Health (*Sehah*), Development (*Ta'mir*), Security (*Amni*), Culture and Science and Technology. By June 1994, the number of departments had risen to fifteen.<sup>22</sup> Zonal

<sup>20</sup>In his typology of Islamic revivalists, Mir Zohair Husain (1995: chapter 3, 152-157) has included the sufi-revivalists Shah Waliullah, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi and Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahdi in the 'fundamentalist' instead of 'traditionalist' category.

<sup>21</sup>Prior to its demise in October 1994, Darul Arqam had undergone changes in its organisational structure relatively rapidly, such that technical information about these in Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1992: 122-131) and Darul Arqam (1993: 92) have become outdated. Fortunately, the present author managed to obtain a document entitled **Senarai Perubahan Jemaah Kepimpinan dan Struktur Jemaah Peringkat Pusat / Zon / Negeri Jemaah Aurad Muhammadiyah Jun 1994** from Hasyim Jaafar, a senior leader of Darul Arqam, during his visit to Leeds on 28.7.94 in conjunction with the 'Darul Arqam Conference - European branch'. Except where a specific reference is indicated, the following information is based on this document, which outlines the last changes in Darul Arqam's administrative and leadership structures; see appendix A2. For Darul Arqam's pre-1994 structure, see appendix A1.

<sup>22</sup>The Department of Guidance and Education was divided into two departments bearing similar names but having separate functions. The Department of Development was also apparently partitioned, becoming the Department of Land and Minerals and the Department of Human Development. The Department of Security was replaced by the Department of Law. A new department

*Amirs* and departmental *Mudirs* reported directly to the leader, the *Sheikh Al-Arqam*, whose leadership role combined that of a spiritual mentor and chief executive (ibid.: 99).

The central administrative body, the *Majlis Syuyukh* (Executive Council), consisted of the *Sheikh Al-Arqam*, two representative *Amirs*, two deputy representative *Amirs*, four deputy *Amirs*, six vice-*Amirs*, sixteen assistant *Amirs*, twenty-two *Amirs* without states and one Secretary (total fifty-four). Membership of the *Majlis Syuyukh* and of geographical and departmental leadership positions often overlapped, such that synchronisation of policies and activities between central, zonal and state organs became the norm. Women's activities were organised under the *Qismu Muslimah* (Women's Section). This section enjoyed the direct patronage of the *Sheikh Al-Arqam* and the *Majlis Syuyukh*, and was organised under a leadership structure which comprised two heads, two secretaries and ten units, viz. the Economic Unit, Agriculture, *Dakwah* and Communication, Information and Guests, Welfare, Finance, Guidance and Education I and II, Culture and Health (Darul Arqam n.d.e). Each unit was headed by a head responsible to the Heads of Women I and II, both of whom had invariably been the *Sheikh Al-Arqam*'s own wives (cf. Darul Arqam 1993: 128-129).

The *Majlis Syuyukh*, whose members were personal appointees of the *Sheikh Al-Arqam*, was responsible for decision-making on Darul Arqam's policies and relevant issues pertaining to the movement (ibid.: 92-93). Selections of lower-echelon leaders were handled by the *Majlis Syuyukh* members known as the *Ahl al-Halli wa al-'Aqdi* (those who loosen and bind), and consented by the *Sheikh Al-Arqam* (ibid.: 94). Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad defined the *Ahl al-Halli wa al-'Aqdi* as "leaders whose words [we]re heeded to by the people, although they [we]re not formal leaders" (1993c: 99-100). They had to possess five necessary criteria, viz. *taqwa*, wide Islamic knowledge, general respect of the masses, considerable experience and extensive general knowledge (ibid.: 178). In general, leaders were expected to understand the Islamic mission, to realise their abilities and shortcomings, to maintain control and care of their subordinates, to exhibit *akhlaq*, to be able to competently evaluate an event, and to possess sound determination, optimism and charisma (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 92-99). With such stiff requirements, no Darul Arqam leaders had emerged from the ranks of newly recruited and highly qualified 'outsiders' who had yet to complete an onerous process of induction and training at grassroots level (Darul Arqam 1993: 88-89). The existence of the *Majlis Syuyukh* was testimony of the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultation) operating in Darul Arqam, albeit on a restricted level. According to Ustaz Ashaari, a *shura* session could take place among

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operating under the *Majlis Syuyukh* (see text further), the Unit of Converts and *Dhimmis* (non-Muslim sympathisers), was created.

relevant (at least two) members of the *Majlis Syuyukh* in an informal manner; it need not be attended by all leaders in a specific venue (ibid.: 95-97, Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: 174). Rejecting the political system practised by Western liberal-democracies, Ustaz Ashaari espoused a form of what he called a "*guided democratic system*" whereby leaders were "*selected from among those few who were the core of society, also known as the Ahl al-Halli wa al-'Aqdi*" (ibid.: 84).

Reflecting its sufi tradition, membership in Darul Arqam was not made conditional upon any regulation of form-filling or fee-paying as in registered organisations. Acceptance into the Darul Arqam fold was based instead on ability and willingness to continually support, participate in and uphold duties and responsibilities in Darul Arqam's struggle (Darul Arqam 1993: 44, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 108, 110). A bona fide member would have gone through four stages of commitment to Islam, viz. the phases of reawakening the consciousness, understanding, practising and striving (Darul Arqam 1993: 46-47). Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1990f: 85-86) differentiated between listeners (*pendengar*): those receptive to Darul Arqam's message, enthusiasts (*peminat*): those who continually participated in Darul Arqam activities, strong sympathisers (*simpati kuat*): those who understood the essence of Darul Arqam's struggle and were willing to sacrifice their material assets for the cause, and *jamaah* members (*ahli*): those who practised and strove for Islam in its entirety. While members were invited to attend special *tarbiyyah* assemblies (*usrah khusus*), sympathisers could only attend general assemblies (*usrah umum*) organised by Darul Arqam branches (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 30-31). Members were expected to adhere to five cardinal responsibilities, viz. to obey their leaders, to attend all programmes arranged by the *jamaah*, to respect and perform directives from the Quran and *Sunnah*, to inform and discuss with their leaders on any problem, and to commit and sacrifice their mental and physical assets for the *jamaah* (ibid.: 37-39). In practical terms, *de facto* requirements for membership were a reasonable duration of acquaintance with Darul Arqam, understanding of Ustaz Ashaari's 'mind' and initiation into the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* circle (Darul Arqam 1993: 45).

His control over the movement reinforced by constant emphasis on voluntary obedience in the manner of a sufi master-disciple relationship (ibid.: chapter 6), Ustaz Ashaari's position as the *Sheikh Al-Arqam* and *Amir Aurad Muhammadiyah* was undisputed and fundamentally secure. In fact, "*joining Darul Arqam mean(t) to accept Imam Ashaari as a leader and teacher*" (ibid.: 73). Since 1993, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had been referred to in Darul Arqam circles as *Abuya Sheikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad at-Tamimi*. The use of the term *abuya*<sup>23</sup> depicted Darul Arqam's

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<sup>23</sup>Meaning 'father' in Arabic.

conception of itself as one big family in which "*members' attitude, actions, lifestyles, way of living, morals and mentality indicate[d] as though they [were] of one father*" (ibid.: 83). Darul Arqam went to the extent of claiming that it was "*creating a 'new race' with a totally new identity, lifestyle, culture and school of thought,*" being "*the products of the industry of 'ideas and thoughts' which trace[d] its source to the Mind of Imam Ashaari At-Tamimi*" (ibid.: 54-55).

The size of Darul Arqam's membership had been consistently prone to exaggeration by external observers. Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1992: 107-109) has outlined three reasons for this tendency. Firstly, the absence of any internal records of registration or attendance, arising from the informal nature of activities and membership recruitment. Secondly, the large-scale nature of some of Darul Arqam's events which required huge manpower and attracted a colossal audience, both of which were not necessarily composed of a majority of *ahli* in the strict sense. Thirdly, the physical appearance promoted by Darul Arqam, especially the recommendation for male members to don robes and turbans and for female members to wear black robes and veils, all of which had powerful visual impact and elicited widespread attraction such that non-members who adopted the Islamic attire were often mistaken for Darul Arqam activists.

According to Darul Arqam's own sources, Darul Arqam's adult membership rose from a mere seventy in 1976 to between five-thousand and six-thousand in 1987, and reached ten-thousand in 1993 (Ali Haji Ahmad 1985: 8, Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 99, Darul Arqam 1993: 13, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1995: 339). Different from the other Islamic movements, whose majority of members commonly relied on public and private sector occupation or self-employment for their livelihood, eighty percent of Darul Arqam members in 1993 worked full-time for the movement. Of the estimated ten-thousand members, 40.3 percent hailed from the middle classes, 30.5 percent were from the upper classes and only 20.2 percent came from the lower classes of society. 47.5 percent were male and 52.5 percent were female. The young were extremely conspicuous; approximately eighty-five percent belonged to the 20-39 year age category. Based on findings by its research unit, Darul Arqam also claimed the support of millions of sympathisers, including sixty-percent of Malay-Muslims and eighty-percent of civil servants (Darul Arqam 1993: 180-182).

## 4.6 MATERIAL ACHIEVEMENTS<sup>24</sup>

As a challenge to the Malaysian state, Darul Arqam's most distinctive characteristic rested in its capacity to operate a self-sustaining and comprehensive socio-economic order, based on Islamic values and principles, whilst remaining within but almost totally independent of Malaysia's liberal-capitalist system. Darul Arqam managed to escape state coercion during its formative years by refraining from criticising the authorities and stressing more on realising an exemplary Islamic way of life as far as permitted. The strategy of villagisation played a cardinal role in this endeavour (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 140). Beginning with its Sungai Penchala headquarters in 1973, Darul Arqam established villages in which the ideals of an independent way of life within an Islamic environment could be transferred into reality by aspiring members. An Islamic village represented a miniature Islamic community in which the comprehensiveness of Islam was realised at the level of the *jamaah* as a foundation for a future Islamic *ummah*. It was the avowed intention of Darul Arqam's founder-leader, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, that his community be the model Islamic state he and his followers wished to see implemented in Malaysia (Ashaari Muhammad 1988: 113, 120-121; 1988a: 98-100, 1990a: 192-194). Ustaz Ashaari saw parallels between the migration of his followers from the unIslamic norms prevalent in the Malaysian state, with the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah to escape from the degradation of and persecution by the Makkan society (cf. Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1049).<sup>25</sup>

Characteristic of Darul Arqam's settlements was their intensely rural setting. Although one of the reasons behind the choice of such remote sites was their comparatively cheaper price, another motivation seemed to be the perceived advantages in terms of shielding the nascent community from inimical influences associated with urban life (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 146-147). Run on a self-sustaining and self-contained basis, the villages were equipped with basic amenities, including schools, health centres, prayer halls, guest houses, separate hostels for girls and boys, and sundry shops (ibid.: 170-175). Land for the villages was acquired through three principal methods, viz. collective purchase by the movement, individual

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<sup>24</sup>Darul Arqam's achievements in erecting independent systems of life is given comprehensive treatment in Darul Arqam (1993: chapter 13): the primary source for statistical references in this section. All figures here were compiled by the Research Unit, *Bahagian Pengeluaran Minda Syeikhul Arqam* (BPMSA: Production Division of the Mind of *Sheikh al-Arqam*), then based in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, an upper-middle class residential area not far from Darul Arqam's main settlement in Sungai Penchala. For secondary sources, see Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1994, 1995).

<sup>25</sup>In one of his recorded public lectures, *Islam Agama Dagang* (Islam: the Estranged Religion), Ustaz Ashaari explained a *hadith* that Islam would revert to being strange as in its early years, and that the strangers, for whom good tidings was promised, were those who broke away from their people for the sake of Islam (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1990c: 44-47).

purchase by members who then transferred ownership of their land to Darul Arqam, and *waqf* by members and sympathisers in possession of idle land (ibid.: 148). Collective effort and personal contribution of assets were responsible for the early development of the settlements (ibid.: 153-154). Self-reliance was gradually established with the initiation of economic projects in 1977. Such projects operated on a self-financed basis, whereby the capital, instead of being obtained by external loans, was acquired via members' contributions, investments whose profits were then re-invested, and an Advanced Payment System in which the monthly expenditure of settlers was pooled and used to buy daily necessities in bulk, which were then sold to the public (ibid.: 177-178). Extremely cost-cutting and time-saving was the system of centralised provision of basic foodstuffs implemented by the Welfare Department of the villages (ibid.: 166-167). A *Shukbah Ta'mir* was created in 1981 to oversee the development of Darul Arqam villages (ibid.: 143-146). In terms of population resettlement on virgin land, Darul Arqam's achievement was very modest in comparison with state-supported schemes such as the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA),<sup>26</sup> but as one rural development researcher has remarked:

..... the interest of Darul Arqam villagisation certainly does not lie in the total area of the land developed. It lies rather in the fact that this modest achievement, by a voluntary, non-governmental movement, has been accomplished on a self-financing and self-reliant basis. (ibid.: 200).

By 1993, Darul Arqam had developed forty-eight Islamic villages spread throughout Malaysia, and handled 158 branches, spread according to national parliamentary constituencies (Darul Arqam 1993: 41, 70). Such communication centres served as information-cum-*dakwah* outlets for the surrounding community, venues for internal meetings and social gatherings, places of transit for travellers and missionaries, religious retreats and ultimately as havens for the practical externalisation of an Islamic identity (ibid.: 37). Thirty-seven similar centres existed in sixteen other countries, viz. Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei, Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, the USA, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Australia and New Zealand (ibid.: 41, 181). In contrast to the villages,

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<sup>26</sup>FELDA is the largest of some fifteen different agencies engaged in state-sponsored land settlement and development schemes in Malaysia. From its establishment in 1956 until 1985, FELDA had developed 385 schemes, covering a total of 648,282 hectares of agricultural land and 42,940 hectares of urban and residential land. Within this time-span, 94,168 settler families were placed in 254 schemes. Of these, 59.1 percent occupied oil palm schemes, 40.4 percent settled in rubber schemes and 0.5 percent (450 families) were resettled in sugar cane schemes (Mohd. Shukri Abdullah 1992: 100-102). By contrast, in 1988, Darul Arqam settlement schemes covered a total of only 196.1 acres of land, out of which developed land comprised 170.1 acres. Of the villages, eighteen were less than five acres, while only one had an area larger than twenty acres. Resettlement covered a total of 3,644 people, which included members, sympathisers and Darul Arqam students (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 199-204).

communication centres were usually located at strategic places conveniently near to public transport and amenities, such as in city centres and housing estates (ibid.: 38).

Accomplishments in terms of material development were engendered by the tireless efforts of Darul Arqam's *shukbahs*. By the late 1980s, so successful had Darul Arqam become that foreign and local observers were implicitly labelling the movement a 'state within a state', boasting its own political, economic and social order within the Malaysian secular superstructure (cf. *Asiaweek* 20.11.87, Forbes 1988). The Singaporean *Straits Times* (ST) (8.2.88) reported, "one of the most controversial groups spawned by the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia..... Arqam seems to have gained ground and become more respectable." In 1990, a political journalist, Yusof Harun, even devoted a whole chapter of a book on his overseas excursion to what he called 'the Arqam Empire', which he compared to Henry Ford's automobile empire (Yusof Harun 1990: 338).

In the field of education, by 1993, eighteen years since opening its first school, Darul Arqam had run 257 schools, comprising kindergartens, primary and secondary schools; in which 9541 students were taught by 696 self-trained teachers. Students who excelled had been sponsored for higher education in Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Jordan and Uzbekistan; majoring not only in the religious sciences but also in technocratic fields such as robotics, medicine, engineering, computer studies, political science and economics. Darul Arqam had also established its own international school in Thailand and university in Pekan Baru, Indonesia. The movement's distinctive curriculum, combining religious and modern subjects, had produced over two thousand graduates for whom employment as Darul Arqam administrators, missionaries and entrepreneurs was a priority (Darul Arqam 1993: 185-187, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 36). Through its *Qismu Dakwah wal Qiadah* (Propagation and Leadership Section) and *Qismu Maharah* (Vocational Section), Darul Arqam's educational system had successfully accommodated students who had undergone secular education up to secondary level (Darul Arqam 1993: 187). Darul Arqam claimed to have not only sustained full employment for its internal graduates, but also been able to provide full-time occupation for a significant number of secular-trained graduates, including non-members, from local and foreign universities (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 120, 208-209).

Through its Department of Information, Darul Arqam organised exhibitions and a systematic network of printed and electronic media for internal and public consumption. By 1993, five exhibition packages had been introduced, viz, the *Al-Arqam Economic Expo* (1980), the *Islam is the Way of Life Exhibition* (1987), The *New World of Islam Expo* (1991), the *Islamic Fest* (1992) and the *Al-Arqam Silver Jubilee Celebration* package (1993). The most successful was the *Islam is the Way of*

*Life* package, which was launched in December 1987 at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC),<sup>27</sup> Kuala Lumpur, amidst widespread national media coverage for eight days and attendance reaching about 500,000 people. Having attained fame nationally in 1988-90, the exhibition reached neighbouring countries before being superseded by the internationally-oriented *Islamic Fest*, which was launched at the Royal National Hotel, London in July 1992 and subsequently held in France, Germany, Pakistan and Thailand (Darul Arqam 1993: 188-190).

By 1993, Darul Arqam's media empire had produced sixteen different titles of newspapers and magazines, with a target readership encompassing the general public, students, women, children and teenagers; and an overall monthly circulation approaching one million. The most popular, *Mingguan Islam* (Islamic Weekly), enjoyed a monthly circulation of 152,000. Unfortunately, virtually all of these publications were eventually revoked of their publishing permits by the Home Ministry, beginning in December 1988. However, publications of booklets, pamphlets and similar reading materials for the internal consumption of members were initially not interfered with. Likewise, except for two books by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad,<sup>28</sup> the production of books, cassette tapes and video cassettes by Darul Arqam did not receive the government axe until the wholesale ban of August 1994 (cf. chapter 5). Overall, the Department of Information was responsible for the publication of all sixty-two books authored by Ustaz Ashaari, thirty titles by other writers and forty children's titles, while its electronic media arm could boast 450 and 500 titles of cassette tapes and video cassettes respectively. These covered documentaries, religious talks, interviews, *tarbiyyah* sessions, Islamic concerts and *nasyeeds*. Since 1986, all products of Darul Arqam's media network had been prepared by its own desktop publishing, audio-recording and video-recording units. With studios and staff of their own, such units even offered training and accepted job assignments from other private and public companies (Darul Arqam 1993: 190-192, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 38-40).

As an alternative to Western-imported fads, since 1980, Darul Arqam's Department of Culture had organised cultural presentations, poetry nights and Islamic concerts in hotels, public halls and parks (cf. Ali Haji Ahmad 1985: 133-155). Such widely-publicised events attracted no fewer than three-thousand spectators in the case of stage-shows held in open spaces. From the mid-1980s, Darul Arqam's main *nasyeed* group, *Nada Murni* (Pristine Melodies), was regularly invited to perform in

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<sup>27</sup>The PWTC is owned by UMNO, the ruling Malay party, and used for its major official functions.

<sup>28</sup>These were, *Perang Teluk: Islam Akan Kembali Gemilang* (1991) and *Siapa Mujaddid Kurun Ke 15? (Who is the Mujaddid of the Fifteenth Century?)* (1987).

state-sponsored religious functions, besides conducting several overseas tours<sup>29</sup> and fulfilling private invitations which witnessed it, on at least one occasion, performing in a discotheque (Darul Arqam 1991, *Amal* October 1992). By 1993, *Nada Murni* had thirty-one *nasyeed* albums to its credit, besides having its songs regularly aired over national radio and television. To cater for ceaseless demands for Islamic forms of entertainment, the Department of Culture established a training centre for Islamic artists, the School of Islamic Culture and Arts (MAKSI: *Madrasah Kebudayaan dan Seni Islam*), which patronised the formation of twenty-two *nasyeed* groups worldwide (Darul Arqam 1993: 193, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 41).

In the field of health, Darul Arqam's Islamic Medical Centre in Desa Minang, Gombak and health clinics made sure patients were treated by doctors of the same sex, as required by Islam. The Medical Centre offered a unique blend of allopathic, homeopathic and traditional methods in its maternity and outpatient treatment. Two other polyclinics catering for maternity services existed in Shah Alam, Selangor and Bukit Mertajam, Penang; while clinics, including two which specialised in dental care, had been founded in all Darul Arqam settlements (Darul Arqam 1993: 194-195, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 41-42). The Department of Welfare looked after various aspects of members' welfare and offered counselling services for people facing marital and psychological problems. It was responsible for arranging members' and on request, sympathisers' marriages, both of the polygamous and monogamous variety, based upon several considerations such as suitability (*kufu*), maturity, religious knowledge, loyalty to Darul Arqam's struggle and economic viability (Nur S. Biedyn Beseri 1992: 35-39 and *passim*). Despite often intense opposition from relatives of brides and bridegrooms, Darul Arqam had successfully eliminated animistic traditions, unIslamic practices and sumptuous costs associated with Malay marriage ceremonies. Other welfare services included funeral arrangements, for which Darul Arqam received an average of fifty requests per month, and animal-slaughtering during *Eid al-Adha* (Festival of Sacrifice) (Darul Arqam 1993: 196-197, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 43).

Through its companies, Spectral Technology and MAQRA Consultancy, Darul Arqam's Department of Science and Technology had pioneered Malay high-technology businesses and training. Spectral Technology, among whose clients included ESSO Production (Malaysia) and power stations of the national electricity company *Tenaga Nasional Berhad* (TNB), provided predictive maintenance services

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<sup>29</sup>These included two European tours, in December 1991 and July 1992, during both of which the author had the privilege of enjoying *Nada Murni* performances in Sheffield, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, the Regent's Park Mosque and the Royal National Hotel, London. The group also staged cultural concerts in France, Germany, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands. The performances were predictably flocked to by Malaysian and Indonesian student communities, but the concerts in London attracted a significant number of Arab, British and Pakistani Muslims (cf. Darul Arqam 1992b).

for equipment, while MAQRA Consultancy supplemented it by organising industry-related management courses and workshops (Darul Arqam 1993: 195-196, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 42). Under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, by 1993, Darul Arqam farmers had operated an Agricultural Complex and an Agricultural Training Centre on a twenty-acre land in Batu Hampar, Perak, and cultivated various short and long-term produce on a total 150 acres of land. Almost all forty-eight Darul Arqam villages had allocated land for various agricultural enterprises such that nationally, the Darul Arqam community would theoretically be self-sufficient in vegetables, fruits, poultry and freshwater fish (Darul Arqam 1993: 202, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 46).

It was in the economic sphere that Darul Arqam's independent system exhibited greatest success. Its financial system avoided the imposition of interest characteristic of capital-raising in the modern banking system. According to Darul Arqam's own estimates, its fixed assets, comprising land, vehicles and equipment, had reached a value of RM 200 million<sup>30</sup> by 1993. The movement's funds were reputed to have been derived from the material sacrifice of members (forty-two percent), contributions from sympathisers (thirty-six percent) and economic projects (twenty-two percent) (Darul Arqam 1993: 200-201). Underlining its sound financial position was the fact that eighty percent of the estimated ten-thousand (10,000) Darul Arqam members worked full-time for the movement (ibid.: 180). These full-time Darul Arqam members were remunerated according to their basic needs, irrespective of status and qualifications. According to this *ma'ash* distribution system, a worker would receive payment as much as he needed to cover his household's expenses. As his family expanded, and his dependants increased in number, he would be paid more, irrespective of whether he was a manager, a supervisor or a normal worker. Payment took the form of basic necessities in the form of goods and services, plus a small cash allowance (Ashaari Muhammad 1990b: 141, 1990f: 239-240; Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 169, 209-222, Darul Arqam 1993: 63-65).<sup>31</sup>

Statistically, by 1993, which Darul Arqam pronounced as its Year of Economic Development, it had handled 417 economic projects, comprising fifty-six manufacturing factories which produced sixty brands of foodstuffs, cosmetics and other goods; twenty mini-markets, fifty-two grocery shops, thirty-six bookstores, twenty-one tailor shops, twelve workshops, eighteen restaurants, thirty-three express

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<sup>30</sup>Equivalent to approximately £50 million for the period under investigation. Since mid-1997, a currency crisis affecting Southeast Asia has plunged the Malaysian currency, the *ringgit*, to historically low levels; see chapter 8: fn. 41.

<sup>31</sup>On the *ma'ash* system, the external examiner of Muhammad Syukri Salleh's doctoral thesis was said to have commented that it was capable of destroying the capitalist economic system practised in Malaysia by virtue of its inherently low labour costs (personal communication with Muhammad Syukri Salleh, cf. Darul Arqam 1993: 137, *Stoppress* 5/93).

coaches and twenty taxis. The projects were all manned by Darul Arqam members themselves from the production to the distribution and retailing stages. These projects also witnessed the direct participation of female members of the movement through fifteen branches of their self-operated company, the Solehah Enterprise, which boasted assets amounting to RM 0.5 million (Darul Arqam 1993: 197-199, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 44). Observers have implicitly acknowledged Darul Arqam as the pioneer of a *halal* food industry within the context of rising awareness of the 'purity' of foodstuffs among Malay-Muslims (cf. Nagata 1984: 107-108, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 87).<sup>32</sup>

Within a few years of expanding overseas, Darul Arqam had attracted followers and sympathisers from other countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Central Asia and the Far East. Through trade missions, Darul Arqam managed to set up investment subsidiaries abroad. Darul Arqam overseas branches operated, inter alia, a restaurant and a tailor shop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan; an animal husbandry project in Ningxia, China; catering and perfume industries in Pakistan, a double-decker executive coach in Thailand, a food packaging and distribution company in Singapore, and in Indonesia, a private university in Pekan Baru, soya sauce and shoe factories in Tasek Malaya, and a hairdressing saloon, groceries and tailor shops in Jakarta and Medan. At its height, Darul Arqam was estimated to have accumulated RM 999,500 worth of assets abroad (Darul Arqam 1993: 198, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994: 44). On 7-8 August, 1993, in Chiangmai, Thailand, in conjunction with Darul Arqam's First International Economic Conference, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad inaugurated the formation of the Al-Arqam Group of Companies (AGC). This corporate body consisted of twenty-two business sections, viz. administration and management, food and beverages, garment and cosmetics, medical and health services, tourism and liaison, marketing and distribution, banking, mini-markets, restaurants, import and export, land and development, human development and skill training, investment and international trade, transportation, publication, high-technology, promotions, electronic media, agriculture, retail outlets, livestock and small entrepreneurs (Darul Arqam 1993: supplement, 1993b). Darul Arqam declared that profits made by economic projects under the AGC would be "*channelled towards social welfare service, financing fard kifayah projects and Darul Arqam's da'wa [sic] missions around the globe*" (ibid.).

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<sup>32</sup>Before Darul Arqam ventured into food processing, the food industry was virtually monopolised by non-Muslims.

## 4.7 THE OTHER MOVEMENTS

Apart from Darul Arqam, other independent movements also played a role in fuelling Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. Inter-relationships among them were not always cordial, as we might have been led to expect from an apparently remarkable affinity of their professed aims. Differences in methods, varying in degrees of intensity from those of one movement to another, prevented synchronisation of activities and cooperative endeavours on any meaningful level. Distant cooperation was observed during their initial phases, especially in public activities involving members of all groups. Similarly, one group's evaluation of current affairs was not too different from another's, as reflected in the concurrent flavour of their statements. The authorities consequently felt threatened by an apparently monolithic force of Islamists from diverse backgrounds. As the 1980s progressed, methodological differences, hitherto submerged under a common purpose, were kindled by varying attitudes towards the government's Islamic policies and appropriate measures to face them. In addition, the movements themselves, having been spearheaded by idealistic young graduates, were undergoing an internal maturing process as devotees began realising that the Islamic struggle was not a simple straightforward task as their superficial reading of speeches and books, usually by foreign Islamists, had led them to believe.

The following account of four other major Islamic movements, viz. the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Islamic Representative Council (IRC), Jamaat Tabligh and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), will focus on the following aspects: origins, objectives, organisation, methods and relations with the government. Although other Islamic bodies do exist, they have been left out from the following analysis, either because the limited range and geographical scope of their activities have denied them any significant following at national level, or because they are not deemed to have asserted a sufficiently independent stance from the government's so as to be able to present a credible threat to the prevailing political order. An example which would fit both categories of circumscribed organisations is the Muslim Welfare Association of Malaysia (PERKIM) (cf. chapter 3: fn. 20, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 89-98).

### 4.7.1 ABIM

Many commentators have linked the genesis and incipient development of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia to the emergence of the Muslim Youth Movement of

Malaysia (ABIM: *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*) as a formidable pressure-group in the 1970s. As far as non-electoral activism was concerned, the early direction and content of outward-oriented political Islam in Malaysia was very much determined by ABIM-sponsored issues and programmes, which enjoyed tremendous support in local universities, colleges, institutes and schools. Among others, Nagata (1980b: 136-136), Funston (1981: 175) and Means (1991: 73) have singled out ABIM, by virtue of the size and composition of its support and the extensive causes it promoted, as the most credible political force from within the ranks of Islamists and NGOs. Mohamad Abu Bakar (1981: 1045) argues that early demands for an Islamic state, which had surfaced in Malaysia by 1977, had come principally from ABIM, while Zainah Anwar regards the founding of ABIM as "*an event that was pivotal to Islamic revivalism in Malaysia*" (1987: 17).

An outgrowth of the National Association of Malaysian-Muslim Students (PKPIM: *Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam SeMalaysia*), which had been organising Islamic activities in student campuses since its formation in 1961, ABIM's inaugural purpose, as declared in its official publications, was to serve as "*a platform for graduating students from the respective universities and colleges who had been active in dakwah (missionary) activities to continue their Islamic activities,*" towards generating "*an Islamic movement as the path to Islamic revival in Malaysia*" (quoted in Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1042, cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 73, 77). Inspired by the holistic image of Islam presented by Professor Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, ex-PKPIM leaders agreed to channel their post-student activism into ABIM, which was registered in 1971 (ibid.: 75). After several years of mobilising students through intensive Consciousness-Raising Campaigns (GKK: *Gerakan Kempen Kesedaran*), which exposed participants to realities of Malay under-development, the pioneers of ABIM suddenly found themselves faced with increasing restrictions on campus activities; a development which arguably remoulded their Malay-centric cause into an Islamic-oriented struggle (Zainah Anwar 1987: 16, 23). Islam and not Malay rights, as previously, became their clarion call. It was after partaking in the campus demonstrations of 1974, and the ensuing arrest of its leaders, that ABIM began to command attention as a power to reckon with.

In addition to its original aims, the ABIM pioneers sought to channel their movement into operationalising eleven procedural objectives. These were, to uphold and strive for the realisation of Islamic objectives in line with the Quranic and Prophetic teachings, to progressively carry out *dakwah* to all people, to utilise fully and harness the potential energy of Muslim youth and direct it towards improving society through social, economic, educational, philosophical and technological efforts; to represent Malaysian-Muslim youth at national and international levels, to

carry out welfare activities for them, to produce newspapers, magazines and bulletins; to function as the Malay-Muslim youth's national and international communications channel, to assist organisations and communities in need, to represent the Malay-Muslim youth in its official capacity, to strengthen Islamic brotherhood with other youth groups, and to implement progressive activities for the movement (M.N. Monutty 1989: 77-78).

As a registered organisation, ABIM's administrative structure is formally set out in its constitution.<sup>33</sup> The highest position is occupied by the President, who, together with a Deputy President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary-General, an Assistant Secretary-General, a Treasurer and fifteen other appointed members, form the Central Executive Committee (CEC). The CEC is responsible to the Highest Consultative Council (MTS: *Majlis Tertinggi Shura*) and the General Assembly. The widely-respected MTS, introduced in 1974, basically scrutinises activities and policies decided by the leadership and the General Assembly. Vested with arbitrary powers, the MTS may also propose nominees to the CEC, issue unrestricted opinions on any matter which requires independent appraisal, undertake disciplinary actions and form special task forces in urgent circumstances. Distinctively, membership of the MTS does not entail any formal religious qualification; it suffices for the member to possess basic understanding of the *shariah* and of ABIM's doctrines, plus the exemplary characters of piety, justice and wisdom.

The General Assembly, on the other hand, is made up of representatives from states, districts and units. It officially endorses appointments to the CEC and formulates general policies of ABIM. ABIM members in each Malaysian state is constitutionally authorised to organise parallel state, district and unit branches, with a structure that resembles the central body. However, the five highest posts in state executive committees are reserved for CEC appointees. As an entity, ABIM's central leadership is assisted in its executive duties by specialist bureaux, whose chiefs are responsible for the formation of permanent, special and ad hoc committees in their respective areas. The bureaux cover the fields of communications, finance, information, welfare, women's affairs, propagation, education, the economy, publications, research, professional groups, planning and expansion, and special functions. Overt participation in political activities is prohibited, and any aspirant to political power, regardless of party affiliation, must, as matter of principle, relinquish all posts in ABIM (ibid.: 78).

Non-stringent criteria determining membership recruitment has enabled ABIM to consistently become the largest *dakwah* movement in numerical terms, with the number of its activists rising from thirty-five thousand (35,000) in 1980-81 to

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<sup>33</sup>Information on ABIM's organisational structure below is derived from M.N. Monutty (1989: 81-95).

fifty-thousand (50,000) by 1989-91 (Nagata 1980a: 136, Funston 1981: 174, M.N. Monutty 1989: 94, Roald 1994: 285). A significant number of core ABIM members have come from among urban-based Malay professionals and intellectuals with diverse educational backgrounds, thus giving ABIM the image of an elitist organisation. This exclusive image was enhanced by its intensely academic approach; its preachers demonstrating a propensity to embellish their Islamic discourse with prevalent concepts and terms from the modern social sciences. In the past, their didactic style has often brought them into conflict with the traditional *ulama* and rural folk, both of whom resented the implicit sense of religio-moral superiority assumed by the young missionaries (Nagata 1982: 53, 1984: 92). Without denying the intellectual slant of its membership, a former ABIM Secretary-General has retorted, "*intellectuals in ABIM..... are social activists who are prepared to join hands with the people*" (Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 9). He has highlighted ABIM's efforts to reach out to the lower echelons of society through educational activities, the Community Participatory Development Programme launched in 1989, and the Islamic Outreach: a missionary-cum-educational institution targeted at non-Muslims and new converts (ibid.: 10-13). These initiatives indicate that ABIM has responded constructively to criticisms of its non-egalitarian nature.

From its outset, ABIM has claimed that *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah* form the *modus operandi* and pillar of its movement (ibid.: 18, Siddiq Fadil 1989: 67). *Dakwah* is understood by ABIM to be comprehensive in manner and operation, such that all social categories and the widest range of modes are involved. ABIM ideologues have listed several qualities of prospective missionaries, including solitary pre-occupation with *dakwah*, non-withdrawal from society, possession of knowledge and steadfastness to principles. Special target groups such as prisoners and drug addicts require specific *dakwah* methodologies, necessitating a working knowledge of psychology. Although ABIM perceives *dakwah* as an individual responsibility of every Muslim, it also recognises the limitations imposed by the varying abilities and potentialities of its members. As such, members have been encouraged to diversify their means of *dakwah*, to cover not only preaching, study circles, discussions and other forms of oral discourse, but also publications and social works (M.N. Monutty 1989: 212-218, 223-224). In the 1990s, ABIM has embraced the concept of *dakwah bi al-hal* (*dakwah* by example), as exemplified in its novel emphasis on outdoor congregational exercises such as community development activities and sports carnivals (Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 11-12, *Utusan Malaysia: UM* 2.1.95). *Dakwah* to non-Malays is put under the jurisdiction of ABIM's Islamic Outreach, which has been praised by the academic-cum-social activist Dr. Chandra Muzaffar as having "*done good work in explaining Islam and making it approachable to contemporary minds*"

(*New Sunday Times* 18.12.94, cf. M.N. Monutty 248-249). Despite ABIM's extensive *dakwah* programmes, which have contributed to a recognition of *dakwah* as a new cultural force in respectable social classes (ibid.: 353), research has shown that ABIM has failed to exert significant influence in artistic circles and rural areas, where its speakers' obsession with academic jargon is hardly appreciated (ibid.: 351, 354).

*Tarbiyyah* is perceived by ABIM as a systematic educational process to build up mankind towards perfecting their role in this world as commissioned by God. In operational terms, the paradigm of *tarbiyyah* in ABIM echoes that of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan, encompassing spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects (ibid.: 231-232). For example, ABIM recommends to its members the recitation of *al-ma'thurat*, a collection of Quranic verses and prayer formulae commissioned by Hassan al-Banna, founder-leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (ibid.: 234-236). By far the most important of its facets of *tarbiyyah*, intellectual education in ABIM productively utilises literature written by scholars identified with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-i-Islami (ibid.: 238). The basic educational unit, the *usrah*, follows suitable curricula for different levels of understanding among members. Such differentiation notwithstanding, all *usrah* units demand discipline, and try to remain faithful to their professed objectives of cultivating responsible and devoted members, relating daily activities to Islamic teachings and fostering brotherhood (ibid.: 240-245). As members progress in commitment, they have to follow a cadre-training programme organised by ABIM's Training Implementation Committee. At the end of the *tarbiyyah* process, members are expected to have mastered not only basic Islamic doctrines, but also could demonstrate familiarity with contemporary aspects of Islam, different world religions and modern ideologies (ibid.: 246-247). To all intents and purposes, to ABIM, the *usrah* has supplanted the *madrrasah* as the cardinal educational and social institution for Malay-Muslims (ibid.: 355). The multi-dimensional *tarbiyyah* syllabus intends to create not spiritual recluses, war guerrillas or one-track minded intellectuals, but rather missionary characters which harmoniously integrate their respective purity, courage and academic brilliance (Siddiq Fadil 1989: 174, 19).

ABIM has distinguished itself by erecting formal educational institutions which have purportedly adapted secular education into an integrated Islamic framework. The first ABIM school, *Yayasan Anda* (Your Foundation), was founded in 1971 to cater mainly for the needs of drop-outs from poor Malay families. Many of its graduates have successfully pursued university education, and were instrumental in infusing Islamic ethos and practices into campus life (Zainah Anwar 1987: 18, M.N. Monutty 1989: 98-99). Until the mid-1990s, ABIM had established over four-hundred kindergartens, twelve primary schools and one secondary school (Roald 1994: 301,

Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 10). In place of the government's New Curriculum for Primary Schools, which ABIM has criticised for neglecting the teaching of fundamental Islamic doctrines and unduly emphasising cultural entertainment (M.N. Monutty 1989: 263-267), ABIM has formulated a distinctive Islamic Primary School Curriculum which its schools have begun to follow (Roald 1994: 300). The task of combining the best of traditional-Islamic and modern-secular education has been facilitated by the academic versatility of members, who produce their own textbooks for the integrated curriculum. Conventionally qualified teachers who wish to serve in ABIM schools are inducted into its educational system through a compulsory training programme (ibid.: 304). At tertiary level, ABIM has established the Institute for the Study of Islamic Sciences (IPI: *Institut Pengajian Ilmu-ilmu Islam*), which offers diploma and certificate-level courses on various Islamic disciplines (Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 10-11). Among established academics, ABIM actively organises seminars on Islamic thought and played a leading role in the formation of the Islamic Science Academy of Malaysia (ASASI: *Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia*) and the Federation of Muslim Writers of Malaysia (GAPIM: *Gabungan Penulis Islam Malaysia*) (M.N. Monutty 1989: 346-349). Its *Jernal Pendidikan Islam* (Journal of Islamic Education) was the first Malay-language quarterly journal on Islamic issues (ibid.: 334). On the whole, education in ABIM is geared towards implementing the intellectual quest for the Islamisation of knowledge, as promoted by Islamic scholars associated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) based in Virginia, the USA (ibid.: 271-274).<sup>34</sup>

Beyond the sphere of education, ABIM's material achievements are less remarkable. After the failure of its first economic enterprise, the International Malay Corporation of Malaysia (SYAMELIN: *Syarikat Melayu Internasional Malaysia*) (Nagata 1984: 94), ABIM has operated the Muslim Youth Cooperative (KBI: *Koperasi Belia Islam*), which specialises in capital-raising and financial schemes for the needy (M.N. Monutty 1989: 339). For all its intellectual rhetoric and expertise, ABIM has failed to put forward a coherent Islamic economic agenda, whether in theory or practice. Its limited economic activities have meanwhile been biased towards the middle-classes (ibid.: 340-341). ABIM's experimentation of Islamic entertainment alternatives through modern music and concerts have met with intense criticism for its sanctioning of female performers and musical instruments traditionally forbidden by Islam (Roald 1994: 298). Nevertheless, the official authorities are convinced that the wayward Muslim youth would be drawn nearer to

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<sup>34</sup>On the global endeavour for the Islamisation of knowledge, see IIIT-published books under the 'Islamization of Knowledge' series such as *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1988), *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge* (1989) and *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (1989, third edition).

religion by such methods, as stressed by the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur when officiating an open performance by ABIM artists, held in conjunction with the 'Twenty-Year ABIM' celebrations and reportedly witnessed by one-thousand spectators (*UM* 8.10.91).

Commitment to Islamic internationalism has been a prominent feature of ABIM since its early days (cf. Funston 1981: 176, Mohamad Abu Bakar 1981: 1046). ABIM has often expressed solidarity with Islamic causes abroad, as can be seen from the regularly issued press statements, such as protests against atrocities committed against Muslims in Bosnia, India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 35ff, *passim*). ABIM has conspicuously supported international Muslim charity appeals, and its leaders have constantly represented the Asian-Pacific region to conferences of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations (IIFSO) and WAMY (*ibid.*: 21-24). In pursuing its international agenda, ABIM has cooperated with local and foreign NGOs. For example, it recently joined with twenty-one other organisations, on an inter-religious platform, in publicly demanding an end to the campaign of vilification and calumnies against Islam by the American media (*Aliran Monthly: AM* 16(6) 1996, *Berita Harian: BH* 10.7.96). It has also agreed to forge a closer relationship with the Turkish-based Zaman Organisation, whose endeavours in technical education ABIM claimed to be worth emulating (*ibid.* 2.11.96).

On the domestic scene, ABIM has officially proclaimed an apolitical stance. Its previous Secretary-General has insisted that such a neutral stance renders it unique among Islamic movements worldwide, enabling it maintain cordial relationships with all parties and enlist their cooperation whenever Islamic issues are raised (Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 15-18). As an Islamic movement, ABIM claims to put ummatic considerations above political concerns. Its Secretary-General, Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman, while regarding interference in contemporary national political affairs as "*wasting time*," has assured that the voice of ABIM will continue to be heard whenever sensitive issues deleterious to the unity of *ummah* arise (*UM* 2.1.95). In its first decade, its ostensibly apolitical orientation never prevented ABIM from issuing such politically sensitive statements that the government came to regard it as a dangerous political threat and inflicted upon it various coercive pressures (von der Mehden 1986: 227, cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1). The implementation of Islamic systems of life lying at the core of his demands, Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM President from 1974 to 1982, gained widespread notoriety for his vociferous attacks against the government's explicit and implicit condoning of ethno-centric Malay nationalism, secularism, capitalism and corruption.<sup>35</sup> Holding that Islam had prescribed eternal and absolute

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<sup>35</sup>One needs to examine Anwar Ibrahim's presidential speeches to ABIM General Assemblies to get a sense of his clamorous critique of the status quo. See for example Anwar Ibrahim (1977, 1979, 1981).

values which separated truth and falsehood, he ridiculed attempts to relate Islamic concepts with policy-making in Malaysia as humiliating to Islam, for the overall ramification of such a system still allows for Islamically-forbidden practices and unequal distribution of wealth (*Dokumentasi Muktamar Sanawi ABIM ke-IX, Risalah* 6/1980). Under Anwar Ibrahim's leadership, so eloquent was ABIM's commitment to social justice and human rights and so uncompromising was its critique of government policies, that some observers branded ABIM as a radical movement guided by a hybrid ideology combining Islamic and Marxist-socialist principles (von der Mehden 1980: 174-175, Ameer Ali 1984: 306, cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 102).

However, since Anwar Ibrahim's cooptation by the government (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.2), there has been a general impression that ABIM has declined from its pressure-group stature (Lee 1986: 79, von der Mehden 1986: 227, Nagata 1994: 70, cf. Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 1-4). Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 51-52) has identified three reasons for ABIM's mellowing. Firstly, the departure of Anwar Ibrahim as leader, bringing along with him his personal charisma, oratorical appeal and organisational talents i.e. attributes which his followers rarely possessed. Secondly, the consequent turn towards PAS among a large number of the more radical members, as personified by four towering personalities, viz. Fadhil Nor, Abdul Hadi Awang, Nakhaie Ahmad and Syed Ibrahim Rahman.<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, among remaining members, there prevailed a conviction that Anwar Ibrahim's decision was a calculated effort to Islamise the state from within the system. This was evident from the launching of Islamisation policies after Anwar Ibrahim's entry into government upon winning a parliamentary seat in the general elections of 1982. By far, this final factor seems to be the most vital.

Although generalised statements of ABIM's decline may have been an oversimplification of matters, for local and overseas ABIM branches continue to exert influence among the ever-increasing pool of students and graduates, it is undeniable that the tone of ABIM's voice has significantly moderated since Anwar Ibrahim's exit. From being an independent socio-political pressure group, it has become more an Islamic charitable organisation increasingly reliant upon government sanction for its services and activities (Mehmet 1990: 49-50). ABIM has increasingly won official favour to help accomplish various government-sponsored Islamic programmes, many of which, ABIM claims, trace their origins to ABIM's demands in the 1970s (*New Sunday Times* 18.12.94). For example, former and present ABIM leaders have been abundantly entrusted with positions of authority in the government-sponsored IIU,

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<sup>36</sup>Fadhil Nor was formerly Deputy President of ABIM and is now President of PAS. Abdul Hadi Awang was ex-ABIM State Commissioner of Terengganu, and is currently Deputy President of PAS. Nakhaie Ahmad was former ABIM chief of *dakwah*, and was Vice-President of PAS barely a year before joining UMNO in 1989 (cf. chapter 3: fn. 48 and relevant text). Today, he is UMNO Deputy Information Chief and member of the YADIM board of directors. Syed Ibrahim Rahman was formerly ABIM legal advisor, and enjoyed an influential stint as PAS Treasurer and CEC member.

such that cynics have dubbed IIU as an 'ABIM university' (cf. Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1990: 114-115).<sup>37</sup> Some loyal lieutenants of Anwar Ibrahim in his ABIM days have even followed his footsteps by joining UMNO, for example Kamaruddin Mohd. Nor, Kamarudin Jaffar and Fuad Hassan.<sup>38</sup> On the personal admissions of Siddiq Fadil, Anwar Ibrahim's successor as President, and Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman, hitherto ABIM Secretary-General, the government now views ABIM with less suspicion, and no longer treats it as an opposition group (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 96, *New Sunday Times* 18.12.94).

ABIM vehemently denies that its voice echoes that of the government, but critics have pointed out that under Anwar Ibrahim's successors, ABIM has more often declared support than expressed reservations for government policies. As Professor K.S. Jomo of the University of Malaya has remarked of ABIM activists, "*They still take moral stands on some issues but they are a shell of their former self*" (ibid.). In his policy speeches to annual ABIM General Assemblies, Siddiq Fadil, despite reaffirming ABIM's apolitical stance, must have greatly appeased the establishment by emphasising ABIM's moderate posture, maintaining a commitment to gradual Islamisation, and distancing itself from radical trends identified with the quest for political power (Siddiq Fadil 1989: 24-25, 151, 4, 166, 120, 178). One Islamic magazine, pin-pointing the hypocrisy of ABIM's stance with respect to past and present less than Islamic government policies, has interpreted Siddiq's speech to the eighteenth ABIM General Assembly of 1990 as blatantly exhorting members to give unflinching support to the government of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar Ibrahim, and reject PAS outright (*Dunia Islam*, September 1990). Siddiq Fadil's presidential successor, Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty, has openly said that the Islamisation policies of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad were more or less justified.<sup>39</sup> A freelance political writer has therefore observed of the post-Anwar ABIM:

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<sup>37</sup>For example, ABIM President, Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty, is the IIU Dean of Student Affairs, and ABIM Vice-President, Dr. Sidek Baba, is the Deputy Rector of IIU. In 1993, a pro-PAS lecturer in IIU told the present author, then a part-time lecturer at IIU, that academics who were affiliated with Islamic movements other than ABIM were not welcomed in the IIU. In fact, if it was known to the IIU authorities that a candidate for a teaching post had non-ABIM affiliations, his or her application would be spontaneously rejected.

<sup>38</sup>Former ABIM Vice-President, ABIM Secretary-General and ABIM CEC member in the mid-1980s respectively. All three contested in the 1995 general elections under UMNO tickets. Kamarudin Jaffar and Kamaruddin Mohd. Nor lost to candidates of the PAS-led coalition in Kelantan's Tumpat and Pasir Puteh parliamentary constituencies respectively. Fuad Hassan won the Selangor state seat of Hulu Kelang that he was defending. PAS has interpreted the decision of ex-ABIM stalwarts to fight against its candidates as trying to undercut the appeal of PAS in Kelantan. To PAS, it was hypocritical insofar as Islam was already secure in Kelantan under PAS' rule; see Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat (1995: 78-80).

<sup>39</sup>Statement delivered in a talk, attended by the author, entitled 'Problem of the *Ummah* and the Way Out', held at the university mosque, Newcastle upon Tyne, on 15.12.94; see also M.N. Monutty (1989: 373).

Until today, under a leader more highly qualified than Anwar, ABIM has failed to present concrete plans, whether at the level of ideas or models, for Muslims in this country. All projects implemented are far lower [in standard] than what Brother Anwar had previously accomplished. Does this [not] prove that ABIM is declining? Although Anwar's endeavours were still far from the true Islam, during his time ABIM's clamorous voice was convincing enough. Today, that raucous voice has vanished. Moreover, its practice and implementation of Islamic systems have been increasingly disappointing. (Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1990: 93-94).

Post-Anwar ABIM leaders, insisting that allegations of ABIM's practical cooptation by UMNO and the government were baseless, have spoken of its new non-confrontational approach as reflecting a realistic and genuine maturing process (Siddiq Fadil 1989: 112, Mohd. Anuar Tahir 1993: 3-4, *New Sunday Times* 18.12.94). However, insofar as ABIM's conciliatory posture *vis-à-vis* the authorities signifies a mellowing, it has been dictated by the faith in Anwar Ibrahim.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Anwar Ibrahim has also referred to his career since leaving ABIM to join UMNO and the government as indicating 'maturation' instead of 'mellowing' (*Impact International*, January 1995). Anwar Ibrahim himself, from the moment of joining UMNO, asserted that he was, to all practical purposes, still with ABIM (M.N. Monutty 1989: 105). He has since confessed to maintaining contact with ABIM leaders (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 92). Not surprisingly, cynics of the post-Anwar ABIM have claimed that the acronym 'ABIM', after all, stands for the 'Anwar Bin Ibrahim Movement' (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1992: 93). Raymond Lee, among many others, has perceived ABIM as essentially "*a well organised "personality cult" centring on the charisma of Anwar Ibrahim*" (1986: 79). For all her favourable comments on ABIM, Roald has observed, "*Anwar was ABIM and when in 1982 he switched allegiance to UMNO, ABIM suffered a setback.....*" (1994: 285). Further underlining the setback was a prevailing crisis of confidence among the rank and file, which was translating into a drift away to other truly non-aligned Islamic movements; a development that probably prompted the leadership to declare:

ABIM is an independent Islamic movement, one which has its own method and programme in striving for its Islamic ambitions, ABIM is not a temporary organisation, ABIM is not an

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<sup>40</sup>From personal communication with ABIM activists among Malaysian students in Britain, the author gets the impression that they put full hopes upon Anwar Ibrahim to turn Malaysia into a full-fledged Islamic state when he becomes Prime Minister. In the election for UMNO's Deputy President in November 1993, ABIM formally backed Anwar Ibrahim against the incumbent, Ghafar Baba, then also the Deputy Prime Minister. A copy of the formal support letter, dated 23.8.93 and signed by Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty, ABIM's President, is in the author's possession. In a talk held for Malaysian students in Leeds University on 18.7.94, which the author attended, ABIM's Vice-President, Dr. Sidek Baba, claimed that Anwar Ibrahim, being still 'Number Two' i.e. Deputy Prime Minister, was still constrained in his manoeuvres to realise his Islamic ambitions, and that ABIM understood the difficulties Anwar Ibrahim encountered in government.

organisation in transit and not an organisation which supplies manpower to other movements.  
(Siddiq Fadir 1989: 66).

#### 4.7.2 IRC

The Islamic Representative Council (IRC), translated into Malay as *Majlis Syura Muslimun* (MSM), was founded in 1975 by Malaysian students in Britain. Its birthplace, Brighton, was then thronged by Malay pre-university students and undergraduates enrolled in technical courses in the city's colleges and tertiary educational institutions. There, they were exposed to the revivalist doctrines of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami, as propagated by the Arab and South Asian students who together dominated students' Islamic societies. IRC arose out of the need to contextualise and realise features of Middle Eastern and Indo-Pakistani trends of resurgent Islam to suit the Malaysian environment (MSM n.d.). Its establishment reflected a sense of disappointment at the marginalisation of issues relevant to Malaysians in programmes conducted by FOSIS, the parent organisation of all registered Islamic societies in British universities and polytechnics, and at the moderate approach of the Malaysian Islamic Study Group (MISG), FOSIS' affiliate body among existing Malay-Muslim students. Kamarudin Jaffar, former ABIM Secretary-General and a political science student in England in the mid-1970s, recalls that by 1974, "*the students were already distancing themselves from FOSIS and MISG and were heading toward the formation of Suara Islam and IRC*" (quoted in Zainah Anwar 1987: 27-28). Of the two splinter groups from MISG, eventually only IRC survived until today; the demise of *Suara Islam* (Voice of Islam) being a foregone conclusion as its open confrontational methods and uncompromising advocacy of political revolution were alien to the Islamic outlook of the majority of Malaysian students. By contrast, IRC's emphasis on *tarbiyyah* and its secret-cell approach "*had more success in influencing the Malaysian A-level students and undergraduates*" (ibid.: 30).

For all its Malaysian concerns, IRC's initial espousal of organisational secrecy echoed the worldview of Islamists in the Arab world, where the prevalence of a pervasive state security apparatus makes clandestine operations a necessary feature of Islamic movements. As such, literature on IRC has only been forthcoming in the 1990s, when the policy of secrecy was phased out. In Britain, this was reflected in IRC's registration with the London-based Malaysian Students' Department (MSD), and a proclamation of its activities, organisational structure and periodical's editorial board (cf. MSM n.d.). In Malaysia, former IRC activists founded the Organisation for

Islamic Reformation (JIM: *Jamaah Islah Malaysia*) which functioned initially as a *de facto* Malaysian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, since JIM's legal registration in 1990, it has been "adapting the Muslim Brothers' ideas and perceptions of Islam to a Malaysian setting" (Roald 1994: 279). Jomo and A.S. Cheek (1992: 100) claim that IRC has been frustrated by the Muslim Brotherhood's apparent recognition of ABIM, with which IRC has been historically entangled in a fierce rivalry for influence in student campuses. But the willing attendance of official Muslim Brotherhood activists in IRC-organised programmes seems to indicate otherwise.<sup>41</sup> Today, besides maintaining its stronghold in Britain, where its cadres have figured prominently in leadership positions of university Islamic societies and FOSIS, IRC enjoys close links with the largest Malay-Islamic student organisations in the USA, Canada and Egypt. Through its large academic membership, IRC has also extended its influence in local universities, traditionally the domain of ABIM, PAS and Darul Arqam.

Although IRC and JIM disclaim any organisational and strategic liaison between themselves, their close inter-relationship is self-explanatory when we consider the mutually smooth overlapping of membership between JIM and IRC or its proxies in other countries, whenever JIM members go abroad for further studies and IRC activists return home upon graduation.<sup>42</sup> JIM may be regarded as the medium for overseas-trained IRC activists to further their Islamic aspirations in Malaysia. That JIM is the mirror-image of IRC, vice-versa, has been implicitly pointed out by Dzulkifli Ahmad, former IRC *Amir* who went on to become leader of JIM in Kelantan, upon completing his doctoral studies in London in 1992:

Recently, ex-IRC members have established a *dakwah* organisation, JIM. So now, the continuation of IRC members' struggle has become easier. Nonetheless, IRC does not want to prevent any of its members who wish to contribute their resources to any other Islamic movement..... IRC members have returned home around fourteen years ago. They did not establish any new outlet, but instead joined existing movements: ABIM, PAS and institutes of higher learning. IRC intends to realise unity between movements at home, and indeed internationally. It has not been an easy task. The considerable time-span has taught us to face the reality of *dakwah* at home. Without any outlet, this group's credibility was not conspicuous, except in an extremely limited scope. Our call towards unity lacked any meaningful response. We are convinced that the emergence of JIM, in one respect, represents an approach which makes possible the clarion call to unity. Its existence has to be seen as a concerted effort to

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<sup>41</sup>For example, during IRC's Winter Gathering at the Muslim Resources Centre, Coventry, in December 1995 - an occasion attended by the present author, participants were addressed by Dr. Kamal al-Helbawy, the official spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom.

<sup>42</sup>From the author's personal observation and communication with IRC activists in Britain. See also the interview of Saari Haji Sungip, President of JIM, by *Furqan*, the mouthpiece of IRC in Britain, in its April-June 1991 issue.

support and fulfil avenues which have unduly burdened existing movements. The venue of *dakwah* at home is still wide open for exploration. JIM is not supposed to be a competitive force to be feared. (*Furqan*, January-March 1991)

IRC professes adherence to five specific objectives, viz. to shoulder Islamic ambitions and aspirations, to implement Islamic *dakwah* to all segments of society and particularly to Malaysian students, to harness the energies of Malaysian students towards forming an excellent and responsible academic community, to realise the concept of unity according to Islamic principles and to execute the commandments of the Quran and the *Sunnah* (MSM n.d.). With regard to the Malaysian situation, JIM President Saari Haji Sungib has stressed, as the movement's fundamental aim, upholding the Islamic *shariah* as ordained by the Quran and the *Sunnah*, the realisation of which is impossible without the cooperation and acceptance of all parties (*Furqan*, April-June 1991). JIM claims that its endeavour does not start with the assumption that Malaysian citizens reject Islam. Ruling out compulsive methods, JIM believes that it is possible to persuade "*individuals, organisations, rural and urban communities, opposition parties and the government*" to discuss "*an important agenda for Malaysia's future, namely the implementation of an Islamic-centred system of governance*" (ibid.). It is noticeable that Saari Haji Sungib refuses to use the term 'Islamic state' to describe JIM's political vision, possibly as a strategy to widen its support, traditionally restricted to the anti-establishment Malay intelligentsia. He denies the need to adhere to any particular form of 'Islamic state' as outlined by classical works of Islamic political scientists, but endorses instead the formulation of new policies by local contemporary *ulama* and legal experts who understand better the present realities of constitutional jurisprudence and statehood (ibid.).

In essence, JIM views its mission as one of reform, carrying the theme 'Constructing Society Together With Islam'. This may be seen from a prescriptive and preventive dimension i.e. improving on previous errors, and a developmental dimension i.e. developing existing potentials and advantages (Saari Sungib 1993: 36). Declaring itself a "*social and dakwah organisation*," JIM claims to believe in a concerted effort of guiding society towards Islam, and "*declines the view that the Islamic struggle is the monopoly of any one group or faction*" (ibid.). JIM admits that a change of thinking is occurring in the administration of the country through the introduction of Islamic politico-cultural concepts, and therefore perceives the present direction pursued by the Malaysian state as positive, constructive and encouraging (ibid.: 16, 37). Predicting that Malaysia will enter the twenty-first century guided by Islam (ibid.: 18), JIM has outlined three programmes separate from but parallel with the national agenda. These are, firstly, strengthening focal targets in its reformation

efforts, with emphasis on four targets, viz. the youth, welfare, education and mass communications. Secondly, helping to put Malaysia as the model ummatic state, by, *inter alia*, implementing realistic programmes to boost the people's self-confidence and initiating cooperation among the various NGOs. Thirdly, playing an active role in formulating the national socio-economic and political agenda, which covers four requisites, viz. ensuring that Muslims continue to hold the reins of government, bolstering Muslim leadership and power by pushing them to the forefront of policy formulation based on an Islamic worldview, ensuring Muslim participation in strategic endeavours, and expanding cultural assimilation on an Islamic basis so as to soothe communal tension and enact national development on universal principles of justice (ibid.: 37-42). From its enumerated agenda, JIM quite clearly regards its endeavours as complementary to those of the authorities.

In order to accomplish its aims, JIM relies primarily on *tarbiyyah* in the widest sense of the term. In practical terms, this takes the form of intensive *usrah* units, night vigils, leadership training sessions, gatherings, visitations, congregational excursions, outdoor camps and physical fitness programmes. A newsletter, *Bimbingan Tarbiyyah* (Guidelines on *Tarbiyyah*) is published by JIM's Department of *Tarbiyyah* and Human Resource Management under the President's auspices, and provides detailed explanations on ways of operationalising *tarbiyyah* programmes within the specified focal targets. In addition, members undergo human resource development and management initiatives, which concentrate upon studying JIM's administrative system and optimising its manpower; pin-pointing motivational factors, members' conduct and leadership norms prevalent in JIM; and organising training modules to improve on the above (*Bimbingan Tarbiyyah*, April 1994).

Formally, JIM has successfully established kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and an institute of higher education, *Akademi Islah Malaysia*, which plans to conduct twinning degree programmes in business studies with three universities in Britain, Ireland and Australia respectively (*Buletin Nasional*, September 1994). JIM's educational institutions teach the Ministry of Education's curriculum, but integrate Islam into the teaching of each subject by using specially selected textbooks which concur with the Islamic worldview. They are further distinguished from state schools by the Islamic-oriented co-curricular activities and active parental participation in the schools' affairs. Hence, despite school budgets being rather strained by virtue of almost total dependence upon student fees, it is commendable that the schools are discovered to be well-equipped with educational facilities, utilise various non-conventional teaching methods and employ highly qualified and socially conscious teachers (Roald 1994: 281-283). Outside the field of informal and formal education, JIM's activities are limited but progressive. It recently launched *Dakwah Digital*, an

Islamic-oriented computer programme over the internet, and formed *Kompleks JIM*, a company which integrates aspects of *dakwah* and business, and which operates on the philosophy of welfare through business rather than on the profit motive per se (BH 25.11.96).

JIM's central leadership structure consists of a President, a Deputy President, two Vice-Presidents, a General Secretary, an Assistant General Secretary, a Treasurer, a Head of Women and ten executive committee members.<sup>43</sup> In every Malaysian state, JIM members organise around a branch with a parallel structure, and are further classified into district branches with similar set-ups. JIM has been reported to have 5188 members, thirteen state representatives and forty-six district representatives (ibid.). Its members being typically well-educated, well-versed in English and occupy comfortable vocations and respectable social positions, JIM has been dubbed an 'elite organisation' (cf. Roald 1994: 282). To counter this exclusive image, for its first five years (1990-95), JIM has sought to widen its public appeal through organised reformation initiatives in its specified focal targets (Mohd. Azraai Kassim, interview 23.8.96).<sup>44</sup> For instance, with regard to youth programmes, the President reminds members, "..... *although concentration on focal targets is intended to bolster the establishment of JIM's role in society, participation in youth issues cannot be regarded as a temporary bridge to build relationships with the wider society..... [it] must be based on a long-term strategy.....*" (Wacana, July/August 1994). Having carved a niche for itself in society, JIM now seeks to institutionalise successful reformation efforts of focal targets and to attempt economic self-sufficiency (Mohd. Azraai Kassim, op.cit.).

The present characteristics and methods of JIM exhibit significant moderation from the radical tone previously adopted by the clandestinely organised IRC, c. 1975-89. In its nascent phase as an overseas-based student movement, IRC was typified by a "*black and white approach to the Islamic struggle*" which perceived society in terms of a hard-and-fast dichotomy between the Muslim and the infidel, the Islamist and the apostate (Zainah Anwar 1987: 30). A glimpse of IRC's publications during such days would reveal not a few anonymously written articles heavily critical of the

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<sup>43</sup>See issues of *Buletin Nasional JIM*, where the structure is consistently and lucidly spelt out on page two.

<sup>44</sup>Dr. Mohd. Azraai Kassim joined IRC whilst a student in England in the late-1970s. He has academic qualifications from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (B.Sc. Hons. 1981, M.Sc. 1983) and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (Ph.D. 1992), and now works as lecturer in civil engineering at the University of Technology, Malaysia. Upon his return to Malaysia in 1992, he became the leader of JIM in Johore until 1995, and is currently member of JIM's central *tarbiyyah* unit. He was interviewed in Newcastle upon Tyne when he came for an academic visit.

government's Islamisation schemes, the NEP and the official *ulama*.<sup>45</sup> Its strategy then was to penetrate into leadership positions of other Islamic movements and spark off change from within. But after limited success, such a policy backfired when, upon disclosure by bona fide members on premeditated IRC-inspired conspiracies to transform their movements ideologically and methodologically, IRC members were effectively banished. It is on record, for example, that during PAS' General Assembly of 1987, its President reminded members to remain loyal to PAS' ideas and *modus operandi*, and decline 'extremist' trends as propagated by some 'new' PAS members (F.M. Jamil 1988: 297). In a spate of hostile publicity, PAS figures suspected of harbouring links with IRC were subsequently defeated in their quest to wrest control of PAS' Youth Council and *tarbiyyah* committee, bringing about the effective "*eclipse of the IRC within PAS.....*" (Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1992: 101). IRC retaliated by attacking PAS' alleged leanings towards Shiism and the Iranian regime (*ibid.*).<sup>46</sup>

Reasons for IRC's newly-found openness and readiness to accept cooperative ventures with other NGOs and the government, as manifested in JIM's programmes and policies, remain purely hypothetical. It is an interesting conjecture to attribute this novel inclination to the failure of its policy of infiltrating existing organisations, as sceptics would argue.<sup>47</sup> According to Dr. Mohd. Azraai Kassim (*op.cit.*), IRC activists who joined other Islamic movements were sincerely committed members devoid of any sinister motives when trying to inject vigour into their adopted causes. Instead, he attributes the petering out of IRC's radical tendencies to other factors, viz. realisation that maintaining secrecy was awkward and dangerous in the light of the heavy government clampdown on NGOs in 1987 (*cf.* chapter 3: 3.5.1), admission that the government has been successful in reducing the public appeal of *dakwah* movements by accommodating their demands, and pre-occupation of activists with other professional concerns. This last factor was predictable as the youthful members advanced in age, left behind idealistic student days, entered the real world of a competitive labour market and to boot, was confronted with a fierce economic recession which beset Malaysia in 1985-87.

According to Jomo and A.S. Cheek, "*the IRC leadership has come to some kind of compromise with the Mahathir regime*" (1992: 101). Indeed, several leading IRC figures are believed to enjoy close connections with Deputy Premier Anwar

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<sup>45</sup>See for example articles entitled 'The threat of Westernism' and 'Ulamak - Warisatul anbiya': Bangun dan Pimpinlah' (*Ulama - Inheritors of the mantle of prophets: Rise and Lead*) in *Furqan*, March-April 1980; and MSM (1983: *passim*).

<sup>46</sup>IRC's antagonism towards Shiism and its proponents continues until today; see for example articles entitled 'Mengenali Syiah: Sejarah Kemunculannya' (History of the Emergence of Shiism) and 'Mengenali Syiah: Pecahannya' (Factions within Shiism) in *Bimbingan Tarbiyyah*, issues June 1996 and July 1996 respectively. Both articles are written by Dr. Mohd. Azraai Kassim, whom the present author interviewed on 23.8.96 (*cf.* fn. 44 above).

<sup>47</sup>A point suggested by many ABIM and PAS members in Britain (personal communication).

Ibrahim; a fact conceded by Dr. Mohd. Azraai (op.cit.) with regard to ex-IRC members in North America.<sup>48</sup> IRC's policy turnabout has caused some dissatisfaction within JIM's rank and file, concerned at the movement's refusal to criticise government policies (ibid.). Furthermore, conciliatory statements probably regarded by such diehard activists as having exceeded acceptable limits have been issued by the JIM leadership. For example, the President recently lauded the government as having successfully developed the national economy without neglecting moral values, and stated JIM's stance of not preventing its members from joining UMNO (*BH* 25.11.96). Later, its Head of Women, Fauziah Salleh, publicly supported the government's proposed changes of state family laws to impose more stringent conditions upon men intending to practise polygamy (ibid. 2.12.96). Whether JIM continually adheres to its allegedly apolitical stance remains to be seen, but early evidence suggests that it would succumb to effective cooptation sooner rather than later.

### 4.7.3 JAMAAT TABLIGH

The international movement of Jamaat Tabligh originated from missionary work initiated by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas (1885-1944) among Muslims in Mewat, to the south of Delhi, India, in the 1920s and 1930s. Notorious for their syncretic practices and poverty, Mewati Muslims initially failed to respond positively to the establishment of Islamic educational institutions by Maulana Ilyas, a scholar from Kandhla who had studying and teaching experiences in well-known traditional religious centres in Nizamuddin, Gangoh and Deoband (Ali Nadwi 1983: 6-30). Upon return from a second pilgrimage to Makkah in 1925, Maulana Ilyas began organising local villagers in *jamaats* (groups) which would embark on *tabligh* (preaching) tours in surrounding districts. He reasoned that as the masses were reluctant to acquire Islamic knowledge through formal institutions, the only solution to their abject ignorance was to bring the faith directly to them. Preferably led by religious scholars, *tabligh jamaats* were supposed to leave their homes for allotted periods and exhort lax Muslims in other regions to revive Islam's fundamental tenets, particularly the *kalimah*<sup>49</sup> and the daily prayers. Members would benefit from visits to local religious

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<sup>48</sup>Dr. Mohd. Azraai was, however, careful to mention that the politically-inclined American and Egyptian trends in JIM, as brought by IRC graduates from North American and Egyptian universities respectively, have been largely submerged by the apolitical British IRC trend.

<sup>49</sup>The term preferred by Jamaat Tabligh to denote the twin attestation of the faith 'there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger', otherwise known as the *kalimah shahadah*.

centres, where the constant supervision of local theologians and spiritual mentors was forthcoming (ibid.: 31-41).

Having effected a popular upsurge of religious consciousness among the illiterate Mewatis, Maulana Ilyas began disseminating his message beyond Delhi and adjacent areas, and among the *ulama* and educated classes, both of whom initially treated the *tabligh* movement with apathy and contempt. Being from the class of the *ulama* himself, Maulana Ilyas personally instructed disciples on ways to associate religious scholars with the *tabligh* endeavour. He also warned fellow *ulama* on the necessity to improve contacts with the masses via *tabligh*, lest they be isolated as a community (ibid.: 69). Financial support from Delhi merchants and articles on Jamaat Tabligh in reputable journals helped to expand the movement beyond its provincial and popular strongholds (ibid.: 57-60). The huge number of visitors and of letters from distant places received by Maulana Ilyas as he lay in his death-bed, were testimonies to the remarkable progress that Jamaat Tabligh had made in its early years (ibid.: 70-71, 84, 88).

In 1952, a group of missionaries led by Maulana Abdul Malik Madani was specially dispatched to Malaya from the Jamaat Tabligh headquarters in Nizamuddin, India. Despite occasional interruptions, Jamaat Tabligh steadily expanded in Malaysia, enjoying heavy support from the Indian-Muslim community based in Kuala Lumpur and Penang. In 1972, a conscious decision was taken by its elders to activate *tabligh* among Malay-Muslims. Missionaries were sent to private religious schools and urban mosques, from where Jamaat Tabligh's influence penetrated into the burgeoning student communities around national cities. The progress was such that by 1977, a seven-member Consultative Council which reported directly to Nizamuddin had to be formed to oversee Jamaat Tabligh's activities in Malaysia, hitherto under the purview of itinerant missionaries from India and Pakistan. In April 1980, an international Jamaat Tabligh gathering in Kuala Lumpur witnessed the participation of six to eight-thousand enthusiasts. Another gathering in November 1982 was attended by the worldwide Amir of Jamaat Tabligh, Maulana In'am al-Hassan al-Kandhalvi. Jamaat Tabligh attained nationwide fame after two of its Malaysian activists were shot dead, having apparently been mistaken for Moro liberation guerrillas, by government soldiers in Marawi City, southern Philippines in June 1987.<sup>50</sup>

Malaysian members of Jamaat Tabligh depend wholly for guidance on literature produced by the movement's South Asian forefathers. Malay translations of such tracts and books are used to address *jamaats*. The most important of these is a

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<sup>50</sup>For information on the development of Jamaat Tabligh in Malaysia as outlined in this paragraph, see Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah (1992: 3-9).

huge compilation of allegories from the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions and of virtues of certain Islamic fundamentals, viz. the Quran, prayers, *dhikr*, *tabligh* and fasting, entitled **Tabligh Nisab** (The Fundamentals of Mission)<sup>51</sup> by Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalvi, Maulana Ilyas' nephew-cum-son-in-law (cf. Roald 1994: 276). The core aims of Jamaat Tabligh are summarised in what has become famously known as the movement's 'six principles'. These are, the inculcation of the requisites of the *kalimah* in individuals; the proper observance of daily prayers, preferably in congregation; the pursuit of knowledge and the constant practice of *dhikr*; the honouring of fellow Muslims; the attainment of sincerity in daily intentions and chores; and the sacrifice of as much time as possible to preach God's commandments to mankind, even if this entails temporarily leaving one's family. To these cardinal points is added a seventh auxiliary lesson, viz. the quitting of vanity, particularly aimless talk (Ashiq Elahi 1989: 3-16). From the ordering of these principles, it is evident that Jamaat Tabligh regards improvement of the inner selves as a pre-requisite for improvements in society. Maulana Ilyas even admitted that *tabligh* was not merely "*for bringing others to the straight path*," instead, being first and foremost "*a process of self-reformation*," its main objective was "*to win the good pleasure of Allah through His service and obedience*" (Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 18).

Jamaat Tabligh ideologues believed that the root cause of present-day religious degeneration befalling Muslims stem from their neglect of *amr bi al-ma'ruf wa nahi an al-munkar* (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil): a duty described as "*the essence and the pivot of the faith of Islam*" and "*the real basis for the superiority of the Muslims*" (Ehteshamul Hasan 1989: 14, Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalvi n.d.a.: 12). According to Maulana Ilyas, the fact that Muslims' hearts were "*devoid of religious consciousness and no eagerness [was] found in them for seeking the knowledge of Faith*" constituted their real ailment (Ali Nadwi 1983: 162). Remedy could only come in the form of revival of the act of *tabligh*, following the precise methods by which the Prophet Muhammad accomplished the social revolution of seventh century pagan Arabs (Ehteshamul Hasan 1989: 25, Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalvi n.d.a.: 16). As he told a disciple:

Unless you devote yourself wholeheartedly to persuading your people to travel from one place to another continuously for as many as four months for the sake of *Tabligh*, the community will not have a real taste of Faith and religiousness..... if you give up the endeavour, the condition of the community will become even worse than what it was. (Ali Nadwi 1983: 41).

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<sup>51</sup>Also published as **Faza'il-e-A'maal** (Paramount Practices).

While prevailing opinion in contemporary Muslim circles had limited the work of *tabligh* to scholars (Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalvi n.d.a.: 16), Maulana Ilyas considered the implanting of a missionary spirit as one's most important duty, thereby advancing the then revolutionary view that becoming a *mubaligh* (preacher) was within everyone's capability (Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 7, 23). To him, *tabligh* was a spiritual as well as a physical endeavour. The starting point for *tabligh*: "*the spiritual food of man*," was worship, and its essence found in *dhikr* and supplication (Ali Nadwi 1983: 106, 144-145). But he expanded the meaning of *dhikr* beyond the traditional conception of it as the recitation of sets of prayer formulae so as to encompass "*whatever profession, state or circumstances*" in which one found "*best to observe the commands of God*" (ibid.: 156). Reputedly a member of the *Chistiyyah* sufi order, Maulana Ilyas nonetheless never systematised specific religious chantings for his followers. Hence, despite sufi techniques of self-purification being evident in the practices prescribed on a *tabligh* journey, Jamaat Tabligh never developed as a *tariqah*. *Tasawwuf* in Jamaat Tabligh departed from the discipline's classical pre-occupation with metaphysical issues, and emphasised instead practical aspects of worship by emulating the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions (Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah 1992: 25-29, Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalvi n.d.: *passim*).

In a similar vein, Maulana Ilyas broke with the elitist view of education as a mental pursuit confined to scholarly endeavours in schools and via books, and stressed instead the direct method of acquiring knowledge by personal contact, association, participation in popular religious causes and leaving one's traditional setting (Ali Nadwi 1983: 145). Maulana Ilyas claimed that if the *tabligh* effort was undertaken seriously, "*a thousand times more madrassas [sic] and Sufi-lodges will get established automatically..... every Muslim will become a Madrassa [sic] and a khanqah (fn.: sufi-hospice)*" (ibid.: 140). Towards the goal of cooperation among different sections of Muslims, he instructed disciples to maintain relationships with and respect for all classes and levels of society, with special reverence shown to the *ulama* and saintly personalities (ibid.: 119-121, 137, 163; Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 15, Ashiq Elahi 1989: 37-38). On the whole, the aims and methods of Jamaat Tabligh are embodied in Maulana Ilyas' explanation:

The principal aim and purpose of our endeavour is to teach the Muslims all the things the holy Prophet had brought with him, i.e. to integrate the Ummat [sic] with the whole of the practical and conceptual structure of Islam. This is our primary object. As for the setting out of *Jama'ats* and *Tabligh* rounds, these are the elementary means to the realisation of that end, while the teaching of the *Kalima* and *Namaz* [prayers] are so to speak, the ABC of our curriculum. (Ali Nadwi 1983: 157).

Jamaat Tabligh categorically rejects the method of demanding the people to live up to God's commandments after a conscious acquisition of political power (Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 12). The prevalence of political oppression in Muslim society is blamed upon the Muslims themselves for disregarding Islamic teachings, and participation in political parties has only raised instances of dishonouring fellow Muslims, a practice described as "*the worst form of usury*" (Muhammad Zakariyya 1994: 87-92, 140-141). This does not mean, however, that Jamaat Tabligh repudiates politics per se. Urging non-students to take part in politics "*with sincere motives and with a clear conscience*," Maulana Zakariyya argues that "*every effort in political fields (for the welfare of Islam and the Muslims) is also considered Jihad*" (ibid.: 45, 52). From the writings of Jamaat Tabligh ideologues, we can deduce that they regard the very act of *tabligh* as constituting an effective political method. Likening his movement to "*the soil of the Faith*," Maulana Ilyas insisted that the prevailing condition of the *ummah* was so abysmal that nothing could be grown on it, and "*to hope for reformation at the top when the base is unsound is pure illusion*" (Ali Nadwi 1983: 138-139). He further emphasised:

The more the efforts are made to promote this goodwill in the society, the more firmly will be "holding to the cable of Allah" and the more quickly and automatically an organised social and political order will come into being. (Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 11-12).

In practical terms, Jamaat Tabligh members are expected to spend at least three days every month, forty days every year and four months in a lifetime outside his locality, travelling in specially dispatched missionary groups. Under the guidance of a selected *Amir*, a group of about ten missionaries, making local mosques as their makeshift headquarters, would conduct *gasht* (visits) to local Muslims on a door to door basis, explaining to them the essentials of the faith and inviting them to the mosque for further sessions of *ta'lim* (imparting of knowledge) and *bayan* (lecture on the necessity and nature of the *tabligh* work). During the *gasht*, ladies of the households may also be addressed with permission from their menfolk, and urged to conduct similar missionary activities among local womenfolk (Muhammad Ilyas 1989: 17, Ehteshamul Hasan 1989: 32-33). Missionaries are expected to adhere to specific requisites during a *tabligh* journey, such as duties pertaining to the leader-led relationship, observance of supplementary prayers, eating and sleeping etiquettes, proper language and speech use and various other reminders (Ashiq Elahi 1989: 17-38). Such missionary tours form the lifeblood of Jamaat Tabligh's organisation and activities. They function as religious retreats as well as hubs of Islamic propagation to the surrounding community. This dual purpose nature was elaborated by Maulana Ilyas:

In our programme, setting out in the path of Faith, in the form of *Jama'ats*, occupies the foremost place. The chief advantage of it is that a man comes out of the traditional into a healthy and dynamic environment in which there is a great scope for the development of his religious sentiments. Moreover, the Mercy of the Lord is drawn towards him, in particular, on account of the hardships he has to undergo in travelling from place to place for the preaching and propagation of Faith. (Ali Nadwi 1983: 162)

As a loosely structured and non-registered movement, Jamaat Tabligh relies entirely upon volunteers who carry out missionary work at their own expense. It has been an exclusively male group since its inception, and only until recently have wives of members been encouraged to organise *jamaats* for *dakwah* purposes.<sup>52</sup> Informal organisation, a deliberate low-profile existence and paucity of primary literature have together made it impossible to arrive at reliable information on Jamaat Tabligh's membership (cf. Nagata 1984: 117-120). Nagata (1980: 422) estimated its members in Peninsular Malaysia to number around five-thousand, of which probably one-fifth were fully committed. A statement by Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, claims that no fewer than five-thousand civil servants and students were involved in Jamaat Tabligh (*UM* 14.3.92). Despite carrying a negative image in traditional Malay neighbourhoods and official quarters for allegedly displaying aggressive missionary tactics, allegiance to Indo-Pakistani connections and neglect of families left behind during members' *tabligh* tours (*ibid.*, Nagata 1984: 121), Jamaat Tabligh has grown in popularity among the Malay intelligentsia, as shown by its capacity to recruit professionals and prominent civil servants such as Dato' Ismail Panjang Aris (d. 1987), former secretary of the National Council of Islamic Affairs (M.N. Monutty 1989: 133, Mohamad Abu Bakar 1991: 224). However, according to other studies, Jamaat Tabligh's restricted and simple-minded form of approach and activities, has discouraged members from remaining with the movement. Credited for galvanising the minds and emotions of truth-seeking young Muslims, Jamaat Tabligh has lost numerous followers to other Islamic movements which offer a more comprehensive ideological worldview and pattern of living (F.M. Jamil 1988: 186, Roald 1994: 278). The present author's impression of Jamaat Tabligh activists is that while earnestly believing that an Islamic system and an Islamic state will eventually materialise, they are not clear as to how Jamaat Tabligh, with its restricted form of activities, seeks to achieve them. On the question of 'how', Jamaat Tabligh members are inclined to escape 'heavenwards' (personal communication).

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<sup>52</sup>Personal communication with Jamaat Tabligh activists among Malaysian students in Britain.

Its seemingly apolitical orientation, as derived from a literal concentration upon spiritual revitalisation and missionary activities, has resulted in Jamaat Tabligh being perceived by the establishment as an irritation which misrepresents Islam rather than as a political threat (cf. Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1992: 81). In a conference paper, Zainuddin Maidin, who as the long-serving chief editor of *Utusan Malaysia* until 1992 represented the voice of official Islam *par excellence*, castigated "*dakwah people who don the clothes of paupers or who are like bastards in carrying sleeping material and cooking utensils everywhere*" for giving "*the picture of Islam's rejection of the worldly, at the same time that we try to convince the world that 'Islam is a total way of life'*"; that he was alluding to Jamaat Tabligh members was made clear when he added, "*in India such missionaries are respected because their clothes are much better than what most poor Muslims in rural areas of that country wear*" (Zainuddin Maidin 1993: 37). In a special interview with *Utusan Malaysia's* representative in Cairo, Professor Abdul Raof Shallabi, representative of the *Sheikh* of Al-Azhar University, to whom many Sunni Muslim countries refer for *fatawa*, accused Jamaat Tabligh of emulating Buddhist teachings and methods by unduly emphasising missionary travelling and asceticism, with deleterious effects on incentives to work (UM 3.4.87).

It was on account of promoting 'bad influences' in the Muslim community that the state government of Malacca banned Jamaat Tabligh's activities in 1992 (BH 12.3.92). Defending the decision, state *mufti* Mohd. Yunus Mohd. Yatim accused Jamaat Tabligh of creating many social problems, including cases of husbands neglecting family responsibilities, students neglecting studies, workers unnecessarily resigning from jobs and mosques being left untidy by visiting *tabligh* groups (UM 14.3.92). Likewise, Chief Minister Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik condemned negative aspects of Jamaat Tabligh's *dakwah* methods as "*not depicting an Islam which has progressed and evolved through times*" (ibid. 17.3.92). Although the Malaccan *mufti* claimed that the ban was in accordance with a joint *fatwa* agreed by all state *muftis* during a meeting in the Islamic Centre, eventually only Johore imposed a similar proscription on Jamaat Tabligh (ibid. 13.3.92). The decision, however, received unofficial backing from the federal government. Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad warned that Jamaat Tabligh's activities, by focusing solely on worship, were detrimental to national aspirations (BH 17.3.92). Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, revealed that according to research by the Islamic Centre, problems about Jamaat Tabligh arose not out of the movement's beliefs and teachings, which did not contradict Islam, but on the ways its members practise such requirements (ibid.: 21.3.92). Such and similar anxieties possibly prompted the Federal Territory Religious Department's abruptly announced

decision to take over the administration of a Jamaat Tabligh mosque valued at RM 3 million then under construction in Seri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur (ibid., *UM* 17.3.92).

#### 4.7.4 PAS

The origins of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS: *Parti Islam SeMalaysia*) lie in a breakaway conference held by UMNO's *ulama* section on 24 November, 1951 in Butterworth, mainland Penang. The conference, indicating widespread disenchantment felt by Islamic-minded activists at their inability to influence policy-making within UMNO, gave birth to the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). PMIP was officially registered as an independent political party one day before nomination day for the federal elections of 1955, subsequently becoming the only opposition group to win a seat. Changes in the country's geopolitical structure eventually rendered the name PMIP obsolete, such that in 1971, this was amended to PAS, which survives until today (Funston 1976: 70-71, Safie Ibrahim 1981: 24-26, 63).

The development of PAS can be seen in three phases. First, the formative phase (c. 1951-55), which witnessed PMIP's radical transformation from a vaguely defined welfare organisation led by disgruntled UMNO leaders, to a self-styled political movement controlled by Islamic-leftist elements heavily associated with anti-UMNO politics. The transient process was replete with problems arising from indecisive leadership, ideological inconsistency, haziness of direction, factional infighting and pervasive political naivety (ibid.: 27-56). Measures of ideological and organisational coherence were gradually introduced as Islamic-leftist elements, bringing along vast experience from 'subversive' participation in legally proscribed political movements, prevailed over traditionalist groups professing a wider loyalty to UMNO.<sup>53</sup> The crystallisation of a distinctive PAS identity took final form with the election of the renowned anti-colonial activist, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy as President in December 1956 (cf chapter 2: fn. 72). This had the immediate impact of boosting support for PAS among virtually all anti-establishment Malay political circles, religious and secular (Safie Ibrahim 1981: 62, Funston 1976: 72-73). In retrospect, the takeover of PMIP by Islamic-leftist anti-colonial activists was inevitable. As Funston (1976: 71) has discovered, the initiative to form a separate political party at the 1951 conference came primarily from Islamic reformists. If, as alleged in official quarters, PMIP was created by the traditionalist UMNO *ulama* as a measure of protest against its new leadership and conversely a show of support

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<sup>53</sup>Such a split-loyalty mentality among the traditionalist *ulama* is reflected in a statement by Haji Ahmad Maliki, the first PAS Secretary: "*The Islamic Party..... is like a younger brother of the UMNO*" (quoted in Safie Ibrahim 1981: 31).

for Dato' Onn, UMNO's ousted leader (*ibid.*), then PMIP's *raison d'être* had obviously vanished after the gradual waning of Dato' Onn's political fortunes in the 1950s. On the other hand, Islamic-leftist activists, having been denied organisational outlets by the colonial government's repressive legislation, had every strategic reason to portray PMIP as politically innocuous by allowing PMIP's leadership to be temporarily occupied by the pro-establishment *ulama*, until the time was ripe for an all-encompassing organisational revamp.

Second, the nationalist phase (c. 1956-82), during which PAS consistently won seats in federal and state elections, formed state governments in Terengganu (1959-61) and Kelantan (1959-78), and briefly joined the ruling National Front coalition (1973-77). Out of government, PAS had to endure a vicious onslaught in the state-controlled national media and overt repression, including the arrests of its top two leaders in 1965 after being implicated in an anti-Malaysian conspiracy (cf. chapter 3: 3.3). Official state propaganda concentrated upon discrediting PAS as a communal party whose election would be disastrous to inter-racial harmony: an allegation apparently supported by contemporary academics (*ibid.*). Indeed, under Dr. Burhanuddin's leadership, PAS' ideological orientation reflected a curious mixture between Islam and Malay nationalism (cf. Mohamad Abu Bakar 1986: 158). Yet, insofar as Dr. Burhanuddin's political ideas became the ideological expression of PAS, the labelling of PAS as a chauvinist party misinterprets PAS' view of nationalism as merely an instrument towards establishing a just society in line with Islamic teachings (Safie Ibrahim 1981: 84-86). Furthermore, Dr. Burhanuddin perceived Malay citizenship as not being racially-based, but instead as a legally-defined national category, meaning that any individual becomes politically a Malay provided he or she "*breaks up his [or her] relationship with the origin of his [or her] nationality and gives full loyalty to, and satisfied the condition and requirement of, Malay nationality,.....*" (quoted in *ibid.*: 90). Accordingly, by embracing Malay nationality, an erstwhile non-Malay was effectively entitled to enjoy 'Malay rights' as the term was constitutionally understood (*ibid.*: 89). As Funston (1980: 148-149) has observed, PAS' concept of Malay nationalism could not have completely barred non-Muslims from political life, to which should be added the repeated assurances by Zulkiflee Mohammad, PAS Vice-President (1956-64), that PAS' objective was not a theocratic state or an Islamic state ala-Pakistan. In concurrence with a resolution passed by its *Ulama* Section in 1958, PAS' aim could be understood as the realisation of the *shariah*, towards which the establishment of an Islamic state was a necessary condition and a collective obligation (Safie Ibrahim 1981: 107-108).

Notwithstanding its Islamic imperatives, PAS' Malay nationalist credentials were augmented under the leadership of Mohamad Asri Haji Muda, and particularly

during the compromising of its principles as a component of the coalition government from 1973 to 1977 (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1986: 161-162, Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 56). Experience of government at federal level had mixed consequences. On the one hand, not only was the undertaking fruitless in terms of substantive structural changes towards an Islamic polity (Mustafa Ali 1993: 117), but it also deprived the badly-split PAS of long-term support from disaffected Malays in search of an alternative political platform (Funston 1980: 247, 281-282). As suggested earlier (chapter 3: 3.4), it was PAS' complicity with the secular-oriented UMNO-dominated government, despite its limited Islamic features, which inadvertently fuelled non-electoral Islamic resurgence. With the benefit of hindsight, it might be argued that PAS' continued existence as an Islamic-oriented opposition party would have obviated the need for Malay-Muslim resurgents to found other *dakwah* movements. PAS would have been the main beneficiary of the students' turn towards Islam. Instead, they could only have been disappointed by the Malay-centric inclination of Mohamad Asri's PAS, as exemplified by its constitution of 1973, which listed PAS' objectives as:

to defend in practice the Malay language as a single national and official language, to fight for the existence of a national culture based on Malay culture which is not opposed to Islamic teachings, and to fight for realising the aspiration of racial harmony in the country, for the rights and interests of the Malay nation and the indigenous people. (quoted in Roald 1994: 257).

On the other hand, it was the failure of participation in the federal government, followed by an ignominious electoral defeat in 1978 which ended PAS' eighteen-year rule in Kelantan, which prompted party reconstruction at grassroots and leadership levels (Mustafa Ali 1993: 120). This culminated in the deposition of Mohamad Asri's cronies from positions of influence and his abrupt resignation, amidst accusing pro-Iranian party *ulama* of plotting his downfall (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 112-113). The period from the assumption to the party presidency of Haji Yusuf Rawa in May 1983 until now, constitutes the revivalist phase of PAS. This era has been characterised by significant ideological and organisational changes in the party. PAS has intellectually aligned itself with contemporary trends in Islamic resurgence by repudiating nationalism of all sorts, as emphasised in Haji Yusuf Rawa's celebrated presidential address of 1984 entitled *Menggempur Pemikiran Assabiyah* (Combating Tribalist Thinking) (Mohamad Abu Bakar 1986: 165, Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 56-57). Bent upon discarding its nationalist and traditional image, PAS has revived demands for an Islamic state, remodelled its arguments with Islamic political vocabulary, resorted to universal principles of justice and equality to woo non-Muslims, and presented itself as the voice of the oppressed masses (Hussin

Mutalib 1990: 118-120). PAS' fierce assaults against government policies have criticised injustices of the New Economic Policy and oppressive legislation, shed doubts on 'cosmetic Islamisation' and raised concern at the lack of initiatives to tackle rising problems of corruption and moral decadence (Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 56, Roald 1994: 258).<sup>54</sup> Such an offensive approach has attracted to its ranks many educated Malay-Muslims, convinced that, in the light of other movements' mute response to rising suppression or preference to shy away from electoral politics, the only possibility for tangible reform in Malaysian society lay in the upholding of Islamic sovereignty in an Islamic state as endeavoured by PAS via the ballot box (Hussin Mutalib 1990: 121, F.M. Jamil 1988: 241-242). Nonetheless, it has also unnecessarily exposed activists to real dangers of over-reaction and consequent counter-operations by the state security apparatus (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1).

PAS' renewed ideological commitment to the ideal of an Islamic state, and its continual adherence to the party political method within a larger political structure based upon competitive elections, have been affirmed in the party's official publications and statements by its leaders. For example, section five of the PAS constitution outlines PAS' objectives as firstly, the accomplishment of a society and government in which Islamic values and precepts are implemented towards the attainment of God's Pleasure, and secondly, the maintenance of the sanctity of Islam, independence and national sovereignty (PAS 1990: 2). The achievement of political power is therefore regarded as a necessary condition for establishing an Islamic state, which is itself a pre-requisite for the total execution of God's commandments. Divine Blessings remain the ultimate objective, as asserted by Haji Yusuf Rawa, PAS' first revivalist President: "..... *securing political office is secondary to our final objective, which is, to seek Allah's reward and to obey His commandments*" (quoted in Hussin Mutalib 1993: 99). The whole chain of means and ends in PAS' struggle has been lucidly articulated in a document circulated by its Information Department:

..... the aim of the PAS struggle through a political party is to establish an Islamic state in Malaysia..... The PAS struggle for governing power is not merely for the sake of power, but as a means to establish an Islamic state which is able to implement completely the laws of Allah..... Implementing the laws of Allah in the form of *ibadah* such as fasting, praying, alms-giving, performing pilgrimage, etc. is relatively easy, but to implement other laws of Allah such as the legal, economic, political and social systems is not easy, unless by establishing an Islamic

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<sup>54</sup>In a recent interview, while insisting that PAS "*never shirk[s] from supporting the government whenever the interests of the country or Islam demand it,*" the PAS President Fadhil Nor remains sceptical of the overall thrust of the government's Islamisation efforts; as he comments: "*Islamic values are not just a matter of occasional injection, they should be part of a policy that develops and broadens its scope in the course of its implementation. We don't deny the existence of the Islamic bank, Islamic takaful [insurance] and the International Islamic University etc., but they remain little islands amidst an ocean of secular institutions*" (*Impact International*, November 1995).

government. As such, realistically, power is the primary condition in implementing the laws of Allah. Therefore, the struggle for governing power is incumbent upon every Muslim. It is this governing power which is called political power, and which has been the struggle of PAS for so long..... PAS has chosen the struggle through an Islamic-based political party as its path towards an Islamic administration. Hence, what is strove for by PAS must be advocated by society, particularly by the country's Muslims. (PAS n.d.: 2, 6-7).

A senior PAS leader has further rationalised the choice of electoral democracy as the suitable avenue to gain political power:

The prevailing political climate is a very important condition for the Islamic movement's participation in active politics. By active politics we mean the utilisation of political processes conducive to the Islamic movement. In this case in any country, we must examine the existing political system to gauge the extent of our possible participation. For example, in a country like Malaysia which practises a limited form of democracy, the political process of elections can be a vehicle for the further propagation of Islam as well as allowing the Islamic movement to attain a certain position that would allow it to either share power, threaten the status quo or seize limited power outright. The process of elections should rightly be seen as a mechanism for the Islamic movement to get the Islamic message across to the masses as well as an opportunity to forge a power-base. In the case of Malaysia again, the concept of Federalism as is practised now cannot possibly rule out the development of a series of Islamic state falling one after another to the Islamic movement..... in spite of such things as the present stringent control of the media, to call for a revolution at this juncture in the Malaysian context would not be wise and would be against the grain of political development. (Mustafa Ali 1993: 123-124).

At grassroots level, PAS' organisational mechanism revolves around the activities of its three sections, viz. the Youth Wing (*Dewan Pemuda*), the *Ulama* Section (*Dewan Ulama*) and the Women's Section (*Dewan Wanita*), each having its own leadership structure. All three sections are subordinate to a nationally-elected Central Executive Committee (CEC), whose leading members include a President, a Deputy President, two Vice-Presidents and a Secretary-General (Roald 1994: 254). According to latest available figures, PAS has 436,836 active members and 3377 branches throughout Malaysia; Kedah and Kelantan being states with most PAS members and branches respectively (*Berita Minggu: BM* 1.6.97).

Since PAS' reorganisation in 1982-83, the role of the *ulama* in the party hierarchy has been elevated to unprecedented prominence under the theme '*ulama* leadership' (*kepimpinan ulama*) (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 37, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 4-5). Undoubtedly inspired by the Iranian example, PAS has conferred on its

*ulama* the right to scrutinise party activities such that ultimate decision-making has been practically transferred from the CEC to them, as represented by a new *Ulama* Consultative Council (*Majlis Shura al-Ulama*). The Council consists of twelve religious scholars and is headed by a *Mursyid al-'Am* (General Guide) (Roald 1994: 254). This partly explains the overshadowing of the present President, Fadhil Nor, by the *Mursyid al-'Am*, Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat, as evident in the extensive news coverage on and specialist columns reserved for the latter *vis-à-vis* the former in PAS' own media network (cf. Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 17).

Unlike other *dakwah* movements which eschew direct participation in conventional politics, PAS strictly rejects the notion that an Islamic state can come about through gradual Islamisation starting from the individual, and progressing towards the family, the society until finally reaching the state. Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS' *Mursyid al-'Am*, surmised that such a theory was concocted by the enemies of Islam to obstruct the Islamic struggle. He ruled out the need for a diversity of movements and methods, and insisted that if there had to be diversity, one movement must be the primary or parent organisation, by which he meant no other than PAS.<sup>55</sup> Despite its President's claim that PAS follows a path of an Islamic struggle which "*works in the society and with the society in order to bring about a gradual but comprehensive reform in all departments of life*" (*Impact International*, November 1995), PAS' practical rejection of the 'bottom to top' approach of Islamising state and society makes it seemingly inappropriate to regard PAS as a strictly *dakwah* movement. However, as Roald argues, "*PAS can be said to belong to the dakwah movements on account of the activities in the Youth wing of the party, with its emphasis on student politics*" (1994: 253). PAS' adoption of party politics, nevertheless, marks PAS out from the main trends of Malaysian Islamic resurgence, with its emphasis on all-inclusive *dakwah* and organisational *tarbiyyah*.

For all its rhetoric on the necessity of an Islamic state as the solution to many contemporary problems (cf. Yusuf Rawa, in Hussin Mutalib 1993: 99), PAS has been reprimanded for failing to outline detailed proposals on the contents and mechanism of such a political entity. For example, Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 58-64) censures PAS for conceiving the revealed holy texts as akin to a magic formula offering specific guidance in nation-building in the political, economic, scientific and educational fields. Behind PAS' grandiose electioneering, he detects a paucity of research and intellectual depth in PAS' conceptualisation of an Islamic state: "*..... PAS has not made any serious study of the type of political and administrative features that are*

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<sup>55</sup>From statements issued by Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS *Mursyid al-'Am*-cum-Chief Minister of Kelantan, during a dialogue session with Malaysian students, attended by the author, at the Al-Hijrah School, Birmingham on 30.12.95, in conjunction with the winter gathering organised by Hizbi-UK, the PAS branch in the United Kingdom.

*best suited to an Islamic State in Malaysia*" (ibid.: 60). Criticising PAS for conceiving the Islamic economic alternative in "*simplistic formal-legal terms*," Jomo and A.S. Cheek warn that "*unless PAS develops its Islamic critique of the Malaysian status-quo along more progressive lines, it will not be able to offer a meaningful, viable and popularly acceptable alternative to the Malaysian people, Muslims and non-Muslims*" (1992: 103-104). Muhammad Syukri Salleh's recent research discloses that PAS' idealism of an Islamic state "*has neither been accompanied by a clear and proper guideline nor a blueprint that explains the model of an Islamic state in Malaysia that PAS is envisaging*," such that "*one is left with the idealism without an operational working plan*" (1996: 8). In response, instead of trying to redress the intellectual deficiency and presenting the electorate with a thoroughly prepared operational catalogue of their proposed institutions, leading PAS figures have lent substance to such allegations by dismissing the relevance of devising workable plans of translating slogan into action. As Haji Yusuf Rawa candidly admits:

We in PAS have been accused for having only general ideas about the structures and functions of an Islamic State whose establishment we call for. Let people continue to say those things. To us, it is not practical to go into details of what we want to do in an Islamic State. If they want to see we operate it well, they must elect us. They owe to God something if their vote deprived us to govern the Islamic State. All operational aspects of how and when to do certain things or launch certain policies, can be taken up later when we do have the Islamic State. (excerpts of interview reproduced in Hussin Mutalib 1993: 99-100).

Party politics, although an attractive channel to realise Islamic aspirations, has so pre-occupied PAS that it has neglected developing non-political aspects that make up a comprehensive Islamic movement. This lack of comprehensiveness in thought and action has exposed its activists to serious disadvantages. For instance, PAS members have been notoriously lacking in formal and informal *tarbiyyah* (cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 135).<sup>56</sup> PAS-run *pondoks* have been found to relegate the importance of the academic sciences such that an integrated curriculum is absent from its formal educational system (Roald 1994: 259-260).<sup>57</sup> In the long term, PAS-trained scholars, trapped in traditional Islamic worldview and intellectually ill-equipped to face modern challenges, are compelled to focus unduly upon relatively superficial issues

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<sup>56</sup>A problem admitted by several pro-PAS religious scholars during their dialogue, attended by the author, with Dr. Muhammad Syukri Salleh of the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (Birmingham, November 1995). Dr. Muhammad Syukri Salleh has done research on PAS in Kelantan, while the scholars were conducting postgraduate research at the Selly Oak Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, University of Birmingham.

<sup>57</sup>Despite widespread criticism of the antiquated *pondok* system, PAS *Mursyid al-'Am*, Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat, has recently reaffirmed his commitment to this form of traditional education ['PAS tetap sokong sekolah pondok' (PAS still supports *pondok* schools), *BH* 18.11.96].

such as tighter clothing regulations and limitations on female working hours, which do admittedly appeal to voters' emotions (cf. Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 67-72). Neglect of educational issues has made PAS vulnerable to a generational problem, whereby children of PAS members, having been insufficiently educated in PAS' doctrines, have drifted away from the struggle of PAS and into other movements or other secular concerns.<sup>58</sup> This is not surprising, considering that from the basic kindergarten level, PAS-run schools have been beset with financial difficulties and a shortage of well-trained teachers (*BH* 18.11.96). So chronic has the problem become that Penang's PAS branch has recently reminded members whose daughters are to pursue studies overseas, to initiate liaison between their children and *Amal Nisa'*, a PAS institution which organises induction courses on PAS doctrines, lest they be purloined by other movements during their further education (*Harakah* 30.9.96).

These, however, do not negate the few improvements of the *ulama*-led PAS. Among them, PAS members have established a successful economic enterprise, *Koperasi Al-Hilal Berhad* (KOHILAL), which began marketing its own products in 1988 and reportedly enjoys a loyal customer base of 300 to 350,000; mostly from low-income Malay families sympathetic to PAS (*FEER* 16.9.93). PAS has arguably transformed its parochial image into that of a mass movement by virtue of the wide circulation of its bi-weekly newspaper, *Harakah*, which by the late 1980s was enjoying a weekly readership of 150,000 (M.N. Monutty 1989: 118). To boost its popular appeal, PAS has initiated cooperative ventures with non-Muslims with limited success, as exemplified in the short-lived Chinese Consultative Councils (CCCs), and has intensively courted support from non-Islamic opposition parties, leading to the formation of two electoral pacts, viz. *Harakah Keadilan Rakyat* (HAK: People's Justice Movement)<sup>59</sup> in 1986 and *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (APU: People's Unity Force)<sup>60</sup> in 1990 (F.M. Jamil 1988: 244, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1992: 99-100, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 5-6). APU bore fruit in the 1990 and 1995 general elections, when the PAS-led coalition mustered a sufficient majority of seats to form the state government in Kelantan.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>For example, former President Haji Yusuf Rawa's own son, Mujahid Yusuf Rawa, a graduate in Arabic literature from Cairo's Al-Azhar University and presently lecturer at the Centre for Foundation Studies, Institute of Telecommunications, Perak, is not a PAS activist, and was instead invited to be the main speaker at IRC's Winter Gathering at the Muslim Resources Centre, Coventry, in December 1995. The author met Mujahid during the aforesaid occasion.

<sup>59</sup>HAK consisted of PAS, *Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia* (PSRM: People's Socialist Party of Malaysia), the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) and *Parti Nasionalis Malaysia* (NASMA: Nationalist Party of Malaysia).

<sup>60</sup>Until 1996, APU was made up of PAS, *Parti Melayu Semangat 46* (PMS 46: Spirit of 1946 Malay Party), HAMIM and BERJASA.

<sup>61</sup>In 1990, APU swept all thirty-nine parliamentary and thirteen state legislative seats in Kelantan. In 1995, the majority was slightly reduced; APU still controlling thirty-six of the forty-three parliamentary seats and twelve of the fourteen state legislative seats.

In the 1990s, the PAS-federal government relationship, which has always been antagonistic, has acquired a new dimension as PAS exerts control over a state which has had twelve years of UMNO rule. The issue of the attempted imposition of *hudud* laws in Kelantan has taken centre-stage in the polemic between both parties, and merits a later discussion of its own (cf. chapter 8: 8.2.1). As PAS' official position in Kelantan bestowed on it public respectability, and as PAS entered the stage of coping with the harsh realities of translating political rhetoric into action at state level, both of which would have had a moderating impact on its members, the government shifted the target of its coercive measures from PAS to Darul Arqam (cf. chapter 5).

#### 4.8 CONCLUSION

Islamic movements in Malaysia flourished after national political and socio-economic developments had shifted parameters of change in the post-NEP Malay-Muslim society. While state-controlled mechanisms tried to impose secular-humanist values in incipient social trends, with only a token appreciation of Islam as a cultural variable; for a large number of Malay-Muslim youth, social engineering took the form of a rediscovery of religion and consequent participation in any one of the five major Islamic movements. A new convert to resurgent Islam would typically 'experiment' with different movements until he or she found one which best suited his or her ideals, abilities and aspirations. As such, inter-movement flow of membership at grassroots level became commonplace. Nevertheless, the numerical strength of movements was rarely diminished as a constant supply of new adherents was readily provided by the ever-increasing pool of students, graduates and young professionals. Under their influence, the movements were moulded to espouse Malaysian-oriented causes, although their sources and formative doctrines not unusually traced their origins to foreign influence. This was especially true of Jamaat Tabligh with regard to its Indian connection, and of ABIM and IRC, both of which never retreated from emphasising their Muslim Brotherhood heritage. Officially, ABIM, Darul Arqam and PAS all had unambiguously Malaysian origins, but while ABIM acquired an international flavour almost from its outset, Darul Arqam and PAS initially orientated themselves as social and political movements respectively, within a Malaysian cultural milieu. In due course, as Darul Arqam became transnational in orientation, the other movements increasingly moulded their ummatic ideals to suit Malaysian realities. This shift, emphasising local *vis-à-vis* international directions of their struggle may have been in reaction to the evident success of Darul Arqam's heavily

Malaysian orientation (cf. chapter 7: 7.3), but evidence in support of such a causal relationship is lacking.

Doctrinally, the movements showed remarkable similarities in their general aims. All recognised the seeking of Divine Pleasure as an ultimate end, but sufi influence had rendered this objective more prominent in Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh. All movements professed a holistic version of Islam which abhorred separation between religion and state, and therefore fervently believed in the eventual pre-eminence of a broadly Islamic social, political and economic order; without specifying its detailed form. However, only post-1982 PAS has explicitly expressed its political ambitions in terms of a juridically defined Islamic state. PAS' political rhetoric was matched by pre-1982 ABIM, which preferred instead to clamour for the implementation of comprehensive Islamic systems. Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh, choosing to phrase their ideal notion of statehood in compromising language and as a distant goal necessitating a long-term evolutionary process, avoided state-inflicted political repercussions which plagued ABIM of the 1970s and PAS of the 1980s. The apparently apolitical tendencies of Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh encouraged early reviewers of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia to variously describe the movements as puritanically fundamentalist, anti-materialist, fanatical, backward-looking, unduly faith-centred, uncritically traditional and prone to other-worldliness (cf. von der Mehden 1980: 173, Funston 1981: 179, Ameer Ali 1984: 306-308, Chandra Muzaffar 1987: 46, Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 864).

It was the methods of translating ideal doctrines into action that significantly differentiated the movements. All groups stressed the importance of *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah*, but in the case of PAS, these aspects have been submerged by the requisites of party politics and electoral campaigning. Such a strategy has produced remarkable results in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, but in other regions, PAS' influence has continued to be marginal, hence effectively consigning it into perpetual opposition in the nation as a whole. Jamaat Tabligh's over-emphasis on a literally understood mode of *dakwah*, eschewing the use of modern technology, has deprived its members of a comprehensive *tarbiyyah* curriculum and an understanding of *dakwah* beyond the confines of oral missionary undertakings. Lack of comprehensiveness in internal movement programmes has not unusually encouraged PAS and Jamaat Tabligh followers to switch to Darul Arqam, ABIM or IRC, all of which offered a wider scope of activities so as to enable adherents to direct divergent capabilities into utilitarian and cost-effective channels. Integrated education was a cornerstone of these movements' programmes, but only Darul Arqam operated an educational system totally disengaged from the paradigm set by the government. While the graduates of other movements' schools relied on formal qualifications to

gain social and economic advancement, the Darul Arqam system painstakingly absorbed its products to fill vacancies in leadership and technocratic roles. Only a handful of intellectual high-fliers were maintained in mainstream public and private sector occupations for strategic *dakwah* purposes. The key to Darul Arqam's success in erecting a way of life independent from state-imposed norms and values, lay in a firm ideological commitment to distinctive precepts of life set by its leadership, and economic self-sufficiency. In these aspects, Darul Arqam was arguably more successful than the other movements. Darul Arqam's national and international expansion was consequently perceived by the Malay-Muslim political elites as a threat to their hegemony (cf. chapter 5).

In the purview of movement-organisation, ABIM's structure seemed the most democratic, while Darul Arqam's, steadfastly adhering to the sufi principle of loyalty to the *sheikh*, appeared to be the most autocratic. However, the existence of a *Majlis Syuyukh*, whose meetings were well-documented in internal Darul Arqam sources, proved that the Islamic principle of consultation was implemented by the Darul Arqam leadership, who claimed to believe in 'guided democracy'. In practice, Darul Arqam undeniably put obedience to superiors as a cardinal rule governing its leader-led relationship. This earned for its members the reputation of being acquiescent, mild-mannered, ascetic, submissive and inward-looking (cf. F.M. Jamil 1988: 163, M.N. Monutty 1989: 128, Roald 1994: 274). Yet, critics have admitted that the 'obedience factor' had served Darul Arqam well by strengthening the force of leadership and subduing internal crises (cf. M.N. Monutty 1989: 137).

In personal discussions with former Darul Arqam leaders in March-April 1996, the author was told that the strength of the 'obedience factor' varied according to the intellectual capacity of members. Those with higher levels of intelligence were encouraged by various formal and informal means to put forward opinions and suggestions to the leadership. But after a decision had been taken, upon considering views of leaders and the intelligentsia, obedience became mandatory so as to ensure cohesiveness and unity of thought and action. Lack of obedience to the leadership, as structurally organised, has been extremely problematic for elite-based movements such as ABIM and IRC. For example, Anwar Ibrahim decided to join UMNO in 1982 despite disapproval from ABIM's Consultative Council, whose judgements in affairs of ABIM were supposedly indisputable. This precipitated a severe internal crisis, which ABIM has weathered only by large-scale withdrawal of the anti-Anwar faction and adoption of Anwar Ibrahim's subsequent pro-establishment line. For all its claims to democratic leadership (ibid.: 88), the judgement of its most charismatic ex-leader overshadowed all other considerations. Because structures of such movements lacked

a spiritual basis, there existed no internal safeguard against intellectually superior members taking an independent line of action.

In the 1980s, under pressure from a shrewd state policy of cooptation and substantive concessions, the leading political Islamists of the 1970s fragmented into three distinct camps, viz. accommodationists who believed that the best way to implement Islam as a socio-political order was 'from above' by penetrating into the ranks of the ruling party and changing the system from within, moderate Islamists who remained nominally independent but significantly toned down their demands and image, and hardline Islamists who persisted with the 'radical' image by joining ranks of the opposition but stopped short of embracing violent tactics. PAS and ABIM exchanged places in the moderate-radical spectrum within mainstream Islamism. The era of a revitalised PAS peaked in 1990 when it captured the state of Kelantan in a landslide victory at the polls. As we progress through the 1990s, and as the revival of PAS entered the stage of coping with the bitter task of running a state administration without cooperation from the federal government, the foremost Islamic political challenge to the secular Malaysian state emerged from Darul Arqam, the quintessential social movement which spent its first two decades cultivating grassroots support through community services. The Darul Arqam challenge shall be examined in the next chapter. The fact that as the main Islamic political threat to the government, ABIM conquered the 1970s, PAS dominated the 1980s and the 1990s had hitherto proven to be the Darul Arqam decade, underlines the interesting dynamics of Malaysian-style Islamic resurgence: that primary Islamic actors in the political spectrum change through time. Historically, no movement can perennially claim to be the eternal or sole voice of resurgent Islam.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# DARUL ARQAM AND THE MALAYSIAN STATE: GRADUAL CONFLICT AND FINAL CONFRONTATION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The vicissitudes in the relationship between Darul Arqam and the Malaysian state perfectly demonstrated how independent organisations, however influential they were, would be tolerated so long as they refrained from politics, but would be suppressed by the authorities once their existence was seen as threatening the socio-political and bureaucratic elites. The official Malaysian government's policy towards Darul Arqam had been a case of gross misjudgement; it mistook Darul Arqam's non-participation in the electoral system for political apathy and allowed it to expand almost without interference for two decades. By the time Darul Arqam was seen as having crossed the political line and rivalling those in power, it had accumulated too extensive an economic clout and social influence to be defeated at ease.

### 5.2 PRE-1994: CONFLICT OF LIFESTYLE AND RELIGIOUS DISCORD

Darul Arqam had earned the 'deviant' tag since the mid-1970s, when its attempt to revive elementary Islamic practices, as manifested in its manners of eating, dressing and communicating, was widely viewed as antithetical to modern values advocated by the socio-political establishment. Allegedly displaying anti-progressive attitudes, Darul Arqam pioneers fostered in many minds the image of religious fanatics aspiring to recreate the 'age of the camel' within their retreats (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 6). The earliest newspaper article on Darul Arqam accused it of basically inventing a 'new religion' which demanded total abandonment of worldly comfort (*Utusan Melayu* 26.5.76). Public misinterpretation of Darul Arqam's endeavour was predictable in view of the widespread ignorance of Islam beyond the paradigm set by the dominant post-independence liberal-capitalist thinking and refurbished by post-1969 leaders of national reconstruction (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994a: 6). Despite contemptuous responses to Darul Arqam growing in society and the pro-establishment media, the political authorities hardly took notice. A handful of recluses who seemingly shunned worldly pursuits and were in turn shunned by society, was hardly an irritation to the broad-based government. Probably convinced that Darul Arqam's

influence would remain marginal, the political elites were content to minimise their surveillance of Darul Arqam at a time when the political potential of Islamic resurgence was beginning to cause apprehension in official circles. The officially sanctioned Islamic Centre did react to public pressure by dispatching an investigation team to Darul Arqam's main settlement in Sungai PENCHALA, but despite reservations for Darul Arqam's alien worldview and lifestyle, it came out with largely positive findings (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 7).

As Darul Arqam's socio-economic and *dakwah* activities began to leave a big impression among the Malay-Muslims, especially the urban youth who flocked in large numbers to self-contained Darul Arqam villages to join their Islamic activities (cf. chapter 4: 4.3), Darul Arqam's exclusive 'anti-development' image was tacitly accepted as inaccurate. This change of perception was reflected in the official cooperation extended to Darul Arqam's economic projects, and the reception of influential government figures in Darul Arqam's functions (Nagata 1984: 112, Hussin Mutalib 1990: 89). The cordial visit to Darul Arqam's principal headquarters by the Federal Territory *mufti*, Syeikh Mohsin Salleh, in 1978 did much to dispel the notion that the Islamic practices enjoined by Darul Arqam differed substantially from those of the Muslim masses (*Al Islam* June 1978). A minor outcry against Darul Arqam surfaced in 1979 amidst the expulsion of six leading members for allegedly questioning Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's unorthodox teachings, but this issue was quickly resolved by an amicable discussion between Darul Arqam leaders and Islamic Centre officials, and the consequent agreement of Ustaz Ashaari to clarify his mystical beliefs in the following December issue of the *Al-Arqam* newspaper (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 8, Kedah Religious Affairs Department 1994: 3-4). The first official recognition of Darul Arqam by the political establishment came in the same year when Ustaz Ashaari was summoned to the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, to explain the nature of Darul Arqam's activities. Having apparently been convinced that Darul Arqam's struggle did not forsake the world and was therefore not antithetical to the aims of the NEP, Dr. Mahathir was reported to have expressed admiration for the good ambitions of Darul Arqam (Subky Latiff 1991, Ashaari Muhammad 1993b: x-xii). Paradoxically, it was during Dr. Mahathir's Premiership that the relationship between Darul Arqam and the Malaysian government deteriorated to the point of no-reconciliation.

Substantial conflict between Darul Arqam and the government came to the fore in 1986. In the wake of the resignation of and revelations by the erstwhile Deputy *Sheikh Al-Arqam*, Ustaz Mokhtar Yaakub, the government began to unearth allegedly deviant (*sesat*) practices of Darul Arqam. Propaganda against Darul Arqam's peculiar lifestyle was superseded by allegations of theological 'deviationism', which came

officially from the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department and sanctioned by its political masters,<sup>1</sup> amidst relentless media attacks on supposedly Darul Arqam doctrines.<sup>2</sup> At the centre of the dispute were the theological status of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* and certain practices associated with it, and Darul Arqam's position with respect to the Imam Mahdi.<sup>3</sup> Darul Arqam's response to the allegations came not in the form of replies through the government-controlled media or outbursts of unruly behaviour, but rather through the intensification of *dakwah*, social services and explanatory activities to the public. Theologically, Ustaz Ashaari defended his teachings in his book **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (*Aurad Muhammadiyah: The Conviction of Darul Arqam*) (1986), to which the Islamic Centre replied with an anonymously written discourse, **Penjelasan Terhadap Buku Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (An Explanation to the book '*Aurad Muhammadiyah: The Conviction of Darul Arqam*') (1986).

However, the climate in which the authorities faced Darul Arqam through an exchange of intellectual exposition of arguments was short-lived. In 1988, unambiguous declarations of Darul Arqam's deviationism were made by the Islamic Centre (*UM* 22.9.88, 12.10.88; *BH* 14.10.88), and followed by state religious councils.<sup>4</sup> The book **Aurad Muhammadiyah** was banned, and the publishing permits of seven Darul Arqam's newspapers and magazines were revoked by the Home Affairs Ministry for fear they would lead the public astray by disseminating the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*.<sup>5</sup> Denied of nearly all means of communication with the public, Ustaz

<sup>1</sup>See the preface to the book **Penjelasan Terhadap Buku Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** by Dr. Mohd. Yusof Nor, then Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, 6.11.86.

<sup>2</sup>cf. 'Yayasan Arqam Berpecah Belah' (Arqam Foundation Breaks Up), *UM* 18.6.86; 'Kewajipan Memerangi Kesesatan' (The Obligation of Fighting Deviationism), editorial, *ibid.* 28.6.86; 'Haji Mokhtar Dedah Kepercayaan Pengikut al-Arqam: Buku Tarikat Disimpan sebagai Pasport Tentera Imam Mahdi' (Haji Mokhtar Discloses al-Arqam Followers' Beliefs: *Tariqah* Book Kept as Passport of Imam Mahdi's Army), *ibid.* 12.7.86, and 'Al-Arqam Adakan Tentera Berpedang Sambut Kebangkitan Imam Mahadi' (Al Arqam Prepares Army to Celebrate Imam Mahdi's Arrival), *ibid.* 16.10.86.

<sup>3</sup>*Aurad Muhammadiyah*, written in italics, refers to the *tariqah* practised by Darul Arqam members (cf. chapter 4: 4.4, Ashaari Muhammad 1986). This is to be differentiated from **Aurad Muhammadiyah**, written in bold, which is consistently used in this essay to refer to the book authored by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad entitled **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (1986). Imam Mahdi is the Islamic version of the messiah who will appear towards the end of the world to restore Islamic political supremacy and universal justice, heralding the ensuing advent of Jesus Christ; see Muhammad Labib Ahmad (1980). See below (section 5.4) for detailed discussions of disputes between Darul Arqam and the government on these matters.

<sup>4</sup>As religious matters are under jurisdiction of the states according to the Federal Constitution, consent of states' religious authorities, headed by *mufitis*, was needed for any legal action to be taken against Darul Arqam. For examples of state religious councils' pronouncements on Darul Arqam's 'deviationism', see Kedah Religious Affairs Department (1994) and Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 74-77, 98-100). For Ustaz Ashaari's replies, see *ibid.* (77-93, 100-119).

<sup>5</sup>The newspapers and magazines affected by this ban were *Al Arqam* (jawi script), *Al Arqam* (rumi script), *Al Arqam* (English), *Mingguan Islam*, *Al Munir*, *Al Mukminah* and *Al Ain*. The ban on *Al Ain* was arguably preposterous since it was a magazine for children and was by no means involved in propagating the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*.

Ashaari questioned the banning and the unilateral declarations of Darul Arqam's deviationism and replied to the book **Penjelasan** with another book, **Berhati-Hati Membuat Tuduhan** (Be Careful in Making Allegations) (1989). Nevertheless, response from the authorities came in the form of intensification of allegations and repressive regulations. Through the 1990s, the Malaysian public was to witness a systematic campaign against Darul Arqam launched through the mass media, distribution of pamphlets, Friday sermons and public lectures in mosques, offices, universities and places of public interest (cf. Abdul Khaliq 1993: 8-16, Haswan 1993: 12-23).<sup>6</sup> As in 1988, newly published Darul Arqam magazines were revoked of their permits, but now no justification was given.<sup>7</sup>

The year 1991 marked the intervention of senior Malaysian political figures in the 'Darul Arqam versus government' confrontation. From this stage onwards, allegations against Darul Arqam would mix theological and non-theological, primarily security, issues. After a firm declaration by the Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, banning all Darul Arqam activities and products in government departments, agencies and ministries: a ban which would also in due course cover statutory bodies, local authorities, political organisations and the private sector (*UM* 12.9.91),<sup>8</sup> the Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir, stated that the activities of the *Sheikh Al-Arqam* would be investigated, to ascertain whether or not they were dangerous and threatened national security (*BM* 15.9.91). Pronouncing that the decision to ban Darul Arqam was made by Islamic experts, Dr. Mahathir unconditionally declared that Darul Arqam had deviated from Islam (*UM* 14.9.91, *BH* 14.9.91). A similar allegation was later reiterated by his deputy, Ghafar Baba (*UM* 28.9.91). These were followed by the commitment given by the Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Megat Junid Megat Ayub, that Darul Arqam leaders would be arrested under the ISA, if their actions were found to create tension and jeopardise national harmony (*ibid.* 27.9.91). On the sluggishness of the government to enforce the said ban, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, replied that aggressive action against Darul Arqam would turn them towards militancy (*BH* 12.10.91, *NST* 18.10.92). In 1991 also,

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<sup>6</sup>In October 1993, for instance, a group of officials from the Islamic Centre was sent to Britain to warn Malaysian students about the 'dangers of Darul Arqam'. They held explanatory sessions in London, Sheffield, Bristol, Swansea, Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne, Leicester and Bradford. Personal communication with those who attended the sessions reveals that the warnings generally fell on deaf ears and students were repelled by the religious officials' arrogance.

<sup>7</sup>In October 1991, four magazines viz. *Al Qiyadah*, *An Nasihah*, *Anak Soleh* and *Generasi* were banned. In November 1992, the permit of the magazine *Amal* was revoked after only two issues, and in March 1993, the magazine *Ratu*, a week after the publication of its premier issue, encountered a similar fate; see Darul Arqam (1993: 191). From then onwards, Darul Arqam publications purely served the internal market i.e. for members only. Among them were *Stoppres*, *Ekonominda*, *Arqamnomics* and *Terkini*.

<sup>8</sup>For the formal letter of ban, written by Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, on behalf of the federal Chief Secretary, see *UM* 11.10.91.

allegations surfaced of Ustaz Ashaari's extravagant lifestyle abroad and of Darul Arqam illegally operating its own radio station (*BH* 7.12.91, *UM* 6.10.91).

In 1993, following Dr. Abdul Hamid's accusation that Darul Arqam was manipulating Islam to highlight the image of its leader as a political hero (*BH* 24.2.93), the Chief Director of the Islamic Centre claimed that militancy had crept into Darul Arqam, which allegedly harboured designs to overthrow the government by revolutionary means (*ibid.* 4.5.93, 6.5.93). After the Prime Minister stressed yet again that Darul Arqam activities would be clamped down upon (*UM* 8.5.93), a prominent UMNO senator issued highly controversial allegations in the *Dewan Negara*, the upper chamber of Malaysia's Parliament. Urging the government to confiscate Ustaz Ashaari's passport, he stressed that Darul Arqam was more dangerous than communists, that Ustaz Ashaari had ambitions to become Prime Minister, that Darul Arqam members believed their leader was the Imam Mahdi, and that the Darul Arqam lifestyle so promoted promiscuity that syphilis was rife among its members (*BH* 26.5.93).<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, as Darul Arqam expanded in size and influence, the government had, on its own volition, transformed the nature of its relationship with Darul Arqam from one of provisional toleration to one of overt hostility. While concerns about Darul Arqam's lifestyle and religious beliefs and practices had ostensibly determined the government's actions until the late 1980s, statements by ruling politicians in the 1990s suggested that antagonism between both parties had assumed political proportions, despite official disclaimers to the contrary. As one analyst contends, in relation to the changing nature of the authorities' approach to Darul Arqam from 1992 onwards, the government's political provocations indicated that its fear of "*Darul Arqam's political potential*" had overwhelmed its "*scepticism of Islam as a practical religion*" and its concern "*to protect Islam from a deviant practice*" (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994a: 14, cf. 1994b: 12-14). But insofar as it needed a religious justification to act against Darul Arqam, which was not legally registered, it had to continue using Islam to conceal more directly political motives. While state religious officials and politicians in charge of Islamic affairs tried to justify government actions from a theological point of view, other politicians and bureaucrats from the ruling elite, in their occasional outbursts, failed to portray the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy as a strictly non-political affair. This gave rise to an apparent inconsistency in the government's position, which became obvious in 1994.

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<sup>9</sup>For the complete statement of Senator Nazri Abdul Aziz in Parliament, see Ashaari Muhammad (1993b: 110-111). In this book, Ustaz Ashaari replied to all the post-1990 allegations against him and against Darul Arqam as an organisation.

### 5.3 THE CLAMPDOWN OF 1994: IMMEDIATE ISSUES

In 1994, political considerations overwhelmed doctrinal arguments in the government's reinvigorated propaganda campaign against Darul Arqam. Darul Arqam's alleged machinations to seize political power pre-occupied the agenda of senior establishment figures, encompassing top-ranking politicians, religious functionaries, security officials and media magnates. Allegations of Darul Arqam's deviationism were suddenly overshadowed by the Islamic Centre's charge that Darul Arqam had formed a 313-men 'suicide army' based in Bangkok in its design to take over power in Malaysia through militant means (*UM* 13.6.94, 14.6.94). Embarrassingly for the Malaysian government, not only was this denied by the Thailand government,<sup>10</sup> but police investigations also failed to provide any concrete evidence to substantiate it (*Thailand Times* 26.6.94, *Bangkok Post* 28.6.94, *The Star* 12.7.94). Consequently, the authorities retracted and confusingly claimed that the armed unit existed not physically but mentally (*BH* 7.7.94, *UM* 7.7.94). Darul Arqam was then accused of encouraging a personality cult, and of indoctrinating members into believing that Ustaz Ashaari was the Imam Mahdi, and even a prophet (*UM* 21.6.94, 24.6.94, 27.6.94, 17.7.94; *BH* 12.7.94). The Prime Minister, his Deputy and the Police Chief likened Ustaz Ashaari to David Koresh, leader of the Branch Dravidian Sect who perished in Waco, Texas, in 1993 (*The Times* 8.8.94, *The Sun* 16.9.94, *UM* 12.7.94).

The 'Darul Arqam versus government' issue was internationalised as the Malaysian government sought for cooperation from neighbouring governments to help suppress Darul Arqam (*UM* 23.6.94, 5.7.94). As Darul Arqam broke its 'media isolationism' by speaking out to foreign journalists, the issue filled the pages of international newspapers and magazines.<sup>11</sup> Ustaz Ashaari himself answered the charges thrown against him and Darul Arqam, besides hitting out at the 'corrupt' Malaysian government and boldly challenging the Prime Minister to a 'popularity' referendum (*The Nation* 2.7.94, *Sunday Times* 3.7.94, *Thailand Times* 24.7.94). On 5.8.94, the National *Fatwa* Council (NFC) announced a sweeping ban on all Darul

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<sup>10</sup>In a letter published in the *New Straits Times* (23.6.94), Surapong Posayanood, the Thai ambassador to Malaysia, wrote: "As regards the Al-Arqam movement, the embassy takes note that there are still differences of opinion within Malaysia and that a dialogue between the two sides has been advocated.....With regard to the alleged training of the armed unit in Thailand, there has been no clear evidence put forward by any party."

<sup>11</sup>cf. 'Target: Al-Arqam', *Asiaweek*, 20.7.94; 'Malaysia: Holier than them', *The Economist*, 23.7.94; 'Mahathir opens high-risk crusade against Islamic sect', *FT*, 6/7.8.94; 'Malaysian sect pays penalty of politics', *The Times*, 8.8.94; 'In the Name of Security', *FEER*, 11.8.94; 'A Ban Against The "Messiah"', *Time*, 22.8.94; 'Premier vs. Preacher', *FEER*, 15.9.94; 'Cult of the 'Father'', *Newsweek*, 19.9.94; 'Sect tries to turn away Malaysia PM's wrath', *The Independent*, 4.10.94, and 'A Malay Plot? Or Just a Well-Meaning Commune', *The New York Times*, 10.10.94.

Arqam activities; this time covering not only activities which propagated the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, but also its schools, businesses, socio-cultural activities and villages. Even declared illegal was the possession of Darul Arqam publicity materials, paraphernalia, literature, recordings and the display of symbols identified with the movement (*The Star* 6.8.94). While this ruling could only be enforced through the various states' Islamic administrative laws, the Home Affairs Ministry's declaration, signed by Dr. Mahathir himself as Home Affairs Minister, that Darul Arqam was an unlawful organisation under the Societies Act paved the way for the national security apparatus to act against Darul Arqam (*NST* 27.8.94).

Following these pronouncements, Darul Arqam leaders and members were subjected to the most intense persecution ever perpetrated on any non-governmental organisation. Such harassment included raids on communes, mass arrests including of women and children, confiscation of property, job and scholarship suspension, social boycott, ban on travel abroad and vilification in the media. During the first of many raids on Darul Arqam communes, 121 members, including twenty-two women and eighty-nine children, were detained in a two-hour pre-dawn operation in Paroi, Negeri Sembilan; eighteen were subsequently charged on various offences, including defiance of *fatawa*, failure to produce marriage certificates and practising polygamy without formal authorisation (*UM* 10.9.94, *The Nation* 10.9.94). In subsequent raids, signboards, banners and posters bearing Darul Arqam's logo were forcibly removed, while hundreds of items including hi-tech equipment, laser printers, computers, video-recorders, green robes, merchandise and printed documents were seized (*Sunday Mail* 11.9.94, *The Nation* 11.9.94).

Apart from banning foreign travel of Darul Arqam leaders (*The Star* 15.9.94), the government also ordered foreign Darul Arqam members to leave Malaysia immediately and Malaysian embassies abroad to stop renewing passports of Darul Arqam members, who were advised to return immediately lest their passports be invalidated (*ST* 8.9.94). Pronouncements were issued by pro-government *ulama* and the NFC declaring the invalidity of prayers led by Darul Arqam followers and forbidding Muslims to consume meat slaughtered by them (*Mingguan Malaysia: MM* 24.7.94, *BH* 6.8.94, *NST* 23.8.94). Earlier, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, confirmed that about seven-thousand civil servants were involved in Darul Arqam, and that the Prime Minister had directed "effective and appropriate measures" to be taken against them (*NST* 6.7.94). On 18.8.94, Education Minister, Dr. Sulaiman Daud, said that his Ministry had identified seventy-seven local university students, five lecturers, eleven non-teaching staff and 165 Malaysian students abroad who were involved in Darul Arqam; on action taken, he added that counselling sessions for the students would be organised, lecturers

would be advised to leave Darul Arqam or face disciplinary action and five Ministry-sponsored students in Jordan had had their scholarships suspended (ibid. 19.8.94).

On 2.9.94, Ustaz Ashaari and a group of followers, having had their passports revoked by the Malaysian authorities, were apprehended by Thai police in Lampang, northern Thailand. Separated from his entourage, Ustaz Ashaari was handed over to the Malaysian police at the Thai-Malaysia border, and was declared to have been detained under the notorious ISA 1960: allowing for detention without trial for up to sixty days pending investigation, and a further two years, renewable indefinitely, if the Home Affairs Minister decided so. Also deported were six others, including Ustaz Ashaari's six-month old daughter, all of whom were taken into custody on arrival in Kuala Lumpur by flight from Bangkok. Of these, three, viz. Khadijah Aam, Ustaz Ashaari's wife and head of Darul Arqam's *Qismu Muslimah*; Shuib Sulaiman, official Darul Arqam spokesman, and Jailani Jasmani, Ustaz Ashaari's press secretary initially released but later rearrested, were later announced to have been held under the ISA. Four other Darul Arqam leaders, viz. Zabidi Mohamed, Darul Arqam legal adviser; Ibrahim Mohamad, Ustaz Ashaari's brother-in-law and Darul Arqam director of finance; Hassan Mokhtar, Darul Arqam director of operations and secretary of *Majlis Syuyukh*, and Khairil Anuar Ujang, Ustaz Ashaari's son-in-law, senior federal counsel and Darul Arqam legal adviser, were also subsequently detained under the ISA.<sup>12</sup> Despite the intense pressure, Darul Arqam pledged not to resort to violence and instead sought redress through legal channels, being represented in their quest by such distinguished lawyers as former Lord President Tun Salleh Abbas and former Bar Council President Raja Aziz Addruse (*The Star* 6.9.94, *The Sun* 6.9.94, 12.9.94, 30.9.94).

The Malaysian authorities and press attempted to portray Ustaz Ashaari's arrest in Thailand as an internal affair of another country, and that Malaysian security forces had only assumed custody of Ustaz Ashaari at the Malaysia-Thailand border (cf. *MM* 4.9.94). Yet, reports in the Thai press clearly indicated that when Thai police intercepted Ustaz Ashaari's entourage in Lampang, they were "*accompanied by Malaysian security agents*" (*The Nation* 3.9.94, 4.9.94). Thai Police Chief Pratin Santriprabhob came under fire for authorising Ustaz Ashaari's arrest and deportation without prior consultation with the Thai Interior Ministry; it appeared also that the Malaysian authorities had contacted Thai police directly without first informing the Thai Foreign Ministry (ibid. 6.9.94). A Foreign Ministry spokesman said that in previous cases where foreigners' passports were revoked, Thailand had issued them a

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<sup>12</sup>The dates of the relevant press statements declaring the detainees' arrests are as follows: Ashaari Muhammad (4.9.94), Khadijah Aam (5.9.94), Shuib Sulaiman (5.9.94), Jailani Jasmani (7.9.94), Zabidi Mohamed (8.9.94), Ibrahim Mohamad (10.9.94), Hassan Mokhtar (19.9.94) and Khairil Anuar Ujang (27.9.94).

document enabling them go to a third country, instead of being necessarily deported to their own (ibid.). Interior Minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, on return from an official visit to China, expressed failure to comprehend the Police Chief's haste decision, asserting that "*the Police Department [was] not a toy for certain people to use*" (ibid. 8.9.94). Deputy Interior Minister, Den Tohmeena, condemned police for overstepping their authority, resulting in Ustaz Ashaari's detention under a "*thug's law*"; he announced that Darul Arqam had not been declared *persona non grata*, the presence of its members in Thailand being tolerable as long as no law was broken (ibid. 6.9.94). Deputy Prime Minister, Banyat Bandatan, was even quoted as offering, on behalf of the Thai government, political asylum to remaining Darul Arqam members in Thailand (*NST* 5.9.94). Such irregularities prompted accusations that Thai security officers had been bribed by the Malaysian authorities to carry out the arrest (*Bangkok Business* 5.9.94), which Darul Arqam claimed was tantamount to kidnap and "*politically motivated*" (*The Nation* 6.9.94). In view of the procedural slip-ups by the Thai police, the ruling politicians' reluctance to wholeheartedly back its security force's decision and publicised reports of enhanced cooperation among police forces in Southeast Asia in conjunction with the Darul Arqam affair (*Sunday Times* 3.7.94, *NST* 5.9.94, *The Nation* 14.10.94), there is reason to believe that the decision to extradite Darul Arqam leaders to Malaysia was made independently by the Thai police in complicity with the Malaysian security apparatus.

Malaysian NGOs and opposition party figures voiced their concern at the arbitrary manner of Darul Arqam leaders' detention and the denial of their right to legal representation. *Suara Rakyat Malaysia* (SUARAM: Voice of Malaysians), a Malaysian human rights group, disputed a country's right to revoke passports of her citizens abroad and claimed that in expelling Darul Arqam members to Malaysia, Thailand had departed from "*the normal international practice of allowing persons the right to choose where to be deported*" (*The Nation* 5.9.94). ALIRAN cited previous cases when the government did not invalidate passports of Malaysians who had escaped overseas after being implicated in financial scandals, and thus accused it of practising double standards (ibid.). Similar press statements by the Bar Council chairman, President of the opposition *Parti Rakyat Malaysia* (PRM) and Secretary-General of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) condemned the gross violation of human rights perpetrated by the arbitrary use of the ISA on Darul Arqam leaders (Zainur bin Zakaria 1994, Syed Husin Ali 1994, Lim Kit Siang 1994). The release of Darul Arqam leaders in the absence of specific criminal charges (and the opportunity to defend themselves) and an end to nationwide harassment of their followers were also demanded by Amnesty International (1994, 1994a) and the

Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (1994).<sup>13</sup> The government's blatant disregard for human rights in dealing with Darul Arqam was given such wide publicity in the foreign media, which Malaysia's Information Minister and Deputy Prime Minister consequently rebuked for allegedly exploiting the Darul Arqam issue to degrade the Malaysian government's reputation (*ST* 8.9.94, *UM* 21.9.94).

The 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy concluded, as far as official version of events was concerned, when the eight ISA detainees, in a closed dialogue session with members of the NFC held at the National Mosque on the morning of 20.10.94, confessed to their mistakes, repented and urged followers to return to the true path of Islam.<sup>14</sup> The Council was reportedly satisfied with Ustaz Ashaari's and his aides' confessions, although Ustaz Ashaari was said to be evasive at times (*NST* 22.10.94). Ustaz Ashaari admitted responsibility for leading his followers astray, and pledged to work for their rehabilitation (*ibid.*). The Islamic Centre warned Darul Arqam members against attempts to revive the movement (*ibid.* 24.10.94), and announced plans to set up rehabilitation centres nationwide for Darul Arqam members (*UM* 26.10.94). On 28.10.94, Ustaz Ashaari and five other ISA detainees were conditionally released (*NST* 29.10.94). At a meeting with followers at Darul Arqam's main Sungai Penchala settlement, Ustaz Ashaari proclaimed that Darul Arqam no longer existed and he was no longer their leader (*ibid.* 30.10.94). On 30.10.94, Mohammad Nasib Zawawi, ex-Darul Arqam *Syuyukh* Council member, announced the formal dissolution of Darul Arqam in the following words: "*The Al-Arqam movement no longer exists and its name can no longer be used for any purpose*" (*FEER* 10.11.94, *UM* 1.11.94).

Consequently, Ustaz Ashaari and the ex-ISA detainees, constantly accompanied by police Special Branch officers, embarked on a tour to former Darul Arqam settlements and centres all over the country, meeting with ex-followers and trying to convince them to leave behind their Darul Arqam past and start building new lives according to true Islamic principles. The press declared that the 'Darul Arqam episode' had finally ended with the surrender of Ustaz Ashaari's deputy, Abdul Halim Abbas, to police at the end of November (*ibid.* 1.12.94). Speaking on a national television programme two months later, Ustaz Ashaari said that more than seventy percent of former Darul Arqam members had been rehabilitated (*NST* 30.1.95). The Deputy Home Affairs Minister later announced that the final three ISA detainees, viz. Abdul Halim Abbas, Fakhrul Razi Ashaari and Sabri Abdul Rani, all of whom surrendered after Ustaz Ashaari's public confession, had been released and expelled to

<sup>13</sup>cf. 'Jurists urge freedom for Al-Arqam chief, *The Nation*, 17.9.94.

<sup>14</sup>The dialogue was broadcast on television by the state-owned Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) on the evening of 20.10.94. The author is in possession of video-tapes of the recording. See also reports in all national newspapers on 21.10.94.

district confinement (*UM* 7.2.95). The government's claim to have succeeded in 'rehabilitating' former Darul Arqam members was corroborated by the Malaysian *Ulama* Association's concession that ex-Darul Arqam members no longer posed a threat to society (*ibid.* 2.2.95), and the Deputy Prime Minister's revelation that Abdul Halim Abbas and many other ex-Darul Arqam members had applied to join UMNO (*ibid.* 27.3.95).<sup>15</sup>

While the government insisted that no pressure had been exerted upon Ustaz Ashaari and his colleagues during their ISA detention, apart from amicable counselling sessions with religious experts (*NST* 30.10.94), and Ustaz Ashaari himself publicly admitted that he had repented of his own free will (*Malaysian Digest: MD* September/October 1994), such pronouncements have to be put into proper perspective. Firstly, practically no ISA detainee has won, or can win, against the ISA, which empowers the Home Affairs Minister to detain anybody who "*has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia*" (Amnesty International 1991: 7, cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1). Various forms of mental and physical torture have been known to be used to extract confessions from previous ISA detainees. As SUARAM (1993) observed:

Torture is a usual phenomenon during detention without trial. Amnesty International, in its reports on Malaysia, have related evidence received about such torture. Many have been detained and forgotten for years..... We need also to bear in mind the mental torture suffered by detainees and their families..... Stories about the suffering of ISA detainees have not been fully disclosed.

What exactly happened during the 'counselling sessions' of Ustaz Ashaari and his fellow detainees remains untold, but in such a hopeless situation, confession was the quickest way of obtaining release. The possibility that they were subjected to torture cannot be totally discounted, for other Darul Arqam followers had to endure a similarly harsh treatment, perhaps less only in scale, as reported by a committee representing eight Malaysian NGOs during the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis:

We are also disturbed by the fact that persons who are members of Arqam and those associated with the organisation are being persecuted, for example through arrests and detentions, torture,

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<sup>15</sup>According to informed ex-Darul Arqam sources (personal communication), the applications by Abdul Halim Abbas and his compatriots were injudiciously ignored. Apparently, UMNO, or at least elements within it, were distrustful of former Darul Arqam members, especially leading figures who could plausibly wield significant influence in a short time and thus rise to prominence in the uncharacteristic manner that Anwar Ibrahim did. It remains uncertain whether the stumbling block to the ex-Darul Arqam members' entry into UMNO came from its secular diehards or its Islamic wing, as represented by former ABIM and IRC members, who possibly feared an eclipse of their influence should an ex-Darul Arqam exodus into UMNO occur. The press was silent on the issue.

intimidations, and threatened with termination from employment. To date, we have been informed that some 60 persons associated with Arqam have been arrested and detained. We abhor the torture and degradation that some of the Arqam detainees are facing. We stand firmly by our position that we are opposed to all forms of torture. This was mentioned in Article 12 of the Malaysian Human Rights Charter: 'No person shall be tortured or subjected to cruel or degrading treatment or punishment by individuals, police, military or any other state agency'. (Hector 1994).

In deciding to sacrifice his mystical beliefs, which he had always asserted were branches rather than the core of the Islamic creed (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1986: chapter 14, 1989: *passim*), Ustaz Ashaari was coming to terms with the reality affecting the eight-thousand full-time Darul Arqam members, whose livelihood were put at risk by the government's full-blown crackdown on Darul Arqam's infrastructure and business interests, not to mention the physical persecution suffered. After the confession, properties confiscated were gradually returned, enabling the formerly full-time Darul Arqam members to continue their business ventures under individual names, ex-Darul Arqam civil servants suspended were readmitted to their jobs, and ex-Darul Arqam students received back their scholarships.<sup>16</sup> Such goodwill was done on the understanding that ex-Darul Arqam followers had wholeheartedly changed their ways. We do not know whether a covert deal had been struck between Ustaz Ashaari and the authorities, but Ustaz Ashaari's willingness to confess indicates that he was, above all, a practical leader; unlike cult leaders, he was not willing to sacrifice his followers' lives for the sake of a few controversial religious beliefs.

Secondly, the nature of Ustaz Ashaari's confession itself raises a number of issues as to the 'validity' of the confession. His answers given to members of the NFC were full of circumlocution, and not once did he directly or unequivocally admit that he was guilty of embracing and spreading deviationist teachings.<sup>17</sup> The session itself was more a 'question and answer' session rather than a dialogue, as publicised, and the manner in which questions were posed to the ISA detainees was biased towards encouraging a 'confession'. Apart from Ustaz Ashaari's long-winded explanation, the other detainees' confessions were strikingly similar, raising the probability that everything had been pre-planned. There was evidence of implicit compulsion in the fact that the male detainees wore plain Malay clothes and skull-caps rather than their usual robes and turbans, and Ustaz Ashaari's wife similarly did not put on her *jilbab*. The donning of such Islamic clothes were allowed back during the ex-detainees' meeting sessions with ex-Darul Arqam followers around the country. During these

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<sup>16</sup>Personal observation of and communication with former Darul Arqam members in Kuala Lumpur and Penang (March-April 1996) (cf. chapter 6).

<sup>17</sup>Personal impression of the video-recording of the confession.

sessions, the ex-detainees were escorted by Special Branch officers throughout; one wonders why this should have been necessary if the confessions had been sincere.<sup>18</sup>

While other independent Islamic movements had largely been tamed or coopted by the government's own version of Islamisation, Darul Arqam had to pay the price for sticking to its own ways, which it was able to do via its economic independence. Despite the government's repeated claims that actions against Darul Arqam had been taken on account of its deviationism, it was evident that in the 1990s, assaults against Darul Arqam had concentrated less upon directly theological issues. The clampdown of 1994 itself started with a politically-laden 'suicide army' accusation. Official pronouncements of government figures suggested fears of Darul Arqam's political potential that threatened their grip on power; thus portraying Darul Arqam as deviant and deviationist (*sesat lagi menyesatkan*) became the only way to convince the Malay-Muslim population to side with the government. These issues will be addressed in the following sections.

#### 5.4 DARUL ARQAM VERSUS THE MALAYSIAN STATE: THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In its ruling on 5.8.94 outlawing Darul Arqam, the NFC listed nine facets of Darul Arqam's teachings considered to have deviated from Islam.<sup>19</sup> However, these and other charges of theological deviationism against Darul Arqam may be classified under three broad headings, viz. the theological validity of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, the nature of Darul Arqam's belief in the Imam Mahdi and fanaticism of Darul Arqam members towards their leader. The first two issues had consistently been the sources of contention between the official religious authorities and Darul Arqam, as revealed in public statements by representatives of the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department (BAHEIS: *Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam Jabatan Perdana Menteri*) and the booklets and documents it published on the matter (BH 10.6.93, 16.7.94, BAHEIS 1986, 1993, n.d.). The issue of Darul Arqam's alleged fanaticism, although existent from the early stages of the controversy, became conspicuous only in the 1990s, after the unprecedented interest shown by hitherto indifferent politicians who tried to justify their arguments in religious terms, hence practically forcing the official *ulama* to follow suit. Since the 'Darul Arqam episode' had always been

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<sup>18</sup>Personal communication with former Darul Arqam members and observation of a personal video-recording of one of these sessions, held at the Darul Arqam settlement in Kuang, Selangor in November 1994; see Ashaari Muhammad (1994a).

<sup>19</sup>For the official pronouncement of the *fatwa*, see the front pages of national daily newspapers on 6.8.94, and appendix C of this thesis.

presented by the government as a purely religious affair devoid of political motives,<sup>20</sup> it is pertinent to examine the contending arguments from just such a perspective. The purpose here is primarily to comprehend the reasoning behind the different understandings of Islamic teachings adopted by the opposing sides and to assess their justifiability, such that the 'Darul Arqam versus government' affair should not be perceived in terms of a hard-and-fast 'right or wrong' situation, with an objective truth at stake.

#### 5.4.1 THEOLOGICAL VALIDITY OF *AURAD MUHAMMADIAH*

Dispute concerning the status of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, as applied by Darul Arqam, concerned both with the *tariqah's* foundational basis and elements of its practice. First and foremost, the official religious authorities contested Darul Arqam's belief that the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was taught directly by the deceased Prophet Muhammad to Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi during a *yaqazah*<sup>21</sup> in Makkah, as related in the biography of the *tariqah's* founder, written by his eldest grandson, Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1990: 26-27) and cited approvingly by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 34-35). The authorities refuted the possibility of such a *yaqazah*, which arguably implied that the *shariah*, as contained in the Quran and *Sunnah*, was incomplete.<sup>22</sup> Acknowledging *yaqazah* apparently degraded both the Quran and the missionary character of the Prophet Muhammad (*BH* 10.6.93), whose death in 632 was an accomplished fact. Communication with the dead was said to be totally impossible for it went against both Divine Revelation and immutable laws of nature, such that Darul Arqam's claim that the founder of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* received it directly from the Prophet Muhammad was judged to be fabricated stories and nonsense (BAHEIS 1993: 15, 19; n.d.: 30). Moreover, it was argued that no mention of *yaqazah* could be found in the stories of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, who were presumably more in need of his direct guidance to confront chronic problems

<sup>20</sup>cf. 'Anwar on banning of Al Arqam', *MD* August/September 1994; 'Abdullah: No reason to give members asylum', *NST* 5.9.94; 'A butterfly upon a wheel', *The Economist* 10.9.94.

<sup>21</sup>Meeting, in a state of consciousness and *zauk*, between two human beings, one or both of whom may have been deceased and therefore present in spiritual and not physical form. Sufis regard *yaqazah* with the late Prophet Muhammad as a *karamah* accorded to saints; see Tomai (1989).

<sup>22</sup>The position of the Islamic Centre on *yaqazah* was clarified by Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, as follows: "*Muslims believe that the Prophet can only be met in dreams and not directly. If the Prophet can be encountered in such a [direct] circumstance, then whatever explanations that occur in the Quran are not correct*" (*BM* 17.7.94). The respective Quranic verse and *hadith* to support this view are: "*This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*" (Quran V: 3), and "*I leave behind the Quran and my Sunnah and as long as you hold on to both of them you will not be lost*" (related by Hakim) (cf. BAHEIS 1986: 27, n.d.: 12).

besetting Muslims of their time (ibid.: 11). Referring to a *fatwa* by the Makkan-based *Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islami*, a highly respected Islamic legal body, BAHEIS declared that claims of "*the dead maintain[ing] physical communication with the living, although the latter are allegedly endowed with supernatural abilities, are absolutely false*" (1986: 79-80).

Although Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 68-71) corroborated his claim with Quranic and Prophetic evidence allowing for Prophet Muhammad's posthumous encounters with succeeding generations among his *ummah*,<sup>23</sup> the authorities argued that his interpretations of the relevant texts had strayed from the consensus of scholars of *tafsir* and *hadith* (BAHEIS 1986: 21-26, 65-79; 1993: 20-21, n.d.: 12). Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 70-73) also quoted anecdotes from classical sufi texts and personal admissions of prominent sufi scholars proving that *yaqazah* with the Prophet Muhammad had taken place, but the authenticity of his references was severely questioned. For example, BAHEIS (1986: 26) rejected Ustaz Ashaari's use of episodes from the medieval book *Sharh al-sudur* as incapable of scientific authentication, and implied that such writings were influenced by the Hindu doctrine of the 'reincarnation of the soul'. This disregarded the fact that *Sharh al-sudur* was compiled by Jalal al-din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), the renowned Egyptian jurist universally recognised as a great Islamic *mujaddid* (cf. Atiqul Haque 1990: 113-115), and who, according to Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1990: 28) and Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 71, 1989: 109), admitted to have met and spoken with the deceased Prophet Muhammad seventy-five times. The religious authorities manifestly held that the authoritative reputation of a scholar was not enough to validate his findings and compilations.

Of Darul Arqam's ritual practices declared to have deviated from true Islamic teachings, two towered in importance above others. Firstly, the allegedly longer *shahadah* contained in the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, whereby the practitioner was expected to acknowledge, after the normal attestation of faith to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, the Righteous Caliphates of Abu Bakr (d. 635), Umar (d. 644), Uthman (d. 656) and Ali (d. 661) (cf. chapter 2: fn. 21), and of the future Muhammad Al-Mahdi. The whole addition was deemed to be publicly misleading, besides the claim that including Al-Mahdi as one of the bearers of the Righteous Caliphate was a *bid'ah* which lacked evidence from the Quran, *hadith* or practices of the *ulama* (BAHEIS 1986: 46-48, 1993: 22-23, n.d.: 24-25). Secondly, Darul Arqam's practice of *tawassul*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>For example, the verse "*And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: 'They are dead.' Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not*" (Quran II: 154) and the *hadith* "*The prophets live in their graves and they pray*" (related by Baihaqi) (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 68).

<sup>24</sup>The practice of invoking intermediaries, usually the *awliya'*, when making *do'a* to God. The issue of whether *tawassul* is permissible or not in Islam has long been a source of contention between Islamic traditionalists, who allow it, and Islamic modernists, who forbid it. See Sirajuddin Abbas (1991: 284-301, 316-326) and Deliar Noer (1975: 56-57).

as contained in the *tahlil* of *Aurad Muhammadiyah*.<sup>25</sup> The authorities vehemently repudiated the ability of godly people to mediate in the affairs of God and His creatures, and implied that resorting to *tawassul* denied His omnipotence and verged upon polytheism (BAHEIS 1986: 49-52).

Defending his teachings, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 89-90, 1989: 110-112) pointed out that grammatically, the apparently additional portion of the *shahadah* ascribed to its *Aurad Muhammadiyah* version was in reality a separate recitation. Linguistically, the phrases shared no connection, apart from being in juxtaposition with one another. The relevant question then became whether mentioning the names of the Prophet Muhammad's companions and of Al-Mahdi, following the conventional recitation of the *shahadah*, was permissible. Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 90-94, 144-151; 1989: 112-116, 118, 227-231) laboriously extracted evidence from the *hadith* and rulings by classical and contemporary *ulama* permitting both the successive recitation and *tawassul*. However, as similar accusations figured in subsequent *fatawa* on Darul Arqam's deviationism, the authorities had clearly chosen to ignore the sources cited by Ustaz Ashaari.

At this juncture, it should be discernible that theological disagreement between Darul Arqam and the religious authorities stemmed primarily from discrepancies in the sources used to buttress each other's arguments. While Ustaz Ashaari espoused the orthodox Sunni theology as systematised by Abu'l Hassan al-Ashari (d. 936) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944) and found in classical works of medieval *ulama* who unanimously endorsed sufism,<sup>26</sup> the authorities relied on the works of modern scholars belonging to the version of reformist Islam whose intellectual origins could be traced to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1263) and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), both of whom sought to purge sufism of its allegedly heretical excesses. Among scholars who could be included in this latter category, and whose arguments were utilised to emasculate and disprove Quranic interpretations and *hadiths* brought forth by Ustaz Ashaari, were Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905): former Grand *Mufti* of Egypt, Mahmud Syaltut: former rector of Al-Azhar University, and Nasiruddeen al-Albani: a well-known Syrian-based *muhaddith* (cf. BAHEIS 1986: *passim*). Contemporary orthodox Sunnis have conventionally used the epithet '*Wahhabi*' to describe the followers of this theological school which unanimously rejects the Asharite and Maturidite systems of beliefs,<sup>27</sup> and have gone at far length to refute their

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<sup>25</sup>*Tahlil* refers to religious chantings which testify that Allah is the One and Only God. The *tahlil* of *Aurad Muhammadiyah* refers to specific chantings recited in congregation by practitioners of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* on Thursday and Sunday nights (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 119-127).

<sup>26</sup>For an exposition and defence of doctrines of the orthodox Sunni theology, see Sirajuddin Abbas (1991: chapters II, III, XXVIII) and Ibn Muhammad (1994: 122-141, 147-149).

<sup>27</sup>The term *Wahhabi* was derived from the name of the reformer of Najd (in present-day Saudi Arabia), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787). It has been suggested that this epithet is a misnomer, for its

doctrines (cf. Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: chapters XXI, XXIII; Ibn Muhammad 1994: 78-121, 142-146). Embracing a traditionalist system of beliefs which tolerated controversial spiritual practices such as *yaqazah*, veneration of *awliya'* and *tawassul*, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad identified the authorities' theological doctrines as resembling *Wahhabi* thought, which was "*in conflict with Sunni thought*" and "*repudiated spiritual and sufi matters*" (1989: 110). He suggested:

I am not sure how far the Islamic Centre accepts my suggestion that its views are closer to those of the Wahhabis than of Sunnis. If that were true, what harm is there in explaining to the public, that the conflict between me and the Islamic Centre is actually a continuation of the traditional conflict between Wahhabis and Sunnis, and not one between true Islamic teachings and teachings said to be 'deviant' or 'deviationist'. (ibid.: 44).

The question of discordant sources apart, one may argue, by a detailed examination of both sides' discourses, that dispute between the religious authorities and Darul Arqam might have been alleviated had the former refrained from accusing the latter of subscribing to views and practices it strenuously disavowed. For example, the authorities accused Darul Arqam of adding phrases to the *shahadah*, hence distorting a cardinal tenet of Islam, although this had been categorically denied by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 89-90). Further, the authorities accused Darul Arqam of honouring the founder of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* as an anointed caliph, with the same status as the four Righteous Caliphs, although Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had made it plain clear that the 'Muhammad Al-Mahdi' mentioned after the *Aurad Muhammadiyah's shahadah* was not necessarily Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi, but the awaited Al-Mahdi (ibid.: 94-95). Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad also painstakingly explained that by *yaqazah*, he did not mean a conscious meeting with the original body form of the Prophet Muhammad, which would indeed constitute a denial of the completeness of the *shariah*, but rather with his soul (*roh*), from whom the acceptance of any command had been declared as commendable by al-Suyuti, among others (ibid.: 71-73). While such mistakes may have originally been the result of an unfortunate misreading of Ustaz Ashaari's *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, the fact that the same allegations were reiterated in 1993 (cf. *BH* 10.6.93, *BAHEIS* 1993: 2), despite Ustaz Ashaari's disavowal of such claims in *Berhati-Hati Membuat Tuduhan* (1989: 77-78, 108, 110-112) which went unanswered, showed that the authorities had resorted to a deliberate distortion of facts smacking of theological sophistry.

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implied sanctification of ibn Abd al-Wahhab was contrary to his opposition against veneration of humans, and that the so-called 'Wahhabis' preferred to be known as *muwahhidun* (unitarians) (cf. chapter 2: fn. 54, Mortimer 1982: 64, Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: 309).

If Darul Arqam were guilty of adopting beliefs and practices as portrayed by the authorities, their arguments in defence of their teachings would have been less credible. But as such, the authorities had to misrepresent facts to convince the masses, who were perennially exposed to only one side of the polemic, that Darul Arqam had indeed deviated from the straight path. Darul Arqam was left defenceless in the psychological warfare against the state as its publications were successively proscribed, such that the public was made to digest not Darul Arqam's actual opinions and convictions, but what the authorities wanted them to believe about Darul Arqam. Unlike previous official campaigns against heterodox beliefs,<sup>28</sup> no Darul Arqam member was charged in the *shariah* court for embracing or propagating deviationist teachings; a fact which lends doubt to the authorities' claim that Darul Arqam's teachings lacked proper Islamic foundations.

#### 5.4.2 BELIEF IN IMAM AL-MAHDI

The fundamental point of dispute on this matter related to Darul Arqam's conditional belief that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi was still alive and was being 'kept' in a miraculous state by God to prepare for his reappearance as Imam Al-Mahdi, the messiah whose advent was ordained by several *hadiths*.<sup>29</sup> Based on the prevailing chaos in the contemporary world and the prediction made by Jalal al-din al-Suyuti that Al-Mahdi would appear around 1407 H., Darul Arqam believed that Al-Mahdi was the anointed saviour of the fifteenth Islamic century, and the last in the list of celebrated *mujaddids* mentioned in the *hadith*, as related by Abu Dawud: "*Allah will raise, at the head of each century, such people for this Ummah as will revive its Religion for it*" (Ashaari Muhammad 1987: 648-654, 1988: 257). This was not surprising since the coming of Al-Mahdi as a ruler who would bring justice and prosperity to the world had always been a favourable topic of discussion and speculation among sufis, who regarded the messiah as the final and greatest *wali* (Muhammad Labib Ahmad 1980: 29-31, 42). But Ustaz Ashaari's postulation that the founder of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was the most plausible candidate for the Mahdship was based on purely arbitrary suggestions made by his grandson Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1990: 67, *New Sunday Times* 13.7.86), and upon circumstantial evidence such as an ancestral lineage reaching to the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah, and physical features and a name which accorded with the

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<sup>28</sup>For an account of such heterodox groups and the measures taken to combat them, see F.M. Jamil (1988: chapter 4).

<sup>29</sup>For *hadiths* on the coming and characteristics of Imam al-Mahdi, see Ibn Kathir (1991: chapter 6) and As-Siddiq (1985) (cf. chapter 7: 7.2).

description of Al-Mahdi in *hadiths*, as testified by his contemporaries still alive (Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 178, 1989: 48-49). One of them, known only as Kiyai Mahmud, was said to have heard in person Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's prediction that the revival of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, after a brief decline following his occultation, would occur under the leadership of a man named 'Ashaari Muhammad' (ibid.: 84).

The religious authorities' claim that the aforesaid beliefs constituted theological deviationism was contested by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 165-178), who opined that the whole issue of Al-Mahdi was not a matter of theological belief, such that even a disavowal of Al-Mahdi would not negate one's *aqidah* (Islamic belief). When the whole matter was not even a tenet of the Islamic faith, unlike beliefs in God, his Messengers, Angels, His Books, the Day of Judgement and *qada'* and *qadar*; how could determining someone as Al-Mahdi constitute a deviation from *aqidah*? Ustaz Ashaari supplied evidence showing that there were prominent Sunni *ulama* who claimed to have met Al-Mahdi and agreed with the Shiite view that Al-Mahdi had been born and was alive, without risking being labelled as heterodox (ibid.: 170-174).<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, part of the evidence came from a BAHEIS-published book, **Aliran Syiah** (The Shiite Sect), by Wan Alias Abdullah of the officially sanctioned Islamic Research Centre (ibid.: 173). Ustaz Ashaari's view that the question of determining the person of Al-Mahdi fell within issues allowing differences of opinion (*khilafiah*) based upon independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), and was beyond matters affecting one's *aqidah*, was purportedly supported by several contemporary scholars whom Ustaz Ashaari listed (ibid.: 175). To Ustaz Ashaari, all matters concerning Al-Mahdi were subsidiary branches rather than the core of the Islamic creed, such that even holding a mistaken opinion on any aspect of them did not make one accountable to God in the Hereafter (ibid.: 185, 1989: 79).

The authorities patently disagreed with the analysis above, stating that "*there exists no avenue for us to deny that the question of Imam Mahdi concerns the aqidah*" and "*determining the Imam Mahdi is surely a false and misguided bid'ah*" (BAHEIS 1986: 64). But apart from a *fatwa* by Mahmud Syaltut, whose unorthodox views had been rejected by the majority of the Sunni *ulama*, BAHEIS failed to provide any documentary evidence to support its stance (ibid.: 61-65). Moreover, as Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 46-47) pointed out, BAHEIS' arguments were replete with

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<sup>30</sup>Twelver Shiites (*Shiah Ithna Ashariah*), the dominant Shiite sect in Iran and most of the world, believe that Imam al-Mahdi is their twelfth Imam, Muhammad Hassan al-Askari, who allegedly disappeared into a tunnel in Sammara', Iraq, in 260 H. at five years of age. Sunni scholars claim that this belief is based on fabricated evidence; see Sirajuddin Abbas (1991: 127-128) and Ibn Kathir (1991: 20). Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad personally refuted Shiite doctrines, including the one on Al-Mahdi, in **Bahaya Syiah** (Dangers of Shiism) (1987b), but unlike the authorities' attitude towards Darul Arqam, he stopped short of labelling Shiites as 'deviants' or 'infidels' (p. 134).

contradictions and confusing statements. For instance, prior to its damning conclusions above, it had agreed that "*to Sunnis, matters concerning Imam Mahdi are only khilafiah*" (BAHEIS 1986: 63), thus implying that *ijtihad* was permissible in such cases. But it also added that "*determining something on a matter which is non-obligatory (khilafiah) surely becomes a bid'ah.....*" (ibid.). Any student of *fiqh* could not help being confounded by such a statement, for *bid'ah*, by definition, referred to any belief or action which was in contradistinction to the *Sunnah* (al Alwani 1993: 137), and the very fact that permissible differences of opinion occurred among scholars on any issue indicated that no clear guidance on it existed in the Quran and *Sunnah*, thus necessitating the interpretative process of *istinbat* (inference).

BAHEIS had also erroneously claimed that the Prophet's companions and the scholars following them had made *ijtihad* on "*matters whose bases were clear in the Quran and Sunnah (having nas qat'i)*" (1986: 64). For, as had been asserted by Dr. Taha Jabir al Alwani, President of IIIT, interpretation of a revealed text was "*only admissible in matters on which there [was] no clear guidance in the Quran and the Sunnah and which require[d] the use of rigorous reasoning (ijtihad),*" but in matters "*pertaining to belief there [was] no room for ijtihad.....*" (al Alwani 1993: 25). The whole purpose of BAHEIS' arguments seemed to be establishing that Ustaz Ashaari had committed a *bid'ah* by tentatively determining the person of Al-Mahdi, but its failure to substantiate them with any evidence from the revealed texts or consensus of previous *ulama* clearly violated the conditions permitting legitimate differences of opinion among scholars. These are, as outlined by al Alwani:

Firstly, each disputant must have evidence or proof (*dalil*) to authenticate his argument. Failure to provide such evidence would invalidate an argument.

Secondly, the adoption of a divergent opinion should not lead to anything preposterous or false. If the opinion is manifestly false from the beginning, it should be abandoned straight away. (ibid.: 81).

In a desperate effort to convince the public that Darul Arqam's opinions on Al-Mahdi were blasphemous and deviant, the religious authorities again blatantly resorted to factual distortion. For instance, as reported in *Berita Harian* (10.6.93), to BAHEIS, "*Ashaari's claim that Sheikh Muhammad Suhaimi Abdullah did not die [was] impossible since even the most honourable Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) died.*" This gave the impression that Darul Arqam believed that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi would never die, which obviously contradicted the Quran (XXI: 35): "*Every soul shall have a taste of death.*" In its official *fatwa* on 5.8.94, the NFC used the word 'resurrected' to describe Darul Arqam's belief in the coming of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi as Imam Al-Mahdi, hence implying that it was a

case of one rising from the dead (*The Star* 6.8.94). But as Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 117) and Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1994: 100) stressed, in response to bewildering allegations of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's immortality, they had said that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi had not died, not that he would not die.

BAHEIS' insistence that the real name of the founder of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was Muhammad Suhaimi Abdullah instead of Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi, as appeared in his biography by Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1990), was another subtle attempt to deny his claims to the Mahdship, for *hadiths* had stated that Al-Mahdi would bear the same name as the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>31</sup> Clarification by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 78) was apparently not accepted by BAHEIS (n.d.: 19), who claimed to have derived Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's real name from his original Javanese-language biography authored by his son and Mohd. Taha Suhaimi's father, Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi.<sup>32</sup> But Mohd. Taha Suhaimi (1994: 90-91), by presenting evidence from books which his grandfather himself wrote and printed, verified that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's real name did indeed resemble that of the Prophet Muhammad. Mohd. Taha Suhaimi also explained that his father, having gone to study in Egypt at a young age and settled in Java for a significant duration thereafter, was never in close companionship with his grandfather, such that intimate details of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's traits and life were missing from the biography he wrote (*ibid.*: 72, 95).

Perhaps most significantly, BAHEIS (n.d.: 22) accused Darul Arqam of deciding for certainty the person of Al-Mahdi, whereas Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad

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<sup>31</sup>An example is the *hadith* narrated by Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, reported by Abu Dawud and mentioned by Ibn Kathir (1991: 21) in connection with Al-Mahdi, where the Prophet Muhammad said: "*If there were only one day left for the world, that day would be lengthened until a man from among my descendants or from among the people of my household, was sent; his name will be the same as my name, and his father's name will be the same as my father's name. He will fill the earth with justice and fairness, just as it will have been filled with injustice and oppression. The world will not end until a man of my household, whose name is the same as mine, holds sway.*"

<sup>32</sup>Unlike his father, who was well-known in his lifetime among the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* circle and other sufi groups mainly for his supernatural abilities, Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi (d. 1963) excelled as a conventional religious scholar prominent for his founding of the Islamic College in Klang and vociferous defence of orthodox Sunni theology against the onslaught of *Wahhabism*, leading to his famed debate against the Indonesian modernist scholar, A. Hassan Bandong, in Penang in 1953. He is mentioned twice by Safie Ibrahim (1981: 17-18), in connection with his article in *Utusan Melayu* (27.7.51) advocating the unification of religious administrations of Malay states, and his chairing a conference of *ulama* which was instrumental in leading to the formation of PAS. William Roff, in his study of Malay-Indonesian students in Cairo in the 1920s, refers to Ata Allah Suhaimi, chairman of the organising committee of commemorative celebrations to honour founders of the *Seruan Azhar* journal, as "*a younger brother of the well-known alim Fadhlullah Suhaimi, who lived and taught in Singapore and Malaya for many years*" (1970: 85, fn. 37). In passing, it may be mentioned that the present UMNO Chief Minister of Terengganu, Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, is Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah Suhaimi's son-in-law and reputedly a practitioner of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*; a fact which he had never admitted in public, probably to safeguard his political interests. For a brief sketch of Sheikh Muhammad Fadhlullah's life, see Abu Arrabi (1990).

(1986: 184, 1989: 47-48) had emphasised that his belief in Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi as Al-Mahdi was *zanni* (uncertain) instead of *qat'i* (certain) since it had not yet happened. This was suitable to the position of such a belief as having been derived from *ijtihad*. Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 182-184) said his attitude was one of *tawaqquf* i.e. not wholly rejecting, yet not necessarily accepting, circumstantial evidence and oral testimonies supporting the view that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi was Al-Mahdi. Since the conviction could turn out to be wrong (Ashaari Muhammad 1989: 48), the so-called determination of the person of Al-Mahdi was nothing more than a prediction (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1988: xi). Furthermore, since the belief was the result of a personal *ijtihad* by Ustaz Ashaari, it was unfair of the authorities to implicate all Darul Arqam members and practitioners of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* with it. Ustaz Ashaari himself insisted that he never forced Darul Arqam members to subscribe to this personal view of his as derived from the view of Mohd. Taha Suhaimi, and that it bore no connection with the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* as a *tariqah* (Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 95, 186).

### 5.4.3 FANATICISM OF DARUL ARQAM MEMBERS

Charges of fanaticism against Darul Arqam most probably carried political motives from the beginning, but they were carefully shrouded by religious language and terminology so as to make politicians' statements incriminating Darul Arqam appear theologically justified. In his 1995 *Eid al-Fitr*<sup>33</sup> address broadcast nationwide, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad reprimanded fanatical teachings which encouraged the blind following of leaders, and gave the example of Darul Arqam as an originally innocent movement which eventually cultivated fanaticism through attempts to create a 'personality cult' around its leader who was allegedly glorified as Imam Mahdi. Fanaticism was thus singled out as the reason why the government disbanded Darul Arqam and rehabilitated its leaders and followers according to true Islamic teachings (*UM* 3.3.95). As a matter of fact, instead of the conventional allegations of Darul Arqam's heresy as outlined in the previous two sub-sections, it was the issue of fanaticism which pre-occupied the authorities in its conflict against Darul Arqam in the period immediately preceding NFC's decisive *fatwa* on 5.8.94. It was the case of an old issue i.e. Darul Arqam's deviationism, being presented by official and unofficial state organs in new fashion, centring upon the towering personality of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad.

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<sup>33</sup>Day of celebration to mark the end of the month of Ramadan, throughout which Muslims are obliged to fast from dawn until sunset every day.

Immediately before the allegation of Darul Arqam's operating a 'suicide army' in Thailand surfaced, Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Megat Junid Megat Ayub, had already declared that stern action would be taken against a religious group which was so obedient to its leadership that it repudiated the validity of the national leadership and administration (*BM* 12.6.94). We might have expected revelations of a Darul Arqam 'suicide army' to have come from the Home Affairs or Foreign Ministry, but ironically, the unsubstantiated allegation was advanced by the Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir. He further claimed that the armed squad would fight against anyone who refused to accept its leader as 'Imam Mahdi', as chosen by the Prophet Muhammad and destined to rule the world (*UM* 13.6.94). The Prime Minister then rebuked Darul Arqam as an organisation whose strength was based on fanaticism and the power of personality, whose leader harboured ambitions to rule the country and was regarded like a prophet and Imam Mahdi by his followers (*ibid.* 18.6.94). Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, accused Darul Arqam members of having been brainwashed into blindly executing any command coming from Ustaz Ashaari, who himself was accused of self-exaltation, through concepts such as *abuya*, his originating from the tribe of Tamim, *khawariq al-'adah* (defiance of natural laws) and Imam Mahdi, to a position attainable only by God's Messenger (*ibid.* 21.6.94). He revealed the government's intention to broadcast a video-recording showing Ustaz Ashaari claiming himself as Al-Mahdi and the operations of Darul Arqam's 'suicide army' (*ibid.* 24.6.94).<sup>34</sup> By later alleging that the concept of Imam Mahdi as brought forth by Ustaz Ashaari was political in nature: not to mould one's faith but to inculcate fanaticism in one's leader, Dr. Abdul Hamid had perhaps unwittingly divulged the government's fears of Darul Arqam and Mahdism as a political threat (*ibid.* 27.6.94). Despite denials by the Thai government and police as to a Darul Arqam-operated 'suicide army' in Bangkok,<sup>35</sup> Dr. Abdul Hamid, in a parliamentary statement, maintained that the formation of such an army took place as a material and personal sacrifice to protect Ustaz Ashaari (*ibid.* 5.7.94). The formation of the army was even mentioned as part of Darul Arqam's deviant teachings by Abdullah Fahim, chief research officer at the Islamic Centre (*BH* 16.7.94). The Police Chief, Rahim Mohd. Noor, condemned Darul Arqam's allegedly excessive glorification of its leader as potentially threatening public order, and raised fears that the tragic aftermath of cult movements like those of David Koresh in Texas in 1993 and Jim Jones in French Guyana in 1978, might occur in Malaysia (*UM* 12.7.94). Darul Arqam's schools were censured by both Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman and Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir for allegedly neglecting the modern sciences and

<sup>34</sup>The video-recording was eventually never shown on television, lending credence to suspicions that it was another government hoax and propaganda effort.

<sup>35</sup>See above, *fn.* 10.

emphasising instead the creation of a cult figure out of Ustaz Ashaari (*Sunday Star* 31.7.94, *BH* 1.8.94).

Clearly, as the promulgation of the *fatwa* of 5.8.94 neared, the leading theme behind Darul Arqam's alleged deviationism shifted from issues concerning the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* and Imam Mahdi per se, to those related with the authoritarian nature of the leader-led relationship in Darul Arqam. Hero-worship charges concurrently shifted attention from the mysterious figure of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi to that of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, who was in a position to respond to provocations, albeit from abroad, and being taken action upon as a Malaysian citizen. To give a religious colouring to the newly created atmosphere and thus maintain the semblance of a 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis that was wholly apolitical, the authorities persistently imposed upon Ustaz Ashaari the image of a militant cult leader who was idolised to an extent exceeding the reverence accorded to the Prophet Muhammad, who exclusively claimed for himself the mantle of prophethood and Mahdship, and who manipulated countless 'innocent' followers towards accomplishing his selfish aims.<sup>36</sup> Unequivocal denials by the accused and interested parties, such as the Thailand government with regard to the 'suicide army' allegation, were sweepingly brushed aside.<sup>37</sup> Yet, a week before the promulgation of the *fatwa* proscribing Darul Arqam, Abdullah Fahim, chief research officer at the Islamic Centre, sensationally confessed to *Reuter* reporters that the 'suicide army' charge against Darul Arqam was actually "*a propaganda exercise..... to get people ready for a comprehensive fatwa*" banning Darul Arqam (*Daily Express Sabah* 30.7.94). Significantly, this admission appeared only in an obscure regional newspaper which the masses of Malay-Muslims in Peninsular Malaysia could not have got hold of.

In the *fatwa* of 5.8.94, two main allegations of theological deviationism were levelled against Ustaz Ashaari in his personal capacity. Firstly, that he claimed to have consciously met and had a dialogue with the Prophet Muhammad. This accusation originally surfaced after the alleged discovery of a tape-recording of the said dialogue, in which the Prophet was said to have acknowledged Darul Arqam as a bona fide Islamic group (*BH* 16.7.94). The recording was played to representatives of the media, before being heard on television on 29.7.94 and printed in *Utusan Malaysia* on 6.8.94. Whereas the Prime Minister and his deputy respectively questioned the respect accorded to Ustaz Ashaari by the so-called 'Prophet Muhammad' who addressed him

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<sup>36</sup>cf. 'Pusat Islam atur strategi selamatkan 6,000 pengikut' (The Islamic Centre devises strategy to save six-thousand followers), *BM*, 17.7.94.

<sup>37</sup>For explicit Darul Arqam denials of operating a suicide army and of Ustaz Ashaari's claims to Mahdship, see respectively, the statement by Hassan Mokhtar, secretary of the *Majlis Syryukh*, in 'Arqam nafi punyai tentera Al-Mahadi' (Arqam denies operating Al-Mahdi's army), *UM*, 14.6.94; and *Asiaweek's* (20.7.94) interview with Ustaz Ashaari, who called the accusation a "*big lie*" which had been clarified many times.

as 'Sir', and the substandard language used throughout the dialogue (*NST* 2.8.94, *BH* 21.8.94), Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman disputed the whole basis of the alleged encounter as a logical impossibility which strayed from Islam (*BM* 17.7.94). This pitted both sides in an irreconcilable position, with regard to theological arguments permitting and denying the possibility of *yaqazah* with the Prophet Muhammad (cf. sec. 5.4.1). Even if we allow that *yaqazah* could not take place, it was instructive that the allegation of the tape-recording being really concocted by Darul Arqam was never scientifically verified in court. This raises the possibility that it was a pre-meditated fabrication by the government.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, that Ustaz Ashaari was claimed to have been endowed with the divine power of creation as summarised by the term *kun fayakun* (be and shall be).<sup>39</sup> Believers in such claims would have involved themselves in *shirk*, an unpardonable sin in Islam. The source of the allegation came from an article written by Khadijah Aam, Ustaz Ashaari's wife-cum-head of Darul Arqam's *Qismu Muslimah*, entitled 'Ayatullah' in an internal Darul Arqam publication, *Siri Terkini Era Kasih Sayang* (Latest on the Era of Love and Care) (1994). In the article, she praised Ustaz Ashaari as an *ayatullah* i.e. a sign of the greatness of God through whom His blessings were showered onto mankind. The controversial phrase appeared to be, "*If Allah is endowed with the attribute of kun fayakun, we can observe the representation of this attribute of His in His people.*" Khadijah's use of the nomenclature *ayatullah* must have caused shudders among the authorities for its resemblance with the title of Shiite *imams*, and was regarded in official quarters as another explicit recognition of Ustaz Ashaari as the promised messiah.<sup>40</sup>

However, the crux of the dispute lay in the disparate writing and interpretative processes utilised. While the authorities relied on a literal understanding of Khadijah's text, Khadijah's work evidently bore hallmarks of a sufi discourse competently written in modern Malay prose. Since the article was meant for an internal Darul Arqam readership, it should not have been interpreted out of context i.e. beyond the confines of sufi literary traditions. A thorough examination of classical sufi texts would reveal that discourses smacking of semi-pantheistic doctrines and advocating a seemingly fanatical adoration of a sufi master are not uncommon, written and comprehended in a

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<sup>38</sup>As believed by some Darul Arqam members and sympathisers (personal communication). Some others, perhaps the more committed ones, upheld the basic veracity of the recording, but suspected that such inside information could only have reached the authorities via government agents who had infiltrated Darul Arqam and who may have defiled the original contents.

<sup>39</sup>The term is derived from the Quran; for example "*Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'Be', and it is!*" (Quran: XXXVI: 82).

<sup>40</sup>See for example 'Action against staff with Al-Arqam links', *NST*, 6.7.94, and the text of the Friday sermon entitled 'Penyelewengan Al-Arqam' (Al Arqam's Deviationism) delivered at the National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur on 5.8.94, in *UM*, 11.8.94.

state of *zauk*.<sup>41</sup> For example, the controversial Andalusian sufi, Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), poetically wrote:

So if one say "I am God," then hearken to him, for it is God (whose name be exalted) saying "I am God," not he. But thou hast not attained to that to which he has attained; for if thou hadst attained to that which he has attained, thou wouldest understand what he says, and say what he says, and see what he sees.<sup>42</sup> (Ibn 'Arabi 1976: 21).

The hypocrisy of the government's stance with regard to Darul Arqam's deviationism, could be gauged by the continual selling of sufi-inclined religious books whose doctrines were akin to Darul Arqam's beliefs and practices alleged to be deviant. One may wonder, if the government was consistent in its theological position and its concern to protect the faith of its people, why did they not declare all such materials which indirectly approved Darul Arqam's controversial religious stance as illegal, and prosecute their authors or translators who were Malaysian citizens? During his several visits to Malaysia after 1988, the year in which Ustaz Ashaari's *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was banned, the present author managed to purchase such books from open shelves in public bookshops. Any reader would be startled to discover that the books candidly accepted the theological validity of, among others, *yaqazah* with the late Prophet Muhammad and determination of Al-Mahdi.

For example, in Husain Hasan Tomai's *Masalah Berjumpa Rasulullah Ketika Jaga Selepas Wafatnya* (The Question of Consciously Meeting the Messenger of Allah After His Death) (1989), translated with explanatory notes by a Malay scholar, Ustaz Anuar Abdul Rahman, the author presented a concrete defence of the North African-based *Tijaniyyah* sufi order, whose founder, Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tijani (d. 1815) also claimed to have received the practice of his *tariqah* directly from the Prophet Muhammad. In *Tazkiratul-Auliya': 62 Orang Wali Allah* (Reminders of Saints: Sixty-two Saints of Allah) (1990), translated into Malay by Abdul Majid Haji Khatib, Fariduddin 'Attar narrated the anecdote of a

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<sup>41</sup>One is reminded of the *ulama's* misunderstanding of the paroxysmal utterances of the phrase '*ana-haq*', meaning 'I am the Truth i.e. God' by the legendary Persian sufi al-Hallaj (d. 921), who was ultimately condemned to death on charges of heresy ('Attar 1990: 113-120, Al-Jiasi 1976: 72). In *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 181) acknowledged the supernatural abilities of al-Hallaj. This apparent approbation of al-Hallaj's mysticism was at least partly indicative of Ustaz Ashaari's sufi inclinations.

<sup>42</sup>This saying was itself derived from a Prophet Muhammad's *hadith*, which, given a mystical interpretation, would probably absolve Darul Arqam of charges of deviously comparing God with His creation. The *hadith*, related by Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, reads: "*Allah the Almighty has said: Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it*" (An-Nawawi 1976: 118).

medieval *wali*, Abu al-Hasan al-Khirqani, who claimed to teach *hadith* just as he was directly taught by the Prophet Muhammad, telling his student:

The Prophet is always with me when I teach you. When a false *hadith* is recited, his facial expression changes in disapproval. From there, I know whether a reputed *hadith* is true or untrue. (Attar 1990: 125).

In **Mengenal Al-Tarekat Al-Ahmadiyah** (Introducing the *Ahmadiyyah* sufi order) (1993), written jointly by Mohd. Murtadza Sheikh Haji Ahmad, the *mufti* of Negeri Sembilan, and Professor Mahmud Saedon Awang Othman of the International Islamic University, the authors more than once explicitly referred to the conscious meetings of Sheikh Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837) and of his disciple Syeikh Ibrahim al-Rasyidi with the Prophet Muhammad in connection with the origins of the *Ahmadiyyah* sufi order.<sup>43</sup> While the *yaqazah* of Sheikh Ahmad Idris, a teacher of Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani, was also mentioned by Tomai (1989: 100-103), it was the fact that both the aforesaid authors were members of the NFC which declared Darul Arqam as heterodox, which would astonish any reader. Furthermore, the book was published by the Negeri Sembilan Islamic Affairs Department and contained a preface by the state's Chief Minister, Mohd. Isa Abdul Samad.

On the issue of Al-Mahdi, a researcher not known to have any connection with Darul Arqam, boldly stated, in close resemblance with Ustaz Ashaari's views, that:

Meanwhile, the author has discovered a book entitled *Manakib asy-Syeikh as-Saiyid Muhammad bin Abdullah as-Suhaimi*, founder of the *Suhaimi*<sup>44</sup> sufi order famous in the Malay world. In the book, it is mentioned that Syeikh Suhaimi, said to have 'died' or disappeared in 1929, will reappear and assume an important position as decided by the Council of Saints. He will be easily recognisable through several distinctive physical features, such as a mole on his right cheek. Besides that, the *Manakib* also proves that Syeikh Suhaimi is a descendant of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)..... **it could therefore be concluded that Syeikh Suhaimi will reappear as the awaited Imam Mahdi.** However, before disappearing, he

<sup>43</sup>The *Ahmadiyyah* sufi order derived its name from the afore-mentioned Sheikh Ahmad ibn Idris, a progenitor of Islamic revival in nineteenth-century North Africa. Despite his strong sufi credentials, Sheikh Ahmad ibn Idris has not unusually been identified by scholars as a 'fundamentalist', whose criticism of degenerated forms of mysticism bore resemblance with *Wahhabi* views and earned him the wrath of traditional sufi brotherhoods. Disciples of Sheikh Ahmad ibn Idris were instrumental in the founding of the *Tijaniyyah* and *Samusiyyah* sufi orders, both of which were similarly revivalist in orientation. See Mortimer (1982: 72-74), Husain (1995: 75) and Tomai (1989: 102-103, fn. 97).

<sup>44</sup>That the author mentioned here '*Suhaimi*' instead of '*Aurad Muhammadiyah*' may be due to factual misinformation in his research, or to the possibility that the '*Suhaimi tariqah*' was another name for '*Aurad Muhammadiyah*'. It has not been known that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi had founded any other *tariqah* besides the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, although he did mention that before practising the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, he was a practitioner of the '*Alawiyah tariqah* (As-Suhaimi n.d.: 3).

reminded his disciples to sustain and implement the laws of Allah. (Muhammad Labib Ahmad 1980: 44, emphasis added).

On the whole, theological allegations against Darul Arqam were never properly investigated or proven, but were judged to be true based on a malicious campaign of 'trial by media'. As far as the media coverage of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy from a religious perspective was concerned, a balanced view i.e. one which gave exposure to perspectives from schools of Islamic thought not subscribed to by the authorities, was perennially elusive. Even if there were remarks representing views congruent with those of the accused, they were relegated to obscure sections of a publication, given minute portions of a page, or even outrightly distorted, such that the balance of the argument would eventually be in the authorities' favour.<sup>45</sup> It was this biased environment which may explain Darul Arqam's reluctance to speak out through the media. At the end of the day, the Malaysian government probably succeeded in pushing its sinister portrayal of Darul Arqam down the throats of the Malay-Muslim population, with the exception of an informed minority whose overt or covert dependence on state patronage and resources, however, cowed them into silence and unwilling submission to the establishment.<sup>46</sup>

## 5.5 DARUL ARQAM VERSUS THE MALAYSIAN STATE: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Notwithstanding the virtually universal acceptance of Darul Arqam as an apolitical movement, a few academics had noted Darul Arqam's latent political capacity which others had prematurely dismissed (cf. chapter 4: 4.8). By the early 1980s, Mohamad Abu Bakar had contended that in terms of practical actualisation of Islamic law, Darul Arqam, with a "*model "society" personif[ying] Ustaz Ashaari's criticism of the government for its failure to implement Islamic law,*" (1981: 1049) was the most advanced of all Islamic movements in Malaysia. In her seminal study of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia, Judith Nagata warned of the political implications of Darul Arqam's economic policies which, by emphasising self-sufficiency and autonomy, constituted "*an indirect challenge to the integrity of the New Economic Policy and its commitment to a western/capitalist pattern of modernization*" (1984:

<sup>45</sup>Personal conclusion from the scrutiny of virtually all newspaper articles and reports on the 'Darul Arqam versus government' issue from June to August 1994.

<sup>46</sup>Personal observation of Malay-Muslim academic communities in Britain (November 1994-present day) and the USM (March-April 1996). Although obviously aware of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' issue, most students and lecturers were reluctant to express views on the subject, possibly for fear of being spied upon by government agents among their colleagues.

113). In a similar light, Muhammad Syukri Salleh, who conducted fieldwork on Darul Arqam in 1988, cautioned, "*as Darul Arqam's independent economic system is alien and in fact inimical to the dominant capitalist system of the country, its expansion would cost a price to the government*" (1992: 280).

In the 1990s, experts' perceptions of Darul Arqam had shifted focus from its economic prowess to its overt political potential, in order to explain both the causes and consequences of the state's increasingly hostile response to it. For example, Nagata questioned the wisdom behind the religious authorities' "*zeal to control or restrict any potential Islamic opposition within the country*," a policy which had purportedly driven Darul Arqam overseas, "*where its informal political success in a longer term may in fact be enhanced*" (1994: 73). Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1993: 30-31) conclusively favoured the 'political' over the 'theological' explanation in his penetrating analysis of the Malaysian state's 'politics of unfavourable responses' against Darul Arqam, and endorsed Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's (1993b: 101) view that the actual reason for Dr. Mahathir's vituperative assaults against Darul Arqam was the wish to see Darul Arqam's influence curbed so that the political environment as determined by the Prime Minister's vision would continue uninterrupted. Barely a month before the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis erupted, Rustam Sani of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) in Kuala Lumpur perceived, "*For a long time Arqam was considered safe because of its non-political stance, but that is certainly changing now*" (FEER 26.5.94). The few research papers that discussed, albeit in rudimentary terms, the state's response to Darul Arqam in 1994 also never failed to mention the political aspect of the episode. For instance, Meuleman noted opinions attributing the harshness of the Malaysian government to "*the particular political interest of Mahathir Muhammad and his UMNO party, trying to strengthen their power in upcoming elections*" (1995: 7), while Naimah Talib of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore thought that despite the Mahathir government's denials of political motivations of its actions, "*it would be difficult to dismiss the suspicion that the government had wanted to deal with the Arqam problem before holding the general election in 1995*" (1995: 17-18).

The government had unwaveringly stressed that the stern measures against Darul Arqam were taken on religious rather than political grounds. For instance, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, insisting that moves against Darul Arqam were purely based on the group's abuse of religious teachings, denied the government's ever considering Darul Arqam as a political threat since its members were not "*registered voters*" and could not "*influence the voting trend*" (MD August/September 1994, BH

16.9.94).<sup>47</sup> In a press conference with Thai journalists, he dismissed Darul Arqam as a minor religious problem which need not be dealt with as a "security issue" (*Bangkok Post* 21.9.94), thus calling into question the government's use of the ISA which was expressly intended to solve security issues. To the Thai government's offer of political asylum to Darul Arqam members in Thailand, the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, replied that there was no reason to do so since Darul Arqam was officially being persecuted for non-political reasons (*NST* 5.9.94). The sentiment was echoed by the Prime Minister, whose affirmation of Ustaz Ashaari's detention and the entire 'Darul Arqam issue' as strictly "religious" matters without political interests, was seen as an attempt to present himself as a bastion against extremism (*BH* 10.9.94, *The Economist* 10.9.94). In the wake of an abortive Darul Arqam revival in 1996 (cf. chapter 8: 8.1), Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, by now Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, publicly denied that the latest Islamic Centre-orchestrated actions against Darul Arqam were politically motivated (*Mingguan Tempo* 2-12.10.96).

Yet, the flow of events and pronouncements by government figures indicated the furtive presence of a politically inspired agenda behind the repression against Darul Arqam. Even before the crisis unfolded, allegations that Darul Arqam was trying to usurp political power through a 'magical struggle' had come from the Chief Director of the Islamic Centre (*BH* 6.5.93). From its very beginning, the Information Minister had accused Darul Arqam of harbouring extreme political ambitions (*UM* 14.6.94). The Islamic Centre's reading of Ustaz Ashaari's mystical teachings brought it to the conclusion that Darul Arqam wanted to impose its reins on the whole of East Asia, starting from Malaysia (*BH* 16.7.94). Immediately following the issuance of the *fatwa* on 5.8.94, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman insisted that Darul Arqam's concept of Imam al-Mahdi was a political concept which had been associated with a religious struggle (*UM* 6.8.94). After the ISA arrests, the Malaysian Police Chief claimed to have extracted information from Ustaz Ashaari, under interrogation, proving that Darul Arqam had plans to capture political power "through magic and violence" (*The Nation* 17.9.94). One wonders, if the repression against Darul Arqam had been truly devoid of political motives, what then goaded the press and respectable government figures into issuing such obviously politically-laden statements?

Commentaries in the pro-establishment press were unabashed in provoking the government into a political confrontation with Darul Arqam. In late 1991, the tabloid *Media Islam*, citing evidence from the Islamic Centre and former Darul Arqam

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<sup>47</sup>This conflicted with an earlier estimate by Ghani Ismail, a newspaper columnist, that Darul Arqam could politically influence up to 200,000 voters (*FEER* 26.5.94).

members, ran a series of special issues which purposely misconstrued Darul Arqam's administrative changes and expanding influence abroad as indicating its intentions to eventually rule the country and the world. Such provocative titles as '*Kabinet Bayangan Arqam*' (Arqam's Shadow Cabinet), '*Arqam Tubuh 13 Kementerian*' (Arqam Forms 13 Ministries), '*Arqam Peralatkan Menteri*' (Arqam Manipulates Minister) and '*Arqam Rancang Rampas Kuasa*' (Arqam Planned to Wrest Power) were unashamedly used to arouse public fear of an impending Darul Arqam takeover (*Media Islam* 25.10.91, 8.11.91). The inculcation of such fear could not have escaped the minds of any uninformed reader of Astora JB's commentary of Ustaz Ashaari's messianic thought entitled '*Jadi Perdana Menteri cara ghaib*' (Becoming the Prime Minister through magic) (*UM* 24.6.94), or A.Nazri Abdullah's weekly column which warned that whereas Darul Arqam had previously "*concentrated on bolstering the faith and popularising the Islamic way of life (albeit in disputable terms),*" now it had remoulded itself into "*a movement with political aims*" (*BM* 3.7.94).

Independent analysts broadly agreed with Darul Arqam's view, as expressed by Ustaz Ashaari in a late August interview with the Bangkok-based *The Nation*, that the government acted against Darul Arqam not out of a benign concern for religion per se, but rather, the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy was purposely engendered and flared up to fulfil political interests of Malaysia's ruling elite (*MM* 4.9.94). The view that the explanation for the government-perpetrated crackdown lay entirely in its concealed political motives found resounding echoes not only in Darul Arqam circles, but also among "*many diplomats and political opponents of the Prime Minister*" (*New York Times* 10.10.94). A senior diplomat was quoted as saying that Malaysia's move against Darul Arqam stemmed from Ustaz Ashaari having "*crossed the political line*" (*The Times* 8.8.94). Ahmad Nor, MP of the opposition DAP, claimed that many ordinary citizens doubted the bases of the government's exaggerated allegations against Darul Arqam, and saw instead behind them, in the wake of the oncoming general elections, sinister political manoeuvres designed to retain the electoral support of those, especially non-Muslims, terrified at the prospects of militant Islamists forcefully assuming power (*UM* 5.7.94). In a highly erudite legal analysis, former Lord Chief Justice Salleh Abas opined that Darul Arqam was indeed guilty of two offences, viz. the failure to register the movement, and the propagation of false doctrines, but added that "*these offences [did] not justify the Government to detain them under ISA which [was] a law used for political purposes*" (Salleh Abas 1994: 18).

In the light of all the aforesaid observations, a discussion of the political aspects and ramifications of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy would have to consider the issue from three perspectives which pit Darul Arqam against

three groups basically making up Malaysia's ruling establishment. These are the religious establishment, the media establishment and the Malay political elites.

### 5.5.1 DARUL ARQAM VERSUS THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

That the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis was engendered by a bitter clash for influence between Darul Arqam and the religious establishment, could be judged by the fact that the campaign against Darul Arqam was spearheaded by successive Chief Directors of the Islamic Centre and Deputy Ministers at the Prime Minister's Department. The former were responsible to the latter, who headed the Islamic Affairs Division, under which the Islamic Centre functioned as the hub of the national religious bureaucracy.

The glaring sluggishness and indecision that characterised the Islamic Centre-led campaign against Darul Arqam, spanning the years 1986-1994, have been legitimately questioned by observers (cf. Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 16, Meuleman 1995: 6, Talib 1995: 16). Having denounced Ustaz Ashaari's reassertion of spiritual doctrines he had purportedly discarded in 1979, and condemned his **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** as "*containing teachings and precepts which deviate from Islam, [which] must be avoided and inhibited by Muslim society in order to avoid deviance*" in BAHEIS (1986: 96-97), the government's use of NFC-issued *fatawa* to proscribe Darul Arqam came surprisingly late and in patches i.e. in 1988 on the book **Aurad Muhammadiyah**, in 1991 on Darul Arqam's activities in government bodies, and in 1994 on Darul Arqam itself. From one perspective, this was a measure of the religious bureaucracy's inefficiency, arising from procedural bottlenecks and lack of uniformity between federal and state religious administrations. Eventually, the manner in which the *fatawa* were issued not only flouted constitutional and legal proceedings, as pointed out by the lawyers Abu Saifullah Ramadhan (1991: *passim*) and Salleh Abbas (1994: *passim*), but the *fatawa* themselves were arguably of dubious value. As will be shown below, circumstantial evidence of bureaucratic and intellectual ineptness surrounding the issuance of the *fatawa* gives one reason to suspect that they were pre-imposed decisions by the political establishment rather than the result of a thorough deliberation by the religious scholars involved.

In the light of the scholarly defence by Ustaz Ashaari of his disputed teachings, any scholar sincere in his knowledge would have hesitated in categorically pronouncing Darul Arqam as 'deviant and deviationist'. Newspaper reports, as reprinted in Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 72), showed glaring inconsistencies in the

reasons for the banning of **Aurad Muhammadiyah** in 1988, as promulgated by the various state religious councils. According to *Mingguan Islam* (21.10.88, 28.10.88), three state *muftis*<sup>48</sup> had publicly exonerated the book from the allegation of containing deviationist teachings, but they upheld the withholding of the book from public circulation for using confusing facts and terms needing "*deeper elaboration*." In any case, this contrasted with the resolution of the Council of *Muftis* that parts of the book were contrary to Islamic *shariah* (UM 6.10.88). Internal Darul Arqam sources claimed to have recorded private acknowledgements of certain official *ulama* as to the veracity of Darul Arqam's teachings; their acquiescence to authority was however dictated by the concern for their positions as government employees.<sup>49</sup> Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad also quoted the admissions of many *Fatwa* Council members that they were merely "*following orders from Kuala Lumpur i.e. the Islamic Centre*" (1989: 92). More astonishingly, a transcript of a private conversation between Hassan Mokhtar, secretary of Darul Arqam's *Majlis Syuyukh* and Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, as published in *As Siddiq* (bil. 6, 1992)<sup>50</sup> and reprinted in Ashaari Muhammad (1993b: 130), Abdul Khaliq (1993: 95-98) and Haswan (1993: 31), quoted Dr. Abdul Hamid as acknowledging Darul Arqam as "*good*", Ustaz Ashaari as "*a knowledgeable person*" and the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* as "*not wrong*."

The government's clarification that the belated harshness in stance was adopted in response to changes in Ustaz Ashaari's religious doctrines and the failure of its earlier persuasive approach, was dismissed by a foreign researcher as "*unsatisfying*" (Meuleman 1995: 6). As such, the hidden political interests of the Islamic Centre's bureaucrats and their political superiors could well provide a more satisfactory explanation for the delayed firmness of action. In 1988, the *fatwa* banning Darul Arqam's publications came immediately after the wide publicity given to Ustaz Ashaari's letter, which criticised the Islamic Centre and state religious departments as inefficient, underutilised, failing to serve Malay-Muslims and obstructing activities of Islamic movements, while offering Darul Arqam's helping hand in administering the Islamic bureaucracy (*Al Arqam* September 1988, *Mingguan Islam* 9.9.88). That the letter was the direct cause of the *fatwa* was admitted by the deputy *mufti* of Kelantan in an exclusive meeting with Darul Arqam's representatives (Ashaari Muhammad 1989: 90). In another letter specially addressed to the *ulama*, Ustaz Ashaari

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<sup>48</sup>Namely, Haji Ishak Baharom of Selangor, Sheikh Othman Haji Ibrahim of the Federal Territory and Haji Mat Yahya Hussin of Perlis.

<sup>49</sup>Personal communication with former Darul Arqam members.

<sup>50</sup>An internal Darul Arqam bulletin published by the Information Section of the *Madinah Al Arqam Saiyyidina Abu Bakar As Siddiq*, as the main Darul Arqam village in Sungai Penchala, Kuala Lumpur, was named.

Muhammad (1988a: 167-176) scathingly attacked them for misusing their knowledge for worldly purposes, neglecting propagation efforts, checking *dakwah* movements, attaching undue importance to formal qualifications which led to the creation of an elite class of religious functionaries, and emphasising traditional issues without paying attention to the prevalent social degradation. Such bold censures were literally taken by the Islamic Centre as a challenge to its authority, and was even misconstrued as a reflection of Darul Arqam's interest in political power (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 236-237, Kedah Religious Affairs Department 1994: 13-14).

Yet, in view of the relative inefficacy of the Islamic Centre in implementing Islamic activities for the public, it was pure concern for its withering influence and envy of independent Islamic movements which moulded its perception of them as rivals rather than complementary partners to its task. Notwithstanding its own lack of a comprehensive Islamic programme, the Islamic Centre was never prepared to set a cooperative agenda with Islamic movements. In an open letter to the Islamic Centre, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad expressed horror at having been told by inside sources that its activities were restricted to "*managing conjugal matters, building religious departments, forming councils for discussion and salary increase, censoring books and investigating false teachings*" (1989: 146). Even within this limited sphere, minor lapses of religious practices were given political colouring. For instance, when some Darul Arqam wedding couples used dowries which diverged from the amount determined by the religious authorities, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, then Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, accused them of "*purposely wanting to fight against the government*" (UM 15.11.88). Yusof Harun claimed knowledge of many people jealous of Darul Arqam, particularly those "*connected with the development or administration of Islam in the country,*" who became nervous after the movement "*successfully attracted many followers and projected a credible and influential leader.....*" (1990: 345). S.H. Alattas (1992: 246) similarly perceived that the Islamic Centre had been left behind in its competition against Darul Arqam for public support. Hence, when "*Darul Arqam appealed more to the people than the Islamic Centre,*" it suddenly became pre-occupied with the ostensibly religio-political threat posed by Darul Arqam (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1993: 15).

Its Islamic initiatives being geared towards the prevention of false doctrines rather than the propagation of true ones, the Islamic Centre was criticised for its inept handling of the Darul Arqam issue, stressing confrontation instead of discussion and dialogue (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 16-17). Despite the media's claims to the contrary, Shuib Sulaiman, former personal assistant to Ustaz Ashaari before being promoted as Head of *Dakwah* in 1988, testified that the Islamic Centre had never invited the Darul Arqam leader to a dialogue in the 1980s, as it had in 1979

(*Mingguan Islam* 21.10.88). Darul Arqam was therefore never given the opportunity to defend the book **Aurad Muhammadiyah**, and only knew of its banning through the mass media (Ashaari Muhammad 1989: xvi, 5; Nik Mahadi Nik Hassan 1993: 71). During the 1994 crisis, calls for a mutual dialogue by Darul Arqam and other neutral parties such as the Malaysian Youth Council and several NGOs, were unceremoniously rejected (*UM* 2.8.94, *NST* 27.8.94).<sup>51</sup> For example, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman spontaneously replied that such a dialogue was unnecessary since Darul Arqam had clearly propagated deviationist teachings, and the dialogue would cause further confusion among the people (*ibid.* 3.8.94). The same view was echoed by the Information Minister, Mohamed Rahmat (*UM* 3.8.94). With such a confrontational attitude of his colleagues responsible for managing the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis, the Prime Minister's proposition that Ustaz Ashaari met the Islamic Centre instead of personally meeting with him, as requested (*BM* 17.7.94), was meaningless. It only reflected Dr. Mahathir's reluctance, as Home Affairs Minister, to acknowledge that the crisis had erupted into a national security concern.

While the protracted nature of the conflict may have caused extreme anxiety in society, a few interested parties gained political mileage by exposing themselves to media publicity whenever they felt it appropriate to boost their political stature. One could pick out three individuals, viz. Dr. Yusof Noor, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman and Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, whose championing of the cause against Darul Arqam had promoted them up the political ladder. All three boasted degrees in Islamic studies, started their careers as academics or civil servants in the religious establishment, shot to prominence in UMNO and national politics amidst or immediately following effectively personally orchestrated campaigns against Darul Arqam, and were jointly castigated by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1993b: 60) as self-proclaimed heroes throughout the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis.<sup>52</sup> The *entrée* of such religious personalities into the

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<sup>51</sup>To ensure fairness and avoid manipulation by the authorities, Darul Arqam, in a letter addressed to Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, requested that the authorities accede to nine conditions to the proposed dialogue. First, that the chairman of the National *Fatwa* Council appoint some or all Council members as participants of the dialogue. Second, that the number of Darul Arqam representatives be equal to the number of Council participants. Third, that the dialogue be televised live. Fourth, that the dialogue be chaired by a mutually acceptable legal expert. Fifth, that the dialogue discuss all matters relevant to the Darul Arqam issue, and be done in phases if circumstances do not permit its completion in one session. Sixth, that the dialogue take two or three hours and continue the next day or the following week if necessary. Seventh, that the *Fatwa* Council enumerate clearly its accusations against Darul Arqam. Eighth, that the *Fatwa* Council, the Islamic Centre and Darul Arqam bring along scholarly references to support their respective arguments. Ninth, that Darul Arqam be presented with the opportunity to cite other deviationist matters which the *Fatwa* Council has to comment upon and give its *fatwa*. See Md. Hassan Mokhtar, Haji, Secretary of *Majlis Syuyukh* (1994).

<sup>52</sup>Dr. Yusof Nor (Ph.D. Cairo) was promoted from the Deputy Ministership at the Prime Minister's Department to become Primary Industries Minister in 1992, and today, despite losing his cabinet post, is national chief of UMNO Information Section and state legislative member for the Kampung Raja constituency in Terengganu. Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman (Ph.D. St. Andrews), Minister at the Prime Minister's Department since 1995, had handled the Darul Arqam issue as Deputy Minister at the

ruling elite had been facilitated by the institutionalisation of the 'Islamic factor' in UMNO politics, following Anwar Ibrahim's meteoric rise in the party and national leadership struggle.<sup>53</sup> One has, however, to question whether such figures did not have UMNO affiliations during their tenures in the religious bureaucracy, and had not acted on behalf of the party's interests in suppressing Darul Arqam.

That political self-enhancement figured prominently in the religious figures' canvassing for public support against Darul Arqam was realised by both the victim and political observers. Mohd. Sayuti Omar (1990a: 112) surmised that as an aspirant to the Premiership, Dr. Yusof Noor intentionally plotted the downfall of Darul Arqam to boost his popularity as a defender of 'true' Islam. Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 122-133) dedicated an open letter specially to Dr. Yusof Noor, questioning the motives behind his variegated statements on Darul Arqam. In another book, Ustaz Ashaari presented a wholesale rebuke of the official *ulama* for volunteering their resources to fulfil their and their political masters' craving ambitions, and in the process, creating all sorts of religious innovations (Ashaari Muhammad 1992a: 15-21, chapter 5). In a veiled reference to Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, he reprimanded a "*Ph.D. graduate from St. Andrews University in Scotland*" for becoming an "*adversary of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia*" (ibid.: 115), before sweepingly categorising such formally qualified *ulama* who received favours from the government as "*agents of the enemies of Islam*" (ibid.: 111).

### 5.5.2 DARUL ARQAM VERSUS THE MEDIA ESTABLISHMENT

The era of Dr. Mahathir's Premiership has seen a considerable waning of media freedom, which had always been relatively minimal, such that by the late 1980s, the ruling elite secured control of all major national dailies and radio and television stations (Means 1991: 137-141, Case 1993: *passim*, cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1). Since the media has been effectively owned by the country's political establishment, one would have been least surprised to discover that its views resemble those of ruling politicians within a mutually reinforcing context, thus explaining the media's increasingly hostile attitude towards Darul Arqam from the moment the authorities declared Darul Arqam as deviant in 1986. The media played a key role in throwing Darul Arqam into the public

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Prime Minister's Department and Chief Director of the Islamic Centre. Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, Chief Director of the Islamic Centre during the 1994 crisis, has been chief of UMNO Information Section in Kelantan since February 1997, having won the Melor state constituency during the 1995 general elections.

<sup>53</sup>cf. 'Islam's important role in the UMNO results', *FEER* 7.5.87.

limelight through a vicious onslaught of slanderous and biased reporting,<sup>54</sup> the intensity of which fluctuated but reached periodic peaks in 1986, 1988, 1991 and 1994. Before 1986, although elements of bias existed, reports were inquisitive rather than incriminating and never touched upon the question of Darul Arqam's controversial beliefs, so much so that Darul Arqam was prepared to publish a compilation of articles on it as had appeared in the national press (cf. Ali Haji Ahmad 1985).

But the clash between Darul Arqam and the media establishment had its own distinctive impulses. While all major press agencies pressured Darul Arqam, the chief protagonist of the Darul Arqam-bashing effort could be identified as the Utusan Melayu (UM) Group, which operated the Malay-language dailies *Utusan Malaysia* in *rumi* script and *Utusan Melayu* in *jawi* script (cf. Tajul Ariffin 1986a: chapter 8, Abdul Khaliq 1993: *passim*, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994b: 6). In an open letter specifically dedicated to the UM Group, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad accused its newspapers of being the "*platform of anti-dakwah groups to attack Islamic movements, particularly Darul Arqam*" (1989: 152). He questioned the Group's sincerity in championing the cause against deviationist teachings since its own publications such as URTV, *Wanita* and *Pancaindera* clearly promoted a sensate culture based upon hedonistic values, which contradicted Islamic principles (ibid.: 164). Nevertheless, Darul Arqam claimed that the antagonistic reports were not necessarily viewed by the public in negative terms, as manifested in increasing visits to Darul Arqam settlements by previously nonchalant sections of society (ibid.: 158-160, Abdul Khaliq 1993: 31-32).

Quite apart from the question of disparate cultural lifestyles promoted by the UM Group and Darul Arqam, there was fierce competition for the Malay-reading audience between their respective publications. For example, the UM Group's children magazine, *Utusan Pelajar*, had to compete with Darul Arqam's *Al Ain* and later, *Komik Dakwah*, *Comel* and *Anak Soleh*. Its women's magazine, *Wanita*, faced rivalry from Darul Arqam's *Al Mukminah* and later, *An Nasihah*. Its Islamic magazine, *Al Islam*, had to face Darul Arqam's *Al Munir* and later, *Al Qiadah*. The impressive circulation figures of Darul Arqam's publications, despite their relative recentness, as

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<sup>54</sup>Examples on slanderous reporting were to be found in reports which unconditionally approved the government's unfounded allegations against Darul Arqam, such as that accusing Darul Arqam of plotting a militant takeover of political power by means of a suicide army (UM 13.6.94, 14.6.94), and that accusing Darul Arqam of exalting Ustaz Ashaari to a position resembling Al-Mahdi and a prophet (ibid. 18.6.94, 21.6.94, 24.6.94). Biased reporting against Darul Arqam was evident throughout the media coverage of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy (cf. fn. 45 above), but was especially glaring in specialist columns [cf. Astora JB, 'Jadi Perdana Menteri cara ghaib' (Becoming Prime Minister through magic), ibid. 24.6.94; A.Nazri Abdullah, 'Antara Ashaari, Tamrin siapa yang berubah' (Who has changed between Ashaari and Tamrin), BM 3.7.94].

reported in non-UM Group publications,<sup>55</sup> would have been extremely disturbing to the Group's publications' long-term survival. Thus one may understand the hidden motive behind the media establishment's push for a wholesale ban of Darul Arqam's publications, although some like *Al Ain* and *An Nasihah* hardly contained anything on its controversial beliefs (cf. Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1993: 23-24). That the Malay-Muslim readership was the prime target of the media establishment's attacks on Darul Arqam was discernible from the amount of blatant sensationalism injected into the UM Group's newspapers' coverage of the Darul Arqam issue *vis-à-vis* their non-Malay counterparts' reports.<sup>56</sup> One detects the ulterior motive of scaring Malay-Muslims away from anything connected with Darul Arqam, such that the journalistic market would remain monopolised by the government-backed media arm. To the UM Group, insult was added to injury by the disclosure that several of its most dedicated ex-employees had joined Darul Arqam's publishing house in prominent capacities.<sup>57</sup>

### 5.5.3 DARUL ARQAM VERSUS THE POLITICAL ELITES

The political establishment's official view that the whole 'Darul Arqam versus government' affair was apolitical could be instantaneously refuted on two tradition-breaking counts: the method and the timing used by the authorities. The use of the ISA in dealing with cases of religious deviationism per se was unprecedented and directly contradictory to the Deputy Prime Minister's claim that the Darul Arqam issue was hardly a "security issue" (*Bangkok Post* 21.9.94). Although the ISA was used to defeat the deviant Crypto movement in 1983, this was only after tangible evidence was discovered of its para-military activities (F.M. Jamil 1988: 218). The decision to wait until 1994 i.e. eight years after the pronouncement of Darul Arqam's deviationism, to deliver the *coup de grace*, was surprisingly lengthy, considering the previously efficient combating of heterodox groups which disintegrated almost as soon as they appeared. Rumps may continue to have existed, but they were regionally concentrated and closely monitored so as never to pose a national threat (cf. *ibid*: 211-219).

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<sup>55</sup>For instance, Zakaria Sungib in the *New Straits Times* (6.5.87) reported that *Al Mukminah* had reached a monthly circulation of forty-thousand copies, while the more modest sum of twenty-thousand copies had been registered by *Al Munir* and *Al Ain*. Within a year, these figures had drastically increased to eighty-six thousand copies for *Al Mukminah*, forty-five thousand copies for *Al Munir* and seventy-three thousand copies for *Al Ain*; on the whole, Darul Arqam's publications were estimated to have gathered a worldwide monthly readership of one million people (*Al Arqam* June 1988).

<sup>56</sup>Personal observation of newspaper articles on the Darul Arqam issue.

<sup>57</sup>Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1989: 167) named four of them, viz. Abu Hassan Yusuf, a former Creative Director at the UM Group; Nik Nordin, an artist; Bakri Shamsuddin, an artist, and Haji Ali Haji Ahmad, a well-known literary figure who used the pseudonym 'Nora'.

Darul Arqam, on the contrary, was allowed, besides the few constraints imposed, to survive and extend its influence in the populace, capitalising on the newly received media publicity. Quantitatively, it was during the years under repression that Darul Arqam underwent its most rapid expansion. Figures showed that in the period 1988-93, Darul Arqam's membership rose by 36.7 percent and the number of its self-contained villages increased from thirty-two to forty-eight (Darul Arqam 1993: 181-182, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1993: 11). The 1994 repression represented a last-resort attempt to eliminate Darul Arqam, and was indicative of the government's failure to contain Darul Arqam the way it had cowed other NGOs. Since launching its 'crusade' against Darul Arqam, its indecisive policy had probably backfired. Having benefited from services, products and publications of Darul Arqam for many years, the public could only be enraged when their continuous supply was disrupted. In its report, the Perak State Security Committee admitted that public support, for instance through their continual patronising of Darul Arqam products, was a main reason for Darul Arqam's persistent strength despite government's efforts to check Darul Arqam's influence (*NST*: 23.1.92).

Although Malaysia's ruling elites never admitted to have been bothered by the numerous reports in the foreign and Darul Arqam press of a significant Darul Arqam penetration into influential sections of the Malay-Muslim community, the widely publicised fact that Darul Arqam attracted adherents mainly from the urban-based intelligentsia and was highly popular among civil servants, hence was drawing crucial middle class support away from UMNO, must have caused trepidation in government circles (*FEER* 26.5.94, *Financial Times*: *FT* 6/7.8.94, *Time* 22.8.94, *The Economist* 10.9.94). It was such concern that prompted the Prime Minister to issue a directive to take action against the estimated seven-thousand civil servants identified to have become involved with Darul Arqam (*NST* 6.7.94). An editorial of the Thai daily *The Nation* (4.9.94), dubbing the Malaysian government's manoeuvres against Darul Arqam a "*political game*," explicitly clarified the reasons behind the ruling elites' apprehension:

The fact of the matter is that al-Arqam is not a rural-based Islamic deviant group led by semi-educated leaders. It is in a different league altogether. After 26 years, it has become the best-known success story of the Malays, with deep roots in society. Al-Arqam runs a business empire with total assets estimated at US\$139 million, about 300 schools and kindergartens, clinics, and its members live in some 40 commune-style settlements spread throughout the country. There are at least 15 branches overseas. Included in its ranks are professionals, including teachers, lecturers, journalists, lawyers, top civil servants and at least one judge. The problem with al-Arqam in Malaysia is that Ashaari and Mahathir are struggling publicly with

one another, with Mahathir wary that the religious sect will control the hearts and minds of the very Malays who are a bastion of support to his United Malays National Organization.

A letter to the same newspaper, written by a dismayed 'Citizen of Malaysia' under the title "*Al-Arqam was threat to UMNO*," admitted that Arqam had the political influence and economic resources to challenge the government's hegemony, and rhetorically asked:

Why has the government of Malaysia waited for nearly 26 years before taking action against al-Arqam and its leader?..... Is it not because al-Arqam only recently reconstructed itself organizationally in Malaysia such that its smallest local unit of governance 'coincidentally' matches Malaysia's parliamentary constituency zonings? Is it not also because UMNO fears the possible entry of al-Arqam into the Malaysian political scene, more so since al-Arqam has made substantive in-roads into the *nouveaux riche* Malay middle-classes and into UMNO itself? Is it not also because al-Arqam's Islamic worldview and development strategy differ significantly from that of the Malaysian government's version of development by the year 2020? (*The Nation* 23.9.94).

Darul Arqam also claimed to enjoy friendly relations with a number of ministers and UMNO stalwarts, all of whom either openly admired or gave covert support to the movement. The most prominent ones believed to have intimate links with Darul Arqam were Sanusi Junid, former Agriculture Minister, ex-UMNO Vice-President and Chief Minister of Kedah since June 1996; Kaharuddin Mokmin, former state executive councillor for Selangor, and Tamrin Ghafar, former chairman of MARA, former MP for Batu Berendam in Malacca and son of former Deputy Prime Minister, Ghafar Baba (cf. *Asiaweek* 20.7.94, *FEER* 11.8.94). The friendship between Sanusi and Ustaz Ashaari could be traced back to the early 1970s, when both, as ABIM Vice-President and Darul Arqam leader respectively, cooperated hand in hand in *dakwah* programmes.<sup>58</sup> In an internal Darul Arqam bulletin, Kaharuddin Mokmin was pictured in family portrait with Ustaz Ashaari, and was quoted as confessing that he learned politics from Ustaz Ashaari, further adding:

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<sup>58</sup>Personal viewing of an undated private video-recording of Sanusi Junid's speech in a closed session with Darul Arqam members, apparently to mark the end of a character-building course for Darul Arqam's university students. During his fieldwork in Malaysia, the author was brought by ex-Darul Arqam members to Sanusi Junid's *Eid al-Fitr* open houses in his state constituency of Kuah, Langkawi, Kedah (8.3.96) and in his residence in Kuala Lumpur (10.3.96). During the latter gathering, there was remarkable rapport shown between Sanusi and ex-Darul Arqam members.

If we want to revivify the Malays, bring them to meet Abuya i.e. Ustaz Ashaari. If we want the Malays to become the good future leader of Islam, they must read Abuya's books. (*Buletin Berita Terkini*, bil. 2/94).<sup>59</sup>

However, it was the conversion of Tamrin Ghafar to Ustaz Ashaari's cause that was to have the biggest impact on the ruling elites' perception of Darul Arqam. Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan was almost certainly referring to Tamrin when attributing the government's post-June 1994 "*sterner action*" against Darul Arqam to the confirmation that "*a prominent member of UMNO was among its members*" (1995: 10). By mid-April 1994, Tamrin, whose name was infamous as a rather 'unscrupulous' chairman of MARA, had publicly announced his repentance and intention to concentrate on religious matters (*UM* 15.4.94). This followed his uncharacteristically melancholy parliamentary speech, which gained instant publicity not only for its signalling that Tamrin was a reformed man, but more importantly for its veiled defence of Darul Arqam (cf. *ibid.* 14.4.94, *FEER* 26.5.94). Among other things, he said:

Among Muslims, an exchange of accusations is still rife. A group accuses the other of heterodoxy, deviationism, polytheism, extremism and apostasy. Unfortunately, upon close examination, such an attitude stems not from a sincere defence of religion, but from selfish motives, having been derived from either political differences or personal reasons, and made carelessly..... Scholarly discussion and dialogue must be held. It must involve all official and unofficial religious groups such as Tabligh, Darul Arqam and *tariqah* congregations. It offers a more practical solution than indiscriminating assaults through the mass media which is monopolised by a particular grouping. It needs urgent action, through the formation of an ISLAMIC CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL (MAJLIS PERUNDINGAN AGAMA ISLAM). (Tamrin Abdul Ghafar 1994a: 4, 7, capitals in original).

In his extra-parliamentary speeches, Tamrin was more forthright in his espousal of Darul Arqam's Islamic ideas. For example, in a speech at a secondary school's Parent-Teachers General Meeting in his home state of Malacca, he openly reiterated Ustaz Ashaari's views on education,<sup>60</sup> admitted he was wrong in his previous criticism of Darul Arqam's educational method, excoriated the revocation of publishing permits of Darul Arqam magazines, and ended with a brief eulogy of its leader (Tamrin Abdul Ghafar 1994b: *passim*). The speech, the transcript of which was freely distributed as a booklet whose front cover pictured a Darul Arqam boy holding

<sup>59</sup>During his fieldwork in Malaysia, the author was brought by ex-Darul Arqam members for a private discussion with Kaharuddin Mokmin at his residence in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur (11.3.96).

<sup>60</sup>For Ustaz Ashaari's views on education, see his *Pendidikan Rasulullah* (The Education of the Messenger of Allah) (1990g).

a book authored by Ustaz Ashaari, was reported in Darul Arqam's internal publication, *Siri Terkini Era Kasih Sayang*, under the headline "*Tamrin Bentang Minda Abuya*" (Tamrin Presents Abuya's Mind). When it was ascertained, particularly through the publication of Tamrin's letter to Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman attributing his newly found Islamic consciousness to Ustaz Ashaari and Darul Arqam (Tamrin Ghafar 1994), that Tamrin's reformed character had been effected through serious contacts with Darul Arqam, he was severely reproved by the political establishment. The Head of UMNO Youth-cum-Chief Minister of Malacca, Rahim Tamby Chik, condemned his involvement in Darul Arqam as embarrassing to UMNO, while his constituency party passed a no-confidence motion against Tamrin for diverting from the party's and government's interests (*MM* 3.7.94, *UM* 4.7.94). Commenting on Tamrin's 'conversion', the press warned of Darul Arqam's strategy of forging close links with frustrated influential people and professionals to "*boost the image and influence of Ashaari*" (*BM* 3.7.94).

The nation was delivered another shock with the revelation that in October 1993, Ghafar Baba, Tamrin's father who was also Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy UMNO President, had cordially met and exchanged views with Ustaz Ashaari in Thailand (*Berita Ekspres* 10.7.94).<sup>61</sup> The rendezvous took place before Ghafar Baba's withdrawal from the UMNO deputy presidency contest against Anwar Ibrahim in November 1993, under intense pressure from the party's 'young blood', as represented by the *wawasan* (vision) team of Anwar-led party post contenders. Prior to the 1993 UMNO elections, Anwar Ibrahim, benefiting from the vast patronage at his disposal as Finance Minister, had gained effective control of the nation's main English-language media outlets. Together with the rest of the media establishment, they conspired to paint an unfavourable image of Ghafar and conveyed the impression that Dr. Mahathir, as the unrivalled President, had tacitly approved Anwar Ibrahim as his deputy, resulting in an 'Anwar bandwagon' within the party grassroots (Case 1994: 923-924). Reportedly bitter over Dr. Mahathir's refusal to halt the bandwagon against him, Ghafar backed out of the 'Number Two' race, and dramatically resigned from all party and government posts (*ibid.*: 925).

According to Opposition MP Kua Kia Soong, official assaults against Darul Arqam were aimed at political adversaries of Anwar Ibrahim, Dr. Mahathir's supposed protégé and heir apparent (*FEER* 11.8.94). To put it more squarely, the clampdown of 1994 was to exact revenge on Darul Arqam for supporting Anwar Ibrahim's opponents in the 1993 UMNO elections. During the elections, the UMNO old guard, comprising figures such as Ghafar Baba and Sanusi Junid, the losing

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<sup>61</sup>Before the publication of the news by *Berita Ekspres*, a Chinese-language newspaper, photographs of the meeting between Ustaz Ashaari and Ghafar Baba had already appeared in Darul Arqam publications; see for example *Stoppres* (8/93: 1), Ashaari Muhammad (1993e: 66, 1994: 54).

incumbent Vice-President, both of whom were speculated to have cultivated a working relationship with Darul Arqam, overwhelmingly belonged to the anti-Anwar camp. Darul Arqam itself was reported to have candidly supported Ghafar Baba (*Newsweek* 19.9.94), while his son Tamrin's apparently pro-Darul Arqam parliamentary speech in April 1994 was simultaneously interpreted as "*a veiled attack on Anwar*" (*FEER* 26.5.94). A book entitled **Politik Melayu: Angin Perubahan** (Malay Politics: Winds of Change), published just before the party elections, provocatively pitted Darul Arqam, Ghafar Baba and Sanusi Junid on one side against the 'corrupt' *wawasan* team led by Anwar Ibrahim. Writing under the pseudonym 'Abdul Khaliq', the unknown author claimed to have discovered a research paper prepared by the UMNO Youth, outlining its twin policy of eliminating the legal immunity of the Malay sultans and Darul Arqam, so that both groups could not interfere with its interests (Abdul Khaliq 1993a: 91).

Following other critics, it would be tempting to causally relate the clampdown with Dr. Mahathir's strategy of deflecting attention away from numerous problems engulfing the government and party members; these included ecological protests over and rumours of hanky-panky in the Bakun dam project in Sarawak, revelations that the Head of UMNO Youth was under police investigation for corruption and sexual abuse of a minor, nationwide concern over the increasing prevalence of 'money politics' within UMNO, and alleged financial irregularities implicating Dr. Mahathir's cabinet ministers (*FT* 20.9.94). Increasing public outcries were also being voiced against a Malay-Muslim businessman's visit to Israel, which he was legally prohibited from entering, and his meeting with Israeli leaders, apparently under the government's patronage.<sup>62</sup> In the wake of Israeli reports of a secret meeting between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and "*Malaysian leaders, including ministers..... with the knowledge and blessing of the Malaysian Prime Minister,*" Dr. Mahathir strenuously denied having a similar meeting with Rabin in France, although he admitted their staying at the same hotel (*Impact International* August 1994, *UM* 16.7.94). Having secured the *fatwa* against Darul Arqam on 5.8.94, Dr. Mahathir and UMNO Youth conceded the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel (*BH* 6.8.94, 25.8.94); such

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<sup>62</sup>The businessman, Tunku Abdullah Tuanku Abdul Rahman, was the younger brother of the reigning *Yang diPertuan Agong*. In a public apology, he admitted having visited Tel Aviv and receiving 'irresistible' invitations to meet the Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, but denied any political motives (*BM* 17.7.94). In the wake of rumours that the visit reflected Malaysia's future inclination of establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, protests were voiced by PAS, the *Ulama* Association of Malaysia (PUM: *Persatuan Ulama Malaysia*) and other independent *ulama*. See for example 'Pemuda PAS tentang sebarang usaha iktiraf Israel' (PAS Youth opposes any attempted recognition of Israel), *Harakah* 25.7.94, 'Minggu Anti-Israel' (Anti-Israel Week), *ibid.* 29.7.94; 'Iktiraf Israel: Sikap pragmatis UMNO membimbangkan' (Recognising Israel: UMNO's pragmatic stance is worrying), *ibid.* 5.8.94; 'Panggil Sidang Majlis Fatwa' (Call for *Fatwa* Council meeting), *ibid.* 12.8.94; 'PUM hantar memo bantahan' (PUM sends a protest memorandum), *ibid.* 22.8.94, and 'Jangan mengundang bala - tokoh agama' (Don't invite disaster - religious figures), *ibid.*

talk had been strictly taboo from the days of Tunku Abdul Rahman's Premiership, known for its tough foreign policy stance defending Palestinian rights (cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990: 50-51). However, in view of the lack of hard evidence, the feasibility that Darul Arqam served primarily as a distraction from other disturbing allegations facing the government could not be substantiated. In the absence of substantive insider revelations, the closest we can get to establishing such a plausibility is by citing circumstantial evidence, such as the glaring coincidence between the onset of enormous problems for the government and the timing of its Darul Arqam-bashing campaign.

As for the Prime Minister's personal intervention, Darul Arqam sources claimed Dr. Mahathir had grown so fearful of Darul Arqam's increasingly powerful hold on elements within his party and the masses, that he personally directed the clampdown to create a climate of fear to win support of non-Muslims in the forthcoming national elections (personal communication with Hasyim Jaafar, July-August 1994; *FT* 6/7.8.94). Dr. Mahathir's anxiety of Darul Arqam was bluntly spelt out by *Newsweek* (19.9.94) in the caption "*Is Al Arqam a threat to Islam - or to Prime Minister Mahathir?*". *The Economist* (10.9.94) similarly suspected:

Dr. Mahathir genuinely fears that Al Arqam's boasts of its conversions among politicians and civil servants signal an ambition to mount a threat to the state..... Dr. Mahathir is preparing himself for the next election by creating a fundamentalist bogey in order to frighten Malaysians into voting for him.

Such fears were not unwarranted, for several popular journalists had predicted the Darul Arqam founder-leader as a future Prime Minister (cf. S.H. Alattas 1988: 336-337, Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1990a: 156-161, Yusof Harun 1990: 345). In a 'Most Popular Leader' poll conducted by the weekly tabloid, *Watan*, in September and October 1991, Ustaz Ashaari emerged 'winner' for two consecutive weeks. In one journalist's comparison of Dr. Mahathir's leadership qualities with Ustaz Ashaari's, the verdict unequivocally favoured the latter (Nik Mahadi Nik Hassan 1992). Advising Dr. Mahathir to change his harsh and "*useless*" stance on Darul Arqam, the same writer reproached the Premier's holier-than-thou attitude despite his obvious lack of religious knowledge, and endorsed his fellow journalists' prediction that Ustaz Ashaari might become the fifth Prime Minister (Nik Mahadi Nik Hassan 1993: 68-71). Perhaps the most severe blow to Dr. Mahathir was the public retraction of support for him and concomitant backing of Darul Arqam by S.H. Alattas, hitherto Dr. Mahathir's staunchest supporter among popular journalists, through his **Memo Kepada Perdana Menteri** (Memorandum to the Prime Minister) (1992). In his exposition of reasons for defending Darul Arqam, he warned:

Dr. Mahathir has to think why I, an erstwhile staunch supporter of him, suddenly takes to defending Arqam. Do I want to become Deputy Prime Minister when Ustaz Ashaari becomes Prime Minister, or is it because I want Arqam to be an alternative to UMNO? When I support anything, this means many others support it. I am only informing that the **Islamic Centre** has gone too far. I wish to remind [him] that the fall of a leader or a government is not due to **bad deeds**, but rather to **arrogance and despotism**. Labelling Arqam as deviant resembles the English proverb: to '*give a dog a bad name and shoot [it]*'. (S.H. Alattas 1992: 246-247, emphasis in original).

Dr. Mahathir's antics showed he was extremely worried by the threat to his position in the figure of Ustaz Ashaari. Declaring that Darul Arqam's teachings would be hindered, Dr. Mahathir referred to its alleged view that leadership must be in the hands of *ulama*, such that people like him were not qualified to lead the country (*UM* 8.5.93). Rejecting Ustaz Ashaari's request to meet him personally to resolve pertinent disputes, Dr. Mahathir's unceremonious reply seemed to put priority on Ustaz Ashaari's leadership claims over his alleged heterodoxy: "*He i.e. Ustaz Ashaari, thinks of himself as equal status to world leaders, I have not reached that status..... it is better for him to meet the Islamic Centre.....*" (*MM* 17.7.94). Lashing out at Ustaz Ashaari's mystical claims, the Prime Minister simultaneously challenged him to an electoral contest by registering Darul Arqam as a political party (*ibid.* 31.7.94). The PAS Information Chief, Subky Latiff (1994a) suggested that the government actions against Darul Arqam were a last straw effort by Dr. Mahathir, who previously offered UMNO membership to Ustaz Ashaari on condition that he discarded his 'Arqam beliefs', to coerce Darul Arqam members into joining UMNO.

On Darul Arqam's part, both the elaboration of Islamic political aspects and implicit criticism of the existing political establishment had been such consistent themes in the writings of its leaders in the 1990s, that adverse reaction of the ruling elites should not have been unexpected. In **Langkah-Langkah Perjuangan** (Strides of the Struggle), Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad listed the preconditions of the success of the Islamic struggle as firstly, "*education in iman (so that society serves and obeys God)*," and secondly, "*national political power, in order to be able to implement hudud and qisas<sup>63</sup> laws*" (1991a: 253). His **Renungan Untuk Mengubah Sikap** (Thoughts to Change Attitudes) (1990a) had separate chapters on the weaknesses of democratic leadership, the qualities of Islamic leaders and short accounts of the exemplary leaderships of Saul, the biblical Jewish leader in the battle against the Goliath-led Philistines; Muhammad Al-Fateh, the Ottoman conqueror of Constantinople in 1453; Saladin, the legendary Kurdish fighter who defeated the Christian Crusaders in

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<sup>63</sup>Criminal punishments based on the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.

Jerusalem in 1187, and Hassan Al-Banna, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood founder-leader.

Islamic internationalism was conspicuous in Darul Arqam's political agenda. **Panduan Membina Empayar Islam di Asia Tenggara** (Guidelines to Building An Islamic Empire in Southeast Asia) (1991), written by Abdul Halim Abbas, Ustaz Ashaari's deputy and long-regarded by the political establishment as Darul Arqam's political mastermind (*UM* 1.12.94), contained practical theories and strategies on implementing Islamic rule in neighbouring countries. In **Perang Teluk: Islam Akan Kembali Gemilang** (The Gulf War: Islam Will Be Glorified Again) (1991), Ustaz Ashaari chided both the Saudi Arabian government's position in the Gulf War and the Malaysian government's supportive policy; observers have linked the ensuing proscription of Darul Arqam's activities with this stance (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1993: 29). By 1992, Ustaz Ashaari could confidently speak of Darul Arqam's political potential as a global movement:

Our i.e. Darul Arqam's main ambition is not to rule the country, because the responsibility is too daunting..... [but] we are prepared to help anybody who wants to establish the Islamic state..... many local and foreign sympathisers of Darul Arqam have asked for Darul Arqam to be registered as a political party so that we can present a legitimate challenge for the power to rule..... **I am convinced that if we are sufficiently prepared and qualified, God will bestow its servants with such power even without their going through electoral politics.** (Ashaari Muhammad 1992b: 94-95, emphasis in original).

Subsequently, Darul Arqam's critique of the political establishment became more intense and explicit. In **Keadilan Menurut Islam** (Justice According to Islam) (1993d: chapters 9, 14), Ustaz Ashaari outlined features of a tyrannical government, and tied his analysis with a warning letter directed to Malaysian leaders who had purportedly messed up the country. While elaborating features of the Islamic administrative system, he found space to berate present-day political rulers as plunderers of national wealth (Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: chapter 14). Touching on the prospects of Darul Arqam assuming the reins of government, he criticised UMNO for its internal disunity, abominable leaders and paucity of socio-welfare programmes, and censured Dr. Mahathir for his belligerent attitude towards Islamic movements, hence creating popular animosity and uncertainty (Ashaari Muhammad 1993b: 88-92). Large sections of Darul Arqam publications were increasingly devoted to colourful pieces of coverage of overseas visits by Darul Arqam leaders and their meetings with journalists, intellectuals, government officials and political leaders from, among others, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Turkey, Jordan, China and Uzbekistan (cf. *Amal* October, November 1992; Abdul Halim Abbas 1992, Mohamad

Mahir Saidi 1992, *Ratu March* 1993, Darul Arqam 1993c, Ashaari Muhammad 1993a: 43-52, 69-84, *Buletin Berita Terkini* 1/94, 2/94, 3/94, 4/94, *Siri Terkini Era Kasih Sayang*).

Although Ustaz Ashaari had vehemently denied on several occasions that he harboured any political ambition (cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 91-92, 1993b: 85; *Eksklusif* 2.12.89), any political observer was arguably bound to see his increasingly bolder statements in 1994 as a direct challenge to the Prime Minister. For example, his seeming disavowal of prime-ministerial ambitions, despite a belief that it was not too difficult for him "to rise to that position [of Prime Minister-elect]," was followed by a subtle assurance that he "would do so only at the urging of the people" (*The Nation* 2.7.94, *Sunday Times* 3.7.94). In another interview, he admitted feeling that it may have been God's will that he become Prime Minister since "everybody [was] talking about it" and that while "Mahathir became prime minister by the point of fingers,..... the heart of the people has been given to me" (*Asiaweek* 20.7.94). In declaring his readiness to face a national referendum against Dr. Mahathir so that "the people can judge for themselves.....," he simultaneously predicted the downfall of Dr. Mahathir and his deputy "within two years or much earlier," guaranteed there would be "a peaceful transformation," and answered to charges that he aspired to become Prime Minister in typically mystical fashion: "If people want me, then let it be; if it's the will of God, then no one can stop it" (*Thailand Times* 24.7.94, *NST* 24.7.94).

The tragic fate of Darul Arqam at the hands of the unforgiving political elites was effectively sealed with the publication of the book **PM Dr. Mahathir di Ambang Kejatuhan** (Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir on the Brink of Downfall) (1994) written by Shuib Sulaiman, a senior Darul Arqam leader believed to be responsible for composing politically-laden leaflets distributed nationwide and bearing similarly provocative titles such as 'Abuya PM Malaysia?' (Abuya the next Malaysian Prime Minister?), 'Logiknya Abuya Imam Ashaari Bakal PM' (The Logic of Abuya Ashaari as the future Prime Minister), 'PM Malaysia: Perang Tiga Penjuru' (The Malaysian Premiership: A Three-Cornered Fight), 'Pertandingan Satu Lawan Satu: Abuya Imam Ashaari vs. Dr. Mahathir' (Head-On Fight: Abuya Imam Ashaari versus Dr. Mahathir) and 'Keputusan Silap Akan Jatuhkan Kerajaan' (The Wrong Decision Will Bring Down the Government). One could only speculate whether the repression against Darul Arqam would have been carried out with such venom had Ustaz Ashaari refrained from publicly making politically sensitive statements, and had Darul Arqam decided to continue its policy of 'media isolationism' and 'non-retaliation'.

## 5.6 RESPONSE TO THE CLAMPDOWN ON DARUL ARQAM FROM OTHER ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

Having been subjected to various forms of repressive and regulatory measures in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1), the other Islamic movements might have been expected to come out in defence of Darul Arqam in the 1990s, or at least express dismay at the unjustified nature of government's actions against Darul Arqam. On the contrary, with the exception of Jamaat Tabligh, whose attitude was typically nonchalant on political and socio-economic issues, the major Islamic movements' response to the crackdown on Darul Arqam was generally supportive of the government's stance. In any case, this was testament to the success of the government's strategy of coopting amenable Islamists and isolating intransigent ones via Islamisation (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.2, 3.5.3), such that a convergence of interests among different Islamist factions was virtually impossible. Such an approach, smacking of the colonial 'divide and rule' strategy with respect to ethnic policy (cf. chapter 2: fn. 39), was crucial to obstructing potential support for Darul Arqam from fellow Islamists, who by and large had been reduced to a state of dependency *vis-à-vis* the Malaysian state. The government, in turn, by enlisting the support of Islamic movements in its campaign against Darul Arqam, added legitimacy to its actions from an Islamist's point of view.

The implicit impression one gets of Darul Arqam was one of a 'black sheep' in the family of Islamic movements, towards which the government was broadly favourable. As a result, moral and material support to Darul Arqam from local and foreign brethren of Islamists was never forthcoming throughout the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis, although the same activists might have viewed Darul Arqam in a favourable light or even cooperated in programmes with Darul Arqam prior to the 1990s (cf. chapter 4. 4.2). While tracing their source of hostility towards Darul Arqam to the Islamic Centre, Ustaz Ashaari expressed disappointment that leaders of other Islamic movements, academics and politicians were blindly espousing the Islamic Centre's position in their press statements. He specifically mentioned, along with several other scholars, Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty, President of ABIM; Anuar Tahir, ex-Secretary-General and Vice-President of ABIM, and Saari Sungib, President of JIM, as those whose apparent antagonism towards Darul Arqam was not sincere, and by implication, betrayed surreptitious motives (Ashaari Muhammad 1993b: 122).

Of the main Islamic movements, ABIM was most forthright in its disapprobation of Darul Arqam. Its leaders were prone to reproach Darul Arqam whenever a credible opportunity existed, particularly by reacting to unconfirmed press reports without proper investigation. In response to allegations that Darul Arqam was

plotting a *coup d'état* against the National Front government, Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty urged the government to act against the potentially subversive Darul Arqam before it created tension and destroyed national harmony (BH 7.5.93). Regarding allegations that Darul Arqam and PAS had influenced Malaysian students abroad into leaving their studies and committing seditious activities (ibid. 5.5.93), Anuar Tahir was quick to blame Darul Arqam for "*infusing lethargy among Muslims*" and "*showing a negative direction to Muslim students*" (ibid. 8.5.93). Reflecting on Ustaz Ashaari's departure from ABIM, Dr. Sidek Baba, Vice-President of ABIM, contrasted Darul Arqam's emphasis on sufi methods of *dhikr* with ABIM's adoption of acceptable practices such as *al-ma'thurat*; although he refuted the 'suicide army' charge as baseless, he compared the widespread use of Ustaz Ashaari's portrait among Darul Arqam members with the extremist methods of Khomeini's Iran (Sidek Baba 1994). ABIM Secretary-General, Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman, demanded that Darul Arqam members dissociate themselves from the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* declared as deviant by the authorities, and expressed grave concern that glorification of their leader might lead to irrational fanaticism (BH 24.6.94). Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty then announced ABIM's plans of organising nationwide seminars and talks, in coordination with the Islamic Centre, to arouse public awareness of the dangers of Darul Arqam's *dakwah* (ibid. 1.7.94). Welcoming the authorities' tough stance on Darul Arqam, he hoped that emphasis would be given to theological issues, on which ABIM claimed to have discovered evidence of Darul Arqam's deviationism since 1973, and not on grey areas such as unfounded 'suicide army' allegations (UM 18.7.94).

Prior to the promulgation of the *fatwa* outlawing Darul Arqam on 5.8.94, an ABIM-organised national seminar attended by about one-hundred Islamic scholars and activists had already adopted eight resolutions designed to counter Darul Arqam's teachings. These were, legal restriction of Darul Arqam's local and foreign economic, educational and social activities; legal action against its leaders, effective public education on true Islamic teachings, exposure of Darul Arqam's deviationism by the mass media, more effective laws to curb deviant teachings, establishment of rehabilitation centres for people thought to have been influenced by Darul Arqam, request for donors to Darul Arqam to cancel donations and endowments, and enforced repentance of all Darul Arqam members (NST 1.8.94). Unconditional approval of the *fatwa* of 5.8.94 was given by ABIM's Head of Women, Aminah Zakaria (BH 6.8.94). While many NGOs disputed the legality of Ustaz Ashaari's arrest and enforced repatriation from Thailand, ABIM's Head of Professional Branch, Nik Yusoff Nik Ismail, praised the detentions under the ISA as a good and wise move (*The Sun* 4.9.94). ABIM enthusiastically undertook responsibility for producing and distributing

video-recordings featuring talks by scholars and ex-Darul Arqam members on Darul Arqam's deviations (*BM* 4.9.94).

IRC and JIM were less vocal than ABIM in supporting the government's moves against Darul Arqam, but were equally critical of Darul Arqam's alleged deviationism. Regarding allegations of Darul Arqam's subversive activities, President of JIM, Saari Sungib, responded by advocating a tough stance against Darul Arqam leaders whose sinister intentions, he claimed, may not have been approved by their followers (*BH* 7.5.93). In the midst of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy, a resolution passed by the IRC leadership in Britain, despite deciding to reject so-called extraneous influences thought to have corrupted Darul Arqam's beliefs, expressed regret that the government was going overboard in its use of force against Darul Arqam such that all *dakwah* activities may be victimised, and acknowledged Darul Arqam's immense contribution to Islamic resurgence in Malaysia.<sup>64</sup> As to JIM's position in Malaysia, according to Dr. Azraai Kassim (interview 23.8.96), no formal stance on the Darul Arqam issue was adopted, and differences of opinion prevailed among JIM members. However, while members who may have privately bore sympathies with Darul Arqam were markedly silent, probably perturbed by the severity of the crackdown on known Darul Arqam affiliates, other leading members did indicate at least token support for the government.<sup>65</sup> For instance, JIM representatives were present at the ABIM-organised Islamic conference on curbing Darul Arqam's deviant teachings (*NST* 1.8.94). Zaid Kamaruddin, Secretary-General of JIM, praised the *fatwa* outlawing Darul Arqam as an accurate measure strictly to rehabilitate the faith of Muslims who had plunged into deviationism (*BH* 6.8.94). As approvingly reported in *Buletin Nasional JIM* (September 1994), JIM representatives in Sabah were invited by the religious authorities to a Council Meeting to Combat Darul Arqam's Deviationism, during which JIM's state leader proposed that *dakwah* efforts be intensified in rural areas, where Darul Arqam's influence was especially strong among new converts.

The position of PAS was critical of Darul Arqam for its teachings and of the government for its methods. PAS insisted that Darul Arqam had clearly committed theological deviations on issues such as the determination of the person of Al-Mahdi,

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<sup>64</sup>Personal communication with Haji Omar Yaakob (23.8.96), IRC *Amir* in 1993-94, Ph.D. student at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and lecturer at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Technology, Malaysia.

<sup>65</sup>One IRC leader and JIM member studying in Manchester (name withheld), privately admitted to the present author in February 1995 that having studied Darul Arqam's literature, he came to the conclusion that nothing was wrong with the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*. By contrast, Dr. Abdul Latif Mohamed, IRC *Amir* in 1994-96 and medical postgraduate at the University of Leeds, stressed to the author in September 1994 that the Malaysian *ulama* had indisputably pronounced that Darul Arqam was deviationist.

*tawassul* and the authenticity of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*.<sup>66</sup> This prompted public endorsements of the government's *fatwa* and ensuing moves to clamp down on Darul Arqam, by Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS *Mursyid al-'Am*-cum-Chief Minister of Kelantan and Fadhil Nor, PAS President (*UM* 6.8.94, 9.8.94, *BH* 9.8.94). Despite recognising Darul Arqam's *aqidah* as deviationist, PAS Deputy President Abdul Hadi Awang warned that PAS' different ways with Darul Arqam did not mean that it approved the government's resorting to harsh and illegal measures to defeat Darul Arqam (*Watan* 5.8.94, *UM* 11.8.94). While reiterating his support for the banning of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, Fadhil Nor was equally unequivocal in condemning the use of the ISA, which flouted Islamic and constitutional principles alike, on Darul Arqam leaders, whom he demanded to be unconditionally released or tried in open court (*Harakah* 9.9.94, 12.9.94). Earlier, he had suspected that the 'suicide army' allegation was purposely concocted to deflect public attention away from the issue of the PAS-led state government's endeavour to implement *hudud* laws in Kelantan (*ibid.* 8.7.94).

After confirmation that the federal government had rejected, through a Prime Minister's letter received by the Kelantan state government on 17.7.94, the PAS-proposed *Kanun Jenayah Syariah (II) 1993* (Islamic Criminal Law Bill 1993) which had been passed by the Kelantan state assembly (*ibid.* 25.7.94), PAS was quick to pounce on the ruling elites' hypocrisy. Fadhil Nor pointed out that UMNO's rejection of *hudud* laws also constituted religious deviationism, and PAS Youth expressed aghast at the NFC's failure to give a ruling on UMNO leaders' rebuff of Islamic law (*ibid.* 12.8.94). PAS' Information Chief, Subky Latiff, questioned the government's rationale of waiting for fourteen years (1979-94) to act on Darul Arqam (*ibid.* 5.8.94). For PAS Vice-President, Dr. Sanusi Daeng Mariok, and Deputy President, Abdul Hadi Awang, the answer was to be found in the government's political motives, citing Darul Arqam's rebuff of cooperative offers from the Islamic Centre and the pressing need to halt potentially adverse publicity on the national leaders' rejection of *hudud* laws and their alleged befriending of Israel (*ibid.* 12.8.94, 19.8.94). *Mursyid al-'Am* Nik Aziz Nik Mat welcomed the NFC's initiatives leading to the public repentance of Darul Arqam leaders, but allusively called upon all devotees of secularism to repent as well (*ibid.* 28.10.94). Not surprisingly, PAS' reluctance to give unconditional support to the government exposed it to rebuke by government leaders who accused it of being inconsistent, insincere and outright liars who told the masses that stern actions against

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<sup>66</sup>See for example an exclusive report on Darul Arqam's deviations in *Al-Muslimun* (September-October 1994), the newsletter of Hizbi-UK, based on a lecture by PAS Deputy President, Abdul Hadi Awang, and a relevant article in *Muslimah* (October 1994), the PAS-run women's magazine. Statements incriminating Darul Arqam were also issued by PAS President, Fadhil Mohd. Noor (1994), and PAS Information Chief, Subky Latiff, in his article 'Mengapa sekarang baru Pusat Islam peka' (Why only now has the Islamic Centre become so conscious), *Harakah*, 5.8.94.

Darul Arqam amounted to a suppression of Islamic activities (*BH* 11.8.94, *NST* 19.8.94, *UM* 19.8.94).

The other movements' hostile response towards Darul Arqam may be considered from two perspectives, viz. doctrinal aspects and inter-movement rivalry. With regard to the former, insofar as ABIM, IRC / JIM and PAS had been influenced by twentieth century revivalist ideas emanating from the Middle East and South Asia, it was anticipated that they would be antagonistic towards sufi ideas much maligned as a cause of the degeneration of the *ummah*. In the absence of any study on sufism by ABIM, IRC or PAS figures, suffice it to quote the views of Abul A'la Maududi (d. 1979), Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami founder-leader whose brand of political Islamic revivalism has had a major influence on ABIM, IRC and PAS,<sup>67</sup> on the questions of sufism and Al-Mahdi. In his historical study of revivalist movements in Islam, Maududi commended past reformers who strove to purify the faith from *bid'ah* and who initiated intellectual reformation, but he remained critical of their attachment to sufism. For example, he mentioned the "*excessive inclination towards tasawwuf*" as a defect of Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) (Maududi 1981: 64). He criticised South Asian revivalists from Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624) to Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi (d. 1763) for prescribing similar sufi remedies for the chronic ailment of Muslims' "*morbid*" attachment to sufism (*ibid.*: 110-112). So hostile was Maududi to sufi traditions and concepts that he proposed:

..... if somebody wishes and plans to revive Islam, he must shun the language and terminology of the Sufis; their mystic allusions and metaphoric references, their dress and etiquette, their master-disciple institution and all other things associated with it. (*ibid.*: 113).

On the place of Al-Mahdi in Islam, Maududi threw doubt on the authenticity of *hadiths* detailing signs of the coming of Al-Mahdi and denied the existence of "*a special office..... created in Religion after the name of Mehdi [sic].....*" (*ibid.*: 147-149). His metaphorical interpretation of the nature of Al-Mahdi allowed for the possibility of any leader or any group which had initiated a distinctive movement of religious revival becoming Al-Mahdi. Furthermore, Maududi rejected the sufis' mystical interpretation of Al-Mahdi, asserting:

'Mehdism' [*sic*] is not something to be claimed, it is rather something to be achieved. People who put forward such claims and those who readily accept them, in fact, betray a serious lack of knowledge and a degraded mentality..... I do not find any room in his work for supernatural acts, divine inspirations and ascetic and spiritual exercises. I believe that the Mehdi [*sic*], like

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<sup>67</sup>Both ABIM and IRC claimed to be the intellectual descendants of Maududi's thinking, as manifested in his books and his movement, Jamaat-i-Islami (cf. chapter 4: 4.7.1, 4.7.2). PAS' approval of Maududi's revivalist ideas could be gauged from the lengthy quotations attributed to him in 'Tajdid Sebagai Proses Kebangkitan Islam' (*Tajdid* as a Process of Islamic Revival), *Al-Muslimun*, November-December 1994.

any other revolutionary leader, will have to struggle hard and encounter all the obstacles common in this way. He will create a new School of Thought on the basis of pure Islam, change mental attitudes of the people, and initiate a strong movement which will at once be cultural and political. (ibid.: 43-44).

It should be evident that such views diverged from Darul Arqam's opinions, as derived from the works of such classical sufi scholars criticised by Maududi. In a summary of Darul Arqam's fundamentals of Islamic doctrine, Ustaz Ashaari claimed intellectual affinity with the sufism of Al-Ghazali, the jurisprudence of Al-Shafii (d. 820) and the theology of Abu'l Hassan al-Ashari (d. 936) (Ashaari Muhammad 1989: 129, 1990f: 160). Maududi's criticism of Al-Ghazali above having been noted, it is significant that Abu'l Hassan al-Ashari and his disciples were also blamed by Maududi for taking it upon themselves "to prove and establish certain things which in fact did not belong to true Faith" (1981: 56). Further, while the other movements, following Maududi (ibid.: 64-71), generally endorsed the reformist efforts of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1263), Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1992a: 220) questioned the teachings of this intellectual godfather of the *Wahhabis*, as did orthodox Sunni scholars (cf. Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: chapter XXI, Ibn Muhammad 1994: 104-117). Small wonder that the other movements were so dismissive of Darul Arqam's intellectual trends, which seemed not to have emanated from the modern spirit of Islamic resurgence as traced back to the founding fathers of *Wahhabism*, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jamaat-i-Islami in South Asia.<sup>68</sup> In his doctoral thesis, the President of ABIM supported findings which regarded Darul Arqam's spiritual doctrines as having been "influenced by Javanese-Hindu mysticism" (M.N. Monutty 1989: 126-127).<sup>69</sup> The scornful attitude towards Darul Arqam's allegedly unrecognised intellectual basis was portrayed in a PAS columnist's commentary on the government's lacklustre efforts in combating Darul Arqam:

The Islamic Centre has enough resources to hinder the influence of Al-Arqam and Ustaz Ashaari among Muslims in this country. According to my projection, Ustaz Ashaari does not wield influence among knowledgeable circles who hold fast to Islamic teachings. That is why the book **Aurad Muhammadiyah** has not been patronised by students of religious secondary schools. Only those who lack a religious education got influenced by the book authored by

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<sup>68</sup>Rather than sweepingly dismissing modern representatives of Islamic resurgence, Ustaz Ashaari was eclectic. He expressed indifference to Maududi's works and movement, but praised Hassan al-Banna and admitted to using his books for organisational purposes during the formative years of Darul Arqam (Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 108, Pahrol Mohamad Juoi 1993: 166).

<sup>69</sup>In his study, Mohammad Nor Monutty carelessly got the basic facts about Darul Arqam's spiritualism wrong, by saying that the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* was an epistle authored by Ustaz Mohd. Taha Suhaimi, the grandson-cum-biographer of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi (M.N. Monutty 1989: 125). One must therefore question his understanding of Darul Arqam's spiritual doctrines which he claimed had emanated from unIslamic sources.

Ustaz Ashaari. Most importantly, Ustaz Ashaari has yet to be recognised as an *ulama* at par with other *ulama* in our country. In short, the highly qualified Islamic Centre officials are capable of debating with and facing Ustaz Ashaari and his followers who lack religious education either from Arabic schools or *pondoks*. If it were true that the **Aurad Muhammadiyah** authored by Ustaz Ashaari has deviated from Islamic teachings, it has to be refuted only by recourse to religio-intellectual arguments. (Ibnu Muslim, *Harakah* 15.7.94).

As regards inter-movement rivalry, the rebuff of Darul Arqam by the other groups could be viewed as a retaliation against Darul Arqam's criticism of contemporary Islamic movements which absorbed themselves in forums and seminars without any practical realisation of the Islamic way of life, and which argued that the acquisition of political power was a pre-requisite for implementing Islam at grassroots level (Ashaari Mohammad 1981a: chapter 6, Ashaari Muhammad 1988: chapter 8, 1988a: chapters 4-6, 1990f: 44-45). Although Darul Arqam hardly mentioned other organisations by name in its reviews of methods used by Islamic movements, the respective targets of such criticisms were apparently ABIM and PAS (cf. Ali Haji Ahmad 1985: 55-59, 192-201; Jomo and A.S. Cheek 1988: 847). As ABIM, and to a lesser extent, IRC, were evidently becoming more pro-establishment in orientation, presumably as a calculated strategy to infiltrate UMNO and Islamise the state from within,<sup>70</sup> it was hardly surprising that they would repudiate Darul Arqam, which had adamantly remained outside the circle of ruling elites. So supportive was ABIM of the government's crusade against Darul Arqam that the resolutions of its *ulama* conference on measures to combat Darul Arqam predated the NFC's official *fatwa* by five days (cf. Shuib Sulaiman 1994: 49). This attitude was a far cry from that of the anti-establishment ABIM of the 1970s, when its President, Anwar Ibrahim, was known to have made Darul Arqam his consistent partner in discussion, as marked by his frequent visits to its main settlement in Sungai Penchala (Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1990: 47, 54). If the current ABIM President's assertion that Darul Arqam's deviationism had been known by ABIM since 1973 were true, then one has to question the motives behind its leaders then courting friendship with Darul Arqam.

One would notice that ABIM's rising hostility towards Darul Arqam paralleled Anwar Ibrahim's rise in UMNO and the government, through which many former Anwar lieutenants in ABIM had carved a niche for themselves in the ruling establishment (ibid.: 114-117, Shuib Sulaiman 1994: 51, cf. chapter 4: fn. 38). The positions of such ABIM opportunists were so obviously dependent on Anwar Ibrahim's patronage that insofar as he articulated the views of the political establishment,

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<sup>70</sup>cf. 'ABIM, JIM tidak perlu saling bertelingkah' (ABIM and JIM need not quarrel with each other), *BH*, 23.1.97.

ABIM's having to uncritically endorse those views was least surprising. It is significant that only after the confirmation of Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister in 1994 that ABIM became insistent upon openly combating Darul Arqam's deviationism, nearly twenty years after discovering it, and playing down the once cordial relationship between Anwar Ibrahim and Ustaz Ashaari (cf. *FEER* 11.8.94). According to a senior Darul Arqam leader and a former member of ABIM himself, Shuib Sulaiman (1994: 90-91), Ustaz Ashaari had predicted Anwar Ibrahim's entry into UMNO and ABIM's consequent belligerence towards Darul Arqam since the late 1970s. He also dubbed ABIM's strategy of 'ABIMising' UMNO from within as having turned upside down, with ex-ABIM members instead being transformed into principled UMNO elements, as reflected in their antagonism towards Darul Arqam (ibid.: 51).

As for PAS' hostile reaction against Darul Arqam, one would have anticipated incongruence between the two by the very fact that Darul Arqam was founded by a PAS renegade. However, while disagreements were confined to spiritual and methodological issues throughout the 1980s, PAS' electoral victory in Kelantan in 1990 inaugurated an era of a PAS campaign to politically outmanoeuvre Darul Arqam. This could be directly related to Darul Arqam's increasingly vocal criticism of PAS' lack of initiative and lethargy in turning Kelantan into a full-fledged Islamic state, despite its perennial rhetoric predicting a swift transformation once political power was attained (Ashaari Muhammad 1992b: chapter 8). Further, Ustaz Ashaari admonished Nik Aziz Nik Mat, PAS *Mursyid al-'Am*-cum-Chief Minister of Kelantan, for being short of ideas, dwelling on trivial issues, issuing tactless statements and allegedly sacrificing principles (ibid.: 132-137). Supplementing his criticisms with proposals to restore the credibility of PAS and its state government, Ustaz Ashaari demanded PAS to acknowledge that its manifest failure to effect a wholesale transformation towards Islamic-oriented systems in Kelantan proved that not all of God's commandments could be implemented by means of political authority alone (ibid.: 111-112, 129-131).

Prior to PAS' endorsing the federal government's *fatwa* proscribing Darul Arqam in 1994, it had already restricted the freedom of Darul Arqam activities in Kelantan. This was most eloquently demonstrated by the state government's last-minute banning of Darul Arqam's Grand Exhibition, Islamic Cultural Concert and Annual World Gathering scheduled for 11-13 September 1991 (*UM* 12.9.91, *Harakah* 20.9.91, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 282). Rationalising the decision, Haji Yahya Othman, member of Kelantan's executive council and chairman of its Islamic Development, Education and *Dakwah* Committee, ostensibly referred to directives from the Islamic Centre. This was ironical, for firstly, the state government was not

bound to the Islamic Centre since religious affairs were constitutionally under state and not federal jurisdiction (Abu Saifullah Ramadhan 1991: 3, Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 22). Secondly, the Kelantan government was prepared to forge closer ties with Iran, whose Shiite faith clearly contradicted Sunni theology on such issues as Al-Mahdi, on which Darul Arqam was declared as deviant (Abu Saifullah Ramadhan 1991: 7, Abdul Khaliq 1993: 104).<sup>71</sup>

In a subsequent meeting between representatives of the Kelantan state government and Darul Arqam leaders, the former made it clear that Darul Arqam's planned grand programme was regarded by the state authorities as a vehicle to challenge, compete with and ultimately undermine the PAS-led government (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 22-23, fn. 22). Evidently, since PAS' assumption of power in Kelantan, Darul Arqam had injected more resources into and more ideas on implementing Islam in Kelantan, in order to widen Islamic alternatives there.<sup>72</sup> But jealous of its own authority and anxious that people might clamour for more wide-ranging programmes which PAS' less than comprehensive mechanism was ill-suited to deliver, PAS snubbed offers of assistance from Darul Arqam and JIM (ibid.: 21, Abdul Khaliq 1993: 105). Some observers argued that the move was an attempt to appease the federal government to whom the Kelantan government was pestering for financial aid (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 283, Nik Mahadi Nik Hassan 1993: 38). Others pointed out that due to PAS' unprecedented round of hostile measures against Darul Arqam in Kelantan, the federal government became bolder in its suppression of Darul Arqam, the defeat of which was now in the interest of both UMNO and PAS (Talib 1995: 16, Meuleman 1995: 6). Concluding his analysis of why PAS treated Darul Arqam as a rival rather than a complementary partner in its task of Islamising Kelantan, Shuib Sulaiman rhetorically asked, "*Is PAS now treating Al Arqam as an enemy because PAS has seen that Al Arqam has the potential and qualifying characteristics to rule the country?*" (Amal November 1992).

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<sup>71</sup>For refutations of Shiite theology from a Sunni point of view, see Ashaari Muhammad (1987), Nomani (1988), Al Nagrami (1989) and Sirajuddin Abbas (1991: chapter V).

<sup>72</sup>cf. Rosnani Untol, 'Perjuangan Muslimah Kelantan Sepatutnya' (The Required Struggle of Kelantanese Women), *Al Qiyadah*, February 1991; Abdul Halim Abbas, 'Negara Islam' di Kelantan' (An Islamic State in Kelantan), ibid. April 1991; 'PAS di Era Perlaksanaan' (PAS in the Era of Implementation), editorial, ibid. June 1991; 'Konsert Bergerak Nada Murni di Kelantan' (*Nada Murni's* road show in Kelantan), ibid. July 1991; Wan Ariffin Al Kelantani, 'Islamkan Pasar Besar Kota Bharu' (Islamise Kota Bharu's Central Market), ibid.; Shuib Sulaiman, 'Kelantan paling Kaya' (Kelantan the Richest State), ibid. September 1991;

## 5.7 RESPONSE TO THE CLAMPDOWN ON DARUL ARQAM FROM OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

In view of Darul Arqam's presence in other Southeast Asian countries, where it claimed to have acquired a relatively significant foothold among the local population, it is pertinent to look at their responses to the Malaysian government's clampdown on Darul Arqam. Such an exercise enables us to gauge the extent of Darul Arqam's impact in these countries, and contrast their government's responses to Darul Arqam with their Malaysian counterparts' harsh stance. Our analysis is restricted to Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, all of which figured prominently in Darul Arqam's global political agenda (cf. Abdul Halim Abbas 1991: chapters 4-7), and were believed to have been the most important of Darul Arqam's overseas centres of influence (Darul Arqam 1989: 2-18, 34ff; Yusuf Din 1992: 241-247, 252-255, 365-371, 417-429).

Prior to the proscriptive *fatwa* of 5.8.94 on Darul Arqam, the impression conveyed by Malaysian leaders in the Malaysian press was one of mounting success in persuading neighbouring governments to impede Darul Arqam's influence in their countries. Following the 'suicide army' allegations against Darul Arqam in Thailand, Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Deputy Home Affairs Minister, announced that he had sought the cooperation of his Thai counterpart, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, to conduct a profound investigation into Darul Arqam activities in Thailand (*Watan* 23.6.94, *UM* 23.6.94). In similar vein, *Utusan Malaysia* (27.6.94) reported that the Council of Indonesian *Ulama* (MUI: *Majlis Ulama Indonesia*) would discuss proposing a national ban on Darul Arqam; its Head, Hasan Basri, being quoted as agreeing to abide by any decision of Malaysia and the meetings of Religious Affairs Ministers of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (MABIMS: *Menteri-menteri Agama Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia dan Singapura*). Reacting to Singapore's decision to bar Ustaz Ashaari and his entourage from entering Singapore on 2.7.94, Malaysian Law Minister Syed Hamid Albar upheld Singapore's sovereign immigration rights which Malaysia could not interfere with, while Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, regarded Singapore's decision as proof of her solid support behind the Malaysian government on the Darul Arqam issue (ibid. 5.7.94). In a related news, Singapore's Acting Community Development Minister-cum-Minister of Muslim Affairs, Abdullah Tarmugi, was reported as backing cooperative efforts between the Singaporean and Malaysian governments in checking Darul Arqam's influence in Singapore (ibid.). As the Fifth MABIMS Meeting, scheduled for 3-4.8.94 in the Malaysian island of Langkawi approached, there was prevailing optimism among Malaysian policy-makers that ASEAN countries, including Thailand and the Philippines which would send representatives as observers

to the Meeting, would agree to take a joint stand in combating Darul Arqam (*NST* 28.7.94). Malaysia's Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Abang Abu Bakar, reportedly said that while Brunei was so far the only ASEAN country to have banned Darul Arqam; Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia were expected to do so (*ibid.*).

With such developments in mind, some observers believed that Malaysia would use the Fifth MABIMS Meeting as a platform to pressure neighbouring countries into following its line on Darul Arqam (Meuleman 1995: 19). If this were true, Malaysia would have been bitterly disappointed by the participating countries' insistence on taking an independent line in handling Darul Arqam (*cf. ibid.*: 20). The Singaporean *Straits Times* (4.8.94) reported that in the course of the Meeting, only Brunei and Malaysia, which was eliciting support from its neighbours, favoured banning Darul Arqam, while Singapore and Indonesia "*expressed reservations.*" Appealing to differing conditions among the countries, Singapore's Acting Community Development Minister-cum-Minister of Muslim Affairs, Abdullah Tarmugi, stated that Singapore's guarantee of religious freedom prevented the government from banning Darul Arqam on the "*basis of faith,*" although action could be taken on "*internal security grounds*" (*ibid.*). This stance was taken despite an earlier *fatwa* issued by the Islamic Council of Singapore (MUIS: *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura*), proposing a halt to the distribution of the book **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam**, and advising Singaporean Muslims against joining Darul Arqam or practising its teachings (*BM Singapore* 7.8.94).

However, as Meuleman (1995: 18) has shown, MUIS' *fatwa* condemning Darul Arqam, while conceding that Darul Arqam might lead to errors, refrained from labelling the movement as deviationist. Instead, loyal to its primary responsibilities of preserving harmonious relations within families and the Muslim community towards ensuring the stability of the state, MUIS' *fatwa* was motivated by social rather than religious reasons, since intra-family rifts had reportedly occurred in cases where some members had joined Darul Arqam (*BM Singapore* 7.8.94). In response to MUIS' *fatwa*, Ustaz Mohd. Taha Suhaimi, the grandson-cum-biographer of the founder of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, in his capacity as chairman of the Islamic Society of Martial Arts of Singapore (PERIPENSIS: *Persatuan Islam dan Pencak Silat Singapura*), questioned the wisdom behind MUIS' proscription of a book it admitted had no religious mistakes, challenged MUIS to a debate to "*further the cause of truth*" and dubbed the Malaysian government's actions against Darul Arqam as "*politics*" (*ibid.*). After the ISA arrests of Darul Arqam leaders, the Singaporean government declared it was keeping close tabs on Darul Arqam, which nonetheless had not caused any problems as yet; as reiterated by Abdullah Tarmugi, "*The Government cannot act on*

*Al-Arqam unless the movement is or can be a threat to national security or can cause religious disharmony"* (ST 19.9.94).

In Indonesia, *fatwa* proclaiming Darul Arqam's teachings as deviant had been issued by the MUIs of Bukittinggi and West Sumatra in 1990 (*Editor* 30.6.90). The *Fatwa* Commission of the national MUI came out with a similar ruling in 1991, but for whatever reason, the MUI presidency never promulgated it (Meuleman 1995: 11). It was only on 13.8.94, a week after the Malaysian government's *fatwa*, that the national MUI finally declared on Darul Arqam's deviationism for reasons not dissimilar to the ones in the Malaysian *fatwa*, and proposed that the Indonesian Attorney-General ban the movement nationally (*Media Dakwah* September 1994, *Kompas* 14.8.94). Nevertheless, MUI's *fatwa* was not universally endorsed by the *ulama*, intellectuals and the government of Indonesia, where a healthy tradition of religious pluralism had long been upheld (cf. Deliar Noer 1985, Muhammad Kamal Hassan 1985). MUI, and for that matter, the Malaysian government, was dealt a severe blow when the *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU: Renaissance of *Ulama*), Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation with sixty-million members, issued an opposite *fatwa* which exonerated Darul Arqam from charges of deviationism and exhorted the government not to ban Darul Arqam on the basis of *aqidah* (Pengurus Besar NU 1994, *Kompas* 13.8.94, *Dunia Islam* October 1994). Later, Chief Director of Malaysia's Islamic Centre, Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir, eagerly announced that NU had sent to him a delegation to procure hard evidence of Darul Arqam's deviationism (*NST* 18.8.94), but no further reports indicated that NU had retracted its earlier *fatwa*.

NU's *fatwa* was reinforced by a significant amount of scholars' questioning of MUI's attempts to push for a national ban on Darul Arqam, for reasons of fundamental human freedoms and ungentlemanly resolution of religio-intellectual conflict (cf. Meuleman 1995: 13). For example, Professor Dawam Rahadjo of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI: *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*) expressed failure to comprehend the rationale behind MUI's seemingly desperate condemnations of Darul Arqam (*Sinar* 1.8.94). Jalaluddin Rachmat, a well-known observer of religious affairs, openly lamented the closing down of channels to air differences of opinion on religious matters if Darul Arqam's proscription were to be effected (*ibid.* 8.8.94). Dr. Azyumardi Azra of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN: *Institut Agama Islam Negeri*), Jakarta, perceived the Darul Arqam controversy as simply a case of doctrinal conflict between the Islamic traditionalists and modernist-reformists as represented in Indonesia by the NU-Darul Arqam bloc and the MUI respectively, and deplored the excessive politicisation of the affair (*Dunia Islam* October 1994). In the wake of the ISA arrests of Darul Arqam leaders in Malaysia, Dr. Tarmizi Taher, the Indonesian Minister of Religion who apparently

supported MUI's *fatwa* and was associated with several harsh censures of Darul Arqam,<sup>73</sup> declared that Indonesia was neither interested in detaining Darul Arqam members in Indonesia, nor in banning the movement (*The Nation* 14.9.94). Eventually, as proclaimed by the Attorney-General on 5.10.94, Darul Arqam was spared from a national ban since it had hitherto posed no threat to Indonesia's security and stability (*ST* 6.10.94, *UM* 6.10.94).

In Thailand, vociferous protests were registered against the Malaysian government's clampdown on Darul Arqam, and against consequent Thai police's complicity in apprehending Darul Arqam leaders. The press heavily criticised the Malaysian government's manoeuvres against Darul Arqam and the Thai government's failure to defend Darul Arqam members' human rights and religious freedom. A newspaper editorial begged the Malaysian government to reconsider its *fatwa* banning Darul Arqam and respect its members' convictions, and warned that risks for regional security were imminent were Darul Arqam forced to relocate underground (*The Sunday Post* 7.8.94). In the wake of the forcible arrest and deportation of Ustaz Ashaari, the *Siam Post* (5.9.94) demanded a clear explanation for its government's actions, which had arguably violated procedures of international law and universal norms of human rights. *The Nation* (4.9.94) concluded that in the absence of a convincing explanation, the Thai government's succumbing to Malaysian pressures to hand over Ustaz Ashaari "*ha[d] made itself appear as a foolish pawn in a political game being played by a neighbouring Asean country*". *Thairat* (7.9.94) accused Dr. Mahathir of exposing Thailand to international criticism by arbitrarily beguiling the Thai government into doing his 'dirty job'. That Malaysia had unfairly gained at the expense of Thailand's goodwill was indicated by the Thai police's disappointment with Malaysia's extradition of a suspected Thai Muslim terrorist, apparently in exchange for Ustaz Ashaari, because they were hoping for "*someone higher up*" in the list of criminals believed to be seeking refuge in Malaysia (*The Nation* 14.10.94).

Conversely, Darul Arqam's record in Thailand was overwhelmingly defended by respectable sections of the Thai population. Open letters of protest against the detention of Darul Arqam leaders were sent to the Malaysian government by the Thai Muslim Lawyer Club and the Union of Civil Liberties (*ibid.* 10.9.94, 11.9.94). Prasith Muhammad, secretary of Chularatchamontree, State Advisor on Islamic Affairs, denied that Darul Arqam was a threat to public order, but instead was "*part of Islam*" and "*well-behaved*", stressing that members should have been given the opportunity to defend themselves and choose the country to be deported to (*ibid.* 7.9.94). A conference of Thai Muslim academics at Chulalongkorn University urged for protests against the Malaysian and Thai governments for their respective violation of human

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<sup>73</sup>cf. interviews with Dr. Tarmizi Taher in *Sinar*, 1.8.94, and *Media Dakwah*, September 1994.

rights and rough handling of deported Darul Arqam followers (*Bangkok Post* 6.10.94). The most articulate response came from Dr. Chokchuang Chutinaton, chairman of the Consumer's Group of Siam and the person responsible for the change in chapter 7, on religious freedom, of the Thai Constitution. He wrote:

The Al Arqam is a peace-loving, Islamic religious group..... [which has] never been known to commit any crimes or violent acts. Yet, today the governments of Thailand and Malaysia are treating them like criminals to be roughly arrested, forcefully expelled and then detained under draconian laws..... have we no kindness and gratitude to show to the Al Arqam business investors who have been here for ten years giving jobs to hundreds of Thai workers to help our economy?..... The above events present together a most shocking tragic piece of news of intolerance and religious bigotry and the most unprecedented, joint, international violation of human rights in the modern history of ASEAN nations. Imagine five nations, in the name of solidarity, joining forces to bully a small minority religious group that has done no known harm to society! Has this sect committed any hideous crimes? Have they committed any violent terrorist acts? Have they willingly broken immigration laws? Have they been charged in the courts of Malaysia and Thailand and found guilty? The answer is no. Not a single one of the ridiculous allegations of the Prime Minister of Malaysia against Al Arqam has been proven in court. Yet, shockingly, five ASEAN nations have already condemned them as guilty by banning them. The verdict is "guilty until proven otherwise" or "guilty because Malaysia says so." What kind of legal justice is this?..... If the Al Arqam group has not been proven wrong yet and we start to condemn them by denying them visa extension, revoking passports, banning, invoking despotic decrees (Internal Security Act), deportation, unlawful forceful arrests, and unjust detentions without trials, then we have set a dangerous precedent! (Chutinaton, *The Nation* 10.9.94).

While the Malaysian government never hesitated to blatantly manipulate religion for the purpose of defeating a potential political rival in Darul Arqam, the Singaporean, Indonesian and Thai governments tried their best to present images of adherence to constitutional limits. The less than punitive attitudes towards Darul Arqam in Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, could be attributed to their societies' apparently higher regard for basic freedoms of religion *vis-à-vis* Malaysia's. Since such freedoms had been enshrined in their constitutions, their governments could find no legal justification to outlaw Darul Arqam, which had been merely practising a 'different', albeit dynamic, version of Islam. When such a constitutional guarantee appeared to have been flouted as in Thailand's forcible deportation of Darul Arqam's leaders to Malaysia, or was seen as close to be ignored, as in MUI's suggestion to the Indonesian authorities that Darul Arqam be banned nationally, waves of protests against such past or impending decisions were registered in the national media. This

testified to the higher degree of freedom of expression in Thailand and Indonesia, at least as far as religious discussions were concerned. In Singapore and Malaysia, such voices of disapproval were relatively muted, but the respective governments' views on the alleged dangers posed by Darul Arqam markedly differed, hence the contrasting positions adopted. Whether the comparatively benign response of other Southeast Asian elites was dictated by the sincere belief that Darul Arqam hardly posed a political threat to their hegemony, or by the need to improve on their societies' notoriously semi-democratic reputation among their own people and Western observers (cf. Neher 1994, Case 1996), remains a matter for speculation. If the former were true, it was testament to non-Malaysian Darul Arqam members' outstanding success in cultivating the image of a peaceful Islamic movement which thrived, via economic dynamism and immense grassroots support, within a predominantly non-Muslim or syncretic religio-cultural framework. Paradoxically, it was in Malaysia, whose government had arguably been the most Islamic in Southeast Asia (cf. Hussin Mutalib 1990a), that Darul Arqam had to weather intense opposition from Muslim political elites, some of whom boasted a background of Islamic activism themselves.

In Malaysia, constitutional freedom of religion applied only with respect to Islam *vis-à-vis* other religions, but not among different interpretations of Islam. The Malaysian government, as represented by its religious bureaucracy, considered its version of religious orthodoxy as infallibly applicable upon the Malay-Muslim population, although legitimate evidence indicates that contravening positions, as adopted for instance by Darul Arqam, had been tolerated within the framework of acceptable differences of opinion in the Islamic intellectual tradition. In fact, it could be argued that before the onset of *Wahhabi* reformism in Arabia and its global dissemination, made possible by Saudi Arabia's patronage of the pilgrimage and massive Middle Eastern oil wealth, it was traditionalist doctrines familiar to the world of sufism, as upheld by Darul Arqam, that held dominant among the *ummah* and certainly in the Malay world (cf. chapter 2). As such, although the Islamic authorities in countries like Indonesia had been penetrated by *Wahhabi* elements, they failed to impose their viewpoints by letter of the law. Respectable sections of society were too familiar with the traditionalist-modernist dimension of doctrinal conflict to be coaxed by any interested party into excommunicating either school.<sup>74</sup> As Meuleman noted, in Indonesia, representatives of the "*traditionalist*" style of Islam..... considered the Darul Arqam doctrine as acceptable within the Islamic tradition," and although at first glance, Indonesia looked "*less democratic than Malaysia*," her handling of the Darul Arqam affair indicated that Indonesia offered "*more religious*

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<sup>74</sup>cf. Azyumardi Azra, 'Terlalu Banyak Campur Tangan Politik' (Too Much Political Interference), *Dunia Islam*, October 1994; Jalaluddin Rachmat, viewpoint in *Sinar*, 8.8.94.

*tolerance and dynamism and more open discussions between various religious figures and organisations or scholars than Malaysia"* (1995: 13-14). In Malaysia, by contrast, the highly limited scope of academic discussion was confirmed by the impression Meuleman got in an interview with a Malaysian scholar, that "*one should be careful not to discuss certain issues or express certain opinions before the wrong forum*" (ibid.: 9).

## 5.8 CONCLUSION

Western analysts have disproportionately focused on radical 'neo-fundamentalism'<sup>75</sup> in their attempt to locate an 'Islamic threat' (cf. Esposito 1992: 173-174). Such an attempt is misplaced, and fails to consider the possibility of 'neo-fundamentalist' activities repelling popular support, representing Islam in a negative light and providing justification for government suppression (ibid.: 202). Where 'neo-fundamentalism' is at a negligible level, Islamic activism is less repugnant to the people and conveys a positive image of Islam to non-Muslims. This has been the case in Malaysia, where Islamic movements discuss how to do *dakwah* i.e. propagate the faith in a peaceful manner, and improve themselves Islamically, rather than how to overthrow the government by revolutionary means. In the Malaysian case, the absence of neo-fundamentalism owes significantly to the accommodative stances of the government, whose main concern lies in the perpetuation of its own power and electoral support, and the lasting heritage of non-violent sufi-fundamentalism in Malaysian Islam.

In Darul Arqam, we have a sufi-revivalist movement which operated on the philosophy that the comprehensiveness of Islam should be realised in stages; first in the individual, then in the family, the organisation, the society, the state and finally the world. Darul Arqam managed to escape early government repression by appearing uninterested in state power, when the truth was that the Islamic state remained a long-term objective. In resurrecting an exemplary Islamic community, Darul Arqam combined traditional spiritual values with modern technology, earning for itself the sobriquet 'technological sufis'.<sup>76</sup> In structuring itself as an Islamic movement, Darul Arqam believed that it should reflect an Islamic state in miniature. It thus established departments to monitor the various aspects of its members' lives, resembling

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<sup>75</sup>The term 'neo-fundamentalist' here is as used by Ayubi, to describe "*splinter groups from the larger fundamentalist gatherings,..... usually more radical or militant in orientation,..... more eclectic in their selection and in their reading of the authoritative sources..... more inclined towards immediate action.....*" (1991: 69).

<sup>76</sup>Malaysian 'techno-sufis' await their messiah', *The Times*, 14.7.94; 'ASEAN may act against sect', *FT*, 29.7.94; 'Sect tries to turn away Malaysia PM's wrath', *The Independent*, 4.10.94.

government ministries. In its twenty sixth year, Darul Arqam, by virtue of a few politically offensive statements and publications (cf. section 5.5.3), projected a public image of being prepared to move from the comprehensiveness of an Islamic society to the comprehensiveness of an Islamic state, albeit with fatal consequences.

Whether the cultivation of such a political image was part of a deliberate programme by the Darul Arqam leadership remains a grey area. From personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam activists in Malaysia (March-April 1996), the present author gets the impression that by 1994, Darul Arqam members felt their movement had politically matured to the point where necessary preparations had to be made in anticipation of the onset of a Darul Arqam-led government. Yet, they were quite clearly unsure as to the *modus operandi* of the anticipated transition of government. Preparations made at grassroots level were mainly organisational and mental, despite the government's insistence that physical preparations had also taken place in the form of an armed unit. By uncharacteristically responding to the government's provocations in a likewise offensive manner, perhaps the Darul Arqam leadership was deluded by a false sense of optimism; a feeling which presumably diffused among the rank-and-file who sincerely believed that after twenty-six years of struggling, the promised utopia was finally within sight. As the crisis of 1994 developed, Darul Arqam implicitly accepted its newly-gained role as a formidable political opposition to the government, which endeavoured to establish that this status carried militant connotations. Darul Arqam's leadership probably sensed that maintaining a prevailing climate of anticipated political success was vital towards maintaining grassroots and sympathisers' support in trying times. But as later events showed, the Darul Arqam-sponsored 'Islamic state' was not to be, at least in 1994.

The classic strategy employed by the Malay-dominated National Front government to neutralise Islamic challenges to its legitimacy had been the cooptation of Islamic figures and partial accommodation to the Islamists' agenda, by for example, redefining development strategies with an Islamic garb (cf. chapter 3: 3.5). This strategy proved successful to pacify demands of hitherto radical Islamic groups, which, having weak economic bases, could only see participation in conventional politics and the state mechanism as the suitable avenue for advancing their ideas. Darul Arqam overcame this regime response by perennially dissociating itself from the state and erecting its own economically successful exemplary society. This exposed it to vituperative assaults from the Malay political elites, ever-antithetical to the idea of there being a group of Malays who had excelled in the Chinese-dominated industrial economy without their patronage. Having a clear hidden agenda, the Malay elites resorted to theological sophistry to deceive the Malays. To convince the non-Malay masses and their representatives in the ruling coalition, they appealed to the

argument of there being a subversive element, which was in reality their political adversary, acting in such a way as to endanger race relations and national security.

Any neutral observer of Malaysian politics would not fail to be perplexed by the sheer ferocity of the government's onslaught against Darul Arqam. While official justifications for the fierce repression revolved around theological issues, Darul Arqam's intransigence not to succumb to the dynamics of patronage-based Malay politics in a multi-racial Malaysia provides a more convincing explanation for the government's actions. Procedurally, the Malaysian political authorities neither had to acquiesce to its religious functionaries' rulings, nor did they want to. In order to maximise public justification for its actions, they invoked results of ostensible deliberations by reputable religious scholars. But their blatant manipulation of the religious establishment for political purposes had not gone unnoticed. As Nagata observed, the government's "*mak[ing] its own definition of heresy and implement[ing] this through the [fatawa] of its own coopted ulama and religious courts*" formed a formidable weapon against anticipated opposition from Islamists (1994: 73). The chain of cause and effect was then quite possibly one of the political elites influencing or directing the religious authorities to abide by their political will, rather than the other way round, as the official version of events suggested. The hazy separation of interests between the political elites and the religious authorities was accentuated by the burgeoning patron-client relationship between them, as indicated by the recruitment of more than willing religious officials into the exclusive group of Malay political elites, having made political capital out of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy.

Throughout its existence, Darul Arqam forsook conventional electoral and pressure group politics, but practised instead the politics of *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah*. This method concentrated upon influencing the minds and hearts of people who were unfortunately regarded by the Malay political elites as their natural constituency. The effectiveness of such a political strategy could be gauged by continual public support for Darul Arqam's economic and socio-cultural activities, despite officially sanctioned, elongated attempts to discredit the movement. Having sensed that such initially innocuous support was in the danger of being translated into a well-grounded belief in Darul Arqam's capacity to govern the country, the elites' response towards Darul Arqam was drastic and unforgiving. The turning point was the public proclamation of support for Darul Arqam and concomitant criticism of elite political behaviour by some political elites themselves. In the context of Malaysia's politics of patronage, such 'defectors' to Darul Arqam wielded immense political clout through elaborate grassroots connections, which had to be quickly severed lest constituents hitherto loyal to the elites decided, following their erstwhile patron, to transfer votes

away from the political party and the politics of the Malay ruling establishment. With the alarming political consequences that this possibility entailed, the authorities imposed upon Darul Arqam a 'neo-fundamentalist' tag i.e. a threat to national security, as a pretext to suppress it having failed in all other provocative actions to drive Darul Arqam towards militancy. Never proven guilty of its alleged crimes, Darul Arqam became the victim of the Malay elites' craving for a perpetuation of their influence over the Malays and thus the Malaysian state; an influence that Darul Arqam was apparently gaining at their expense.

As far as national development policy was concerned, the secular aims and objectives of the government's modernisation strategies, as articulated in successive Five-Year Plans and most recently in Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's 'Vision 2020', exhibited irreconcilable differences with the Islamic movements' aspirations of an Islamic-based society within the context of multi-racialism.<sup>77</sup> Success of this Islamic challenge would erode the legitimacy of UMNO's claim to be the sole representative of a Malay society desperate to catch up with other ethnic groups in the race for development. The huge potential of Darul Arqam's grassroots approach to Islamic development, as articulated in Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1992: chapter 7, 1994c), directly challenged the government's approach in not only their disparate aims and methods, but also in blocking channels of corruption and favouritism which had recently tainted the political and corporate culture of the emergent alliance between Malay ruling politicians and entrepreneurs (cf. Case 1994). That Darul Arqam was successfully making inroads into Malay business elites was indicated by a Malay professional's commendation of Darul Arqam as having "*managed to put into practice what Muslim business should be,*" without having "*to lie or cheat*" (Time 22.8.94). In a report on Darul Arqam's business empire, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1.9.94) observed:

Besides leading an Islamic revival from Southeast Asia, the goal of Al-Arqam's empire-building is a self-reliant Islamic economy in its home base of Malaysia. That's anathema to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad, who calls for capitalism and foreign investment to maintain the country's rapid economic growth..... Theology aside, Al-Arqam enterprises symbolise precisely what Mahathir champions: Malay entrepreneurship. Growing popularity of the sect's 60-odd products could make it even harder to try to dismantle Al-Arqam's business concerns.

In retrospect, Darul Arqam's political openness was premature. It enabled the government propaganda machine to justify its 'trial by media' on Darul Arqam and

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<sup>77</sup>For an elaboration of the Five-Year Plans, see Cho (1990). On Vision 2020, see further Chapter 8: 8.2.2, especially the final paragraph and fn. 35.

thus hoodwink or cow the masses into accepting the charge that Darul Arqam was intent upon a forcible takeover of power. Yet, credit has to be given to Darul Arqam for holding fast to its sufistic non-violent philosophy in the face of the most horrendous persecution in Malaysian history. The experience of Darul Arqam shows that it is possible to implement Islam in a comprehensive and peaceful way without giving immediate priority to political power. While the government may have been successful in achieving its short-term political objectives of eliminating Darul Arqam and securing an overwhelming victory in the 1995 general elections,<sup>78</sup> nothing can guarantee that a sufi-fundamentalist movement similar in style, manner and approach to Darul Arqam will not re-emerge. In many ways, the actions of the Malaysian authorities and the reaction of the Darul Arqam movement and other interested parties were tradition-breaking in the context of the politics of Islam in Malaysia. The 'Darul Arqam episode' cast a significant light upon the various tactics, methods and strategies pursued by different Islamic movements in their route to power. For Islamists in particular, the episode demonstrated the danger of underestimating the extent of resources at the government's disposal in combating the 'Islamic threat', and of overestimating their movement's own strength and resilience in challenging the secular state.

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<sup>78</sup>In the 1995 elections, the UMNO-dominated National Front coalition amassed 161 out of 191 available parliamentary seats, equivalent to an increase of thirteen percent from the 1990 elections. In addition, it maintained control of all state legislatures, except that of Kelantan, won by the PAS-led APU coalition. In all states, it won an overall of 338 out of the available 394 legislative seats, amounting to a rise of fourteen percent from 1990. For detailed results of the elections, see *UM*, 27.4.95.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DARUL ARQAM COMMUNITY IN THE POST-REPRESSION ERA: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND FIELDWORK SURVEY OF FORMER DARUL ARQAM MEMBERS

#### 6.1 THE CONTEXT AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

While comparative studies of Islamic movements in Malaysia have invariably included Darul Arqam as a unit of analysis, researchers have generally been reluctant to gather empirical data on Darul Arqam by means of field surveys of any cluster of its activists. For example, Nagata (1984: 104-116) seemed to have relied for information on Darul Arqam mainly upon personal observations of Darul Arqam's activities and community in its settlement in Sungai Penchala, Kuala Lumpur. The identities and backgrounds of her primary and secondary informants were unreasonably concealed, giving rise to the possibility that her 'anthropological endeavour' (ibid.: ix) was a covert operation based upon random and probably superficial encounters with her subjects. Besides raising serious ethical implications, her account shows no sign of her having been involved in any serious discussion and interview with Darul Arqam leaders and members, or with having consulted Darul Arqam publications. She appeared to be more interested in establishing 'facts' based upon hollow conjectural evidence, such as when translating her observation of Darul Arqam's alleged "*siege mentality*" into a claim that Darul Arqam members believed in "*a constant danger of infiltration by hostile government authorities*" (ibid.: 105). Despite its methodological weaknesses, Nagata's work, as the first of its kind, has influenced subsequent comparative studies of Darul Arqam, including those by Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 44, fn. 4), F.M. Jamil (1988: 160-181), Hussin Mutalib (1990: 87-88) and Roald (1994: 268, fn. 1; 270, fn. 3). They have all referred approvingly to Nagata's analysis or conclusions on Darul Arqam.

However, apart from Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 44-48) whose solitary primary source on Darul Arqam was an interview with an anonymous Darul Arqam follower in Penang, post-Nagata studies have demonstrated a willingness to investigate Darul Arqam by means of Darul Arqam's internal sources, if only inadequately. This is observable in Zainah Anwar (1987: 36-37), F.M. Jamil (1988: loc.cit.), S.A. Hussein (1988: 222-241, 274-294), M.N. Monutty (1989: 124-131), Hussin Mutalib (1990: 85-89), Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah (1992: part 2) and Roald (1994: 261-271). Each of

these works has its own merits, but none could claim to offer a comprehensive analysis of Darul Arqam. For example, F.M. Jamil, M.N. Monutty and Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah failed to extract information from even a single Darul Arqam respondent-informant. Moreover, the studies exhibit a conspicuous lack of originality. As gauged from the number of relevant quotations and conclusions drawn, for instance, Roald was heavily influenced by M.N. Monutty, who endorsed the views of F.M. Jamil, who in turn, as we have mentioned, was unduly dependent on Nagata's analysis of Darul Arqam. As Darul Arqam had developed rapidly since the publication of Nagata's book in 1984 (cf. Darul Arqam 1993), a significant degree of dependence on studies whose chain of information inevitably leads us back to Nagata's conclusions will be outdated and unsatisfactory.

Of the afore-mentioned researchers, only S.A. Hussein and Hussin Mutalib made significant attempts to procure primary information on Darul Arqam through face-to-face communication with Darul Arqam respondent-informants.<sup>1</sup> S.A. Hussein's doctoral dissertation, **Islam and Politics in Malaysia 1969-82: The Dynamics of Competing Traditions**, reveals profound research into Darul Arqam's origins, activities and leadership-membership structures, as mainly derived from interview-discussions with twenty-seven Darul Arqam members (S.A. Hussein 1988: loc.cit.). In **Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics**, Hussin Mutalib interviewed three high-ranking Darul Arqam leaders, besides claiming that he was refused an audience with Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad despite repeated requests (Hussin Mutalib 1990: viii). For all the research effort put into by S.A. Hussein and Hussin Mutalib, their failure to refer to

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<sup>1</sup>Zainah Anwar (1987) and Roald (1994) also conducted an interview each with a Darul Arqam notable, but both their interviewees were not particularly suitable to their respective projects. Zainah Anwar's informant, Muhammad Zakaria, was Principal of Darul Arqam's Academic Institute, which bore no organisational connection with Darul Arqam's local university students i.e. Zainah's focus of study, who in 1985 (year of Zainah's interview with Muhammad Zakaria) were organised under Darul Arqam's *Usrah Institut Pengajian Tinggi* (Assembly of Students of Institutions of Higher Learning). Moreover, Muhammad Zakaria had reportedly left Darul Arqam even before the commencement of the present author's study in October 1994 (personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam members, March-April 1996). Roald's informant, Johari Murad, was interviewed in his capacity as Secretary-General of Darul Arqam's main settlement in Sungai Penchala. This was arguably an ill-suited choice since Johari Murad was not directly responsible for Darul Arqam's educational policies i.e. Roald's focus of study. Furthermore, Johari Murad, an Al-Azhar University graduate whom the author incidentally met during the former's *dakwah* tour in Britain in the autumn of 1991, joined Darul Arqam as a student in Cairo and had not therefore directly experienced Darul Arqam's educational system. A better choice as Roald's informant would have been Fakhurrrazi Ashaari or Nizamuddin Ashaari, Ustaz Ashaari's sons who headed the two branches of Darul Arqam's Department of Guidance and Education in September 1991-January 1992, when Roald collected fieldwork material in Malaysia (Roald 1994: 25). In view of her research interest in educational matters, it is disappointing that Roald showed a singular lack of awareness, when investigating Darul Arqam, of Darul Arqam's publications on education such as Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's **Pendidikan Rasulullah** (The Education of The Messenger of Allah) (1990), Abdul Halim Abbas' **Panduan Untuk Murabbi** (Guidelines for Educators) (1990) and Fakhurrrazi Ashaari's **Menyingkap Minda Syekhul Arqam di Bidang Pendidikan** (Unravelling the *Sheikh Al-Arqam's* Mind in the Field of Education) (n.d.).

more substantive and recent works by the Darul Arqam leadership is disappointing, considering the fact that such works had been in public circulation well before the submission and publication of S.A. Hussein's and Hussin Mutalib's studies in 1988 and 1990 respectively.<sup>2</sup>

S.A. Hussein's study suffers from three further deficiencies. Firstly, S.A. Hussein neither told us the specific breakdown of his Darul Arqam respondents between leaders and non-leaders, nor did he disclose their geographical, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. He only told us generally that his respondent-informants from all Islamic movements he investigated totalled 102, twelve of whom could be categorised as leaders, and who came from four Malaysian territories, viz. Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johore and Kelantan (S.A. Hussein 1988: 51-52). Secondly, his fieldwork covered the period 1980-82 (ibid.: 50), when Darul Arqam was just beginning to leave its formative phases (cf. chapter 4: 4.3). The enormous gaps between this period and his dissertation submission year of 1988, and between 1988 and the present day, arguably devalues the contemporary significance of his conclusions. Thirdly, all of S.A. Hussein's respondent-informants were males (S.A. Hussein 1988: 53). Yet, as adduced by Roald, Darul Arqam greatly stressed the role of women as "*active participants in society as well as inviters to Islam maybe more than other Islamic movements in Malaysia*" (1994: 267). This judgement has received support from Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah (1992: 87-88).

A major landmark in studies on Darul Arqam was registered with the publication of Muhammad Syukri Salleh's doctoral thesis, **An Islamic Approach to Rural Development - The Arqam Way** (1992).<sup>3</sup> This study combines a meticulous examination of internal Darul Arqam documents and audio-visual materials, with extensive information gathering via informal interviews and participant observation

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<sup>2</sup>S.A. Hussein and Hussin Mutalib respectively referred to only three and two elementary works by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad. These are, **Huraian ke Arah Membangun Negara dan Masyarakat Islam** (Towards the Establishment of an Islamic State and Society) (1981), **Ke Arah Membangun Negara dan Masyarakat Islam** (Establishing an Islamic State and Society) (1981): a condensed version of the above, **Huraian Apa itu Masyarakat Islam** (Explaining What is an Islamic Society) (1981) - referred to by both authors, and **Falsafah ke Arah Menyelesaikan Masalah Hidup menurut Islam** (The Philosophy of Solving Problems of Life According to Islam) (1982). Yet, by 1988, such major Ustaz Ashaari-authored books as **Iman dan Persoalannya** (Faith and its Implications) (1983), **Matlamat Perjuangan menurut Islam** (Objectives of the Islamic Struggle) (1984), **Mengenal Diri Melalui Rasa Hati** (Recognising the Self through the Intuition of the Heart) (first edition 1985), **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam: Sekaligus Menjawab Tuduhan** (*Aurad Muhammadiyah: The Conviction of Darul Arqam*) (1986) and **Siapa Mujaddid Kurun Ke 15?** (Who is the *Mujaddid* of the Fifteenth Century) (1987) had been widely patronised by the Malaysian public (cf. chapter 4: 4.6) and could not have escaped the attention of any thoroughgoing researcher on Darul Arqam. S.A. Hussein's and Hussin Mutalib's omission of these works in their bibliographies is mystifying, such that one may question the relevance of their understanding of Darul Arqam's ideological worldview by the late 1980s.

<sup>3</sup>The original thesis, submitted to the University of Oxford in 1991, was entitled **A Grassroots Approach to Rural Development: The Case of Darul Arqam in Malaysia**.

among Darul Arqam members in Peninsular Malaysia throughout 1987 (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 16). Nonetheless, being an investigation into Darul Arqam's rural development programme and policies, the study contains minimal discussion of Darul Arqam's politics and turbulent relationship with the Malaysian authorities, which form the present author's main focus of research. Muhammad Syukri Salleh's work has also been criticised for conspicuously neglecting discussions within a wider comparative framework (Nagata 1993: 615). The present study seeks to improve on his thesis' weaknesses by discussing Darul Arqam not in isolation, but as an entity within the broad typology of Islamic movements and trends in Malaysia, and as a movement which traces its heritage to the sufi origins of Malaysian Islam and dynamic sufi-revivalism in Islamic political history (cf. chapters 2, 4). Muhammad Syukri Salleh's approach of documentary analysis, participant observation and fieldwork survey has been retained, but with an assiduous updating of the list of utilised Darul Arqam printed materials to include, appropriately, many publications of a highly political flavour. But working within a limited frame of time and space, the present author acknowledges the inevitable limitations of his empirical research, which was based upon participant observation in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, and a field survey in Penang (March-April 1996).

Firstly, strictly speaking, his study may not qualify as a research on Darul Arqam, due to the legal dissolution of Darul Arqam at the end of October 1994, approximately a month after the commencement of the project. However, this is a minor issue insofar as we are concerned with Darul Arqam not as a physical entity, but rather as a systematic manifestation of a body of beliefs and an ideological worldview which leads to the practical implementation of a distinctive Darul Arqam pattern of thought and action.

Secondly, his restriction of the participant observation and survey areas to Kuala Lumpur and Penang might reduce the general applicability of his conclusions to other clusters of the ex-Darul Arqam community around Malaysia. As much as he would like to widen the geographical scope of his study, he has been obliged by shortage of time<sup>4</sup> and funds to limit his survey to a particular cluster of the ex-Darul Arqam community, of which the ones in Kuala Lumpur and Penang serve as handy choices (cf. section 6.2).

Thirdly, since Darul Arqam has become a highly sensitive issue of national security, the discussion of which was still taboo to the ordinary Malaysian by the time the researcher set his feet on Malaysian soil on 10.2.96, the major obstacle to the success of this project lay in a possible paucity of information. Reluctance of

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<sup>4</sup>The researcher's sponsor, the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, allows a maximum three-month research leave for fieldwork purposes during a course of doctoral studies.

holders of relevant information, whether in oral or document form, to release it has to be expected in view of the Malaysian government's declaration that the possession of any printed material relating to Darul Arqam as an organisation constitutes an offence (cf. appendix C). The primary concern of holders of such sensitive information would naturally be their personal security, having witnessed the systematic harassment of Darul Arqam members and families during a tumultuous four-month period from June to October 1994 (cf. chapter 5: 5.3). To overcome this problem, the researcher has had to guarantee anonymity to selected respondent-informants. Only where the respondent-informant has not explicitly prohibited the disclosure of his or her identity, can his or her name be revealed at the discretion of the researcher.

Finally, as in all surveys of the kind, the researcher has had to assume that respondents are inclined to tell the truth, to interpret questions in like manner and not to give answers merely to fit in with the perceived bias on the researcher's part. This precaution takes into account the security implications of the survey, which may encourage respondents to diverge from the truth in order to appear socially and politically acceptable to the authorities.

## **6.2 SUBJECTS AND VENUE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

Throughout a brief two and a half-month period from mid-February to the end of April 1996, the researcher conducted participant observation in Kuala Lumpur, its outskirts and the state of Penang to the northwestern coast of Peninsular Malaysia, and administered a field survey in Penang. In both exercises, the subjects were adult men and women who had been members of Darul Arqam during its declared dissolution on 30.10.94. Since Darul Arqam never had a list of officially registered members, identification of a subject was made by means of personal admission and peer identification i.e. potential subjects were recognised as former Darul Arqam members if they were identified as such by themselves and by fellow ex-Darul Arqam colleagues and leaders who were contacted beforehand by the researcher. Spouses of subjects were automatically treated as subjects themselves. The task of identifying subjects was facilitated by the visible existence of traits retained from subjects' days of involvement in Darul Arqam, for example their distinctive attire. Ex-Darul Arqam men had invariably stuck with their distinctively wrapped colourful turban, made from relatively thick material, usually imported from Turkey or Jordan. Most had discarded their robes in favour of long-sleeved shirts and trousers, but they may have still donned what they regarded as the traditional Islamic apparel in the privacy of their domiciles. The women had invariably retained their robes and veils, but their colour

now varied from person to person, instead of their uniformly displaying dull black clothing as in the Darul Arqam days.

The choice of Kuala Lumpur and Penang as venues for the empirical investigation of ex-Darul Arqam communities was determined by convenience and the pivotal role of the localities and population concerned. In terms of convenience, the researcher had the advantage of possessing a natural base in his parents' home in Petaling Jaya, the sister-city of Kuala Lumpur, for his research in Kuala Lumpur, and in the Universiti Sains Malaysia, to which he has been attached since 1993 as a junior fellow, for his observation and survey in Penang. The minimal costs of lodging incurred were vital to enable the channelling of limited resources to other relevant purposes. Furthermore, among the ex-Darul Arqam communities in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, the researcher had existing contact-persons in acquaintances met during the period of his undergraduate studies in England.<sup>5</sup> These acquaintances, upon return to Malaysia, wielded positions of influence in their respective Darul Arqam branches, having derived significant advantage from their overseas university qualifications (cf. section 6.3). It was through their assistance that the researcher was able to make significant inroads in investigating ex-Darul Arqam members. Without the 'personal acquaintance' factor to boost the researcher-subject relationship, the task of the researcher would have been made markedly difficult, if not impossible. This was in view of subjects' perennial security concerns, which could only have accentuated problems deriving from their 'siege mentality', as experienced by Nagata (1984: 105) and Hussin Mutalib (1990: 87-88), both of whom palpably failed to gain the trust of their Darul Arqam subjects.

No less significant was the salience of Kuala Lumpur and Penang as centres of influence for *dakwah* in general and Darul Arqam in particular.<sup>6</sup> Such a reputation had come about as a result of both territories' reputation as the most urbanised areas of the country; *dakwah* being an invariably urban phenomenon (cf. chapter 3: 3.3). The Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital city since independence, is the country's most densely populated territorial state, with 1,226,708 inhabitants living within an area of 243 square kilometres, according to the 1991 census. The state of Penang, comprising an island to the northwestern coast of Peninsular Malaysia and a strip of mainland opposite to it known as Seberang Perai, comes second, with

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<sup>5</sup>For his undergraduate degree, the researcher read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford, in 1989-92, during which he attended many Islamic conferences and gatherings held by various Islamic organisations throughout Britain (cf. chapter 3: fn. 35). For the backgrounds of the contact-persons used in this study, see below, fn. 11.

<sup>6</sup>For statistics quoted in this paragraph, see the 'Statistical Survey' on Malaysia in the yearbook, *The Far East and Australasia 1996* (London: Europa Publications, 1996, pp. 576-580).

1,116,801 residents inhabiting an area of 1031 square kilometres.<sup>7</sup> Penang's state capital, Georgetown, the island's eastern port, alone holds 219,603 residents. Together, Kuala Lumpur, Georgetown, Ipoh and Johor Baharu, the last two being the capitals of the states of Perak and Johore respectively, account for about forty percent of Malaysia's urban population (Milne and Mauzy 1986: 84). Both Kuala Lumpur and Penang, having been developed economically by foreign industrialists during the colonial era, have preserved their rapid paces of urbanisation under the direction of organs of the federal government for Kuala Lumpur, and of state agencies such as the Penang Regional Development Authority (PERDA) and the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) for Penang (Ahmad Idriss 1990: chapter 4, Gulrose Karim 1990: 671-673).

As Darul Arqam's birthplace, and where its settlements and economic enterprises were first established (cf. chapter 4: 4.2, 4.3), the choice of Kuala Lumpur as a venue for an empirical investigation of ex-Darul Arqam members is self-explanatory. But the choice of Penang needs further elaboration. The choice is defensible on account of the extremely precarious situation of Malay-Muslims in Penang, due largely to their minority status, their inferior socio-economic position *vis-à-vis* non-Malays and the irresistible intrusion into traditional Malay lifestyle of an alien materialistic culture accompanying Penang's rapid pace of mass industrialisation and urbanisation.<sup>8</sup> Malay-Muslims have been consistently outnumbered by non-Muslims in both Penang island and Seberang Perai, such that overall, Penang's Malay-Muslims constitute only about thirty-three percent of the state's population, as compared with fifty-five percent Chinese, eleven percent Indians and one percent for other ethnic minorities (Gulrose Karim 1990: 669-670). Such an ethnic composition, favouring heavily the non-Muslims, is unparalleled in any other Malaysian state, and has rendered Penang's past marred by instances of serious racial tension (cf. Snider 1968). To add to Malay-Muslims' feeling of vulnerability, Penang has long been a hotbed of Chinese-led opposition politics, in the form of the *Parti Buruh* (Labour Party) in the 1960s and the DAP since 1970. Since independence, Penang has been led by a Chinese-dominated component party of the ruling coalition, thereby being the only state to have consistently had Chinese Chief Ministers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>In this thesis, the term 'Penang' refers to the state of Penang, comprising both the island and Seberang Perai, which used to be known as 'Province Wellesley' in colonial times. When only the island is referred to, the word 'island' is affixed to 'Penang'. In the Malay language, however, 'Penang' is translated as 'Pulau Pinang', literally meaning the island of Penang but administratively covering both the island and Seberang Perai.

<sup>8</sup>For specific economic factors for the urbanisation process in Penang, see Ahmad Idriss (1990: 59-60).

<sup>9</sup>From 1957 until 1970, politics in Penang was dominated by an intense rivalry between the MCA of the ruling coalition and Chinese opposition parties. Since 1970, Penang has been controlled by the *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (GERAKAN: Malaysian People's Movement), which joined the National Front coalition in the aftermath of the 1969 racial disturbances. Originally founded on multi-racial principles,

Overwhelmed by non-Muslims numerically, politically and economically, Muslims in Penang are presumably extremely self-conscious of their identity, such that an interlocking of religious and ethnic factors in the dichotomisation of society is practically inevitable. Previous research has confirmed the rigidity of boundaries separating Penang's ethnic communities (Nagata 1985, 1978: 108-109). Judged on past theories of the origins of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia, as advanced for instance by Nagata (1984: 72-73) and Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 13-22), being metropolitan in character and highly susceptible to the penetration of foreign elements through tourism and international trade linkages, Penang would be a perfect breeding ground for Islamic movements, which so often thrive on recruiting culturally alienated individuals plunged into a severe identity crisis.<sup>10</sup> An examination into the social composition and attitudes of ex-Darul Arqam members will help us to put into perspective the extent to which the growth of Darul Arqam was influenced by a Malay-centric indigenous self-assertion under conditions of economic backwardness and cultural insecurity.

On Darul Arqam's map, the distinctiveness of Penang had traditionally been in the intellectual strength of its membership; several Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) lecturers and administrative staff were known to have had Darul Arqam affiliations. The importance of Penang was further underlined by the fact from 1992 until 1994, Penang's Darul Arqam members were put under the stewardship of Abdul Halim Abbas, the long-serving deputy *Sheikh Al-Arqam* ranked second only to Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad in Darul Arqam's leadership hierarchy.

### 6.3 DESIGN AND SAMPLE OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The participant observation and the survey were separately designed to fulfil two distinct objectives. Primarily exploratory in nature, the participant observation aimed to discover whether Darul Arqam still existed as an organisational entity, and if it did, in what form and for what purpose. The relevant issue was whether the government's repressive measures had merely driven Darul Arqam underground, as

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GERAKAN later came to develop a predominantly Chinese leadership and membership (cf. Snider 1968: 970-975). While the Chief Ministership has been constantly held by GERAKAN, UMNO has been allocated several executive council portfolios, including the Deputy Chief Ministership, on the basis of mutual political bargain. GERAKAN's political supremacy in Penang has consistently been challenged by the DAP, whose political fortunes suffered a setback in the 1995 general elections, when it hung to only three and one parliamentary and state legislative seats, having won six and fourteen in 1990, out of a possible fourteen and thirty-three seats respectively.

<sup>10</sup>The hypothesis that the Islamic resurgence is mainly a Muslim response to alienation wrought by a crisis of individual and collective identity has been enthusiastically put forward by several Western social scientists. See for example Dekmejian (1980: 9-11, 1988: 7-8) and Ayubi (1991: 217-218).

suspected by Nagata (1994: 73), rather than eliminating it. The means adopted for this exercise were investigative visits to former Darul Arqam settlements and centres, and to the premises of commercial companies run by ex-Darul Arqam members. During such visits, the researcher was involved in personal discussions and informal interviews with subjects. Notes of the meetings were carefully kept in the researcher's diary. In his itinerant task, the researcher was willingly assisted by Mohd. Ali Tahir, administrative and finance manager of ULFAH Trading, a private limited company run by ex-Darul Arqam members in Selayang, Selangor; Mohammed Razib Abu Bakar, marketing manager of KARYAONE, a publishing company run by ex-Darul Arqam members in Kuala Lumpur, and Dr. Mansor Mohd. Noor, lecturer in sociology at the Centre for Policy Research, USM, Penang.<sup>11</sup> Benefiting from their contacts, the researcher was cordially received by the ex-Darul Arqam communities, observed internal discussions among ex-members and met several prominent ex-Darul Arqam leaders, including former ISA detainees.

On the other hand, the survey among ex-Darul Arqam members in Penang, mainly attitudinal in approach, was designed to investigate five core issues, viz. the significance of Darul Arqam in shaping the lives of ex-members; the political vision and orientation of ex-members; their past and present attitudes towards fellow ex-members, co-revivalists, the established authorities, the media and the larger society; how ex-members have coped with the post-repression era; finally, whether ex-members harbour hopes for any future revival of Darul Arqam or its peculiar brand of political Islam. Tied together, results derived from both the participant observation and the survey would give reasons for the past and possibly present resilience of Darul Arqam in Malaysia. In a wider context, the conclusions may be relevant to sufi-revivalist movements elsewhere, albeit taking into account the country-specific frameworks in which the different movements operate.

Due to a shortage of time, the researcher had to limit his sample of survey respondents to around a quarter of the total population of former Darul Arqam members in Penang. His sample of thirty respondents were selected in close consultation with Dr. Mansor Mohd. Noor, who was a high-ranking Darul Arqam leader in Penang, until its dissolution in October 1994. The selection was intended to

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<sup>11</sup>Mohd. Ali Tahir (b. 1968) graduated with a degree in Accountancy from the University of Central England, formerly Birmingham Polytechnic, in 1992. Upon return to Malaysia, he instantly attached himself to Darul Arqam's Selangor branch, and had since been involved in various secretarial and leadership roles. Mohammed Razib Abu Bakar (b. 1969) graduated in Electrical Engineering from Loughborough University in 1993, and experienced working in the commercial private sector before joining KARYAONE full-time in 1995. Both Mohd. Ali and Mohammed Razib joined Darul Arqam while studying in England. Mansor Mohd. Noor (b. 1951) joined Darul Arqam in 1983 while lecturing at the USM, and was almost instantly promoted to leadership roles. He was a member of Darul Arqam's *Majlis Syuyukh* during its dissolution in 1994. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Bristol in 1992, and served as leader of Darul Arqam in Europe throughout his four-year doctoral studies.

reflect a proportional balance between the various categories of respondents' backgrounds,<sup>12</sup> such that results of the survey would do justice to the whole of Penang's relatively small ex-Darul Arqam population. In order not to put off respondents from answering what may have seemed to them a tedious questionnaire, the researcher endeavoured to be within easily reachable distance from them when they were completing the exercise, should any queries arise. This was also important to ensure that possible bottlenecks arising from any concern for the respondent's security was broken down from the beginning. While this practice may have been time-consuming in necessitating the researcher to get hold of respondents in person in their domiciles or places of work scattered all over Penang, an encouraging response rate to the survey questions was never in doubt.

#### **6.4 FINDINGS: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN KUALA LUMPUR AND PENANG**

When the researcher began his empirical investigation of ex-Darul Arqam members, most of his subjects were supposed to have undergone some form of 'rehabilitation': a euphemism for having left Darul Arqam's beliefs and lifestyle in favour of mainstream Islam as promoted by the state. The government's purported seriousness in the rehabilitation programme was shown, for example, by the announcement that in Kedah, the task would be jointly undertaken by the state departments of Religious Affairs, Education, Welfare, Information and Police (*UM* 1.11.94). By the end of January 1995, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad was claiming that seventy percent of his ex-followers had been rehabilitated (*NST* 30.1.95); a claim substantiated by the Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman's assurance that continuous efforts to rehabilitate the remaining twenty to thirty percent 'adamant' ex-members would be undertaken through non-coercive methods (*UM* 20.2.95). When the Prime Minister himself declared, in mid-June 1995, plans to build a national rehabilitation centre to detain and treat 'deviationists' and apostates, many observers believed that it was directed at ex-Darul Arqam members (*FEER* 6.7.95). On the whole, rehabilitation focused on educating ex-Darul Arqam members in the essentials of Islam through talks and courses by the official *ulama*, and on re-educating ex-Darul Arqam children in government schools. Wide publicity was consequently given to the Education Ministry's efforts to incorporate large cohorts of ex-Darul Arqam children into government schools, to set

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<sup>12</sup>The categories considered in the selection process were: leader or ordinary member, male or female, full-time member or part-time member, a respondent's socio-economic background, and his or her educational background.

up special rehabilitation classes for them, to help ease financial strains of ex-Darul Arqam students abroad and to encourage ex-Darul Arqam teachers to resume their careers in state schools (*UM* 10.12.94, 4.1.95, 1.2.95; *NST* 22.1.95, 24.1.95).

By mid-February to early May 1996 i.e. the duration of the empirical research, the government's rehabilitation programme, apart from the successful absorption of ex-Darul Arqam children into state schools, was at best, in tatters. In his three months in Malaysia, not once did the researcher witness ex-Darul Arqam members attending any sort of rehabilitation programme. Through personal conversations with ex-Darul Arqam members, the researcher discovered that except for a very brief period following the dissolution of Darul Arqam in 1994, the rehabilitation programme was left in limbo. If any rehabilitation had occurred, it had certainly not been ingrained in the mental make-up of ex-Darul Arqam members. Books authored by Ustaz Ashaari and other Darul Arqam paraphernalia were still neatly arranged on the shelves of their homes and offices. In public, however, physical traits associated with Darul Arqam had virtually disappeared. No Darul Arqam badges and logos could be observed in premises occupied by ex-members. Their villages and economic enterprises, no longer monitored by a nationally synchronised Darul Arqam superstructure, were seemingly stripped of their group identity.<sup>13</sup> The authorities, meanwhile, were content to bask in their success of defeating Darul Arqam. Presented as yet another victory against the forces of extremism, it appeared hugely justified by the government's resounding electoral victory in the 1995 general elections. In an interview with the researcher (24.2.96), Sheikh Abdul Majid Mohamed Noor, chairman of Kedah *Fatwa* Council and member of the NFC, strenuously denied that tortures were used in ISA detention camps and affirmed the authorities' view that the Darul Arqam issue was regarded as effectively over. In the wake of reports of an alleged Shiite conspiracy in Malaysia, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman confidently declared that the strategy that paralysed Darul Arqam would be used to combat the Shiite movement (*MM* 3.3.96).

Inflaming the government's sense of optimism in eliminating Darul Arqam were several feature articles in newspapers which had portrayed ex-Darul Arqam members in a positive light, as though they had been successfully integrated into the mainstream of Malay-Muslim society. Former pupils of Darul Arqam schools, having discarded traditional Islamic attire, were portrayed as enjoying their experiences among new friends and teachers in state schools (*UM* 31.1.95, *NST* 2.12.94, 3.1.95). OVA

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<sup>13</sup>However, the researcher could witness, in ex-Darul Arqam villages, the gradual return to wearing distinctive robes and turbans reminiscent of the Darul Arqam days, although the colours black and green, so sensitive to the authorities, were scrupulously avoided. In short, there were hints of a reappearance of a congregational identity among ex-Darul Arqam members, but only in flashes and in clandestine manner.

Productions, Darul Arqam's recording company which maintained its acronym,<sup>14</sup> was praised for its success in penetrating the entertainment and music industry through its innovative production of albums featuring *nasyeeds* sung by ex-Darul Arqam groups, all of which retained their names while replacing Islamic with traditional Malay performance dresses (*UM* 27.1.95). Ironically, the albums promoted in such articles included those produced during the Darul Arqam years (*ibid.*). By mid-1995, KARYAONE, the ex-Darul Arqam publishing company, was publishing four magazines, viz. *Dunia Baru*, a current affairs magazine; *Ayu*, a women's magazine; *Tatih*, a children's magazine and *OK!*, a humour magazine. All were given an Islamic outlook minus traces of Darul Arqam teachings, in order to pass the criteria set by the Home Affairs Ministry. The publications were widely promoted in and warmly received by commentators of the national media.<sup>15</sup> *Tatih* was even reported to have gained the recommendation of the Minister of Education to become an additional reading material for primary schoolchildren.<sup>16</sup> KARYAONE was subjected to further media publicity when it was nearly embroiled in a legal battle against TV3, Malaysia's main independent television station, over TV3's production of a religious programme allegedly plagiarised from KARYAONE's ideas; eventually, the issue was resolved amicably in mutual discussions between both disputants (*ibid.* 10.2.96, 11.2.96, 16.2.96). For ex-Darul Arqam members among the KARYAONE staff, the reports in the national media were advantageous in two ways: by convincing the authorities that they had sincerely reformed their ways, and by removing the stigma that some potential patrons might have harboured against Darul Arqam-branded products, thus enlarging their market share. By deciding to sacrifice their individual identities as Darul Arqam members and restraining themselves from expressing controversial beliefs, ex-Darul Arqam enterprises had raised their business legitimacy among Muslim customers.

Observation by the researcher convinced him that restrictions imposed upon ex-Darul Arqam members' *dakwah*, educational and village-level activities had merely served to redirect their resources towards economic enterprises in a more resolutely money-making context. The more commercial slant of business enterprises was a corollary to foregoing cross-subsidising non-profitable activities which had been proscribed or taken over by the state. The list of companies operated by the ex-Darul Arqam members and their range of activities was extremely impressive (*cf.* appendix D). In many ways, they inherited the basic principles, methods and personnel of their Darul Arqam predecessors, but fitted themselves to the new climate

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<sup>14</sup>The initials 'OVA', which used to stand for 'Odiao-video Al Arqam', were apparently retained by its namesake company after October 1994 without being given any new identification.

<sup>15</sup>*cf.* 'Dunia Baru, Ayu, Tatih, OK! penuhi keperluan pasaran' (*Dunia Baru, Ayu, Tatih, OK!* fulfils market needs), *Mingguan Watan*, 7.4.96.

<sup>16</sup>See the relevant ministerial statement reproduced on the back page of *Tatih*, March 1996.

of operating in a legally and socially acceptable environment. For example, workers were now paid wages instead of the basic needs *ma'ash*, and observed conventional office hours. Appendix D lists the major companies run by ex-Darul Arqam members and their activities, in Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas until the end of April 1996, as compiled from notes of visits to their premises and internal company documents released to the author.

In Penang, during the period of the fieldwork, ex-Darul Arqam members were handling a twenty-acre rice field, a fertiliser distribution enterprise, a polyclinic offering maternity services, a mini-market, a cake factory and various small-scale enterprises. A company based in Bukit Mertajam, Seberang Perai, Mujaddid Enterprise, specialised in the supply and distribution of books, cassette tapes, foods, perfume and Islamic paraphernalia. The ex-Darul Arqam community in Penang was unique in operating a hostel for students, so that although children of ex-members had to attend state schools in the morning, ex-Darul Arqam teachers could reorientate the pupils through special motivational classes and religious lessons during extra-school hours. In personal communication with teachers responsible for handling the hostel-cum-evening school, the researcher was told that its pupils numbered 104, and that they came from ex-Darul Arqam communities throughout the north of Peninsular Malaysia. They were supervised by six male and nine female staff. Remuneration for staff members and the hostel's operating costs were wholly funded by parents' and other ex-Darul Arqam members' contributions. This was a testament to their financial sacrifices which surpassed those of the Darul Arqam era, when the costs incurred for running such an institution were invoiced to Darul Arqam's Department of Guidance and Education. During the period of his fieldwork, ex-Darul Arqam members in the northwestern states of Penang, Kedah and Perlis were embarking on a gigantic project to synchronise their economic activities under a multi-purpose holdings company, HALAWAH Sdn. Bhd., whose organisational structure is reproduced in appendix E.

A superficial observation of the ex-Darul Arqam community in February-May 1996, would probably lead to the conclusion that only economic dynamism, devoid of any socio-political significance, was what was left of its members. The authorities seemed content to leave ex-Darul Arqam members to their own devices, so long as they showed no signs of reorganising around a central leadership whose power of mobilisation covered each and every ex-member. With their ingenuity, they outwardly conveyed the impression of having left behind their Darul Arqam past for new lives as private entrepreneurs. Virtually all ex-members met during the research accepted the mortal fate of Darul Arqam. Many of them surprisingly displayed no longing for their Darul Arqam past and expressed optimism that things could only get better for them in the future. An impartial observer of the protracted Darul Arqam versus

government' conflict would have been perplexed to discover, in mingling with ex-Darul Arqam members, the virtual absence of any talk of revenge or feeling of ill-will against the authorities.

In personal discussions with ex-Darul Arqam leaders, it was made clear to the researcher that the physical disappearance of Darul Arqam was less important than the preservation of thoughts, ideas, principles and aims in the minds and hearts of its members, that made Darul Arqam a force to be reckoned with, c. 1980-1994. As long as these tenets could be transmitted to future generations: a transmission which must now take place in informal institutions, there was always a possibility that a movement resembling Darul Arqam would re-emerge. That it might not bear the name 'Darul Arqam', the mention of which had become a political taboo, or that they may not live to gather the fruits of their endeavours, were immaterial. Violence and other forms of overt anti-state activities, by begetting even harsher repression, were counter-productive. Ex-Darul Arqam members were content to observe limits and regulations imposed by the authorities on their post-repression lives, for not only did the restrictions not interfere with their long-term goals, but also they could help to improve their public image and financial standing within a legitimate political and socio-economic framework.

One former senior leader of Darul Arqam explained that focusing on the economic sphere was the latest technique in the ex-members' Islamic struggle. It was a strategic necessity in order to ensure the survival of the ideals of Darul Arqam in not only commercial terms, but also in their political and ideological aspects. In terms of implementation, he added, in the post-repression era, seventy percent of ex-members' economic practices was still governed by the Darul Arqam mind or worldview, while the remaining thirty percent incorporated various aspects of modern entrepreneurial methods. A healthy economic base was perceived as the foundation for a future Islamic state, but a smooth transition from a movement-based to a state-based economic framework depended on two pre-conditions. Firstly, there must be ex-Darul Arqam elders or leaders on ex-members' companies' Boards of Directors. They would function as a watchdog to prevent it from degenerating to a purely profit-making enterprise, thus deviating from the movement's original and larger aims. Formal engagement of ex-leaders as multiple company directors gave official legitimacy to their veritable roles as guardians of the movement's ideals. It eased their movement from one place to another, without inviting unwelcome surveillance from the state security apparatus, on the pretext of overseeing business operations. Secondly, ex-Darul Arqam companies were encouraged to diversify activities and ease difficulties of their business associates i.e. other ex-Darul Arqam companies, while publicly maintaining each company's

individuality as a semblance of separateness. The ideals of 'one movement, one aim' was surreptitiously preserved rather than shelved.

Ex-Darul Arqam leaders met were fond of rationalising Darul Arqam's fatal confrontation with the government in 1994 as a necessary event to prepare their followers and the Malaysian nation for 'larger future happenings' with respect to Islam. A respected senior figure explained the developments affecting Darul Arqam in the 1990s in terms of its three steps towards the era of the Islamic state. Firstly, the era of the entrance to the state (*era pintu daulah*), which was characterised by intensive efforts to cultivate support from the influential echelons of society, such as politicians, traditional elites and the intelligentsia. Priority in *dakwah* was transferred from the larger public, who had already been approached for two previous decades, to these 'commanding heights' of Malaysian society. The result was high-profile conversions to the Darul Arqam cause of such notables as Tamrin Ghafar and Kaharuddin Mokmin, not to mention scores of distinguished sympathisers (cf. chapter 5: 5.5.3).

Secondly, the era of the key to the state (*era kunci daulah*), which witnessed the commercialisation of Darul Arqam's economy, as symbolised by the inauguration in August 1993 of the AGC in Chiangmai, Thailand. This had the impact of highlighting Darul Arqam and its leader as an economic success story, bearing in mind the importance of the economic dimension as a yardstick of successful leadership in today's world. Economic ventures, the most ambitious phase of which saw the expansion of Darul Arqam's business interests to Central Asia and China (cf. chapter 4: 4.6), also functioned as the most effective means of *dakwah* to business magnates, whose crucial backing of any future Islamic state was presumably dependent on its advocates proving that Islam was conducive to economic development.

Thirdly, the present era of the preface to the state (*era muqaddimah daulah*), which has mainly been negative in implication, having been ushered in by the arrests of the Darul Arqam leadership under the ISA and continued to be plagued by restrictions on ex-members' activities. Yet, according to the informant, in retrospect, the detentions were necessary in order to enable the leadership to meet face to face with the security apparatus: arguably the most diehard elements of the post-colonial secular-nationalist order. Experience of Islamic movements in the Middle East showed that the state's security-military apparatus was virtually impregnable to anti-state views,<sup>17</sup> as

<sup>17</sup>For example, in Sivan's review of Islamists' successful attempts at "*modifying the division of spheres between state and society*" by "*reconquering civil society*," he mentions the penetration of Islamic movements into realms of voluntary associations, public religious institutions, vigilante-style reinforcement of law and order, economic and socio-welfare services and the judiciary. The security-military apparatus, conspicuously absent from his analysis, evidently remained firmly in the hands of the authoritarian state (Sivan 1990: 358-361). The pervasiveness of security and control mechanisms in post-colonial Muslim societies in the Middle East was a legacy of the authoritarian system practised by European colonialists (ibid.: 353-354, Owen 1992: 15). It is reasonable to assume that a significant penetration of the security-military apparatus by Islamist elements would precipitate an Islamist

was probably the case in Malaysia. If this bulwark of the secular state was to be penetrated, it had to occur in a negative way, that was by appearing to concede victory and being apparently willing to be moulded by its tenets. But in forging a relationship with security officials, ex-Darul Arqam leaders believed that the previously elusive opportunity to propagate the Islamic message to them had finally arisen. This was to be done through not only direct contact and exemplary behaviour, but also by exposing the security men to the feasibility of managing enterprises in an honestly Islamic, yet commercially viable, way.

In another discussion session, the researcher was told that since the purported era of the preface to the state was a negative one, ex-Darul Arqam members were required to understand four realities in order to remain faithful to the cause which they had so far espoused. Firstly, the apparent calamities befalling the ex-Darul Arqam community since 1994 constituted a series of tests which, with proper insight, could be benefited to their advantage. For rank-and-file members, they were tests of conviction and allegiance, both of which were also faced by the Prophet Muhammad's companions.<sup>18</sup> On their part, the movement's leaders, being denied direct communication with Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad and other ISA detainees, had to face tests of their leadership capabilities. The movement as a whole, having been divested of bottlenecks arising from Darul Arqam's illegal status and unsavoury reputation in the eyes of the uninformed public, was being tested on its potential for expansion and diversification. Previously unaware elements would hopefully be enlightened by ex-

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takeover of the country, as happened in revolutionary Iran. On the eve of the February 1979 revolution, it was reported that the Shah's army had been divided into two groups, with pro-revolution forces eventually defeating the Shah's loyalists in street battles (Rizvi 1982: 101). After the Shah's downfall, Ayatollah Khomeini outmanoeuvred the nationalists from positions of temporal power by consolidating the Islamists' position in state institutions, whose network they efficiently utilised to reach out to the masses (Milani 1989: 11-13).

<sup>18</sup>The informant mentioned two occasions when the companions' faith in the prophethood was put to test. Firstly, on the occasion of the Prophet's one-night celestial journey from Makkah to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and from there upwards through the seven heavens, after which he was granted audience with God, and then back to Makkah. Upon recounting his journey, which occurred in his eleventh year of prophethood, the Prophet was mocked at and insulted by fellow Makkans. Some believers, who could not stomach the extraordinariness of the Prophet's account, wavered and eventually lapsed into apostasy; see Zakaria Bashier (1991: 187-189, appendix 1) and Al-Isma'il (1988: 68-71). Secondly, it was tested during the Prophet's conclusion of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with the Makkan polytheists in 628, six years after his migration to Madinah. On the face of it, the Treaty seemed to be heavily disadvantageous to the Muslims, many of whom only acceded to it at the command of the Prophet. Although arousing doubts as to the Prophet's veracity at the time, even among such exalted personalities as Umar al-Khattab, the ensuing truce enabled the Muslims to rebuild their strength and cement relations with foreign countries in the face of a hostile Makkah, which eventually capitulated to the Muslims in 630; see Al-Isma'il (1988: 168-169).

Darul Arqam members' organisational talent at the same time that their abhorrence of Malaysia's present repressive regime intensified.

Secondly, the Islamic struggle from the days of the Prophet Muhammad had oscillated between defensive and offensive stages, and armed conflict was resorted to by righteous defenders of Islam only when peaceful options were exhausted. Circumstances had shown that the present era was filled with opportunities to join the mainstream of Malaysian society and initiate change from within. Hence, for example, ex-Darul Arqam members who had resigned from public services to focus their energies on Darul Arqam, rejoined public sector employment after 1994. There was a distinct possibility that an exodus of ex-Darul Arqam members and students into public sector institutions and schools would generate there an atmosphere friendly to Islam, especially if they successfully penetrated into influential ranks. So long as a particular sector's activities were permissible in Islam, ex-members were encouraged to contribute to it to the best of their abilities. But as a matter of principle, they were obliged to relate themselves to ex-Darul Arqam companies, for instance by becoming sleeping partners or donors, in order to be in constant contact with the movement.

Thirdly, ex-Darul Arqam members had to understand that the basic implementation of a system need not change along with changes of its external manifestations. Essential elements of the Darul Arqam system could be retained in the new configuration of separate entities, infused with new terminologies and arrangements so as to appear congenial to the authorities. For example, '*tarbiyyah* sessions' were continued as 'motivational courses and exercises'. Similarly, '*usrah*' was replaced in name by 'meeting', and 'Darul Arqam' became simply 'the movement'.

Finally, ex-Darul Arqam members had to remain convinced that, despite all odds being against them, there was always a blessing in disguise in recent negative developments affecting the movement. Divine miraculous help came not only in the form of material bounties. Ex-members were urged to refer back to their messianic doctrines of the successive advents of a promised leader from the east, of Imam Al-Mahdi and of the Prophet Jesus. By doing so, they could reassure themselves that for all the seemingly bad tidings as interpreted from the dire straits they were in, their righteous efforts would eventually be rewarded as part of the fulfilment of the 'schedule of Allah' for the final *ummah*. But this did not mean that they should rest on their laurels, for the impact of Al-Mahdi would not, as some traditional sufis believed (cf. Maududi 1981: 42), operate like some kind of magical panacea offering instant cure for the predicament of Muslims. Instead, Al-Mahdi would emerge among his followers who had toiled to prepare a functioning model system and society, which he would later expand from national to global level. In other words, an Islamic state of

some form had to be accomplished in the eastern part of the Islamic world to precipitate the coming of Al-Mahdi. To the authorities, it was the firm belief that this state would necessarily be on Malaysian soil that rendered Darul Arqam a politically subversive movement in their perception. Maintaining such a belief could never be consonant with the mainstream Islam as promoted by the state, but it was such a belief, fuelled by economic vitality, which had kept alive ex-Darul Arqam members' resolve in trying times following the events of 1994.

## **6.5 FINDINGS: DISCUSSION OF FIELDWORK SURVEY RESULTS IN PENANG**

Discussions of results of the survey questionnaire below are organised section by section according to the format specified in the survey questionnaire reproduced in appendix F of this thesis. A thematic rather than a question-by-question approach is used. However, where appropriate, the reader is referred to the relevant response in squared parentheses; the letter 'Q' denoting the relevant question on the questionnaire sheet.

### **6.5.1 SECTION A: BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENT (see appendix F: section A, appendix G: table A)**

The background-composition of ex-Darul Arqam members in Penang generally conforms to that of the popular conception of *dakwah* membership, as depicted by Zainah Anwar (1987: chapter 4) and Nagata (1984: 81-85, 125-130), among others. The majority of them were young: two-thirds of respondents being within the twenty-five to forty year old age group, rural-urban migrants: eighty percent claiming rural origins, and had penetrated into the middle class and upper-middle class occupational status [Q1, 6, 5].<sup>19</sup> The typical image of the "*more educated, high-school, university, and professional, urban-and-middle-class young*" (ibid.: 125) is epitomised in respondents' educational standards. Slightly more than half enjoyed secular-academic education up to pre-university and university levels [Q4.3, 4.4].<sup>20</sup> None claimed to have undergone formal religious education at any level, and only seven percent were educated in Darul Arqam's secondary schools [Q4.2]. The highly secular-academic slant of the cohort's education may reflect, on

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<sup>19</sup>Q1: Age, Q6: Place of origin, Q5: Occupational Status.

<sup>20</sup>Q4: Level and Stream of Education.

the one hand, the intensely secular character of Penang with its dearth of religious education, but on the other hand, it may also indicate Darul Arqam's successful recruitment initiatives among secular stream rather than religious stream students and graduates. Having been absorbed into Darul Arqam's informal educational system by means of intensive training and guidance sessions, the majority of such secular-academic students and graduates were subsequently channelled into full-time careers within Darul Arqam's comprehensive system, as confirmed in results of section B below. The youthfulness of the cohort, however, meant that their offspring, all of whom presumably attended Darul Arqam's educational institutions, were not old enough to influence the response to question 4 so as to favour decisively option 3: education in the Darul Arqam stream. Further lessening the proportion of graduates of Darul Arqam's schools among ex-members in Penang would have been their migration to other states, whose Darul Arqam community might have been more in need of workforce in view of their comparatively larger purview of activities.

Results of section A also fit the pattern established by Darul Arqam members nationally, as revealed in Darul Arqam (1993: 180-182). Slight variations exist in the categories of age distribution and education; the Penang membership being slightly older and more highly educated. Classifications according to social classes had some similarities. Using occupational categories as proxies for social classes,<sup>21</sup> the survey arrived at the following figures: 26.7 percent having lower class jobs, 46.7 percent having middle class jobs and 16.7 percent having upper-middle class jobs [Q5]. These compare with the national percentages of 20.2, 40.3 and 30.5 respectively. The only significant variation between the Penang and the national cohorts was in terms of sex; while Penang's ex-Darul Arqam community had a male majority [Q2],<sup>22</sup> the reverse was true of its national Darul Arqam counterpart. The large majority of ex-Darul Arqam members in Penang were married [Q3],<sup>23</sup> reflecting the widespread practice of marrying at an early age, as encouraged in the movement and indeed in Islam as a measure to protect chastity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Occupations numbered 1,2 and 3 in question 5 are taken as representing the lower class, the middle class and the upper-middle class categories respectively.

<sup>22</sup>Q2: Sex.

<sup>23</sup>Q3: Status of Marriage.

<sup>24</sup>The importance of early marriages in Islam has been stressed in several *hadiths*, for example the one in which the Prophet exhorted a group of youths in the following words: "*O ye young men! Those of you who have the wherewithal for marriage, should marry*" (related by Bukhari). For further details, see Nadvi (1982: 123-126), in which the preceding *hadith* is quoted, and Nur S. Biedyn Beseri (1992: 20-21).

### 6.5.2 SECTION B: INVOLVEMENT IN DARUL ARQAM AND ATTITUDES TO LIFE IN THE DARUL ARQAM ERA (BEFORE NOVEMBER 1994) (see appendix F: section B, appendix G: table B)

The experience of Penang's ex-Darul Arqam members' incipient involvement in the movement provides evidence of its successful recruitment among target groups, and of the efficiency of its information machinery. Over one-half of respondents joined Darul Arqam in the 1979-86 period [Q1],<sup>25</sup> which was characterised by a burgeoning of Darul Arqam literature, products and services in the open market. While government-initiated anti-Darul Arqam propaganda probably halted the growth of Darul Arqam membership after 1986, it was not enough to dissuade the 36.7 percent of respondents who joined Darul Arqam in 1987-93 [Q1]. This figure exactly corresponds to the national membership rise from 1988 to 1993, as compiled by Darul Arqam's Research Unit (Darul Arqam 1993: 181). The same source affirms the steepness of the membership rise in 1978-88 (ibid.: 182).

Most of the recruits were inducted into Darul Arqam during their intellectually upcoming and socially mobile years at university and during early stages of their careers. The most effective sources of introduction to Darul Arqam were friends and Darul Arqam publications, each providing the initial attraction to sixty percent and 13.3 percent of respondents respectively [Q3].<sup>26</sup> Taken together, responses to questions 1.1 and 3 indicate the importance of migration from village of origin and peer influence in igniting one's interest in resurgent Islam. Quite contrary to the popular notion that the issue of participation in Darul Arqam almost always became a source of friction between members and their original families,<sup>27</sup> eighty percent of respondents classified their relationships with their families as 'good' and 'very good' [Q6].<sup>28</sup>

Among factors which attracted members towards Darul Arqam [Q2],<sup>29</sup> the most crucial ones appeared to be an attraction to Darul Arqam's leader, the conviction that Darul Arqam was destined to 'succeed' as promised by God, the potential for self-improvement in Darul Arqam and Darul Arqam's method of struggle [Q2.8, 2.7, 2.1,

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<sup>25</sup>Q1: When did your involvement in Darul Arqam activities begin?

<sup>26</sup>Q3: From which sources did you start to harbour interest in the Darul Arqam group?

<sup>27</sup>In the televised 'confession' by Ustaz Ashaari in front of members of the National *Fatwa* Council on 20.10.94, he was asked, "Do you realise your Al Arqam teachings have rocked the family institution? Do you realise the marriages that have taken place among those from your movement have caused concern?;" to which he replied, "Not all the members behaved in that way, only some of them. If a person acted in that manner, it was not a directive of the group, but an individual decision. My mistake as leader was in not taking responsibility and not advising them not to go against the law" (NST 22.10.94).

<sup>28</sup>Q6: How has your relationship with your family been since your involvement with Darul Arqam?

<sup>29</sup>Q2: What factors attracted you towards Darul Arqam?

2.2]. Evidently, factors associated with the daily operations of Darul Arqam as an organisation, for instance its missionary, economic and cultural programmes, came to assume importance for members only after they had been implanted with a certain belief in Darul Arqam's veracity. Such a purported truthfulness was primarily determined by the charismatic personality of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, and the central message and precepts of Darul Arqam as a comprehensive movement which started from reforming the individual.

Overall responses to question 2 substantiate our designation of Darul Arqam as a 'sufi-revivalist' movement (cf. chapter 4: 4.4). Respondents did not see the importance of 'sufi *tariqah* aspects' as submerging that of other aspects which together determine the comprehensiveness of an Islamic movement [Q2.5]. Nonetheless, concern for sufi notions of leadership and self-purification were evident from the affirmative responses to choices 2.8: attracted to leader, and 2.1: potential for self-improvement. It is likely also that the preference shown for factors 2.8 and 2.7: the 'promised' group, betrays elements of messianism which assumed greater strength in the years ahead. Thus, one has to put into perspective the observation by Nagata that Malaysian revivalist movements were "*rational-social rather than thaumaturgical or millenarian in orientation*" (1984: 126). In the light of our findings, an outside observer may argue that in its early years, Darul Arqam was already at least partly messianic in character, but this character was temporarily overshadowed by contemporary conditions which necessitated the precedence of the rational-social aspects of organisation. To an insider, however, this would be an understatement. Rather, mystical elements of the movement had always been salient, as further implied by the fact that over eighty percent of respondents attributed the success of Darul Arqam's economy to 'piety' and 'blessings', rather than the other rational-social answers [Q16].<sup>30</sup>

The bulk of questions in section B served the purpose of gauging respondents' level of commitment to Darul Arqam, and how far such commitment had affected their relations with other sections of Malaysian society. Our findings indicate that the level of sacrifice among Darul Arqam members could appropriately be described as intense, perhaps even defying the belief of those who had sought to evaluate Darul Arqam from purely hedonist-materialist perspectives. Respondents' overwhelming secular-academic educational background proved no hindrance for sixty percent of them to opt for full-time careers with Darul Arqam [Q4],<sup>31</sup> on the full understanding that Darul Arqam would remunerate them on the basis of merely basic needs of an employee, his family and his dependants. For the university graduates, this meant

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<sup>30</sup>Q16: In your opinion, what was the primary factor of Darul Arqam's economic success?

<sup>31</sup>Q4: Were you a full-time or a part-time Darul Arqam member (working for another employer)?

foregoing the attractive salaries and fringe benefits they would have received by working in the private commercial or public sector. Almost one-half of full-time respondents worked in Darul Arqam's economic sector [Q4.1], testifying to the pivotal role of economic activities even in the relatively small Darul Arqam community in Penang. Exemplifying respondents' enormous financial sacrifice is the admission by about ninety percent of full-timers that they were satisfied with the basic amount of their remuneration [Q12].<sup>32</sup> Among respondents working outside the Darul Arqam system, sixty percent had no fixed percentage of monthly donations to Darul Arqam, giving a broad picture of fluctuating contributions. Consistent donations of between zero to fifty percent of monthly wages from the remaining forty percent, however, were a source of stability [Q13].

Beside the economic aspect, nearly one-half of all respondents had variously held leadership responsibilities [Q4.2],<sup>33</sup> betraying the consistent exposure of rank-and-file members to leadership capacities which enabled them to nurture mobilising skills. Over sixty percent had never experienced membership of other Islamic movements prior to joining Darul Arqam [Q5],<sup>34</sup> repelling any suspicion that Darul Arqam might have relied mainly on taking other movements' members in its recruitment drive. Once inducted, members' lives were practically governed in all aspects by the Darul Arqam worldview and *modus operandi*. Sixty percent of respondents relied on Darul Arqam for their choice of spouse [Q7],<sup>35</sup> only thirteen percent sent their children to non-Darul Arqam schools [Q8].<sup>36</sup> Most who did so expected their children to become Islamic workers rather than entering more financially rewarding professions [Q8.1].<sup>37</sup>

The pervasive significance of Darul Arqam in shaping members' lives did not preclude them from relating to the wider world. As mentioned above, respondents were generally on good terms with their original families who might have bore pre-conceived apprehensions about their involvement in Darul Arqam [Q6]. Beyond their kith and kin, none of the respondents failed to interact with non-Darul Arqam Muslims, and only an insignificant minority failed to interact with non-Muslims [Q9a, 9b].<sup>38</sup> Economically, over seventy percent admitted having patronised non-Darul Arqam goods out of their own conscience [Q11].<sup>39</sup> However, the enormous time and resources expected from a committed Darul Arqam member would have necessarily

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<sup>32</sup>Q12: (Full-time member) Was the *ma'ash* which you received adequate?

<sup>33</sup>Q4.2: Highest post held in Darul Arqam.

<sup>34</sup>Q5: Have you ever been involved in any other Islamic movements?

<sup>35</sup>Q7: Who arranged your marriage?

<sup>36</sup>Q8: Which school did your children go to?

<sup>37</sup>Q8.1: What did you expect of your children's future with such an education?

<sup>38</sup>Q9: Did you interact with the following groups? (9a: Non-Darul Arqam Muslims, 9b: Non-Muslims).

<sup>39</sup>Q11: Did you buy products of other manufacturers if they were produced by Darul Arqam?

imposed limitations on his or her social interactions beyond Darul Arqam-imposed horizons. Present social interactions might have come about due to necessity rather than choice, as revealed by the relative insignificance of residence areas and places of social gathering as venues of extra-Darul Arqam interactions [Q9.1].<sup>40</sup> Regular participation in non-Darul Arqam community programmes was at an equally low level [Q10].<sup>41</sup>

Despite the relative intellect of respondents, as gauged from their educational backgrounds, only thirteen percent had read books written by non-Darul Arqam authors on any regularly frequent basis; the majority (63.3 percent) only 'sometimes' having read them [Q14].<sup>42</sup> Among authors favoured by respondents [Q15],<sup>43</sup> the extreme popularity of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, Abdul Halim Abbas and Al-Ghazali was hardly surprising. The preference for Al-Ghazali over Abdul Halim Abbas possibly reflected members' emphasis on traditional-spiritual rather than modern-methodological writings; Ustaz Ashaari's works presumably seen to encompass both aspects. The majority admitted never having read books written by leaders of other Islamic movements listed, viz. Nik Aziz Nik Mat of PAS, Maududi of Jamaat-i-Islami, Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi of the international Muslim Brotherhood and Maulana Zakariyya of Jamaat Tabligh. Ismail Kamus, a popular religious author in Malaysia, also failed to attract a significant following among respondents. The late Hamka, former leader of Muhammadiyah, the influential Indonesian modernist movement, fared much better, probably because of a due regard to spiritual matters in his works. Mohd. Sayuti Omar and Syed Hussein al-Attas, both journalistic authors known for their favourable views towards Darul Arqam, were similarly favoured by many respondents. Of the two contemporary academics listed, the popularity of Dr. Muhammad Syukri Salleh, a Malaysian social scientist who established himself through research on questions of development in Darul Arqam, far outweighed that of Syed Hossein Nasr, the renowned American-based Iranian philosopher. It may be surmised that, in the final analysis, it was left to Darul Arqam leaders and the more intellectually-oriented members to sow in the movement seeds of tolerance of other worldviews and lifestyles. If gauged from the universal abstention from illegal and anti-social acts among Darul Arqam members following the forcible banning and dissolution of their movement, the inculcation of tolerance in their community was a success, despite the perceived rigidity of its way of life.

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<sup>40</sup>Q9.1: Where did you interact with them?

<sup>41</sup>Q10: How far did you participate in social programmes not organised by Darul Arqam?

<sup>42</sup>Q14: How far did you read books other than those written by Abuya and other Darul Arqam authors?

<sup>43</sup>Q15: Number the following authors, according to the given categories, about their books which you have read? (categories: 1: extremely like, 2: like, 3: do not like, 4: extremely do not like, 5: never read his book).

On the whole, internal Darul Arqam politics in Penang was calm.<sup>44</sup> But the huge majority (83.3 percent) of respondents chose to characterise the leader-led relationship as 'close' and 'moderately close' rather than 'very close', which only ten percent endorsed [Q17].<sup>45</sup> Since top state leaders were usually also involved with programmes at national and international levels, this finding was not very surprising. It was sufficient for leaders to be open-minded and demonstrate willingness to discuss matters with and consider opinions of followers in order to command their respect and loyalty [Q18].<sup>46</sup> Approximately three-quarter of respondents, in never voting in general elections, strictly adhered to the unofficial Darul Arqam policy of non-participation in the country's electoral politics [Q19].<sup>47</sup> A candidate's good character and apparent potential to uphold Islam, regardless of party affiliation, were enough to secure the support of those who cared to cast votes on polling day [Q19.1].<sup>48</sup> The large majority (86.7 percent) of respondents were typically revivalist in espousing the unity between religion and politics (*din wa dawlah*) [Q20],<sup>49</sup> while at the same time expressing the utmost conviction that Darul Arqam was a political movement in its own unique approach, with an eye towards eventually wresting the reins of government and thereby transforming Malaysia into an Islamic state [Q20.1, 20.2].<sup>50</sup>

Summarising their lives in Darul Arqam, respondents were divided: forty percent said it was 'very good', another forty percent opted for 'good' and the remaining twenty percent selected 'moderate' [Q21].<sup>51</sup> As a whole, the reluctance of respondents to endorse overwhelmingly all aspects of the Darul Arqam system in the category of the 'best' or 'highest' answers, for example in responses to questions 11, 17

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<sup>44</sup>Personal communication with Dr. Mansor Mohd. Noor and ex-Darul Arqam leaders in Penang.

<sup>45</sup>Q17: How would you categorise the leader-led relationship in Penang's Darul Arqam community?

<sup>46</sup>Q18: Were local leaders open-minded in terms of willingness to discuss matters and to consider opinions of their followers?

<sup>47</sup>Q19: Have you ever voted in a general election? For a discussion of Darul Arqam's political views, see chapter 4: 4.4. Despite an unofficial isolationist policy, it has been observed that Darul Arqam was quick to pounce on any opportunity to raise its political fortunes by influencing the grassroots electorate to support suitable candidates whose victories would benefit Islam, as for example in the Sabah state elections in 1990, when it threw its weight behind candidates from the United Sabah National Organisation (USNO), the Muslim opposition party (Rosnani Untol 1990, cf. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah 1992: 100). Furthermore, in response to allegations of fellow Islamists that Darul Arqam was not benefiting Muslims by standing aloof from politics, Ustaz Ashaari admitted that Darul Arqam had never totally boycotted electoral politics. Although Darul Arqam did not directly vie for political power, some of its members did vote tactically, and furthermore it was heavily involved in influencing public opinion at grassroots level (Ashaari Muhammad 1988a: 90--91). It was this mobilising capacity which nonetheless made Darul Arqam a threat to the government.

<sup>48</sup>Q19.1: If yes, what factor encouraged you to vote for a particular candidate?

<sup>49</sup>Q20: Did you agree with the statement 'religion and politics do not mix'?

<sup>50</sup>Q20.1: If no, would you agree that Darul Arqam was a political movement, albeit with its own approach to politics? Q20.2: If you agree that Darul Arqam was a political movement, does this mean you were convinced that at the pinnacle of its struggle, Darul Arqam would gain political power and transform Malaysia into an Islamic state?

<sup>51</sup>Q21: How would you describe your overall life during your days in Darul Arqam?

and 21, indicate that despite members' intense level of commitment to Darul Arqam, they were still able to react critically to independent appraisals of the movement. Such results would refute charges of authoritarianism and narrow-mindedness often levelled against Darul Arqam's organisational machinery and members (cf. F.M. Jamil 1988: 163, M.N. Monutty 1989: 128, 137; Roald 1994: 265, 270). In intimate discussions with some respondents, it was possible to locate traces of dissatisfaction against certain decisions of local leaders, but such grumbling was apparently submerged in order to provide the overall mechanism of Darul Arqam with elements of cohesiveness. It was this ability among rank and file members to outwardly obliterate any semblance of discontentment and instead to express it privately through the proper internal channels, which has enabled Darul Arqam to avoid internal crises and consistently present a united front against potential rivals. The voluntary inculcation of such ability, arguably extraordinary in modern organisations, would have been impossible without the prior execution of the self-purification process, which served to fight unwarranted conceit and self-aggrandisement.

### **6.5.3 SECTION C: PERIOD OF 'CRISIS' (JUNE-OCTOBER 1994) (see appendix F: section C, appendix G: table C)**

The prevailing political attitudes of Darul Arqam members in Penang throughout the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis from June to October 1994, which culminated in the official dissolution of Darul Arqam on 30.10.94, were, as revealed by findings of section C of the survey, marked by an acute distrust of the political establishment and its organs. Almost ninety percent of respondents felt that Darul Arqam was unjustifiably victimised by a government which lacked any legal basis whatsoever in cracking down on the movement [Q2, 11].<sup>52</sup> That Darul Arqam was made the scapegoat in the government's manoeuvres towards discrete political motives was believed by about three-quarter of respondents, while a further one-fifth thought that the government's actions were indicative of an overall hostility towards Islamic movements in general [Q3].<sup>53</sup> In unanimously rejecting the government's ostensible reason that it wanted to eradicate deviationist teachings, respondents' utter distrust of government intentions was epitomised.

Yet, it could not be said that aspects of Darul Arqam's lifestyle or society had necessarily driven its members into an innate hostility towards established authorities,

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<sup>52</sup>Q2: Do you feel Darul Arqam was the victim of government's injustice and aggression? Q11: Did Darul Arqam commit any wrongdoing, such that the authorities were justified, on a legal basis, in their stern measures against Darul Arqam?

<sup>53</sup>Q3: In your opinion, what was the real motive behind the government's pressure against Darul Arqam?

although the sense of resentment was understandably magnified by the severity of the repression against Darul Arqam. The overall impression that respondents had of the repression was coloured by melancholy and shock rather than anger [Q1, 4].<sup>54</sup> The unexpected willingness of the government to react so aggressively obviously confounded many respondents, but the spiritual-mystical tendencies of Darul Arqam enabled a significant proportion of them to accept calmly their leader's forcible apprehension. Only 16.7 percent of respondents reported initially not believing the news of Ustaz Ashaari's arrest [Q4]; such followers were obviously divested of any mythical conviction they may have held of Ustaz Ashaari's 'invincibility'. The detention may well have refined their mystical tendencies in a more rational direction since the tumultuous events of 1994.

Respondents' views of other social groups could be assessed by their perceptions of the groups' reactions to Darul Arqam's dissolution. Urban Muslims were seen as the group most saddened by the demise of Darul Arqam, testifying to Darul Arqam's strong influence among urban middle-class Malays [Q9.3].<sup>55</sup> No obvious segment of non-Muslim society was thought to have been delighted by the loss of Darul Arqam [Q9.5]. This observation may reflect, on the one hand, non-Muslim apathy of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' episode, and on the other hand, minimal communication between non-Muslims and respondents, nearly thirty percent of whom expressed ignorance of non-Muslim views on the matter. The groups seen to have been most hostile towards Darul Arqam were other Islamic movements, although a fair percentage of members of these other movements were also deemed to have been saddened by the eventual outcome of the crisis [Q9.2]. This attitude may have been conditioned by the lack of moral and material support given by the other movements to Darul Arqam throughout the crisis, not to mention the endorsement of the government's stance given by some of their leaders (cf. chapter 5: 5.6). A plurality of respondents felt that their original families and rural Muslims, both of whom most probably belonged to the same social class, were indifferent to the plight of Darul Arqam. More families were thought to have been saddened rather than delighted by the fate befalling Darul Arqam, reflecting a sympathy borne out of the presence of blood relations in the movement, about which families may still have harboured reservations [Q9.1]. The converse was true of rural Muslims [Q9.4], possibly reflecting the larger faith put by rural Malay society in pro-government media reports condemning Darul Arqam. On the role of the media, respondents were near-

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<sup>54</sup>Q1: Describe your overall feeling throughout the 'crisis' in 1994? Q4: What was your feeling when the news of Abuya's arrest reached you?

<sup>55</sup>Q9: From your observation, how did the following groups react to Darul Arqam's dissolution? (9.1: Your family, 9.2: Other Islamic movements, 9.3: Urban Muslims, 9.4: Rural Muslims, 9.5: Non-Muslims).

unanimous in ascribing to it an important role in influencing public opinion throughout the 'Darul Arqam versus government' crisis [Q10].<sup>56</sup> The extent to which some sections of society dissented from the government's viewpoint as articulated by the media could reflect how far they trusted the authorities. According to respondents, the government's anti-Darul Arqam propaganda was mostly believed by other Islamic movements, successively followed by rural Muslims, urban Muslims and non-Muslims.

In view of Darul Arqam members' intense commitment to their movement, as disclosed in findings of section B, it is less than surprising that respondents' conviction in Darul Arqam's veracity and struggle was hardly affected by the experiences of June-October 1994. Seventy percent of respondents insisted that the government-initiated repression was ineffectual as far as changing Darul Arqam members' lifestyle was concerned; only twenty percent reported a decline in activities [Q5].<sup>57</sup> This variation is probably influenced by the section of Darul Arqam's system in which the respondent was directly involved. Respondents were near-unanimous in steadfastly holding to the ideals of Darul Arqam's struggle despite Ustaz Ashaari's public 'confession' of his mistakes, and, following in the footsteps of Ustaz Ashaari, in openly accepting the dissolution of Darul Arqam [Q6, 8].<sup>58</sup> One could attribute respondents' overwhelming preference for the second rather than the first option in question 8 to the leader-centric character of Darul Arqam members (cf. section B: Q2.8, 15.1); the 'Darul Arqam' tag being rendered meaningless once the leader had repudiated it. As for the actual motive behind their leader's 'confession' [Q7],<sup>59</sup> 26.7 percent of respondents ascribed it to strategic considerations to do with the movement's art of survival in the face of ceaseless pressures. The relieving of such pressures was obviously crucial to the movement's endurance, which may also have been in the mind of forty percent of respondents who felt that their leader agreed to 'confess' in order to reduce the prolonged tension between Darul Arqam and the government. Significantly, respondents wholeheartedly rejected the suggestion that Ustaz Ashaari may have sincerely changed his beliefs, as the authorities sought to portray. For all its purported leader-oriented mentality, the ex-Darul Arqam community firmly adhered to a given message when it came to the fundamentals of the 'Darul Arqam doctrine' (cf. chapter 4: 4.4). For ex-Darul Arqam members, the sincere leader and the message were seen as mutually reinforcing components of a

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<sup>56</sup>Q10: How far was the role of the media in influencing the public perception of Darul Arqam?

<sup>57</sup>Q5: How did government's aggression and arrest of Darul Arqam leaders under the ISA affect the lifestyle of Darul Arqam members?

<sup>58</sup>Q6: What was your attitude at watching Abuya's confession on television on 20. 10. 94? Q8: How do you accept Darul Arqam's dissolution on 30. 10. 94?

<sup>59</sup>Q7: To you, what was the motive behind Abuya's agreement to confess?

movement with well-defined objectives; the pledging of allegiance to one without embracing the other practically being a pointless exercise.

#### **6.5.4 SECTION D: SITUATION AND ATTITUDES TO LIFE AFTER THE DARUL ARQAM ERA (NOVEMBER 1994 - APRIL 1996) (see appendix F: section D, appendix G: table D)**

As an attitudinal survey of ex-Darul Arqam members that went beyond the Darul Arqam era, Section D promised to be, in many respects, the most interesting part of the questionnaire. Not only would the findings reveal the extent to which ex-members had managed to cope with life without Darul Arqam's patronage, but they would also have direct implications on questions concerning the government's success or failure in clamping down upon a sufi-revivalist movement unique within contemporary trends of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia and arguably the world. Such revelations would be instrumental towards a projection of the future of any organisation which may seek to revive the 'Darul Arqam doctrine' and its manifestations. More generally, we would be able to postulate pre-conditions for the successful re-emergence of a sufi-revivalist movement similar to Darul Arqam.

Paradoxically, for many ex-Darul Arqam members, the forcible dissolution of Darul Arqam turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It allowed the basic precepts of the system to function without the legal and security constraints which marred the closing stages of the Darul Arqam era. As Darul Arqam's position became increasingly untenable in the eyes of the authorities and Malaysian society, defending its physical structures became a pointless exercise. Ex-members were determined that Darul Arqam's physical demise would do minimal damage to the internal facets of their movement. In short, apparently by 1994, sacrificing the Darul Arqam cover, under which ex-members had sheltered for so long, became necessary in order to preserve the more integral aspects of their struggle.

On the whole, responses to questions in section D suggest that ex-Darul Arqam members' devotion to a particular lifestyle as promoted by Darul Arqam was unhindered by the defunct status of Darul Arqam. This was observable at both personal and organisational levels. While the quality of life of three-quarter of respondents broadly remained constant nearly one and a half years after being officially disentangled from the Darul Arqam tag, almost all of the remaining one-quarter reported a rise in their standards of living [Q1].<sup>60</sup> The vast majority of ex-full time members established business enterprises to earn a living, either as private

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<sup>60</sup>Q1: How has the quality of your life been since Darul Arqam's dissolution?

proprietors (14.3 percent) or in partnership with other ex-Darul Arqam colleagues (76.2 percent) [Q2].<sup>61</sup> Beyond considerations of similar economic interests, the intense camaraderie among ex-members remained undiminished from the Darul Arqam era. This was the verdict of over three-quarter of respondents, with just under one-third of them even thinking that the level of brotherhood had improved [Q4].<sup>62</sup> Further, for nearly ninety percent of respondents, the level of intra-communication and participation in programmes organised by ex-Darul Arqam members verged from 'frequent' to 'very frequent' [Q3].<sup>63</sup> Unmarried ex-members could not conceive sharing family lives with spouses from outside the ex-Darul Arqam family; all the relevant respondents expressing a desire to have their marriages arranged by ex-Darul Arqam colleagues [Q5].<sup>64</sup>

Despite the external dismantling of Darul Arqam's temporal organisational structure, ex-members remained firmly attached to their former Darul Arqam leaders. Not only were respondents unanimous in retaining their allegiance to Penang's ex-Darul Arqam leadership hierarchy in the course of the Islamic struggle [Q6.1],<sup>65</sup> but the vast majority of them also expressed more favourable opinions of their former leaders than during the Darul Arqam era. 85.7 percent of respondents regarded their former leaders as more accessible nowadays, while over ninety percent testified to their ex-leaders' increased receptiveness to followers' opinions and higher ability to mould followers towards perseverance in the Islamic struggle [Q6.2, 6.3, 6.4].<sup>66</sup> Therefore, unconstrained by responsibilities imposed by the national Darul Arqam superstructure, local ex-leaders and ex-followers found more time and opportunity to understand each other within the smaller realm of privately managed companies. Whereas previously leaders were seldom present among grassroots followers at state and regional levels, as they were perennially summoned for duties at national and international levels, the opposite appeared to be true of the post-repression era. Ironically, the leader-led relationship had become closer in the aftermath of Darul Arqam's demise.

Respondents were emphatic in their continual espousal of political doctrines associated with Ustaz Ashaari's theory of Islamic resurgence. In the researcher's view, this resolute adherence had emerged as a consequence of messianic beliefs implanted

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<sup>61</sup>Q2: If you were formerly a full-time Darul Arqam member, what do you do now to raise a living?

<sup>62</sup>Q4: Since Darul Arqam's dissolution, how has the brotherhood among former members been?

<sup>63</sup>Q3: How often do you contact your ex-Darul Arqam friends or participate in programmes organised by them?

<sup>64</sup>Q5: (If unmarried) Do you hope that your marriage be arranged by your ex-Darul Arqam colleagues?

<sup>65</sup>Q6.1: Do you still regard the former Darul Arqam leadership in Penang as your leaders in the Islamic struggle?

<sup>66</sup>Q6.2: Are they (the former leadership) more accessible now? Q6.3: Are they more amenable to discussion and more receptive to followers' opinions? Q6.4: Are they able to mould you to persist to struggle for Islam despite various tribulations?

in the psyche of Darul Arqam members; convictions which outlasted their Darul Arqam days. Despite the failure of Darul Arqam's version of the Islamic state to materialise, respondents were unanimous in defending the feasibility of Ustaz Ashaari's theory of an Islamic revival sprouting from the eastern part of the Islamic world [Q7],<sup>67</sup> and in clinging fast to the conviction that Malaysia would eventually become an Islamic state [Q15].<sup>68</sup> It was arguably the steadfast belief in the messianic roles of Darul Arqam's founder-leader and spiritual forefather that explains the relative calmness which prevailed in the Darul Arqam community despite Darul Arqam's hopes of sponsoring an Islamic government in Malaysia seemingly consigned to oblivion [Q14].<sup>69</sup>

At the level of practical politics, ex-members' faith in Darul Arqam's leader and doctrinal worldview seemed to have been far from mitigated by the ignominy that Darul Arqam suffered at the hands of the merciless authorities. 93.1 percent of respondents were adamant that only through methods expounded by Ustaz Ashaari, could the much sought-after comprehensiveness of Islam be realised [Q8].<sup>70</sup> Such comprehensiveness, according to 83.3 percent of respondents, was unable to be implemented without political power [Q9].<sup>71</sup> Clearly, ex-Darul Arqam members fervently opposed, in line with global Islamists, the separation between religion and politics. This did not however mean that conventional political practices had gained wide acceptability among ex-Darul Arqam members. Two-thirds of respondents would still refuse to support any Islamic-oriented leader who utilised existing political methods [Q11].<sup>72</sup> Under present circumstances, a further three-quarter of respondents, roughly the same proportion that had never voted in any general election (cf. section B: Q19), would continue to refrain from the electoral process [Q12].<sup>73</sup> On whether respondents would, if legally permitted in the future, revive their Islamic struggle through the Darul Arqam approach as previously experienced by them, a slight majority was in favour [Q13].<sup>74</sup> The 42.9 percent who did not favour the option

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<sup>67</sup>Q7: After the tragedy that had befallen Darul Arqam, is Abuya's theory about an Islamic revival from the 'East', by which he meant the Malay world, still defensible in the light of present political facts in Malaysia?

<sup>68</sup>Q15: Are you still convinced that Malaysia will become an Islamic state in the near future?

<sup>69</sup>Q14: What was your feeling when your conviction that an Islamic state under Darul Arqam's patronage would eventually come about in Malaysia failed to materialise?

<sup>70</sup>Q8: Can the comprehensiveness of Islam be accomplished through other methods than that espoused by Abuya?

<sup>71</sup>Q9: In your opinion, can Islam be implemented in comprehensive terms without political power?

<sup>72</sup>Q11: Would you give your support to any political leader who aspires to pursue the Islamic struggle through existing modern political methods?

<sup>73</sup>Q12: In the present situation, would you vote for any party in a general election?

<sup>74</sup>Q13: If the *Yang diPertuan Agong* gives his consent for Darul Arqam to operate as freely as before, are you willing to resume your Islamic struggle through the approach of Darul Arqam as you had known it?

possibly thought, out of pragmatic concerns, that it was necessary to try to implement the ends of the 'Darul Arqam doctrine' through other politically feasible approaches.<sup>75</sup>

Respondents' views of present-day political and religious notables [Q10],<sup>76</sup> were very much determined by the notables' perceived relationship with Darul Arqam and the ex-Darul Arqam community. The extreme affection that Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad commanded among ex-Darul Arqam members was demonstrated by respondents' unanimous approbation of him [Q10.1]. The reputation of Haji Abdul Halim Abbas, Ustaz Ashaari's long-serving deputy, however, seemed to have suffered, with respondents almost evenly divided between those who liked and those who disliked him [Q10.2]. This decline of affection for Haji Abdul Halim Abbas was undoubtedly influenced by reports that he had sought membership of the ruling elites' political party, UMNO (cf. chapter 5: 5.3). Apparently, the drastic decision was quite unpopular among the more resolute of ex-Darul Arqam members who were inclined to view such and similar 'desertions' as the unprincipled act of a desperate renegade.<sup>77</sup> Leaders of other Islamic movements and representatives of the media and the security apparatus, all of whom were associated in one way or another with the Darul Arqam-bashing campaign, fared extremely badly in the opinion survey. All five figures, viz. Dr. Muhammad Nur Manuty, President of ABIM; Shaari Sungib, President of JIM; Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Mursyid al-'Am* of PAS; Rahim Noor, the Police Chief and the Chief Editor of *Utusan Malaysia* were generally disliked by respondents [Q10.3-10.7]. Among them, the relatively popular figure was Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Kelantan's PAS Chief Minister whose state-level Islamic reforms and scholarly contributions to Islamic resurgence were apparently appreciated by the one-third of respondents who expressed a certain liking for him. On the other side of the coin, Rahim Noor was the most unpopular figure, with more than eighty percent of respondents expressing dislike of him. Ex-Darul Arqam members were quite obviously tormented by the horrifying experience and the witnessing of scenes of police brutality during the security crackdown on Darul Arqam. Interestingly, around one-half of respondents admitted to not even knowing who Shaari Sungib was; the appeal of IRC and JIM apparently still being restricted to narrow echelons of the upcoming Malay intelligentsia.

One would expect the next categories of personalities, viz. politicians and religious spokesmen of the establishment, to be extremely unpopular among ex-Darul

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<sup>75</sup>An impression gained also from personal communication with some ex-Darul Arqam members in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>76</sup>Q10: Number the following leaders according to the categories below (categories: 1: extremely like, 2: like, 3: do not like, 4: extremely do not like, 5: do not know him).

<sup>77</sup>This prevailing impression of Haji Abdul Halim Abbas among some sections of the ex-Darul Arqam community was confirmed in personal communication with them in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

Arqam members in view of their direct participation in the clampdown on Darul Arqam. This verdict was certainly borne out in the cases of Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim, Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman and Dr. Yusof Noor, the last two being prominent members of the ruling party's religious wing [Q10.8, 10.9, 10.12, 10.13]. Bearing in mind political circumstances leading to the demise of Darul Arqam, that the Prime Minister, his deputy and the Royal *Mufti* Ahmad Tajuddin, a highly-regarded religious bureaucrat, could each command around twenty percent of respondents' fondness was surprising. It is possible that respondents who admitted to liking them recognised their not insignificant contributions to Islamic life and society in Malaysia. The popular association of Sanusi Junid, the Chief Minister of Kedah, and Ghafar Baba, former Deputy Premier, with Darul Arqam was lent credence by the survey. All respondents endorsed Sanusi Junid and Ghafar Baba as politicians worthy of their liking [Q10.10, 10.11]. Although the endorsement was not as emphatic as that accorded to Ustaz Ashaari, it significantly showed the relative popularity of both figures *vis-à-vis* the declining influence of Haji Abdul Halim Abbas.

Finally, respondents were asked to reflect specifically on the causes and consequences of Darul Arqam's demise. The outlook of respondents were generally optimistic towards the future. Around three-quarter of respondents agreed that the dissolution of Darul Arqam brought certain benefits to themselves, to Malaysian society and to the Islamic struggle [Q16].<sup>78</sup> All respondents thought that they had succeeded in coming to terms with life after Darul Arqam, although a minority had to grapple with a few problems [Q18].<sup>79</sup> Of the six listed groups which were liable to be held responsible for the downfall of Darul Arqam, the role of the *ulama* appeared to respondents to be the most important factor [Q17.3].<sup>80</sup> This broadly reflects the trend, not unusual in contemporary trends of Islamic resurgence, of suspicion towards the official religious establishment. The *ulama* in the respondents' mind must have been legalistic scholars opposed to sufism. Nonetheless, all groups listed were considered by respondents to have played a significant role in destroying Darul Arqam. In descending order of importance, they were the *ulama*, international Islamic enemies, the mass media, the security apparatus and lax Darul Arqam members. The very fact that ex-members recognised their colleagues' slackness as an important factor in emasculating Darul Arqam, albeit the least important, shows their ability to admit the

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<sup>78</sup>Q16: Does the dissolution of Darul Arqam bring any benefit to: (16.1: you? 16.2: Malaysian society? 16.3: the Islamic struggle?).

<sup>79</sup>Q18: How far have you succeeded in coming to terms with the reality of life after the dissolution of Darul Arqam, whether socially, economically, mentally and spiritually?

<sup>80</sup>Q17: In retrospect, how important are the roles of the following groups in leading to Darul Arqam's demise? (17.1: Politicians, 17.2: The security apparatus, 17.3: The *ulama*, 17.4: The mass-media, 17.5: International Islamic enemies, 17.6: Lax Darul Arqam members).

occurrence of errors within their movement. In spite of their unending commitment to the lofty ideals propagated by their movement, adherents of the 'Darul Arqam doctrine' may not have been as utopian and fanatical as they were often made out to be by adversaries and commentators alike.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

The methodology employed by the present study diverges significantly from those of most other works which had sought to investigate the Darul Arqam movement and its members. In contrast with previous researchers, most of whose findings had been derived from secondary information and meagre primary data, the present author conducted a participant observer study and a survey questionnaire of the ex-Darul Arqam community. Circumstances surrounding the author's fieldwork exercise made its execution necessarily difficult, if not dangerous, for both researcher and informants, bearing in mind that barely two years had passed since the latter were subjected to a state-inflicted persecution at a level not witnessed in post-independence Malaysia. While questioning the methodological viability of past studies, the author recognises their usefulness as starting points towards a taxonomy of Malaysian Islamic movements, of which Darul Arqam has formed an integral part. But the author also hopes to show that more wide-ranging effort is needed from researchers for their studies to do justice to Islamic movements in Malaysia in general, and to Darul Arqam in particular. Until the completion of the present study, such an endeavour has arguably eluded most studies claiming to investigate Darul Arqam and related issues. This, however, does not mean that the present study has been devoid of limitations, such as had arisen from contextual and data-gathering complications. The findings presented by this study are in full recognition of such limitations.

Findings of this study can be organised in two separate discussions. Firstly, discussion of issues surrounding the nature and success of Darul Arqam as a comprehensive Islamic movement. In terms of membership background-composition, the findings confirm the portrait of Islamists as drawn from theoretical and empirical studies of Islamic movements not only in Malaysia but also in the Middle East: that activists were generally young, well-educated in the secular-academic sciences, and rural-urban migrants who formed the bulk of socially mobile, upcoming middle classes (cf. Ibrahim 1980: 438-440, Ayubi 1991: 162-164). As an Islamic movement, Darul Arqam prescribed for its members a specific ideological worldview realised through a particular way of life, both of which were mutually reinforcing and demanded a level of commitment which could be fairly described as exclusively

intense. At both theoretical and practical levels, once inducted, members were expected to submit their lives and resources to the cause of Darul Arqam, as manifested in their full-time participation in its activities, the extent of their material sacrifice, their organisation of family and social lives and the moulding of their intellectual orientation. This already formidable means of control was buttressed by a ceaseless devotion to Darul Arqam's spiritual antecedent and founder-leader, whose command of authority transcended all categories of Darul Arqam membership. In the course of Darul Arqam's history, both Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi and Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad became gradually associated in the minds of many members with messianic figures tracing their origins to prophetic beliefs. Most past studies seemed to suggest that Darul Arqam's ideological and organisational make-up was necessarily conducive to authoritarianism, implying that personal appeals of charismatic leadership almost always overwhelmed doctrinal considerations when a prospective member decided to pledge allegiance to the movement (cf. F.M. Jamil 1988: 164-165, M.N. Monutty 1989: 129, Roald 1994: 265, 270).

Nevertheless, the present study has discovered that as a comprehensive movement, Darul Arqam was both man-oriented and message-oriented, with the proper balance between both aspects being left to the discretion of members. In personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam members, the present author discovered that the majority of less intellectually-inclined members were admittedly prone to accept uncritically their leaders' claims to messianic leadership. According to one influential ex-leader, this was the advisable course for them in order to remain loyal to the movement's struggle. This partially vindicates a recent observation that "*Ashaari did not appropriate the status of wali [saint]. He merely allowed his own personality and charismatic leadership to be absorbed into the image of a saint*" (Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan 1995: 16). But the present study has revealed that for the more intellectually-inclined members, among whom included the movement's leaders and technocratic elites, devotion to messianic leadership was strictly conditional upon its adherence to fundamental principles of the message as derived from authentic Islamic sources. In other words, the man-oriented nature of Darul Arqam only assumed relevance insofar as the figure or figures at the centre of the strict code of the leader-led relationship was or were firmly message-oriented. As in the case of Haji Abdul Halim Abbas, a former leader who, regardless of his previously unblemished reputation, was seen as having deviated from the path of the message, he would be gradually disowned by his former associates. It is this two-tier understanding of Darul Arqam's leader-led relationship that past researchers have failed to take into account when making conclusions about the movement. In Darul Arqam, man-orientedness and message-orientedness were not to be conceived in

mutually contradictory and exclusive terms, although the significance of one may outweigh that of the other, depending on a member's intellectual horizons.

The main ingredient of Darul Arqam's character as an Islamic movement was an elegant combination between theory and practice in attempting to implement Islam in as comprehensive a manner as possible. The realisation of Darul Arqam's ideological framework was not restricted to merely spiritual training and intellectual guidance, as was the case in many latter-day sufi brotherhoods and *tarbiyyah*-based Islamic movements. Instead, the paradigm manifested itself in a temporal organisation sustained by a progressive understanding and implementation of economic development. While economic activity was seemingly the primary vocation in Darul Arqam, the prior emphasis on self-purification and sense of belonging meant that wealth-generating concerns were consistently subordinated to larger religious ends. For members, commitment to activities pertaining to Darul Arqam was so all-encompassing that room for communication with the outside world had to be meticulously drawn: the task of maintaining a bridge between Darul Arqam and the wider society was primarily the responsibility of a core leadership-intellectual elite suited by having the necessary social skills. In providing the main avenue for the cementing of such liaison, business activities performed a social as well as an obvious economic function. Not surprisingly, economic strength was construed by Darul Arqam as its foremost source of subsidiary strength, being ranked after the three sources of primary strength, viz. *iman* (faith), *ukhwah* (brotherhood), and uniformity and conformity among and within members and leaders (Ashaari Muhammad 1993d: 85). Without the demonstrable qualities of Darul Arqam's economy, the political challenge of Darul Arqam might never have emerged such as to invite unwelcome repercussions from official circles.

The second set of issues revolves around Darul Arqam's evident resilience in the face of crises, and ensuing prospects of revival after its legal dissolution. Before the events of 1994, it was observable that every time Darul Arqam had to undergo a period of turbulent relationship with the authorities, it bounced back with new initiatives and expansion plans, appearing far from affected by the negative propaganda it was showered with. Such ceaseless assaults were usually provoked by internal crises in Darul Arqam, arising from the departures of leading figures after disagreement of views with the top leadership.<sup>81</sup> To the present author, there is little

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<sup>81</sup>The main exits were the departures of Akbar Anang, head of Darul Arqam's Economic Section in 1979; of Ustaz Mokhtar Yaakub, Deputy *Sheikh Al-Arqam* in 1986, and of Ustaz Roshdi Yusof, Vice *Sheikh Al-Arqam* in 1979. While Ustaz Mokhtar Yaakub died shortly after his departure, Akbar Anang and Ustaz Roshdi Yusof were actively enlisted by the authorities in their campaign to expose the so-called deviations committed by Darul Arqam. For an insider's coverage of the main issues dealing with controversies surrounding their exits from Darul Arqam, and their purported misdemeanours while inside the movement, see Tajul Ariffin (1986a) and Abdul Khaliq (1993).

doubt that this enduring resilience was the consequence of Darul Arqam members' strength of character, as moulded by the inculcation in their hearts and minds of an ideological worldview which demanded total commitment within a particular socio-political and economic framework. The main incentive goading members to continue revitalising Darul Arqam in trying times and against all odds was the messianic belief in the role of their movement and its leaders in the present resurgence of Islam. The means towards such reinvigoration was provided by Darul Arqam's economic vitality. It is the survival of these factors taken altogether, which would guarantee the continued challenge to Malaysia's political, social and economic status quo from Darul Arqam, albeit under a different guise.

As revealed by relevant sections of the questionnaire, prospects for a Darul Arqam revival looked promising, as of February-May 1996. Fundamental principles of the Darul Arqam doctrine appeared to have retained the loyalty of its former members, despite the Darul Arqam garb being separated from their physical identity. Political attitudes of ex-members were markedly anti-establishment in a non-emotional way, with their retention of a firm conviction in the eventual political triumph of their now nameless movement. Unflinching approval was expressed towards ex-Darul Arqam leaders and pro-Darul Arqam public figures. Conversely, figures identified as anti-Darul Arqam were disowned. Findings of the participant observation of ex-Darul Arqam members further accentuate the view that despite the extinction of Darul Arqam as a physical entity having been accepted wholeheartedly by its former members, they saw no justification in equating such acceptance with a simultaneous repudiation of precepts, inclinations, convictions and structures which made Darul Arqam into what it was: an economic success story as well as a political threat to the government. At the time of the fieldwork, it was evident that the government had succeeded only in eliminating external manifestations of Darul Arqam's peripheral facets. So long as the government fails to extinguish core elements of Darul Arqam's worldview, whose tangible survival was aided by the continuing economic viability of its organisational successor, there would always remain a possibility of the emergence of a movement whose predecessor was Darul Arqam in all but name and total membership.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# NEW TRENDS OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC RESURGENCE: MESSIANISM AND ECONOMIC ACTIVISM IN DARUL ARQAM

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Findings of the empirical survey reported in the previous chapter establish two facets of the Darul Arqam movement as having been primarily responsible for its resilience amidst recurrent crises. These are, firstly, the messianic beliefs of its followers, and secondly, the economic vitality of the movement. Messianism guarantees the total commitment of rank and file members who are thereby convinced of the consecrated roles of Darul Arqam and its leaders in the contemporary Islamic resurgence, and economic strength provides the logistics for the realisation of their firmly held beliefs. It is further projected that a long-lasting challenge to Malaysia's political establishment waged by Darul Arqam, albeit under an apparently different organisational umbrella, is conditional upon the retention of the fundamentals of Darul Arqam's messianic ideology and economic practices in the political agenda of ex-Darul Arqam members. While the existence of messianic traits and a measure of economic independence is not uncommon among past sufi-revivalist movements, specific features of Darul Arqam's millenarianism<sup>1</sup> and economics involve significant departures from their intellectual and organisational predecessors. The uniqueness of Darul Arqam among Islamic movements, whether of sufi-revivalist or modernist-reformist varieties, is underlined by such innovative aspects of Darul Arqam's religious thought and practice, as are examined below.

### 7.2 MAHDISM: THE ISLAMIC REVIVALIST-MILLENARIAN TRADITION

Some observers of the 'Darul Arqam versus government' scenario have sought to de-emphasise the position of Darul Arqam within the general taxonomy of

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<sup>1</sup>The term 'millenarianism' is used here in the generic sense to refer to the belief in an awaited utopia on earth founded upon the predicted coming of a messiah. In its Christian context, 'millenarianism' may be taken to refer to the belief in the one-thousand years when Christ will reign on earth, as foretold in the Book of Revelation. Christian fundamentalists further distinguish between 'post-millennialism' i.e. the belief that Christ will return to earth after the millennium to announce the effective realisation of His kingdom, and 'pre-millennialism' i.e. the belief that Christ's return will occur before the awaited millennium. For details, see Dobson and Hindson (1986).

Islamic movements in Malaysia, by arguing that Darul Arqam's allegedly unorthodox doctrines divested it of any claim of being a bona fide revivalist organisation. The deliberate marginalisation of Darul Arqam's role in the Islamic resurgence invariably stems from a corresponding dismissal of Darul Arqam's eschatological beliefs as theologically doubtful, although not necessarily outright heterodox, as the official religious authorities would make us believe (cf. chapter 5: 5.4). Such perspectives are inclined to view the 'Darul Arqam episode' as a phenomenon in passing, triggered by similar factors which gave rise to other Islamic movements, but which somehow during its course developed millenarian traits which cast it in a different light from mainstream trends of contemporary Islamic resurgence. As such, it has been argued that Darul Arqam's quest for a just Islamic society, built upon an undue emphasis on peripheral rather than fundamental aspects of Islam, was bound to end in failure. Darul Arqam's messianism is said to have manifested itself in its extreme veneration of its founder-leader, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, and its spiritual progenitor, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi, both of whom were regarded as expected deliverers whose political dominions, that of the former immediately succeeding that of the latter, would herald an end to injustice and oppression.

For example, a nationwide Islamic magazine disputed Darul Arqam's claims to messianic leadership by condemning the doctrinal belief in Imam Al-Mahdi as "*a controversial issue which has corrupted the Islamic struggle,*" and by providing historical documentation of how pseudo-Mahdis had exploited the widespread existence of messianic beliefs among Muslim masses for their own selfish purposes (*Tamadun* August 1994). A commentary in *Bicara* (November 1994), the monthly journal of the British-based IRC, insinuated that Darul Arqam's downfall had been caused primarily by an improper reliance on the force of character rather than arguments from acceptable sources of the *shariah*, in educating its followers in Islam. Even the internationally respected *Impact International* (November 1994) perceived the Darul Arqam phenomenon as representing "*a cultisation of Islam at the cost of its basic teachings.*" The anthropologist Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan (1995: 13) claims that Darul Arqam's giving prominence to the Mahdist ideology with respect to the concept of leadership in a just society "*defied Sunni conventional practices*" since Mahdist beliefs have tended to be integrated by Shiite Muslims but peripheralised by Sunnis. In another article, she underlines the boundary separating Darul Arqam from what is normally understood in Malaysia to be orthodox Islam:

..... Al Arqam's persistent efforts at exalting Ashaari Muhammad to the status of a saviour was deemed by those in power and concerned members of the public as a gross departure from Islamic orthodox bodies of beliefs and practice. As pointed out earlier in this paper, in Malaysia the state operating through the religious bureaucracy reserved the right to determine what

constituted orthodox Islam. Although beliefs in saints (*wali*) and the Hidden Imam (*Imam Mahdi*) [sic] were acceptable in Malaysian orthodox thinking, they were not central and certainly could not be used as the main reference points in terms of which Muslims should organise their religious activities. Thus, any attempt on the part of an individual or group to promote these beliefs as the main thrust of Islam in Malaysia is bound to be questioned and regarded with suspicion. (Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan 1995a: 97-98).

While the bogus claims of many self-proclaimed Mahdis have in the past had deleterious effects on what may originally have been constructive endeavours to revive the religion,<sup>2</sup> thereby raising legitimate concern among contemporary revivalist figures (cf. Maududi 1981: 43, Israr Ahmad 1992: 23), it does not necessarily follow that a prominence placed upon Mahdism constitutes a deviation from orthodox Sunni Islamic practice. It is true that eschatological beliefs concerning the Expected Mahdi never became an essential part of the Sunni creed, unlike in the Shi'ite sect, whose historiography contains strong arguments and beliefs pertaining to various aspects of Al-Mahdi. This is due to, among other things, the absence of a subject matter on Al-Mahdi in the two most authentic *hadith* collections of Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim (d. 875), and scrupulous avoidance of discussion of the issue in the works of medieval systematic theologians such as Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) (Gibb and Kramers 1974: 311, Madelung 1986: 1235, Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: 128).

Historically, movements inspired by Mahdist expectations have persistently emerged in peripheral Sunni lands, fuelling the masses with hopes of revolutionary changes which would end the present state of Muslim backwardness and restore the purity and exalted status of Islam. Among Sunnis, Mahdism has come to embody not only a theological belief in the coming of a final deliverer towards the end of time, as derived from *hadith* collections by others than Bukhari and Muslim (cf. As-Siddiq 1985: *passim*, Ibn Kathir 1991: chapter 6), but also a political belief in the destiny of the *ummah* to undergo regeneration under the leadership of a centennial *mujaddid* called 'Al-Mahdi', literally meaning 'the divinely guided one'. As such, scholars have usually discussed the subject of Al-Mahdi in conjunction with the famous *hadith* regarding the promised *mujaddid*, as narrated by Abu Hurairah and found in the collection by Abu Dawud (d. 888): "*Allah will raise, at the head of each century, such people for this Ummah as will revive its Religion for it*" (Maududi 1981: 33-34). Thus for example, the Umayyad caliph Umar Abd al-Aziz (d. 720) was referred to in respectable religious circles as Al-Mahdi, apart from being conventionally regarded as the *mujaddid* of the first Islamic century (ibid.: 45-51, Gibb and Kramers 1974: 310,

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<sup>2</sup>For an account of some of these Mahdist impostors and their movements, see Muhammad Labib Ahmad (1980: 32-45).

Madelung 1986: 1231). In the light of previously wrong eschatological predictions, the specification of Al-Mahdi as a *mujaddid* saves scholars from the need to explain the failure of the Day of Judgement to materialise after the expected dates for the appearance of Al-Mahdi. It also enables us to understand why Mahdist expectations have been strongest during the beginning of every Islamic century (cf. Friedmann 1989: chapter 4). In conceptualising the pattern of revivalist movements in Islam, Hopwood describes the Sunni version of Al-Mahdi, in contrast with the Shiite view, as follows:

Although the belief in the *mahdi* or the 'hidden imam' became most widespread among the Shi'a, the Sunni community none the less reposed certain hopes in the appearance of a leader who would strive to renew Islam. Indeed, it is the title of *mujaddid* (renewer) which is perhaps more appropriate for the expected figure in Sunni Islam - one who is not necessarily the harbinger of the Last Day but a more humble figure to guide the *umma* back to the right path. (Hopwood 1971: 151).

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to categorically divorce Mahdist movements that have appeared throughout history from their originally eschatological connotations. It is reasonable to assume that such movements were inspired by the *hadiths* on Al-Mahdi, but whether they were led by the Expected Mahdi or not could only be ascertained with reference to events succeeding their leader's ascendancy to power. Since the issue of Al-Mahdi has never been placed as a cardinal tenet of the Sunni faith, claimants to the Mahdship, if their characteristics fit those of the Expected Mahdi as foretold in *hadiths*,<sup>3</sup> can only be repudiated historically but not theologically. In retrospect, past claimants to the Mahdship have all been either purposely bogus or innocently mistaken, since hardly any of the events which were supposed to follow the proclamation of the Mahdship actually occurred. These include, the appearance of the Dajjal,<sup>4</sup> the descent of the Prophet Jesus who will kill

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<sup>3</sup>From his compilation of eschatological *hadiths* entitled **Jesus, Al Mahdi and the Anti-Christ**, the *hadith* scholar Dr. Abdullah ibn As-Siddiq summarises the features and clothing of the Expected Mahdi as follows: "He will be tall and dark, his face will be like a glittering star in beauty and radiance. His forehead will be clear, and his nose prominent; his eyes will be naturally mascaraed; his teeth will be radiant; his eyebrows shaped and long but they will not be joined. Upon his right cheek will be a mole, he will have a thick beard; on one of his shoulders there will be a black piece of flesh surrounded with hair like a seal. His thighs will be widely spaced and he will wear a white cloak with a short fringe" (As-Siddiq 1985: 54).

<sup>4</sup>The Dajjal represents the Islamic version of the Antichrist, the epitome of all evil towards the end of time, who will be slain by the Prophet Jesus after tyrannically ruling the earth for forty days (cf. McGinn 1994: 111-113). According to *hadiths*, the Dajjal will be blind in the left eye, his right eye will look like a floating grape, the word *kafir* will be inscribed between both eyes, and he will be granted with miracles by God in order to test the faith of Muslims, many of whom will be led astray in times of severe hardship. Several *hadiths* seem to identify the Dajjal with Ibn Sayyad, a Jewish contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad, but it is possible that Ibn Sayyad was metaphorically labelled as the Dajjal on account of his mischief and rivalling pretensions to be a prophet (Halperin 1976). In the same manner

the Dajjal,<sup>5</sup> the appearance of the destructive tribes of Gog and Magog,<sup>6</sup> the rule of Al-Mahdi over the world for five or seven or nine years and followed by that of the Prophet Jesus for forty years, after a series of triumphant wars against the infidels (As-Siddiq 1985: *passim*, Ibn Kathir 1991: *passim*). But the fact that past Mahdist movements have been proven in time to be not Mahdist in the scriptural sense, does not mean that they were not Mahdist in orientation, in the sense of their having derived political inspiration from the apocalyptic belief in the Expected Mahdi. Therefore, the doctrine of Al-Mahdi wields not only theological significance, but it is also of enormous value in generating and rejuvenating Islamic political movements, particularly in times of economic and social discontent when the longing for a Golden Age becomes pervasive (Hopwood 1971: 150). To the social scientist, it is the political role of Mahdism which stimulates most interest. Hence the inclusion of 'Mahdist' as one of the categories of leadership in Islamic movements in the taxonomic analysis by Dekmejian (1988: 14).

It is a historical fact that discussions revolving around the concept of Al-Mahdi in Sunni Islam have exacted most interest from the sufis (Muhammad Labib Ahmad 1980: 21, 29-31). We consequently notice that most revivalist movements described as Mahdist in orientation have had sufi origins and inclinations. This may initially seem paradoxical, for while the contributions of sufism to socio-cultural

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that we differentiate between the centennial Mahdis and the apocalyptic Mahdi, we can therefore distinguish between lesser Dajjals and the apocalyptic Dajjal. Developing this theme further, a modern Islamic writer distinguishes three aspects of Dajjal, viz. Dajjal as the individual as mentioned in apocalyptic *hadiths*, Dajjal as a worldwide social and cultural phenomenon, and Dajjal as an unseen systemic force (Ahmad Thomson 1986). For *hadiths* on the Dajjal, see As-Siddiq (1985: chapter 3) and Ibn Kathir (1991: 41-72).

<sup>5</sup>Unlike Christians, Muslims have never believed that Jesus was crucified. Instead, he was said to have been raised by God to the heavens at the same time that Judas, Jesus' betrayer, was made to assume Jesus' physical characteristics and ultimately died on the cross. The Quran (IV: 157-158) states: "*That they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah'; but they killed him not, nor crucified him. Only a likeness of that was shown to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge. But only conjecture to follow, for a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself, and Allah is exalted in power, wise.*" In a *hadith* related by Ahmad, Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet Muhammad said: "*The prophets are like brothers; they have different mothers but their religion is one. I am the closest of all the people to Jesus son of Mary, because there is no other prophet between him and myself. He will come again, and when you see him, you will recognise him. He is of medium height and his colouring is reddish-white. He will be wearing two garments, and his hair will look wet. He will break the cross, kill the pigs, abolish the jizyah [poll tax on non-Muslims] and call the people to Islam. During his time, Allah will end every religion and sect other than Islam, and will destroy the Dajjal. Then peace and security will prevail on earth, so that lions will graze with camels, tigers with cattle, and wolves with sheep; children will be able to play with snakes without coming to any harm. Jesus will remain for forty years, then die, and the Muslims will pray for him*" (Ibn Kathir 1991: 74-75).

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Kathir (1991: 77-78) describes Gog and Magog as two Turkish tribes who are currently restrained behind a barrier built by Zulqarnain, who is popularly held as the Islamic version of Alexander the Great. Upon collapse of the barrier after the death of the Dajjal, Gog and Magog will disperse, spread corruption, destroy plants and commit atrocities, until God, in response to prayers said by Jesus, sends a kind of worm in the napes of their necks, thus killing them.

aspects of Islam have been sufficiently acknowledged (cf. Akhtar Qamber 1982), its role in rekindling outward-oriented political movements have usually been downgraded by analysts and contemporary Islamists alike. For example, Dekmejian characterises the resurgence of popular Islam as exemplified by sufi brotherhoods as "*generally passive in a political sense, except in situations of crisis when it could become radicalised,*" and which provided the populace "*with a framework of identity and a spiritual medium of escape from alienation*" (1985: 30). One of the most eloquent spokesmen of contemporary Islamic resurgence, Abul A'la Maududi (d. 1979), even exhorted aspiring revivalists to "*shun the language and terminology of the Sufis; their mystic allusions and metaphoric references, their dress and etiquette, their master-disciple institution and all other things associated with it*" (1981: 113).

In order to make sense of the hostility of most contemporary Islamists and educated Muslims towards sufism, Professor Victor Danner (1980) distinguishes between the dead, sleeping and living sufi orders. Dead sufi orders have incorporated various forms of *bid'ah* and illicit activities into their practices, as a result of long term decline initiated by the demise of veritable leaders and their replacement by incompetent teachers. Sleeping orders have also lost competent teachers, but still retain genuine forms of Islamically sanctioned practices, albeit in somewhat unorthodox forms as a result of having been mixed with local cultural elements. It is from the living sufi orders, under the guidance of competent masters whose teachings conform to the Quran and *Sunnah* within the context of both spiritual and legal aspects, that hopes and realities of genuine sufi-based revivalism can be generated. In blaming the excesses of sufism for the decline of Islam, contemporary Islamists and observers have often indiscriminately lumped all categories of sufi orders together, whilst having in mind the deviations and eccentricities of rituals practised by dead and sleeping sufi orders. Their adversarial attitude towards sufism and the ensuing indifference towards Mahdism have also been moulded by the widespread acceptance of theological doctrines effectively denouncing sufism and its corresponding manifestations as historical accretions. Danner contends that such antipathy is found in its most extreme form in the *Wahhabi* revivalism that has affected the Middle Eastern Islamic heartlands; he claims that in their enthusiasm of "*remaking Islam into a puritanical and fundamentalist faith.....,*" the *Wahhabis* denigrated the mystical elements of Islam (Danner 1980: 35, cf. chapter 2: fn. 54, chapter 5: 5.4.1). Yet, this anti-sufi mentality might not have been the best course for contemporary Islamists to follow. Danner identifies the main fallacy of *Wahhabism* to be its anti-sufi implications:

Wahhabism, however, suffers from an interior fissure in its teachings that could never compensate for its ritualistic and legalistic exactitude. Sufism, for Wahhabism, is the real agent

of Islamic degeneration: get rid of it and everything returns to normal. That is precisely what the Wahhabis did, and in the process, they stripped Islam - or their Islam - of all its spiritual plasticity and beauty..... But it is not through the destruction of the Sufi institutions and shrines of Arabia that one reawakens the inner spark of the religion. The error of the Wahhabis was not so much that they reduced Islam to the *sharia[h]*, but that, in so doing, they reduced the entire structure of beliefs within that faith to the most fundamentalist dogmatism conceivable,..... [and] insisted that this was the *true* Islam. (ibid.: 31-32, italics in original).

During the heyday of Western colonialism in Muslim lands, the emergence of sufi-revivalist protest movements described as Mahdist in orientation often caused consternation within the ranks of colonial governments and their protégés among the native ruling elites. In the orientalist paradigm, Mahdism conjures up the image of politically active messianic primitivists ever-prepared to employ violence to achieve their puritanical aims (Dekmejian 1988: 13-14). Typical Mahdists supposedly regarded modern society as an abomination. "*Messianic visions and calls for total commitment often result in conflict..... it arouses a zeal which easily leads to violence,*" observes Voll (1986: 169). In the peripheral lands of Islam, the nineteenth century witnessed a heightening of messianic expectations among the masses whose lives had been severely disrupted by Western military domination and capitalist intrusion. The onset of non-Muslim rule raised the spectre of an impending Armageddon, with the colonial infidels being characteristically identified with the forces of Al-Dajjal, Al-Mahdi's antithesis (cf. Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim 1979: 441). At the same time, sufism was undergoing a reformation in the direction of "*greater orthodoxy and uniformity,*" meaning essentially stricter adherence to the Quran and *Sunnah* (Mortimer 1982: 70). Such neo-orthodox sufi revival took on so many aspects conventionally identified with *Wahhabism*, such as flexibility in opening the gates of *ijtihad* and an uncompromising rejection of innovations of non-Muslim origin which had infiltrated traditional sufi orders, that analysts have used the epithet 'fundamentalist' to describe it (cf. Voll 1979). Movements generated out of the revival were responsible for most anti-colonial uprisings of the period, either directly in taking up arms or indirectly in providing behind-the-scenes activists (cf. Clancy-Smith 1988). Not all of the movements were Mahdist, but a great many were.

In Indonesia, Javanese millenarian mythology which predicted the coming of a *Ratu Adil* (Just Prince) blended well with the Islamic concept of Al-Mahdi to periodically produce movements of socio-political protest against Dutch colonial rule (van der Kroef 1952: 161-162, Wertheim 1961: 56). In the most famous of the revolts, the Java War (1825-30), the Islamic leader Prince Diponegoro came to personify simultaneously Al-Mahdi, *Ratu Adil* and *Erucakra*: another Javanese-Hindu version

of the saviour, in his fight against foreign contamination and exploitation (van der Kroef 1949, 1959: 309). In northwestern Africa, the *Tijaniyyah* order, founded by Sheikh Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tijani (d. 1815) at Fez, Morocco, provided the ideological basis for the founding of an extensive Islamic state in the valleys of upper Senegal and upper Niger in mid-nineteenth century (Mortimer 1982: 72). While Mahdist fervour has not been too obvious in the *Tijaniyyah* movement, sufi scholars have explained that the *Tijaniyyah* enjoys a brotherly relationship with the Expected Mahdi, and that the deluge of followers to its order is a portent of Al-Mahdi's imminent appearance (Tomai 1989: 98-99, fn. 90). Although subsequently the *Tijaniyyah* order seemed to have succumbed to colonial French overtures (Vidal 1950: 432-434), evidence gathered by Clancy-Smith (1988: 72) indicates that the *Tijaniyyah* leadership was at the same time covertly participating in anti-colonial revolts as behind-the-scenes activists. It was a measure of the order's resilience and political vitality that first expressions of violent agitation against the legacy of Kemal Ataturk's secularisation drive in Turkey, as early as the 1950s, were masterminded by members of the *Tijaniyyah* (Lewis 1952: 43, Marmorstein 1952: 346-348).<sup>7</sup>

The most successful Mahdist movement ever launched was arguably led by the Sudanese Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahdi (d. 1885), whose Mahdship was allegedly proclaimed to him by the Prophet Muhammad in person in a state of consciousness.<sup>8</sup> The Sudanese Mahdi had received spiritual training in the *Sammaniyyah* sufi order, whose reform-oriented roots in the Hijaz set him on a collision course with established religious leaders (Voll 1979: 164-165). It is on record that he even clashed with his *Sammaniyyah* master who had permitted leniency in men-women segregation and in the practice of traditional musical entertainment, later to find himself joining and eventually heading a breakaway *Sammaniyyah* group of unmistakably 'fundamentalist' persuasion (ibid.: 156-157, Dekmejian and Wyszomirski 1972: 204). The Mahdi's struggle was directed against two sets of enemies at the same time: the Turco-Egyptian rulers and their British accomplices and local religious leaders who upheld popular folk traditions (Voll 1979: 165). The Mahdi's success was underlined by the creation of a Mahdist state (1885-98) strictly

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<sup>7</sup>Lewis Thomas has cautioned against exaggerating the extent of the Tijanis' campaign of mutilation of Kemal Ataturk's statues and portraits, dismissing it as "*a last-ditch Turkish stand by diehard Anatolian reactionaries combating modern times in central Turkey*" (1952: 38). However, the seemingly narrow range and limited impact of the Tijanis' agitation must be weighed against the horrifying disestablishment that Islam and particularly sufi orders had to undergo in early Kemalist Turkey. Under extremely unfavourable circumstances, the fact that the agitation could be weighed at all was a testament to the sufi order's resilience.

<sup>8</sup>In a letter addressed to Sayyid al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, leader of the *Sanusiyyah* order dominant in regions of present-day Libya, the Sudanese Mahdi wrote: "*My mahdism was revealed to me when I was wide awake and in good health. I was not asleep, nor hallucinated, nor drunk with wine, nor mad, but in possession of all my mental faculties*" (quoted in Hopwood 1971: 154).

organised along the lines of the *shariah* and which outlived its founder. Throughout its existence, the state never ceased to encounter hostilities from the imperialists and popular religious figures opposed to its unification efforts, as could be gauged by its constant military expeditions on both fronts (Dekmejian and Wyszomirski 1972: 206-210, Voll 1988). Although eventually having to succumb to the military might of the British in 1898, it had left a lasting impression on colonial administrators, who continued to apply an iron fist policy, even to the point of over-reaction, to suppress future uprisings which derived inspiration from Mahdist doctrines (Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim 1979). The success of the Sudanese Mahdi, albeit short-lived, testifies to the utility of Mahdist doctrines as a political rallying cry.

In the twentieth century, major Sunni Islamic movements have evidently chosen not to utilise Mahdism in their efforts of regenerating the Muslim masses. Mahdism has been 'relegated' to the realm of fringe sufi groups, Shiites and heterodox revivalist movements such as the *Ahmadiyyah* sect,<sup>9</sup> giving it an image of being irrelevant to mainstream resurgence. While it may be true that sufi-millenarianism and *Wahhabism*, which has had a major influence upon contemporary Islamic resurgence,<sup>10</sup> constitute alternative styles of Islamic renewals (Voll 1982), they are not poles apart. It has been revealed that Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1263), the medieval theologian best known for his reputation as a sworn enemy of sufism and to whom many contemporary Islamists refer for intellectual guidance, actually had untarnished sufi credentials which were however overshadowed by his hostility towards sufi excesses of the pantheistic variety (Makdisi 1973). On the other side of the coin, the Sudanese Mahdi's credentials as a message-oriented fundamentalist, as most Western social scientists would describe present-day Islamists, are unblemished despite a rigorous adherence to man-oriented Mahdism (Voll 1979: 153-166). Instead of conceiving Mahdism as foreign to Islamic resurgence, it would be more useful to see the Sunni Mahdi as "*a 'fusion of a cult of the Book with a cult..... of Leadership' which stays within the bounds set by the tradition and scriptural religion*" and "*a special*

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<sup>9</sup>A movement founded in the late nineteenth century in Qadian, India, by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), who claimed to be not only Al-Mahdi and but also a prophet. Denounced by the orthodox *ulama* as heretical, rejected by mainstream Islamists for its abolition of *jihad* and apparent complicity with the British colonialists and having to undergo a major split in its ranks, the *Ahmadiyyah* has nevertheless survived until modern times. In response to pressure from orthodox Muslims, the Pakistani government has in recent times declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. Prominent Ahmadis have included Zafrullah Khan (d. 1985), Pakistan's former foreign minister, and Professor Abd al-Salam (d. 1996), joint-winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Physics. For details, see Sirajuddin Abbas (1991: 341-353) and Watt (1988: 58-60).

<sup>10</sup>In his review of contemporary Islamic politics, Mir Zohair Husain remarks of the global legacy of *Wahhabism*: "*Perhaps the greatest impact of al-Wahhab and his Wahhabi movement is that he not only reignited Islamic fundamentalism in the Arabian peninsula but spread his influence to India, North Africa, and throughout the Muslim world. As all Muslims were obliged in the hajj to visit Arabia, all were thus exposed to the Wahhabi movement*" (1995: 47-48).

*leadership style within the broader framework of the Islamic fundamentalist tradition*" (ibid.: 153). It is in its firm acceptance of Mahdism as an agent for revival, without rejecting scriptural orthodoxy and the impact of modernity, that Darul Arqam differs from its counterparts among mainstream Islamic movements.

### 7.3 MESSIANISM IN DARUL ARQAM

Considering the fact that the doctrine of Mahdism has been entrenched in Islamic teachings and history since the early days of the religion, one might wonder why Darul Arqam's messianic beliefs should have aroused so much furore over their validity and applicability. On the one hand, this may be explained in the light of latter-day Muslims having been divorced from the sufi heritage of traditional Islam as a consequence of the ascendancy of anti-sufi thought throughout the *ummah*. This ascendancy has been accentuated in modern times by Arab oil wealth facilitating the global export of *Wahhabi*-inclined doctrines and the continual recognition of Middle Eastern institutions as centres of Islamic learning (cf. Voll 1982: 124-125). Insofar as *Wahhabism* prides itself as a vigorous opponent of the sanctification of man (ibid.: 116-117, 119), it is not surprising that both sufism and Mahdism, with their relative emphasis on man-orientedness, should register a popular decline in both official and popular resurgent Islam. Voll (1979: 162, 1982: 120) has observed that Mahdist movements have had most success in peripheral areas of the Islamic world, where traditional Islamic teaching have mainly relied on local religious personalities. Messianic leaders such as Indonesia's Diponegoro, Morocco's Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tijani, the Sudanese Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Mahdi and Darul Arqam's Ashaari Muhammad were invariably trained in the Islamic sciences within their local environment. Apart from having made occasional visits to the Islamic heartlands, none underwent consistent academic training in distinguished educational centres of the Middle East.

On the other hand, *Wahhabism* does not necessarily entail a categorical rejection of Mahdism. Taking message-oriented renewal as the primary distinction of *Wahhabism* (ibid.: 116, 121), no *a priori* reason exists for *Wahhabis* to disavow Mahdism so long as Mahdist doctrines propagated by a movement are derived from legitimate sources of the *shariah*. Hence, Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, the present *mufti* of Saudi Arabia, the core of whose religio-legal system is formed by the *Wahhabi* faith (ibid.: 124), has said:

Repudiation of the Expected Mahdi and all issues relevant to it, as presently understood by some, is invalid. This is because *hadiths* about his coming at the end of time to fill the earth

with justice and peace which supplant corruption, are *mutawatir*,<sup>11</sup> great in number and recognised by most of the *ulama*, among whom are Abul Hasan al-Aburi as-Sajastani of the fourth century, al-Allamah as-Safarini, al-Allamah Syaokani and others. It is as if a consensus on the matter has been reached by the *ulama*....." (quoted in Almascaty 1994: 38-39).

Mahdism being acknowledged as a facet of orthodox Islam notwithstanding, Darul Arqam's version of messianism would still have stirred up controversy as a consequence of its peculiar nature even by standards of past messianic trends. To begin with, in terms of the personality of the Expected Mahdi, Darul Arqam's belief in the Mahdship of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi puts it on a similar terrain with the Twelver Shiites, who also believe in the occultation of Al-Mahdi prior to his promised reappearance (Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: 127-128, Nomani 1988: chapter IX). From the Sunni point of view, there exists no scriptural justification supporting the doctrine of Al-Mahdi's occultation. In defence, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 179-180, 1989: 50-51) cited the precedence of the Prophet Jesus and the People of the Cave, both of whom were thought to have died by their contemporaries but who in reality are being kept by God in an unknown state until such a time that God decrees that they would re-emerge.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Al-Mahdi's antithesis, the Dajjal, is also arguably in occultation. This view is based on a lengthy *hadith* which tells how Tamim al-Dari, a Christian convert to Islam, was stranded during a voyage in a remote island where he met and had a dialogue with a beast shackled in a monastery. The creature claimed to be the Dajjal, and this was verified by the Prophet upon hearing Tamim's story (Ibn Kathir 1991: 48-51, Halperin 1976: 223). It has also been shown that some Sunni *ulama* and sufis share Ustaz Ashaari's view of the occultation of Al-Mahdi (Madelung 1986: 1236-1237). Evidence quoted in support of this include a statement from Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) and the testimony of another sufi, Sheikh Hasan al-Iraqi (d. 1525), whose personal encounter with Al-Mahdi was also cited by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad (1986: 171-173). Perhaps the closest evidence in support of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's claim to the Mahdship is found in Hasan al-Idwi al-Hamzawi's **Masharik al-Anwar** (1859), in which Al-Mahdi's year of birth is calculated to be 1255 H. or 1839 AD. (Madelung 1986: 1237), which is extremely

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<sup>11</sup>A *hadith* which is *mutawatir* has several continuous chains of narrators and is regarded as categorically authentic; see Al Alwani (1993: 129).

<sup>12</sup>For the occultation of Prophet Jesus, see above, fn. 5. The People of the Cave refer to seven unitarian Christian youths who fled from the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius (reigned 249-251), ending up in a cave in Asia Minor where they were put to sleep for 309 years. When they woke up, they found that the persecution of Christians had ended. Their story is told in the Quran (XVIII: 9-26); see also the commentary in Yusuf Ali (n.d.: 730, fn. 2337, 736, fn. 2365). In a *hadith* narrated by Ibnu Abbas, it is said that the People of the Cave are the assistants of Al-Mahdi, such that they must now be in occultation waiting for their eschatological role to be performed (Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 180, 1989: 50).

close to Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi's birth year of 1259 H. (Mohd. Taha Suhaimi 1990: 1, Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 17).

Darul Arqam's belief in the Mahdship of its spiritual forefather is also extraordinary in its implication that the leader of Muslims worldwide will be a Javanese-Malay of Arabic descent. Not only does this conviction catapult the Malay world to the forefront of the contemporary resurgence of the *ummah*, but also within the context of the Malay world, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi seemed to be an ill-suited candidate for the Mahdship on account of his relative obscurity during his pre-occultation lifetime (cf. *ibid.*: 80). The doctrine of Malay leadership of the *ummah* is further accentuated by the unprecedented emphasis placed by Darul Arqam on the purported advent of a 'youth of Bani Tamim', a mysterious figure who has been described in *hadiths* as coming from the east and acting as a standard-bearer of Al-Mahdi (Gibb and Kramers 1974: 313).<sup>13</sup> Even though the appearance of such a figure has been foretold in *hadiths*, an examination of the history of messianic movements in Islam reveals a total lack of attention given to this purported assistant to Al-Mahdi. Possibly due to the vagueness of the identity of the youth of Bani Tamim, whose pedigree and physical characteristics, unlike Al-Mahdi's, are scarcely elaborated in *hadiths*, no messianic truth-seeker or power-seeking pretender has been eager to come forward and claim the rank of this assistant of Al-Mahdi. This is in stark contrast to the abundance of Mahdist claimants.

Prior to Darul Arqam, Islamic messianism had virtually solely concentrated on the figure of Imam al-Mahdi. To Darul Arqam, this constitutes a mistake. For the advent of Al-Mahdi must as a matter of principle be preceded by the coming of the youth of Bani Tamim who will eventually hand over power to Al-Mahdi (Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: 188). In other words, the youth of Bani Tamim is the lesser saviour whose political triumph will usher in more significant victories at the hands of the principal saviour, Al-Mahdi (*ibid.*: 200). The placing of the arrival of the youth of Bani Tamim as a necessary condition for the advent of Al-Mahdi means that in retrospect, past claimants to the Mahdship can be categorically repudiated by pointing to their lacking a revivalist predecessor from the tribe of Tamim.<sup>14</sup> In his

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<sup>13</sup>For example, the *hadith* reported by Abd Allah ibn Umar and found in the references of At-Tabarani, Abu Nu'aym, Al Kidji and Al Khatib: The Messenger of Allah was among a group of the migrants and supporters. Ali, son of Abi Talib was on his left side and Al Abbas was on his right side, when Abbas and a man from the supporters started to debate. The supporter spoke harshly to Abbas, then the Prophet took the hand of Abbas and the hand of Ali and said, "*From the loins of this (meaning Al Abbas) will come a youth who will fill the earth with transgression and injustice and it will come from the loins of this (meaning Ali) a man who will fill the earth with fairness and justice. If you see this pay attention to the Tamimi youth who will come from the direction of the east, he is the owner of the Banner of Al Mahdi*" (As-Siddiq 1985: 25).

<sup>14</sup>Interestingly, the tribe of Tamim has a history of active participation in religious revolutionary movements. Voll quotes Montgomery Watt's observation on the perceived "*special connection between the Kharijite movement and certain northern Arab tribes, notably Tamim, Hanifa and Shayban*" (Voll

widely-publicised address in conjunction with Darul Arqam's Silver Jubilee celebrations, rather than staking a claim for the Mahdship as previous messianic leaders have done, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad exhorted Muslims to compete healthily for the coveted position of the youth of Bani Tamim:

Based on *hadiths*, we are also informed that the revival of Islam in the East happens in the hands of a man from Bani Tamim (Quraisy clan) [sic]: the man who will hand over the black banner to Imam Mahdi. This means the struggles of the man of Bani Tamim and of Imam Mahdi are closely related, connected and occur in succession. Perhaps the relationship between the prophets Aaron and Moses provide a fair comparison. I see both the man of Bani Tamim and Imam Mahdi as being concurrent *mujaddids*. [Any member of] the Muslim *ummah* should make the effort to become the man of Bani Tamim as mentioned in *hadiths* so that the schedule of Allah happens in his hands. There is nothing wrong or extreme in competing to become the anointed man; this is the way it should be. But if we are not capable of accomplishing such high ambitions, we must search for another more able person. When such a person clearly exists, we must follow him and assist his struggle. There is no need to devise some other method..... Please feel welcome to grab this opportunity. The identity of the *mujaddid* or the man of Bani Tamim has not been fixed. This means that whosoever has the chance to qualify as the man of Bani Tamim. (Ashaari Muhammad 1993: 38-39).

Further, Ustaz Ashaari enumerated the characteristics said to be possessed by the youth of Bani Tamim and his followers, as derived from the writings of Jalal al-din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), whose works have proved extremely important for the development of Islamic eschatology (cf. Friedmann 1989: 97, fn. 12; 98, fn. 19). The main characteristics are:

He is of Arab ancestry, hailing from the Quraisy clan of Bani Tamim. But he has very few Arab features as a result of his lineage having been mixed with non-Arabs [via marriage]..... His female followers appear like black crows, while the men wear turbans and green robes. The sight of them moving together in groups is awe-inspiring..... The black banner which he carries in the east also flaps in Khurasan: a country behind a river (*ma waraa un nahar*). This means he is the leader of the same movement in the east and in Khurasan..... The eastern-born leader will approach a man waiting for him in the country behind the river, called Al Harith Harrath.<sup>15</sup> As

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1988: 105). Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), founder of the *Wahhabi* movement, also came from the tribe of Tamim (Sirajuddin Abbas 1991: 310).

<sup>15</sup>The *hadith* reported by Ali and related by Abu Dawud: The Prophet said, "A man named al-Harith ibn Hirath will come from Transoxania. His army will be led by a man named Mansur. He will pave the way for and establish the government of the family of Muhammad, just as Quraysh established the government of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Every believer will be obliged to support him" (Ibn Kathir 1991: 22). A look at the Arabic of the *hadith* reveals that 'Transoxania' here is literally referred to as the *ma waraa un nahar* i.e. the country behind the river (Muhammad Labib Ahmad 1980: 8, Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: 194). 'Mansur' literally means 'one who is helped': a sobriquet of the

the outcome of his struggle, the man of Bani Tamim obtains the reins of government in one of the countries in the east. It is this ruling power that will be handed over to Imam Mahdi. (Ashaari Muhammad 1993: 40).

It was the spatial and temporal dimensions of Darul Arqam's eschatological beliefs, being so obviously threatening to the political status quo, which were to arouse the ultimate suspicion from the authorities. Once Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad coupled his beliefs with political interpretations implying a proximate changeover of government, the government felt it could not afford to ignore such apocalyptic pronouncements as the hollow dreams of a maverick messianic leader, bearing in mind Darul Arqam's enormous mobilising capacity and economic influence. The political suspicion was based on the premise that Darul Arqam believed in a Malaysian provenance of the youth of Bani Tamim, thereby holding that Malaysia was the 'east' that had been referred to in *hadiths* and scholarly opinions as the cradle of Islamic resurgence towards the end of time (Ashaari Muhammad 1993: 42-43, 1993c: 207; Darul Arqam 1992b: 8, 1993c).<sup>16</sup> This belief was founded upon the hypothesis that many Sunni Arab families emigrated to the Far East to flee from *Wahhabi* persecution during the last century or so, such that a possibility arises that "*one of the Bani Tamim migrated to Malaysia, married a local and produced a son with Quraisy [sic] blood in him.....*" (Ashaari Muhammad 1993: 42).<sup>17</sup> Added to this is circumstantial evidence obtained from personal encounters and dialogues with foreign *ulama* who expressed the view that based on the comparatively higher level of

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youth of Bani Tamim; see the version of the *hadith* in Darul Arqam (1992b: 7, 1993c: 20) and its interpretation in Darul Arqam (1993: 176-177).

<sup>16</sup>For example, the *hadith* reported by Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Juz' al-Zubaydi and related by Ibn Majah: The Prophet said, "*A people will come out of the east who will pave the way for the Mahdi*" (Ibn Kathir 1991: 22). Ibn Kathir ends his discussion of *hadiths* on the Mahdi with the conclusion that "*.....the Mahdi whose coming is promised at the end of time will appear from the East.....*" (ibid.: 23). Another *hadith*, reported by Hasan al Basri and found in the reference of Nu'aym ibn Hammad, establishes the Mahdi's victory as the pinnacle of the struggle of the eastern people: "*Allah will send a Black Banner from the East, whosoever supports it Allah will give victory to him, and whosoever does not support it Allah will forsake him until they come to a man whose name is like my name and they give him the power of their affairs, so Allah will support him and give to him victory*" (As-Siddiq 1985: 31)

<sup>17</sup>This is Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's interpretation of an Ibn Majah-related *hadith*, as narrated by Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud: "*Whilst we were with the Prophet (peace be upon him), some young men from Bani Hashim approached us. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw them, his eyes filled with tears and the colour of his face changed. I said, 'We can see something has changed in your face, and it upsets us.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, 'We are the people of a Household for whom Allah has chosen the Hereafter rather than this world. The people of my Household (Ahl al-Bayt) will suffer a great deal after my death, and will be persecuted until a people carrying black banners will come out of the east. They will instruct the people to do good, but the people will refuse; they will fight until they are victorious, and the people do as they asked, but they will not accept it from them until they hand over power to a man from my household. Then the earth will be filled with fairness, just as it had been filled with injustice. If any of you live to see this, you should go to him even if you have to crawl over ice.*" (Ibn Kathir 1991: 22-23, cf. Ashaari Muhammad 1986: 169, Darul Arqam 1993c: 18-20).

Islamic consciousness among the masses in Malaysia than anywhere else in the *ummah*, the pivotal role of Malaysia in the ultimate resurgence of Islam is practically destined (ibid.: 41, Abdul Halim Abbas 1991: 18-20, Mohamad Mahir Saidi 1992: 222).

To Darul Arqam's detractors, it seemed obvious that Darul Arqam was claiming the mantle of the youth of Bani Tamim for its leader, and claiming itself to be the followers of the youth of Bani Tamim and thereby of Al-Mahdi. One indication of this was the employment since 1993 of a new title for Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, viz. *Abuya Sheikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad at-Tamimi*; the surname 'at-Tamimi' clearly suggesting Bani Tamim origins (Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan 1995a: 94). Although nowhere did Ustaz Ashaari categorically make exclusive claims for his followers as the 'chosen people' of the *ummah*, he did explicitly mention Darul Arqam's endeavour to realise the steps needed to qualify themselves as followers of the youth of Bani Tamim who will hand over power to Al-Mahdi:

We in Darul Arqam are striving to realise this promise. After striving for the resurgence in the East, we headed towards Khurasan in great numbers, just as Allah seized the area from the hands of the Communists. Khurasan is the place for the flapping of the black banner from the East where there is a man, Al Harith Harrath, as mentioned in the *hadith*. We want to be the first to meet him. (Ashaari Muhammad 1993: 42-43).

Darul Arqam earnestly espoused the theory of the reverse flow of Islamic resurgence: that the ultimate revival of the *ummah* will be generated from the periphery towards the Islamic heartlands of the Middle East, based on the *hadith*, "*Islam will return to its place of origin like a snake returning to its hole*" (quoted in Darul Arqam 1992b: 4). The widely publicised trips made by Darul Arqam to Uzbekistan and Yunnan in China in 1992-93 were part of exploratory expeditions into Khurasan in search of Al Harith Harrath and *asoibs* i.e. followers of Al-Mahdi as mentioned in *hadiths* (ibid., Yusuf Din 1992: 155-160). It was in conjunction with the launching of its 'Khurasan Operation' that Darul Arqam inaugurated its International Centre in Islamabad, Pakistan in January 1992. As declared by Darul Arqam (1993: 175-177):

From this base, Darul Arqam concocts plans and strategies to explore Khurasan further, especially Uzbekistan, since a lot of *hadiths* on the period near the end of time are related to Uzbekistan. For instance, the *hadiths* on the fortunate land of *ma waraa un nahar*, *asoibs*, Al Harith Harrath and the unfurling of the Black Banner, which signify the near coming of Imam Mahdi. *Ma waraa un nahar* - the land behind the river, according to the *ulama* is situated between Samarqand and Bukhara. More accurately, *ma waraa un nahar* is situated in Termez, a small town at the side of the Amu Darya river [in Uzbekistan]..... It is here that *asoibs* are

being prepared. According to signs of *hadith*, *asoibs* in Uzbekistan will combine forces with Islamic strivers from the East especially, and also with Islamic activists from other parts of the world. Then they will move together to Syam [Greater Syria]. From there, they will proceed to Haramayn: the Forbidden Lands of Makkah and Medina. Imam Ashaari at-Tamimi is convinced that if the revival of Islam at the end of time can be portrayed as a human body, the East is the pulse (life) while Khurasan is the backbone. In other words, the East acts as the initiator and leader of the resurgence, and Khurasan becomes its supporter and prime auxiliary. The East-Khurasan combination, or specifically, the joining of forces between *asoibs* from the East under Al-Mansur (the man of Bani Tamim) and the chosen *asoib* (leader of *asoibs*) from Khurasan, viz. Al Harith Harrath.....[is] the closest sign of the advent of the supreme leader, Imam Mahdi. With the fall of Russia and the weakening of America, Islam is gradually on the rise. Each step of decline of the infidel system is accompanied by a step of rise of Islam..... happening especially in Malaysia. This is exuberating news to be relished by the East, Khurasan and the entire world. Now it is the East's turn to lead the promised revival. This is what Imam Ashaari at-Tamimi and Darul Arqam have been trying to prove.

The perceived implication that Darul Arqam was destined to wrest political power in Malaysia in preparation for the advent of Al-Mahdi was doubly alarming for the temporal proximity of the predicted events. An examination of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's eschatological thought reveals a gradual stiffening of the conviction in the nearness of Al-Mahdi's coming. In his controversial **Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam** (1986), no specific date was set for the advent. In **Siapa Mujaddid Kurun Ke 15?** (Who is the *Mujaddid* of the Fifteenth Century), a work dedicated entirely to the subject of Mahdism, Ustaz Ashaari confidently predicted that the promised *mujaddid* of the fifteenth Islamic century would be Imam Mahdi, whose appearance must be effected by the year 1425 H. at the latest in order for him to qualify as the centennial *mujaddid* (Ashaari Muhammad 1987: 43, 50). This view was based on the calculation of the age of the world by Jalal al-din al-Suyuti and the elaboration of the signs preceding the advent of Al-Mahdi by another Egyptian jurist, Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 1565), and the Malay scholar Uthman Jalal al-din (d. 1952) (ibid.: chapter 6). In **Inilah Pandanganku** (My Contemplations), Ustaz Ashaari specified seven years from 1988 as the upper time-limit before which Al-Mahdi had to appear (Ashaari Muhammad 1988: 257). Amidst the euphoria surrounding the Gulf War in 1990-91, Ustaz Ashaari applied his eschatological doctrine to explain current events in the Middle East and consequently moved forward the seven-year deadline to start from 1991 (Ashaari Muhammad 1991: 121). It might seem puzzling that the Darul Arqam leader's apparent uncertainty of timing did not cause Darul Arqam followers to lose faith in the movement. But as Friedmann (1989: 96-97) shows,

'postponements' of specified dates for the saviour's emergence and the Day of Judgement were not uncommon among scholars. To followers of Islamic messianic movements, it seemed that whether the predicted apocalyptic events would actually occur was less important than the question of regenerative efforts made to herald the expected Golden Age. In this sense, Mahdism is an activist rather than a passivist doctrine.

In the history of Darul Arqam, the activism was injected with new blood as of 1993 with the introduction of the doctrine of the youth of Bani Tamim, and the consequent roles of Malaysia and Darul Arqam in ensuring its realisation. During these latter stages, to bolster his messianic claims, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad even quoted apocalyptic predictions from non-Islamic sources such as the French-Jewish soothsayer Nostradamus (d. 1566) and the twelfth-century Javanese-Hindu mysticising Djayabaya (Ashaari Muhammad 1993a: 4-5).<sup>18</sup> It is however uncertain whether this was a ploy to widen Darul Arqam's appeal beyond the confines of Islamists, some of whom would presumably frown upon the decision to use such sources (cf. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah 1992: 110-111). As time passed, Darul Arqam was impeded by the government repression in its activity of establishing the youth of Bani Tamim as Malaysia's political leader, at least for the near future. While the regime may have been basking in its success of preserving its hold on power, it is reasonable to question the wisdom behind its acting based upon suppositions and even superstitions, taking into account the non-Islamic sources utilised by Darul Arqam. Not only were Darul Arqam's political pronouncements and millenarian activity based on circumstantial and conjectural evidence, but there was also hardly any evidence of Darul Arqam having made tangible preparations towards wresting political power, apart from improving its administrative infrastructure which did resemble a political set-up (cf. appendix A2). Activist and politically oriented as they were, it remains disputable whether Darul Arqam members had been sufficiently prepared by 1994 to govern the state, having been immersed in their own life-systems for a considerable period of time.

Judging from the logistics of the situation, it is legitimate to echo the bewilderment expressed by *The Times* (8.8.94): had the government "*taken too literally some of the sect's [i.e. Darul Arqam's] more mystical pronouncements?*" Inner conviction does not necessarily lead to the adoption of organisational methods which can readily be transplanted from one structure to another; in Darul Arqam's case, from a Muslim-oriented movement structure to a multi-racial state structure.

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<sup>18</sup>For Nostradamus' predictions pertaining to apocalyptic events, including the emergence of the Oriental Antichrist, the rise of Islam from the East and the Armageddon, see Anderson Black (1995: 243-254). For the significance of Djayabaya's ancient prophecies predicting a succession of kingdoms culminating in *Ratu Adil's* rule, see van der Kroef (1959: 311-313).

Technically aware as Darul Arqam was, it remains doubtful whether it could match the technical resources and sophistication possessed by the government's research and development programmes. In this regard, it is apt to recollect Dekmejian and Wyszomirski's reflection on the fate of the Sudanese Mahdist movement: "*.....no amount of Mahdist devotion and courage could counter the new machine-guns of the Anglo-Egyptian forces*" (1972: 210). As events turned out, the veracity of Darul Arqam's eschatological pronouncements have not really been put to test. Driven by an almost pathological fear of losing power, the government embarked on a campaign of repression which many Darul Arqam members say has paradoxically distorted the original flow of cause and effect which would have culminated in the proclamation of Al-Mahdi.<sup>19</sup> In Darul Arqam's scheme, the repression has allowed a further postponement of the 'schedule of Allah' until such a time when future followers of the youth of Bani Tamim and Al-Mahdi have regained strength. If Al-Mahdi does not emerge by the year 1425 H, approximately 2005 AD., Muslims would have to wait until the turn of the next century for his next expected coming. The *mujaddid* of this century would then be proven not to be Al-Mahdi.

Ironically, the government's clampdown has possibly hardened ex-Darul Arqam member's messianic beliefs (cf. chapter 6: 6.5.4). Perhaps it should have waited until the expected moment promised by Darul Arqam's leader pass without the awaited denouement, after which Darul Arqam would have been entangled by the historical dilemma of messiahs as mentioned by Hopwood: "*He disappoints his followers either by failing to achieve power or having achieved power by being unable to usher in the promised age*" (1971: 151).

#### **7.4 ISLAM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: STANDARD WESTERN SOCIOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS**

Insofar as Western sociology of religion traces its origins and early development to the writings of the German sociologist Max Weber (d.1920), it is hardly surprising that subsequent social scientists studying Oriental societies have been prone to blame Oriental religions as a cause of their stagnation and thereby a barrier to modernisation. At the centre of Weber's thesis is the contrast drawn between the mystical otherworldliness of Oriental religions and the worldly asceticism of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, whose religious ethic is said to have been conducive to the development of capitalism and economic rationalism among the

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<sup>19</sup>Personal communication with former Darul Arqam members in Penang and Kuala Lumpur (February-May 1996).

populace of Western Europe (Weber 1930, 1965: *passim*). Weber's thesis has been subject to various interpretations which are not in the present author's interest to discuss (cf. Turner 1974). Suffice it to say that the widespread treatment of Weber's thesis as a deterministic theory of values i.e. that religious beliefs are directly related to economic life, has had a profound impact on Western scholarship of Islam and the Islamic world. The overwhelming tendency of scholars has been to denigrate, even to the point of denying altogether, a positive role of Islam in economic development. Indeed, according to Weber:

..... Islam was never really a religion of salvation; the ethical concept of salvation was actually alien to Islam. The god it taught was a lord of unlimited power, although merciful, the fulfilment of whose commandments was not beyond human power. An essentially political character marked all the chief ordinances of Islam: the elimination of private feuds in the interest of increasing the group's striking power against external foes; the proscription of illegitimate forms of sexual behaviour and the regulation of legitimate sexual relations along strongly patriarchal lines (actually creating sexual privileges only for the wealthy; in view of the facility of divorce and the maintenance of concubinage with female slaves); the prohibition of usury; the proscription of taxes for war; and the injunction to support the poor. Equally political in character is the distinctive religious obligations in Islam, its only required dogma: the recognition of Allah as the one god and of Muhammad as his prophet. In addition, there were the obligations to journey to Mecca [sic] once during a lifetime, to fast by day during the month of fasting, to attend services once a week, and to observe the obligation of daily prayers. Finally, Islam imposed such requirements for everyday living as the wearing of distinctive clothing (a requirement that even today has important consequences whenever savage tribes are converted to Islam) and the avoidance of certain unclean foods, of wine, and of gambling. The restriction against gambling obviously had important consequences for the religion's attitude toward speculative business enterprises..... Islam displays other characteristics of a distinctively feudal spirit: the obviously unquestioned acceptance of slavery, serfdom, and polygamy; the disesteem for and subjection of women; the essentially ritualistic character of religious obligations; and finally, the great simplicity of religious requirements and the even greater simplicity of the modest ethical requirements..... Islam, in contrast to Judaism, lacked the requirement of a comprehensive knowledge of the law and lacked that intellectual training in casuistry which nurtured the rationalism of Judaism. The ideal personality type in the religion of Islam was not the scholarly scribe (*Literat*), but the warrior. (Weber 1965: 264-265).

While examples of Weberian perceptions abound, only views expressed in connection with the Southeast Asian situation will hereafter be cited for the purpose of contextual significance. It has been observed that Weber's thesis had interested colonial administrators in Southeast Asia since the early 1920s, and that Weber's

methodology played a vital role in moulding the arguments of such major historical works as Schrieke's **Indonesian Sociological Studies** (1955) and van Leur's **Indonesian Trade and Society** (1955), although the fact was never explicitly admitted by the authors (S.H. Alatas 1963a: 29-30). As previously noted (chapter 2: 2.2), both Schrieke and van Leur were sceptical of Islam's role in Malay-Indonesian history. Syed Hussein Alatas identifies Wertheim's essay, 'Religious Reform Movements in South and Southeast Asia' (1961), as the first attempt to apply Weber's sociology of religion into the Southeast Asian scene (ibid.). Although a wholehearted approval of Weber's thesis is not unequivocally expressed in the study,<sup>20</sup> Wertheim's introduction does indicate his having been inspired by Weber's comparative analysis of religions (Wertheim 1961: 53). Furthermore, in a language which would have delighted Weber's enthusiasts, Wertheim ends his essay with a pessimistic projection of Oriental religions antipathetic to reform:

If the Oriental religions will fail to readapt themselves to the material and spiritual needs of the common people, who are passing through a process of rapid transition, they will have to yield to other ideologies - Marxist or whatever they may be called. (ibid.: 62).

With specific regard to Malay-Muslim society in Malaysia, a main concern of academics has been to explain reasons for Malay underdevelopment *vis-à-vis* non-indigenous communities' economic advancement. The Weberian mentality of Western scholars has been demonstrated by the tendency to seek causal explanations in Islamic beliefs *per se*. For example, the economist Brien Parkinson blames the Malays' fatalistic conception of life, as allegedly derived from Islam and its messianic tradition, for hampering their economic motivation:

The Islamic belief that all things are emanations from God is another important force affecting the Malays' economic behaviour, for it tends to make them fatalistic in their approach to life. 'The Malay is very prone, after receiving a setback, to give up striving, and say that he has no luck, that it is the will of God. In economic affairs, this is most clearly seen in the concept *rezeki*, a person's divinely inspired economic lot. Such an attitude constitutes a significant drag on economic development. For, if the Malays subscribe to this fatalistic view and believe that any individual efforts to improve living standards are not likely to be successful, then they are not likely to attempt to master nature, or to strive for their own economic advancement by initiating the changes necessary for it. And all this forms part of their impotence in the face of the more powerful influences which shape their destiny. Indeed, this view is but part of their belief in the advent of a Messiah, the Islamic *mahdi*..... Islamic Messianism may well have had a profound effect on the Malays' economic ambition and

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<sup>20</sup>Syed Hussein Alatas admits: "*Regarding his [i.e. Wertheim's] stand on the Weber thesis, I can only suspect that he approves it, probably with some minor modifications*" (1963a: 30).

aspiration. To the persons who believe in the likelihood of the coming of a 'golden age', into which they would be led and in which all problems would be solved, there is the tendency to sit and wait passively for change to occur rather than to become active vehicles of change. In short, there is a tendency to adopt an attitude of resignation rather than innovation. And it must be remembered that the golden age for which the Malays yearn..... does not seem to envisage a commercial or industrial community with all the trappings of material wealth..... (Parkinson 1967: 40-41).

The political scientist Gordon Means, writing on the role of Islam in Malaysian political development, has been forthright in his endorsement of Weber's thesis and in his conviction that meaningful development for the Malay-Muslims could only come about under the leadership of secular-oriented leaders:

Unlike the Protestant ethic, as analysed by Max Weber, Islam does not appear to create among its believers 'worldly asceticism' and the 'compulsion to save,' or the 'release of acquisitive activity' in the form of economic competition and hard work. Among Muslims, a good share of their savings is invested for noneconomic purposes, such as for the *hajj*], for religious festivals, or for *kenduries*. Although the government has attempted to inculcate values conducive to economic development and a pragmatic-instrumentalist approach to both political and economic problems, the value system inherent in Islam has not been substantially altered..... Hypocrisy and compartmentalisation of religion from everyday life provide ways of accommodating the conflicting demands of religion and modernisation. Eventually Islam will be challenged by those members of the Muslim community who are already secular, pragmatic, and rationalist in their outlook, attitudes, and behaviour. (Means 1969: 282-283).

Prior to the onset of Islamic resurgence, it is no exaggeration to say that most of the Malay-Muslim intellectual and political elites did subscribe to views demeaning any notion of positive Islamic economic ethic (cf. N.M. Yasin 1994: 20-24). Syed Hussein Alatas has observed the popularity within intellectual circles of the opinion that Islam acted as an impediment to Malay economic development by unduly emphasising "*what Weber calls otherworldly asceticism..... this inhibited the Malay-Muslims from vigorous economic action in comparison with their Chinese neighbours*" (1972: 26). The political establishment's desirability to develop Malay economic attitudes along the lines of the 'Protestant work ethic' was given its clearest expression in the publication of the book **Revolusi Mental** in 1971 (cf. chapter 3: 3.3). Such broad acceptance of Weberian analysis was in reality a common phenomenon among elites of post-colonial Muslim societies. In his critique of Weber, Turner censures Weber's 'Protestant ethic' thesis as suffering from "*damaging*

*theoretical ambiguity and circularity*" or "*factually false*;" Muslim apologies on the matter are similarly reproved:

It is ironic, therefore, that when Muslim reformers came to explain for themselves the apparent failures of Islamic civilisation, they used implicitly Weberian arguments, especially theories of individual ascetic motivation..... Islamic reform was a response, often apologetic, to an external military and cultural threat; it was an attempt to answer a feeling of inferiority and frustration resulting from Western colonialism..... The 'Protestant Ethic' of Islam was second-hand and it was because the leaders of Islamic modernism were either educated by Europeans or accepted European traditions. Weber's Protestant Ethic theory came to fit Islamic modernisation simply because Muslims came to accept a European view of how to achieve capitalist development. (Turner 1974a: 240-241).

At the universal level, refutations of Weber's thesis and its application to Muslim societies have been put forward by, among others, Turner (1974, 1974a) and Zubaida (1972), using both theoretical arguments and historical facts. Turner's analysis further suggests that in his treatment of Islam, Weber was not so much concerned with the role of values, as he was with the conception of Islamic societies as a form of patrimonial domination which constituted the main stumbling block towards the emergence of capitalism (Turner 1974: 16, 20-21). Even if this argument stands, it is not Weber's actual intention which matters. Despite Weber's "*defective*" and "*factually wrong and misleading*" analysis of the Islamic ethic (ibid.: 175-176), it is this aspect of Weber's sociology which has been dominant among Weberian protagonists. Weber's thesis may have been enormously important for its eventual rather than original purpose, but this does not diminish its pivotal role in moulding conceptions of an inherent Western superiority over the Islamic world, as derived from religio-cultural foundations. As Zubaida notes:

Nevertheless vulgarisers and imitators of Weber have tended to ignore the subtleties of his arguments in the empirical works and the qualifications of the Protestant Ethic thesis and have clung on to a simplistic version of this thesis. Thus, we have the common claims in modern sociology that Oriental religions are 'dysfunctional' for economic development and the search for 'functional equivalents' to the Protestant Ethic in modern 'developing societies'. (Zubaida 1972: 310).

Returning to the Malaysian situation, objections to the implications of Weber's thesis have been spearheaded by Syed Hussein Alatas. This Malay-Muslim sociologist concedes that modernisation in the form of rational economic action was introduced into Malay lands by the British (S.H. Alatas 1972: 40), but denies that Islam is to be held responsible for the absence of a Malay-Muslim reaction to the new capitalist

developments. Utilising data from Malaysian history, Alatas argues that different historical and sociological conditions between the indigenous and emigrant communities dictated their divergent responses to British-induced modernisation. For the Malay-Muslims, the despotic rule of Malay sultans and chiefs and the feudal nature of traditional value systems served to inhibit rational economic action (*ibid.*: 36-39). For the emigrant Chinese communities, the emigrant spirit and their position outside government service were decisive factors in spurring them towards fostering the ethic of economic achievement (S.H. Alatas 1963a: 33). Alatas points out that migrant Muslim communities in Malaya such as Arabs and South Indians did develop a capitalist spirit despite having a similar Islamic heritage with the Malays (S.H. Alatas 1972: 28). The Chinese, released from socio-political constraints of mainland China, developed an action-oriented work ethic without discarding superstitious aspects of the Chinese religion upon arrival in Malaya, because ample scope was offered by colonial policies for the encouragement of migrant labour and enterprise (*ibid.*: 31-35). Despite the persuasiveness of Alatas' arguments, the bulk of literature dealing with the role of Islam in Southeast Asia remained Weberian throughout the 1970s. As von der Mehden's neat review of the academic scholarship suggests:

No matter what their intellectual antecedents might be, most analyses of the influence of Islamic or Buddhist tenets on Southeast Asian development have emphasised negative factors. Assessments of the role of Islam have pictured it as not conducive 'to economic development and a pragmatic approach to both political and economic problems'. Specific aspects of the religion have been described as weakening the ability of its adherents to compete with other communal groups (particularly the Chinese and Europeans) in a modern economic system. Three of these elements most often noted have been fatalism, otherworldly asceticism and messianism..... These negative perceptions of Islam fit many of Weber's views as well as those of other observers of Islam elsewhere who have argued that over time it became overly influenced by Sufism and other elements of mysticism until it reflected passivity, fatalism and mysticism. (von der Mehden 1980a: 546).

Perhaps the greatest irony of the matter is that Weber, the progenitor of standard Western sociological perceptions of the relationship between Islam and economic development, never conducted a systematic study of Islam himself (Wertheim 1961: 53, Turner 1974: 7, 1974a: 230). Apparently, the project had been in his mind, but death overtook him. Weber's views on Islam have had to be assembled from disparate sections of his numerous writings on a wide range of subjects. Not only were they later discovered to have relied heavily on the research of past orientalists such as Carl Heinrich Becker and Snouck Hurgronje, but the whole of Weber's sociology of religion is reputed to closely resemble the scheme of Marx,

whose antipathetic views towards religion are well-known.<sup>21</sup> Fred von der Mehden (1986a: 13) has argued that Weber and his followers could be held accountable for establishing the tradition of 'academic scholasticism' i.e. "*theory and analysis written in the studies of professors in Europe and America without the benefit of actual research in that field,*" which has plagued the literature on modernisation. The contributions of scholars in this field have been invariably lacking in extensive research of developing societies, in primary data and in concrete illustrations from first-hand experience. The additional fact that modernisation literature blossomed in the post-Second World War era, when expectations were high that the developing world was destined to toe the line of the secular, rational, industrial and democratic West, led to deterministic theories on the global evolution of society which degraded the role of religions. The possibility that non-Western religions could change was tacitly rejected (ibid.: 13-16).

As we enter the age of global Islamic resurgence, aside from individual contributions of Muslim economists (cf. Ahmad 1980), the *ummah* still lacks concrete cases of a steadfast adherence to Islam contributing positively to economic development in the form of a living example of a movement or nation.<sup>22</sup> Even though some Islamist movements do initiate economic projects, the initiatives do not serve as the movements' main source of living, as most of their members depend upon state-supported capitalism for their livelihood (cf. chapter 4: 4.7). As for Muslim nations, it

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<sup>21</sup>For a sample of Marx's writings on religion, see Boccock and Thompson (1985: 11-16).

<sup>22</sup>The primary dilemma of Islamic economics in the revivalist mould is an aridity of practical alternatives beyond theoretical ideals. The consequent discrepancy between economic theory and practice is reflected in the absence of a model in action, leaving doubt as to whether or not the Islamists' demand for social justice is no more than rhetoric inapplicable in the context of modern economic changes. The dilemma has been observable since the late 1980s in revisionist literature which has questioned the doctrinal coherence of Islamic resurgence and the persistence of its protagonists, some of whom have frankly acknowledged the need for re-evaluation in the light of the relative paucity of tangible success. For example, in a review of Islamist economic literature between 1970 and mid-1987, Timur Kuran (1989) highlights serious inconsistencies and flaws between and within positions adopted by Islamist economists, such as the utopian assumption that economic justice will necessarily arise as a matter of procedure in the event of an Islamic economic system materialising. In an article entitled 'The Decline of Islamic Fundamentalism', Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady brings out examples from several countries to argue that "*Islamic fundamentalists..... do not have a clear economic policy*" and "*have not been able to successfully reconcile the permanency of the sharia[h] with the changing socio-economic environment*" (1992: 233, 240). In a critical assessment of contemporary Islamic revivalism, a self-proclaimed revivalist, AbdulWahab Saleh Beair (1993) exhorts co-revivalists to minimise the emphasis on the negative strand of revivalism, to stop blaming the spectre of the West, to admit to past mistakes by Muslims, to desist from rhetoric, to avoid sweeping generalisations, to establish priorities and to espouse a gradualist approach. On the revivalists' economic agenda, he approves Kuran's analysis (op.cit) and cites the admission in 1990 by Professor Khurshid Ahmad, the prominent Islamic economist-cum-revivalist, that manifold problems have yet to be resolved in the discipline of Islamic economics (Beair 1993: 12-13). In a separate interview, Khurshid Ahmad candidly admits that the Islamic economic model, of which he is perhaps the most ardent proponent, has "*a long way to go*" as far as translation of ideals into reality is concerned; even in the field of Islamic banking which has seen significant institutional expansion in recent years, "*we are still far away from real Islamic banking*" (Sardar and Davies 1989: 57-58, interview with Khurshid Ahmad reproduced in pp. 50-59).

has been argued that unbridled capitalist development has heightened the contrast between the ideals of Islamic social justice and economic modernisation, hence precipitating the Islamic resurgence (cf. Dekmejian 1980: 6-7, Yapp 1980, Ali Fekrat 1981). In its twenty-six year history, Darul Arqam's status grew from a grassroots movement into an economic powerhouse in Malaysia. Perhaps the lesson of Darul Arqam can shed some light into the Muslim dilemma of having to confront Weberian arguments without the benefit of a living example.

## **7.5 DARUL ARQAM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: RETHINKING SOCIOLOGICAL PERCEPTIONS**

By the time of its legal dissolution in 1994, Darul Arqam had established itself as an international business conglomerate whose economic prowess was acknowledged by friends and foe alike (cf. chapter 4: 4.6, appendix B). Amidst the escalating tension between Darul Arqam and the Malaysian government, reports in the local and foreign media presented extremely impressive statistics on Darul Arqam's business interests. For example, Darul Arqam was revealed to have accumulated assets valued at RM 300 million (US\$ 116 million), to have kept eight-thousand members fully employed in its corporate set-up and to have spent a massive RM 9 million on annual overseas travel (*MM* 7.8.94, *FEER* 1.9.94).

In a country where development strategy had been invariably operated along liberal-capitalist lines, with a *laissez-faire* approach from independence until 1969 and a state-supported policy since 1970, the disclosure that Darul Arqam had registered colossal economic gains despite a conscious rejection of government economic policy and patronage was bound to trigger worries among if not retaliation from the business elites whose stake in the national economy was being threatened. In view of the lack of concrete evidence, it can only be conjectured that the repression of Darul Arqam was a manifestation of fear on the part of capitalist elites at the potential erosion of their economic clout. Since Darul Arqam was operating from outside the dominant economic structures, fighting its emergent influence presumably required an extra-economic dimension, hence the political repression perpetrated under the guise of combating theological deviationism. This theory acquires added plausibility with evidence of Malaysian political culture in the 1990s being increasingly moulded by an unholy alliance between ruling politicians and entrepreneurs, both of whom share mutual interests in the form of wealth, patronage and influence (cf. Case 1993:

198-199, 1994).<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Karp reported that Darul Arqam's goal of "*a self-reliant Islamic economy in its home base of Malaysia*" was antipathetic to Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's calls for capitalism and foreign investment; yet, theology aside, "*Al-Arqam enterprises symbolise[d] precisely what Mahathir champions: Malay entrepreneurship*" (FEER 1.9.94). There was evidence that mainstream elites were being attracted by Darul Arqam's material success to the movement's economic principles;<sup>24</sup> if such convictions reverberated around the entire business community, a damaging outflow of capital from the dominant economic structures may be triggered. Popular journalists had also warned of the inherent subversiveness of Darul Arqam's economic mentality and thrifty patterns of expenditure to the capitalist system (Yusof Harun 1990: 343-344, S.H. Alattas 1992: 119-120).

To academic analysts, the economic component of Darul Arqam has always acquired a measure of prominence since its inauguration in 1977. Nagata contrasts the government's and Darul Arqam's approach to economic development: "*What the government strives for in its New Economic Policy, Arqam hopes to achieve through the strength of its religious commitment and organisation alone;*" she further observes how Darul Arqam's economic policies have been seen as "*an indirect challenge to the integrity of the New Economic Policy and its commitment to a western/capitalist pattern of modernization*" (1984: 107, 113). Despite an overall critical review of Darul Arqam, M.N. Monutty acknowledges the position of Darul Arqam, by virtue of its pioneering agricultural activities and backyard industries, as "*the first [Islamic] movement which emphasised the imperative of economic berdikari (self-sufficiency) not only for its members but also for the rest of Muslim society*" (1989: 129). Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1992: 280) warns of the heavy price that had to be paid by the government in the form of an eventual destruction of its state-supported capitalism, if Darul Arqam's independent economic system with its inherently low labour-cum-production costs were allowed to expand uninhibited. Roald (1994: 264, 269) reports that great economic sacrifices of Darul Arqam members had contributed to the soundness of its finances and the rapid growth of its commercial enterprises;

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<sup>23</sup>See also reports in *Aliran Monthly* on how the emergent trend of 'money politics' had been beleaguering UMNO elections since the mid-1980s: Ramakrishnan (1994), Netto (1994) and Gomez (1995).

<sup>24</sup>For example, *Stoppess* (5/93: 8) quotes the eminent Malay-Muslim economist, Royal Professor Ungku Aziz: "*The problem of corruption in today's cooperatives can only be solved by Ustaz Ashaari. Ustaz Ashaari should be here [i.e. in Malaysia] to tackle the problem.*" Dr. Rosli Yaakop, deputy manager of the Personnel Section of the state-controlled National Bank, was appointed executive chairman to a conference on 'Darul Arqam's Latest Approach to Economic Development in the Era of the Commercial Economy' held in October 1993 at the Merlin Hotel, Subang, Kuala Lumpur (Darul Arqam 1993d). *Time* (22.8.94) cited a Malay professional as praising Darul Arqam for having "*managed to put into practice what Muslim business should be*" without having "*to lie or cheat.*" See also reports on the enthusiastic response of businessmen to Darul Arqam's business ventures in *Ekonominda* (1/93) and *Arqamnomics* (2/93).

she further concedes that the ban on Darul Arqam might have partly sprung from its economic influence in society. Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan (1995a: 95) views economic radicalism as one of the core elements of the Darul Arqam ideology, the other two being an anti-establishment strand and mysticism.

A clue to comprehending the impact of Darul Arqam on Malaysia's socio-economic structure may be found in the latest review of Islam in Malaysia by Nagata (1997). After glimpsing at the burgeoning economic network and development of Darul Arqam as it approached its ultimate confrontation with the government, Nagata explains how the material successes of Darul Arqam's model society, being guided by a philosophical worldview antithetical to that subscribed to by the government, effectively threatens the political legitimacy of the regime in the public eye. The relevant aspects include messianism (cf. section 7.3), the active social role of Darul Arqam women whose veiled and heavily clad appearance provide "*a challenge to a state intent on projecting a modernising image to the rest of the world,*" and most importantly, Darul Arqam's economic system: "*In its astonishing economic success, and stubborn refusal to consider any dependence on government funds, loans or any of the special schemes set aside for the Malays, Arqam has flouted the conventional stereotype of the loyal, subservient, dependent Malay*" (Nagata 1997: 138).

Therefore, the perceived threat posed by Darul Arqam came from its exemplary success rather than any intricate theoretical model. Although Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad had been putting forward views on social engineering based on religious conviction and an economic support structure since the early 1980s, it was only a decade later, after Darul Arqam's material successes had become evident, that his socio-political-cum-economic perspectives were treated with any seriousness in official circles. By the 1990s, the once fashionable view of Darul Arqam's approach to economic production and organisation as being perpetually tailored towards small-scale industries rather than technologically appropriate modern enterprises, as suggested by Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 47), had become grossly outdated. Ironically, Darul Arqam became the victim of its own economic success. The government, having realised the magnitude of Darul Arqam's economic challenge, invented pretexts in order to justify its suppression of Darul Arqam (cf. chapter 5: 5.5).

As a movement which eschewed complex theoretical constructs, Darul Arqam's economic system was not built upon any distinctive economic modelling. In fact, Darul Arqam regarded economic affairs as part and parcel of the Islamic struggle; practising Islam as a way of life would necessitate the collective participation of Muslims in their nation's economic life. Taking the cue from *hadiths* which stressed the integral nature of business and economic transactions as "*one-half of life*" and "*nine-tenths of sources of economic provisions,*" Darul Arqam perceived

economic development as a *fard kifayah* whose implementation would necessarily establish the independence of Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims and secular systems (Ashaari Mohammad 1981: 57, Ashaari Muhammad 1984: 32).

While observers have correctly identified self-sufficiency as a key strand of Darul Arqam's economic thought, hardly any of them have been able to relate this aspect to Darul Arqam's holistic nature. For example, Nagata (1984: 111-112), Chandra Muzaffar (1987: 45-46) and Roald (1994: 263) have seen Darul Arqam's quest for self-sufficiency in food production as manifestation of ethnic resentment against non-Malay monopoly of the food industry. But in his explanations of the need for Muslims to produce their own food, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad cited the *hadith* "the heart is moulded by our food and drink" in emphasising the genuine Islamic cleanliness of foods and food processing (Ashaari Mohammad 1981: 58). In other words, the definitive criterion was spiritual and not socio-economic. Since wealth was only a secondary means in the Islamic struggle, the aims of wealth creation through economic activities were always to be subordinated to the larger ends of the Islamic movement and the Islamic struggle (Ashaari Muhammad 1984: 51-52). The success of the Islamic economic system was conditional upon the creation of spiritually conscious Muslims whose rationality in economic decision-making had been moulded towards serving the cause of Islam, hence the importance of *dakwah* (Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 25-26). Ustaz Ashaari presented a historical parallel in the success of the Prophet Muhammad in breaking the Jewish stranglehold upon the Madinan economy of his time by relying on Islamic unity, faithfulness and assertion of self-identity amidst fierce economic competition (Ashaari Muhammad 1990: 27-29).

In Darul Arqam's framework, it is the correlation between spiritual revitalisation of economic agents and the implementation of the economic system which differentiates the Islamic system from man-made systems. This can be seen from the contrast drawn between economic life in a capitalist society and in an Islamic society. Blaming the ascendancy of capitalism for the global prevalence of economic injustice, Ustaz Ashaari traces the problems brought about by capitalism to the inculcation of covetous desires to accumulate worldly possessions on the part of individual producers (Ashaari Muhammad 1993d: 85-88). Such *mazmumah* is treated as rational in the capitalist economic framework, hence capitalist economic theories have been prone to accept uncritically the motive of profit-maximisation as the overriding consideration in production decision-making in a *laissez-faire* economy. Dire economic consequences have followed, including exploitation through industrial monopolies and the demise of small industries, inflation, corruption, widening socio-economic gap between rich and poor, wastage, decline of morals and imperialistic wars (ibid.: 88-94). To stem the undesirable effects of externalities resulting from the

dynamics of the capitalist mode of production, capitalist governments propose piecemeal reforms of the system such as tougher law and order to tackle crime and financial penalties for causing environmental damage. But since such measures do not attack the root problems deriving from frailties of human nature, their effectiveness tends to be very much subdued.

By contrast, in a society governed by Islamic economic principles, voluntary sharing of wealth between the rich and poor becomes the fundamental means of distribution. According to Ustaz Ashaari, the eradication of poverty is a futile enterprise which is not enjoined by Islam; instead, Islam commands the reduction of economic imbalances to such an extent that the poor are assured of basic needs and religious requirements (Ashaari Muhammad 1993e: 35, 38). The fundamental socio-economic problem is not material poverty per se, but the unwillingness of the spiritually deprived rich to ease the material burden of their poor brethren (*ibid.*: 6, Ashaari Muhammad 1991b: 73). While submitting that poverty resulting from lack of incentive and motivation is abhorrent in Islam, Ustaz Ashaari maintains that most occasions of poverty in the present world stem from such unavoidable causes as flawed education, regime discrimination, systemic discrimination, wars and a host of natural factors that government programmes to eradicate poverty appear to be no more than hollow rhetoric (Ashaari Muhammad 1993e: 18, 32-35). The onus of relieving the burden of the poor falls not only upon the government through mandatory alms-giving and taxation, but also upon the rich through voluntary contributions (*ibid.*: 44-45, 74-76; Ashaari Muhammad 1991b: 72-73).

To Darul Arqam, being categorised as rich and poor is relative to one's needs (Ashaari Muhammad 1993e: 26). The social status of the rich becomes meaningless without the existence of the poor. Both sections of society live in dependence on one another: the poor as provider of manual services to the rich and the rich as banks out of which the poor can constantly withdraw donations and interest-free loans (Ashaari Muhammad 1988: 17, 1990a: chapter 10, 1991b: 73). The poor have a stake in the wealth of affluent members of society; it is the failure of the latter to honour their social responsibility that has triggered socio-economic problems which affect all people irrespective of economic status (Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: 125). For instance, many present world leaders have managed to lead a luxurious lifestyle by unashamedly amassing wealth at the expense of their countries' populations, whose dissatisfaction eventually manifests itself in social afflictions, economic grievances and political rebellion (*ibid.*: chapter 14). In a spiritually refined society, the social responsibility of the poor is even greater: that of accepting their material shortcomings without resorting to chaos-prone extra-legal measures to claim their share of national wealth (Ashaari Mohammad 1981: 63). In the event of the rich

shirking their social responsibility, solace for the poor is guaranteed in the Hereafter, as indicated by *hadiths* on the virtues of being poor.<sup>25</sup> In operational terms, distribution of economic resources is implemented through the *ma'ash* system, whereby a worker receives payment in the form of basic necessities in the form of goods and services plus a small cash allowance, as much as he needs to cover his household's expenses according to the size of his family but regardless of his occupational status (Ashaari Muhammad 1990f: 29-30, 239-240; Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1992: 169).

The core argument of Ustaz Ashaari's economic doctrines is that *taqwa* forms the primary factor for economic success in an Islamic state and society (Ashaari Muhammad 1993c: 124). God-consciousness instils an activist work ethic on the part of economic agents, at the same time that it divests them of avarice, miserliness and extravagance. As redistribution of wealth is primarily done on a voluntary basis by economic agents, a minimalist state is maintained, thus minimising channels of patronage and corruption. While its economic principles seem to be uncompromisingly egalitarian, Darul Arqam opposes state-directed measures which, although redressing economic imbalances, also fosters indolence by dampening incentives to work. For instance, Darul Arqam criticises the provision of unemployment benefits as practised in the West, asserting that "*Islamic social services provide only for the aged, the disabled, the widows and the orphans,*" i.e. destitutes who suffer as a result of natural misfortunes (Ashaari Muhammad 1992: 63-65, quotation p. 65). The welfare system envisioned by Darul Arqam is related essentially to working capabilities of potential recipients of benefits: "*..... a man's worth is measured in terms of his contributions to others*" (ibid: 66). Therefore, Ustaz Ashaari similarly reproves the manner of the implementation of the NEP, firstly for giving out material subsidies to Malay-Muslims without scrutinising recipients' individual capabilities, secondly for being improperly planned and thirdly for neglecting spiritual development (ibid.: 68-69).

Since critics are likely to be sceptical of Darul Arqam's apparently over-optimistic conception of human nature, Ustaz Ashaari furnishes his arguments with historical examples of how classical Islamic leaders willingly chose to sacrifice their material comfort for fear of misusing God's bounties for selfish individual ends (Ashaari Muhammad 1982: 56-61, Ashaari Muhammad 1991b: 59-62, 1993c: chapter 15). But the practicality of Ustaz Ashaari's economic theories is demonstrated *par excellence* in the experience of Darul Arqam's economic system as a living reality. In

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<sup>25</sup>For example, the *hadith*: "*The poor enter Paradise five-hundred years earlier than the rich*" and the Prophet's prayer: "*O Allah, make me live as a poor person, die as a poor person and gather me with the poor in Paradise*" (both related by Tirmidhi). For details, see Ashaari Muhammad (1993e: 15-16, 48-50).

both growth and distributional aspects, the expansion of Darul Arqam into a massive business empire and the broad satisfaction expressed by Darul Arqam members at their quality of life provide empirical evidence of economic success based on religious faith (cf. chapter 6: 6.5).<sup>26</sup>

It has been perennially stressed in Darul Arqam that economic development must be founded upon spiritual development, without which misallocation of resources and exploitation would occur. In his inaugural speech to Darul Arqam's First International Economic Conference in Chiangmai, Thailand,<sup>27</sup> Ustaz Ashaari emphasises that the cardinal objective of Islamic economics is to gain Divine Pleasure by increasing our *iman*. Islamic economics is a system tailored towards the Hereafter. Its reality is incorporated in economic agents' realisation that economic resources are provided to us by God as a trust, not an outright possession. The absence of such a spiritual responsibility to God and fellow humans in secularistic economic systems creates imbalances in the relationship between man and nature and between man and man. The prominence of the spiritual dimension in Ustaz Ashaari's economic thought is underlined in his enumeration of other aims of Islamic economics, viz. to realise Islamic economic life, to realise the injunction of *zakat*, to provide social services, to avoid collective sins, to establish economic independence, to prevent waste and abuse of natural resources, to provide employment, to express gratefulness to God and to disseminate good deeds among mankind. While capitalist economic theory lists only material resources as factors of economic production,<sup>28</sup> the parallel concept in Darul Arqam includes the spiritual factors of *taqwa* and *do'a*, besides such material factors as labour, natural resources, expertise, knowledge, economic acumen, effort and consistency; it can be seen that human development forms the main strand of Darul Arqam's conception of factors of production. In order to ensure the spiritual purity of Islamic economic life, Ustaz Ashaari further outlines eight features which must be avoided, viz. usury, trade of forbidden goods, price exploitation, monopolies, protracted indebtedness, uncompromising attitudes, deception and neglect of basic Islamic injunctions.

The main contribution of Ustaz Ashaari's economic thought lies in divorcing the concept of economic development from solely material concerns. Through Darul Arqam's economic experience, it has been proven that an Islamic-oriented economy

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<sup>26</sup>For reports on Darul Arqam's business empire, see 'Empayar perniagaan Arqam terjejas' (Arqam's business empire threatened), *MM* 7.8.94; Jonathan Karp, 'Allah's Bounty: Al-Arqam sect draws strength from business empire', *FEER* 1.9.94; and the special report 'Kerajaan Bisnis Darul Arqam' (Darul Arqam's Business Government), *Sinar*, 1.8.94. For evidence of Darul Arqam's grassroots' satisfaction with the *ma'ash* system, see Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1992: 209-222).

<sup>27</sup>For contents of the 7-8 August 1993 speech entitled 'Dasar-dasar Ekonomi Islam' (Principles of Islamic Economics), upon which this paragraph is mainly based, see *Ekonominda*, bil. 1/93, pp. 14-17.

<sup>28</sup>Conventionally, the factors of production are land, labour, capital and enterprise or entrepreneurship.

does not necessarily work to the detriment of economic growth. When tested against Darul Arqam's experience, the Weberian sociological thesis that an activist work ethic is absent from societies adhering to Oriental religions falls apart. In line with the view that spiritual development takes precedence over material development, Ustaz Ashaari sees the development of an Islamic economy as falling into three stages, viz. the *fard kifayah* economy, the commercial economy and the strategic economy (*Ekonominda* 1/93, *Stoppres* 5/93). The *fard kifayah* economy emphasises the development of industries hitherto dominated by non-Muslims, in order to exonerate the whole Muslim community from the collective sin of neglecting industries vital to spiritual development, for example, foodstuffs. Any profit-making is regarded as an additional bonus instead of a priority. As the economy evolves into a commercial one, profit-making becomes its most prominent feature. With respect to Darul Arqam, the inauguration of the AGC in August 1993 signifies the shift from a *fard kifayah* economy into a commercial economy (*ibid.*). The strategic economy stresses Muslim involvement in strategically poised industries designed to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Islamic identity within the context of an economically vibrant society. *Dakwah* being its primary motivation, manifestations of a strategic economy may be present in the wider domain of a *fard kifayah* and a commercial economy. As far as the experience of Darul Arqam is concerned, the strategic economy had yet to assume a distinctively self-financing form when it reached its demise in October 1994.

The overall paradigm of Darul Arqam's economics offers a new scope of thinking to both contemporary capitalist and Islamic economic theory. Darul Arqam tackles capitalism's lack of multi-dimensionality, as evident from the theoretical bias towards capital accumulation as the engine for growth, by widening the parameters of the human dimension of development so as to encompass not only physical and intellectual but also moral and spiritual aspects.<sup>29</sup> Within the context of Islamic development theories, Darul Arqam's novelty lies in not only its multi-dimensionality but also in its empirical success, as contrasted with the compartmentalised and unduly theoretical nature of research in the field (cf. Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1987: chapter 1). In a seminal paper entitled 'Arqamnomics: New Thinking in Islamic Economics',<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1993a) argues that Darul Arqam's approach to economics provides solutions to three major problems besetting contemporary Islamic economic thought, viz. the problems of eclecticism, superficiality and paradigm.<sup>31</sup> As the first

<sup>29</sup>On the conceptual dilemmas engulfing capitalist-oriented development economics and the justification for a paradigm shift, see Aidit Ghazali (1990: chapter 1).

<sup>30</sup>Based on theoretical research done in 1993, on the basis of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad's speech 'Dasar-dasar Ekonomi Islam' (Principles of Islamic Economics) (see above, fn. 27), and published in Darul Arqam (1993d: 34-43) and the magazine *ERA*, March 1994, pp. 18-19, 32-33.

<sup>31</sup>Eclecticism refers to the haphazard use of Islamic conceptual tools as a result of lacking a background of comprehensive Islamic knowledge and having instead been immersed in secularistic economic analysis

attempt to understand Darul Arqam's economics from a theoretical perspective, the work deserves to be quoted at length:

The novelty of Arqamnomics lies in its ideas. Arqamnomics not only differs from contemporary Islamic economic thought, but it also offers a scope of thinking free from the problems of eclecticism, superficiality and paradigm which have hitherto engulfed the discipline. Arqamnomics is free from eclecticism because it encompasses all Islamic disciplines in a comprehensive manner. Its *tawhid* is enshrined in its list of economic sources and guidelines. Arqamnomics is convinced that only Allah gives effect and economic agents must consistently pray to Him that his endeavour succeeds. All economic returns are under the absolute possession of Allah, not agents. Hence, Arqamnomics stresses not only the horizontal relationship between man and man and between man and nature, but also most importantly, the vertical relationship between man and Allah, as manifested in the emphasis on *iman* and *taqwa*. Arqamnomics' *fiqh* is clear in its emphasis on carrying out *fard kifayah* deeds and *zakat* and on forsaking forbidden deeds as enumerated in its economic guidelines..... Emphasis on *tasawwuf* is depicted in Arqamnomics' economic objectives, sources, stages and guidelines..... This emphasis is appropriately understood within the context of Al Arqam as a *tariqah* movement which seeks to obliterate evil attributes and sow virtuous attributes. Arqamnomics is also free from the problem of superficiality; its economic thought encompassing not only theoretical but also operational aspects. The perspective that Islamic economics should not be separated from spiritual development is elaborated in terms of its philosophy, forms and ways and means. In this context, Islamic economics is part and parcel of Al Arqam's teaching as a whole..... Similarly, Arqamnomics seeks to free itself from the problem of paradigm. Al Arqam initiates its struggle by cleansing the intellect and heart from unIslamic elements. It then begets its unique system of living from beyond the less than Islamic paradigms and philosophies. Al Arqam erects its own mode of thought and spiritualism and practises its own way of life on a completely new foundation. As a system within the overall approach of Al Arqam, Arqamnomics has its own philosophy, epistemology, assumptions and premise which are different from those of contemporary economics. Its philosophy revolves around realising Islam and its *ummah* towards seeking Divine Pleasure, while its epistemology, concepts, assumptions and premise are based on the Quran and *Sunnah*. Arqamnomics constructs and implements its thought outside the dominant secular paradigm, simultaneously challenging it.

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dominant in Western institutions. Superficiality refers to compartmentalised discussions which draw a rigid boundary separating the physical from the spiritual, the quantitative from the abstract and the theoretical from the empirical; thus belying the status of Islam as a holistic way of life and converting Islamic economic thought into a venue for 'mental gymnastics'. The problem of paradigm refers to the inability of Islamic economists to strip their research of the secular paradigm, whether neo-classical, Marxist or neo-Marxist. Elements of Islamic economics are introduced into the main body of economic structures without attempting to change fundamental mechanisms underlying the working of the economy. For details, see Muhammad Syukri Salleh (1993a). See also the criticism of contemporary Islamic economic thought by Kuran (1989).

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

Two characteristic features of Darul Arqam predominate in attempts to conceptualise it as a contemporary Islamic movement, albeit in a distinctive mould. These are a controversial messianism and a praiseworthy economic success. As suggested by our empirical study in Chapter Six, both features have been cardinal reasons for the ability of the ex-Darul Arqam community in 1994-96 to maintain the ideals, doctrines and non-physical identity cherished by Darul Arqam. While not being exact replicas of Darul Arqam's structures, the institutions preserved legally by ex-Darul Arqam members had been sufficient to give them hope that with destiny on their side, the resurrection of their movement in whatever form was merely a matter of time. This hope was accentuated by the evident ineffectiveness of the government's rehabilitation programmes. The conscious decision by ex-Darul Arqam members to strip their community of physical aspects of Darul Arqam's identity had seemingly convinced the government that the ex-members themselves conceived of any attempt to revive their movement as futile.

Within the broad history of Islamic resurgence, revivalist movements have not unusually attached some measure of significance to messianism and economic activity. As our account of the Mahdist tradition in Islam shows, the invocation of messianic beliefs among sufi-based revivalists in order to mobilise support has been relatively common. By invoking messianism, Darul Arqam was arguably embarking on unfamiliar territory within contemporary trends of Islamic resurgence; yet its position was well-situated within sufi-revivalist traditions. While Mahdist proclamations have been denounced by some orthodox *ulama* as a destructive influence on the faith, and further condemned by institutions presently controlling the religious establishment of modern Muslim states, sufis have generally refrained from categorically repudiating such pronouncements as blasphemous and from excommunicating the proclaimers. Messianism has very much been a taboo to standard-bearers of orthodox and official Islam, just as it has been the most potent political weapon of sufis and popular Islam. This political correlation explains the fact that despite evidence of sufi-millenarian movements not rejecting scriptural orthodoxy per se, messianic proclamations by sufi leaders have almost always been implicated with heterodoxy. As Dekmejian and Wyszomirski reflect in connection with the Sudanese Mahdi, "..... *in Islamic society such religious hereticism was tantamount to political opposition*" (1972: 205). The implications of messianic proclamations for political practice have been summarised by Ernest Gellner:

If you believe that you, or your Leader, is "*infallible..... (and) the executor of the word of God,*" you possess a fine legitimation of revolution against current rulers who are not so

remarkably qualified. Hence, from the viewpoint of those rulers, you are not merely a heretic, you are also a most disagreeable political danger." (Gellner 1973: 197).

Even if we acknowledge that broad historical parallels could be found for Darul Arqam's millenarian tendencies, two features of its messianism were unprecedented. These were the doctrine of the youth of Bani Tamim as the lesser messiah and the destined role of Malaysia as a future Islamic state which would precipitate the coming of Al-Mahdi, the greater messiah. As the agenda of Darul Arqam became more clearly tailored towards realising its messianic expectations, the orientation of Darul Arqam shifted from that of a socio-welfare-cum-economic movement to that of a political movement. While the subversiveness of Darul Arqam's political programme was never in doubt, at least from the government's point of view, the extent of Darul Arqam's preparations for assuming the reins of government by installing its leader in power remains questionable. In the light of the relatively docile manner by which Darul Arqam eventually succumbed to government pressure in 1994, it was well within the Sunni political tradition of preferring injustice to anarchy caused by a downfall of government without a decent replacement. Darul Arqam's eschewing political violence was also consistent with traditional Malay political culture. Its renewalist credentials notwithstanding, at decisive moments Darul Arqam outwardly retained traditional Malay-Islamic conceptions of loyalty to political authority. Its clandestinely held beliefs and practices aside, it was Darul Arqam's political traditionalism which prevailed in ending, albeit tentatively, its confrontation with the government. Sufi-revivalist it may have been in its latter-day political orientation, in critical stages preceding its legal demise Darul Arqam found no obstacle of reverting to sufi-traditionalism which had coloured its nascent phase.

Proponents of Weberian sociology of religion may point to the generally poor economic state of Muslims and Muslim countries to justify their belief that adherence to Oriental religions acts as a hindrance to economic development. Many Islamists, on the other hand, blame the religious laxity of present-day Muslims for their material backwardness. They argue, conversely, that once priority is given back to religious observance, God will shower the Muslim community with material bounties such as wealth, peace and power. While this argument may appeal to Muslims of various persuasions, the Islamists lack a living model by which they can justify their argument of Islam being conducive to economic development. Within contemporary trends of Islamic resurgence, economic achievement has not acquired the prominence it should have had considering the utmost importance given to economic performance in judging the success of modern states and organisations. For many contemporary Islamic movements, economic dependence of members upon the secular state remains

a reality. For contemporary ideologues of Islamic economics, their ideas serve no further than the construction of theoretical models. Therefore, Darul Arqam serves as a unique example of an Islamic movement which had harmoniously translated its religious and economic ideas into practice, without encountering the inherent contradictions between religious adherence and economic activism as presumed by Weberian sociology.

In its activist economic ethic, Darul Arqam has antecedents in medieval sufi guilds which ascribed to trade and the acquisition of wealth particular religious significance in their spiritual path. For all their exhortations on worldly renunciation, *"these mystic pietists seem to come closest to the 'Protestant Ethic' in their combination of asceticism with business activities as a duty and a virtue"* (Zubaida 1972: 323). The paradox has also been noted by Gellner (1973: 196, 202-206), who attributes the sufis' successful *"adaptation to modernity"* to, above all, *"brilliant economic performance"* and offers the example of the Murids of Senegal at the turn of the century.<sup>32</sup> It is plausible to postulate a connection between the economic clout of sufis, seen as threatening the political authorities, and the condemnation of sufis to heterodoxy by the state-controlled *ulama*. Islamic history is replete with accounts of rulers' rapacity in preying on the wealth of merchant classes. Urban merchant and craftsmen classes, to both of whom the *ulama* invariably belonged, did accumulate economic and political influence which was, however, *"purely individual and personal..... As a class they did not develop institutional or collective bases of power"* (Zubaida 1972: 327). In order to prevent the sufis from forming an entrepreneurial class with a popular economic base, political repression, ostensibly launched to combat theological deviationism, appeared to be a credible approach. The overall consequence was that a Muslim middle class which could function like the European bourgeoisie in engineering industrial development, but refining it with Islamic economic principles, never really materialised. Comparatively speaking, the aforesaid economic scenario was repeated in the 'Darul Arqam versus government' controversy. Darul Arqam's astounding expansion was interpreted as an assault to capture a stake in the national economy, hitherto controlled by the entrepreneurial associates of political elites who in turn controlled the religious and media elites. In other words, economic, political, religious and media elites colluded to outmanoeuvre Darul Arqam from their respective spheres of influence, but economic considerations might have well been most crucial.

The economics of Darul Arqam challenges the presumptions of Weberian sociology by showing that Islamic activism does not necessarily hinder economic

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<sup>32</sup>For a recent insight into the Senegalese Murids' economic enterprise, see the report by Marcus Mabry and Alan Zarembo, 'Africa's Capitalist Jihad: On the world's street corners, profit is prayer for marabout entrepreneurs', *Newsweek*, 7.7.97.

development; indeed it may foster growth by inducing a positive work ethic among economic agents. It refines the discipline of Islamic economics which has been tainted by the same material concerns of its secular counterpart. Most importantly, the theoretical revamp offered by Darul Arqam is supported by an empirical model in the form of an economic organisation. As an economic movement, Darul Arqam preferred practising simple economic ideas to devising elaborate theoretical models. Its economic doctrine is derived not only from scriptural deductions and economic practices of pious early Muslims, but also from its own economic experience. Unconventional though it may seem, such a human-centred economic platform has worked well for Darul Arqam as a movement, but its potential success at nation-state level is open to question.

In ensuring a consequential role for Darul Arqam in Malaysian society, messianism and economic development were mutually reinforcing. In achieving social mobilisation, messianism provided the ideological underpinning while consistent economic development provided the avenue and resources. Both had arisen not as original planks of Darul Arqam as a sufi movement, but gradually gained importance as Darul Arqam expanded its horizons into wider socio-political domains. The messianic and economic ideas of Darul Arqam were not left to paperwork, but were operationalised through a distinctive programme which was bound to be perceived as subversive by the authorities. This synchronisation between theory and practice coloured Darul Arqam since its inception, and distinguishes it from the many Islamic movements whose practical alternatives to achieve their ambitions are left to be desired. Transposed into Darul Arqam's situation, many movements would have resorted to violence or simply succumbed to cooptation, but ex-Darul Arqam members have managed to retain their ideals via a flexible approach to planning and decision-making while steadfastly holding to renunciation of violence. The reality of Darul Arqam as a messianic yet non-militant and achievement-oriented movement debunks the stereotyped image of Islamists as predisposed to violence, economically deprived and intellectually superficial, among other things.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DARUL ARQAM AND POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA: RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

#### 8.1 POSTSCRIPT TO EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: THE ABORTIVE REVIVAL OF DARUL ARQAM IN 1996

The present author's empirical research in Chapter Six reveals that from mid-February to early May 1996 i.e. approximately one and a half years after Darul Arqam's legal dissolution, the former Darul Arqam community were still organising their activities around the thoughts, ideas, principles and aims which had shaped Darul Arqam as a sufi-revivalist movement. The situation would have eluded the attention of the casual observer, for the impression given by the state-controlled national media was one of outright success in eliminating Darul Arqam and integrating its former members in mainstream society (cf. chapter 6: 6.4). Such a judgement would have been accentuated by a cursory observation of ex-Darul Arqam members' apparent compliance in changing their physical appearance, especially clothing; in discarding paraphernalia associated with Darul Arqam and in dismantling their educational institutions. Buoyed by sound finances, ex-Darul Arqam members found no difficulty in remobilising themselves through privately managed enterprises, which in reality were tied together by interlocking directorships involving the former Darul Arqam leadership (ibid.). The enterprises, whose products and services were gaining immense popularity among the Malaysian public (ibid.), played a triple role as a source of living, a provider of public legitimacy and confidence and most importantly, a guise under which ex-Darul Arqam members could meet, discuss, plan for the future and refresh their entrenched beliefs. Through such a mechanism, the Darul Arqam worldview was far from having been extinguished, although its dissemination had undoubtedly been adversely affected. To the former Darul Arqam community, it was a defensive era, during which the primary concern was with retaining the fundamentals of Darul Arqam under a different organisational umbrella while conveying the impression of having integrated with the wider society in order to appease the authorities.

The empirical findings above have been supported by the observation made by Nagata that in 1995, Darul Arqam was "*reported to be still active and going about its life as much before, albeit with caution*" (1997: 138). In public eyes, Darul Arqam was

possibly never extinct anyway.<sup>1</sup> For instance, patronisation of goods and services produced by companies ran by ex-Darul Arqam members was encouraging. Such a heartening response possibly owed to a successful public relations exercise and the maintenance of a corporate image which differed in style but not in substance from that of the Darul Arqam days. However, the situation was not to last long. Among the ex-Darul Arqam community, by late April 1996, apprehension had begun to emerge regarding the observable tightening of surveillance directed at their places of work and residence (personal communication). Rumours circulating among ex-members anticipated the possibility of a second crackdown if they refused to tone down activities which allegedly gave the impression of a pre-meditated surreptitious revival. They strenuously protested their innocence against any alleged plot to revive Darul Arqam (personal communication). According to them, the fact that ex-Darul Arqam enterprises had expanded and cooperated was indistinguishable from trends towards business mergers, product diversification and economies of scale in the corporate world. They could find no rationale for not capitalising on the goodwill, markets, labour and connections readily established by Darul Arqam's fragmented business empire. The corporate image that seemed to be portrayed in unison was the manifestation of Islamic brotherhood rather than of a malignant conspiracy to revive Darul Arqam. As for security arrangements with the authorities, ex-Darul Arqam members had observed every legal requirement demanded on paper. Officially, no major breach of security had been committed to warrant another clampdown. Minor breaches had to do with individual failings rather than malicious intent.

The first indication that the security apparatus was keeping close tabs on ex-Darul Arqam members came when a meeting of ex-Darul Arqam leaders organised under the pretext of an *Eid al-Fitr* gathering was raided by police, resulting in the charging and conviction of the ex-ISA detainee Ibrahim Mohamad for transgressing his restricted residence boundary by a mere fifty metres (*UM 27.3.96, The Sun 27.3.96*). Amidst the tightening of security measures, the present author was advised by concerned ex-Darul Arqam notables, presumably acting on their good intent, to cancel his appointment to interview Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad at his residence, lest the rendezvous be misconstrued by security officials as a publicity stunt to reach out to the public.<sup>2</sup> Within a week of the completion of the author's empirical research, the ex-Darul Arqam members' worst fears were confirmed. Beginning with the detention of four ex-Darul Arqam members who were actively involved in managerial roles in ex-

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communication with various sections of Malaysian society, including academics, teachers, students and ordinary villagers (February-May 1996).

<sup>2</sup>The interview was originally scheduled for 7.5.96, a day before the researcher's departure back to the United Kingdom. See also fn. 5 below and the appropriate text, indicating that the fears, which were justified in the wake of the crackdown which followed, were shared by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad himself.

Darul Arqam companies, a wave of arrests under the ISA was instituted to forestall an alleged plot to revive Darul Arqam.<sup>3</sup> Altogether, eighteen ex-Darul Arqam notables, including three women, were detained pending investigation under the ISA; fourteen were eventually held incommunicado at the Political Detention Centre in Kamunting, Perak. The other four, viz. Khadijah Aam, Ibrahim Mohamad, Fakhru Razi Ashaari and Sabri Abdul Rani, all of whom were ISA detainees in 1994, were released under further restriction orders. While Ustaz Ashaari was himself spared from the arrests, among those held in Kamunting were his wife, Tengku Noriah Tengku Abdullah; his son, Nizamuddin Ashaari; his younger brother, Hashim Muhammad, and his son-in-law, Mohamad Abu Bakar. Also detained was the USM lecturer Dr. Mansor Mohd. Noor, who was a valuable source of information for the author's empirical research (*BH* 20.6.96, cf. chapter 6: 6.3).

The need for a second major clampdown on Darul Arqam, albeit in its clandestine form, raises important issues. First and foremost, it demonstrates the inefficacy of the government's programme of rehabilitating religious deviationists. Despite the considerable rhetoric given to efforts and alleged successes of rehabilitation, religious officials responsible for the Darul Arqam programme showed apathy almost from its beginning.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the programme was practically doomed to failure well before it got under way. In a press conference at the former Darul Arqam settlement of Sungai Penchala, a community elder, Mohd. Yunus Ismail, excoriated the Islamic Centre for failing to organise rehabilitation programmes on a consistent basis, despite repeated requests from the ex-Darul Arqam community (*The Star* 13.6.96, *BH* 13.6.96). On the few occasions when missionaries were sent to Darul Arqam villages, the talks were initiated by the Home Affairs Ministry and the Special Branch police. While the Islamic Centre did organise one rehabilitation course for ex-Darul Arqam leaders in December 1994, ordinary members were left in the lurch despite having outwardly shown a willingness to change (*ibid.*). Observations by journalists at several ex-Darul Arqam settlements around the country revealed that ex-members had faithfully complied with the letter of the ban such that tangible signs of Darul Arqam's reappearance were non-existent (*ibid.* 31.5.96, 10.6.96). On such evidence, ex-Darul Arqam members' criticisms of the Islamic Centre's negligence were more or less justified.

The Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Megat Junid Megat Ayub, was forthright in censuring the Islamic Centre and State Departments of Religious Affairs for

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<sup>3</sup>For reports of the ex-Darul Arqam members' arrests and consequently lengthy detentions, see national newspapers on 15.5.96, 7.6.96, 8.6.96, 9.6.96, 15.6.96, 18.6.96, 20.6.96, 14.7.96, 6.8.96, 11.8.96, 13.8.96 and 18.8.96.

<sup>4</sup>Personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam members who attended rehabilitation talks and courses organised by the Islamic Centre (March-April 1996).

shirking responsibility and snubbing cooperative efforts from his Ministry in the rehabilitation programme (ibid. 3.6.96, *The Star* 3.6.96). The Islamic Centre, its credibility in rehabilitating ex-Darul Arqam members publicly thrown into doubt, sought to absolve itself from the imbroglio by blaming diehard ex-Darul Arqam members for failing to turn up regularly at rehabilitation courses, reproducing materials containing deviant teachings, failing to register marriages and retaining a blind adulation of their former leaders (*BH* 31.5.96, 1.6.96, 3.6.96). But in announcing that the second phase of the rehabilitation programme was to employ a radically new approach, the Minister at the Prime Minister's Department Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman implicitly admitted the weaknesses of the programme's first phase while simultaneously dispelling suggestions of a communication breakdown between the Islamic Centre and the Home Affairs Ministry (ibid. 4.6.96). The Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin, apportioned a significant amount of blame for the Islamic Centre's failure on intransigent ex-Darul Arqam leaders, particularly Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, for 'programming' his followers (ibid. 5.6.96, *The Star* 5.6.96). Responding to accusations that he himself may have been behind the moves to revive Darul Arqam (*BH* 2.6.96, 7.6.96), Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, in a press conference, insisted that friendly visits made by family members, personal acquaintances and business colleagues to his residence had been misinterpreted by some quarters as conspiratorial meetings to revive Darul Arqam (*Sunday Star* 9.6.96).<sup>5</sup> To ex-followers harbouring ambitions of a Darul Arqam revival, Ustaz Ashaari pleaded them to give up their "*useless intention*" (ibid.).

Moreover, one should appreciate the intense difficulties faced by the authorities in eliminating messianic beliefs which had been ingrained in the minds and hearts of ex-Darul Arqam members for a considerable period (cf. chapter 7: 7.3). Even with a more wide-ranging effort, the task of divesting the aura of divinity that surrounded both Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad and Darul Arqam's spiritual forefather, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi, and from their former followers would still be arduous. Even if the controversial beliefs and practices were disowned publicly, there was every possibility that they were retained in private. The Islamic Centre itself claimed that the Shiite doctrine and practice of *taqiyah*<sup>6</sup> had been an entrenched feature of Darul Arqam since its early days (*BH* 4.6.96, BAHEIS n.d.: 32). Furthermore, although rejecting *taqiyah* as a generally Shiite practice, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad allowed it in emergency circumstances, giving the example of Ammar ibn Yasir, the Prophet's companion who was forced to renounce his faith under torture

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<sup>5</sup>Ustaz Ashaari's full statement may be read in *Mingguan Watan* (9.6.96) and *Massa* (15.6.96).

<sup>6</sup>Subterfuge intended to conceal one's real faith by conveying the false impression that it is no different from that professed by the established majority. For the specific Shiite context and usage of *taqiyah*, see Nomani (1988: chapter XII).

(Ashaari Muhammad 1987b: 112). In short, the second clampdown on Darul Arqam was necessitated by both the inefficacy of the rehabilitation programme and the steadfast adherence of ex-Darul Arqam members to their lofty ideals, the protection of which was possibly aided by a tactical recourse to *taqiyah*.

Stirred by further revelations that ex-Darul Arqam members had reactivated schools and kindergartens (*BH* 12.6.96, *The Sun* 12.6.96), the government decided to discard the previously flexible approach at rehabilitation which had allowed the ex-Darul Arqam members to maintain their congregational lifestyle and distinctive clothing (*The Star* 6.6.96, 12.6.96). Instead of permitting them freedom of movement, the second phase of rehabilitation would rigidly circumscribe ex-Darul Arqam members' means of communication with society by, for example, confining them to training centres ran by the National Civics Bureau (*Biro Tatanegara*), while retaining the broad curriculum of the first phase (*BH* 20.6.96, *The Sun* 20.6.96). Branding Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad "*a liar*," the Chief Director of the Islamic Centre, Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin, asserted that ex-Darul Arqam members had to be forcibly separated from their former leaders in order to extinguish their fanaticism towards a leadership hierarchy which still existed in their minds (*BH* 24.7.96). As for top ex-Darul Arqam leaders, it seemed that the government was content to isolate them permanently, having resigned to the fact that no panacea was available for their diehard attitude. As Abdul Hamid said of Ustaz Ashaari: "*There is no point in forcing him to attend rehabilitation courses as he has refused to be rehabilitated*" (*The Star* 26.7.96).

As in the first phase, the success of the rehabilitation programme in its second phase was swiftly proclaimed (*ibid.*: 29.7.96, *BH* 28.8.96, 5.11.96, 7.11.96). The claims were apparently substantiated by public confessions of repentant ex-Darul Arqam members, many of whom vowed to return to mainstream life (*BH* 10.9.96, 12.9.96, 21.9.96, 6.11.96). The authorities also sought to close down ex-Darul Arqam settlements which functioned as the hub of ex-members' congregational activities, on the pretext of effecting inter-mingling between ex-members and the wider society, which was deemed vital to the rehabilitation process (*ibid.* 29.7.96). According to Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, the exclusivity of the communes would be ended by opening them to outsiders and changing them "*to reflect a true Malay village situation*" (*The Star* 30.7.96). The closures of settlements commenced in January 1997, and controversially involved the destruction of residential properties (*BH* 3.1.97, 4.1.97, 15.1.97, 23.1.97). On 4.2.97, seemingly convinced that the threat of a revitalised Darul Arqam had evaporated, the Deputy Home Affairs Minister, Megat Junid Megat Ayub, declared the conditional release of

all fourteen of the long-term ISA detainees.<sup>7</sup> Since the release, an extremely tight surveillance regime has been imposed on ex-Darul Arqam leaders. Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad is reportedly being held incommunicado under virtual conditions of house arrest, with only family members being granted access to him under ordinary circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

It remains to be seen whether the new hardline approach adopted by the authorities in their treatment of ex-Darul Arqam members bears fruit in the long term. While instant success portrayed by the media may almost certainly be an exaggeration, the present approach may well be more successful than the previous one, as newly-devised restrictions are brought to bear upon the lives of ex-Darul Arqam members resistant to change. But doubt may still linger as to whether the consequent changes of lifestyle reflect a sincere abandonment of ex-members' beliefs or are merely an expedient solution to the practical impossibility of retaining tangible aspects of the Darul Arqam worldview.<sup>9</sup> If the latter proves to be the decisive factor, and Darul Arqam teachings continue to be clandestinely cherished and successfully transmitted to the younger generation, the government will face a future problem when this generation, now distributed in all walks of mainstream life and without carrying the instinctively 'subversive' tag of their parents, decides to resurrect their ideals.

For its part, the government may simply wish to retain the status quo until the passing of the time designated for the messiah's advent or until death overtakes Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, after both of which one might expect ex-Darul Arqam members to give up their messianic expectations and return to reality. But it will not be easy for the ex-Darul Arqam children to forget the images and the horror of persecution experienced and recounted by their parents. Therefore, one cannot rule out the possibility of a resurrection of Darul Arqam arising from a pure concern to avenge the injustice meted out to their immediate forebears. Moreover, many non-messianic aspects of Darul Arqam teachings may remain latent, but alive nevertheless. The government's heavy-handed approach may ultimately backfire, as pressing human rights issues are raised by the secretive nature of the present rehabilitation programme. Journalists have voiced dissatisfaction at the refusal to admit them to rehabilitation sessions, the coverage of which have been scarce (*BH* 19.6.97). Even under the current stringent regime, the Islamic Centre admitted that some ten percent of ex-Darul

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<sup>7</sup>All were released under strict conditions of restricted residence. Ahmad Salim Omar, 50, was released unconditionally on the basis of his position as a senior civil servant - once the national Deputy Director of Land and Cooperative Development. For news of the release, see national newspapers on 5.2.97 and 6.2.97.

<sup>8</sup>Personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam members through letters and electronic mail.

<sup>9</sup>Some of the changes witnessed include the abandonment of exclusive religious gatherings, full-time admission of children into government schools, return to occupations in the non-Darul Arqam sectors and changes of clothing to reflect a more typically Malay identity (personal communication with ex-Darul Arqam members).

Arqam members were persistently causing problems by maintaining the movement's image (*BH* 9.4.97).

Finally, the status of Darul Arqam as an international movement poses a different set of problems. It may be fair to say that Darul Arqam's position in other countries has been relatively unaffected, despite token assurances given by foreign governments that the activities of Darul Arqam in their countries were under scrutiny.<sup>10</sup> In fact, official version of events suggested that the second clampdown on Darul Arqam was sparked off by reports of a revival of communication between ex-Darul Arqam members in Thailand and in Perlis, the northern Malaysian state bordering Thailand (*BH* 25.5.96, 31.5.96, *UM* 18.5.96). In the midst of the crackdown on ex-Darul Arqam members in Malaysia, their Indonesian colleagues could publicly hold an All-Indonesian Al-Arqam Community Luncheon, at which journalists present witnessed Darul Arqam's official declaration of support for the presidency of Soeharto (*The Star* 30.5.96). If Darul Arqam members abroad continue to gather strength, one wonders for how long they could resist trying to accomplish the messianic rule which is supposed to originate from Malaysia. One cannot discount overseas assistance to their Malaysian brethren being provided in the form of materials, finance or manpower. Monitoring such supplies will prove difficult since the existence of inter-marriages between Malaysian and non-Malaysian ex-Darul Arqam communities will compel the immigration authorities to allow family visits by foreign nationals.

Since Darul Arqam's messianic doctrine proclaims the role of Malaysia as the cradle of Islamic political revival, the primary object of subversion by a global Darul Arqam movement must necessarily be the Malaysian political establishment, the downfall of which will trigger the creation of Islamic governments elsewhere. The Malaysian government's negotiating skill and unblemished reputation as an international power will be extremely crucial to persuade foreign governments to crush any manifestation of Darul Arqam in their countries. But while outwardly showing concern to protect bilateral relations, foreign governments may be reluctant to act on Darul Arqam, whose record of observing the rule of law outside Malaysia has been impeccable. In addition, there may exist a fear of a human rights backlash from their own people, for many of whom Darul Arqam conveys a peaceful and innocuous image (cf. chapter 5: 5.7). A persistent flourishing of Darul Arqam abroad may

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<sup>10</sup>On the assurances, see 'Indonesia nafi izinkan Arqam bergerak semula' (Indonesia denies allowing Arqam to remobilise), *BH*, 1.6.96; 'Malaysia, Indonesia bekerjasama basmi ajaran sesat' (Malaysia and Indonesia cooperate to eradicate deviant teachings), *ibid.*, 7.8.96, and 'Ashaari to spearhead Pusat Islam programme', *The Star*, 31.5.96. Yet, later reports confirmed that Darul Arqam teachings were continually making inroads in southern Thailand and various places in Indonesia (*BH* 23.9.96). Personal communication via telephone with Indonesian Darul Arqam members based in Germany (1996-97) also confirms that Darul Arqam activities in Indonesia have met with hardly any interruption.

therefore indirectly indicate Malaysia's weakness in the sphere of international relations.

The need for a second crackdown on Darul Arqam, or rather on its anonymous organisational successor, in mid-1996 reflects both the inefficacy of the government's rehabilitation programme and members' strength of character that has ensured their retention of fundamental Darul Arqam principles, and hence their resilience amidst internally and externally induced crises. Whether they will survive the latest brush with the authorities depends on the latter's perseverance and resolve to dismantle the forces of messianism and economic organisation which have spurred Darul Arqam members to remobilise each time after having undergone repression. The present rehabilitation regime, the detailed operations of which are not divulged to the public, may yet prove to be the harshest that Darul Arqam members have had to endure. They should have learnt from past experience that too much publicity of successful activities is bound to attract a punitive response from the political establishment, especially now that the 'Darul Arqam threat' has become an issue of national and regional importance. It is reasonable to predict that such a threat is not likely to recur in the near future, due as much to ex-Darul Arqam members' strategic considerations and realisation of their infrastructural weaknesses, as to greater restrictions imposed by the new rehabilitation regime.

## **8.2 ALTERNATIVES FOR POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA IN THE LIGHT OF DARUL ARQAM'S DEMISE**

The resurgence of Islam in Malaysia has been most lucidly embodied in the activities of *dakwah* movements at grassroots level (cf. chapter 4). For *dakwah* movements, Islam is understood as a comprehensive way of life which necessarily encompasses political and legal aspects of organising society. Therefore, the Islamic state is perforce a distinct goal of *dakwah* activists, notwithstanding differences among them pertaining to its exact form, the best approach towards achieving it and the prescribed time-length of the enterprise. To outsiders, the political side of *dakwah* movements may not be evident from its beginning, but in this, *dakwah* activists may cite the example of the Prophet Muhammad who took twenty-three years of ceaseless missionary activity before establishing the first Islamic state of Madinah. The perennial dilemma confronting *dakwah* activists revolves around the precise timing and nature of the adoption of the political phase of the struggle.

For Darul Arqam, its confidence boosted by its startling economic success, the switching of phases occurred in the early 1990s. Darul Arqam's character visibly

changed from a movement whose spiritual and missionary concerns were geared towards building a self-sustaining socio-economic order independent of the larger liberal-capitalist system, to one whose ultimate implication entailed a replacement of the liberal-capitalist political equivalent with its own messianic state (cf. chapter 4: 4.3). Tolerable co-existence between Islamic-based and secular-based socio-economic orders swiftly ended when representatives of the rivalling systems insisted on utilising political means to establish the superiority of their model societies (cf. chapter 5: 5.3, 5.5). The finale of the battle was not only fatal to Darul Arqam as an organisation, but it also dealt a severe blow to proponents of the grassroots approach to political Islam.

A comparative analysis of Islamic movements in Malaysia would in all likelihood establish Darul Arqam as the practitioner of the grassroots approach towards an Islamic state *par excellence* (ibid.). As far as political strategy is concerned, ABIM and later IRC, despite both claiming political neutrality, have to all intents and purposes espoused the approach of penetrating the ranks of the Malay-Muslim ruling elite as represented by UMNO. Despite a historic rivalry between ABIM and IRC, both movements' manoeuvres into the political establishment have demonstrated stark similarities in recent years.<sup>11</sup> For example, both ex-ABIM and ex-IRC members have been increasingly successful in attaining influential positions within the UMNO hierarchy. This has apparently coincided with official leadership statements indicating a compromise with the secular establishment which they presumably intend to influence (ibid.: 4.7.1, 4.7.2). PAS has from its outset embraced the political party alternative, leaving the grassroots *dakwah* approach to the realm of students. But upon graduation, they will most certainly overlook the grassroots approach in their enthusiasm for 'top to bottom' Islamisation through electoral politics (ibid.: 4.7.4). After Jamaat Tabligh's brief brush with the authorities in the early 1990s: an episode which exposed its sheer inadequacy in the sphere of conflict resolution, Jamaat Tabligh has shunned publicity and persevered absorbingly in old-fashioned missionary undertakings which completely eschew the use of modern technology such as audio-visual communication and the internet. Possibly for fear of inviting further damaging repercussions, discussion of the transition to the political phase of Jamaat Tabligh's struggle is deliberately avoided by members, thus calling into question the very existence of a coherent political strategy in the foreseeable future (ibid.: 4.7.3).

With Darul Arqam defeated and Jamaat Tabligh ruling out overt political action, adherents of the grassroots approach to an Islamic state are arguably left in a quandary. On the assumption that they abandon the grassroots political approach, which seems destined to fail by becoming the victim of its own success upon being

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<sup>11</sup>cf. 'ABIM, JIM tidak perlu saling bertelingkah' (ABIM and JIM need not quarrel with each other), *BH*, 23.1.97. ABIM members have tended to ridicule IRC's foray into UMNO as a direct imitation of ABIM's successful political venture (personal communication with ABIM members in Britain).

identified as having crossed the political line, the Islamists are presented with two alternatives. First, they can embrace the line followed by ABIM and IRC of Islamisation from within the dominant political structures, or second, they can adopt the PAS approach of vying to defeat the ruling political elite at competitive elections, through the mechanism of registered political parties. In both alternatives, discussed below, overt political manoeuvres are no longer *a priori* associated with extra-constitutional subversion of the state. But politics also takes firm priority over non-political aspects of Islamic life now viewed as dependent on political changes.

### 8.2.1 THE POLITICAL PARTY ALTERNATIVE: PAS AND THE QUEST FOR AN ISLAMIC STATE IN KELANTAN

The struggle for an Islamic state by political participation in general elections is an explicitly confrontational attempt to secure the reins of government by exploiting constitutionally acceptable political practices. By proclaiming themselves to be one of the players of the established political system, Islamists avoid being marked out as anti-state insurgents, whose extra-constitutional position offers a pretext for rulers to put them down on national security grounds. Public legitimacy enables the Islamists to propagate their message openly to the widest available audience. Their supporters are given the opportunity of voicing approval through the ballot box; their conscience thus satisfied by not having to waste votes on the best among secular-inclined electoral candidates or by simply abstaining, both of which merely perpetuate the regime in power. While accepting that the system of choosing rulers through democratic elections is opposed to the Islamic principle of *shura*, the Islamists argue that electoral participation is a temporary necessity to prevent the greater evil of having their views submerged in public. The argument becomes more persuasive in a Muslim-minority environment, where electoral campaigns provide an avenue for highlighting the Islamic alternative and where meek resignation to the powerlessness of Muslims adds injury to a community already beleaguered by the secular establishment.<sup>12</sup> Electoral participation may be rendered superfluous once victory is delivered by a popular majority whose votes, when translated into parliamentary seats, result in a sufficient majority to effect constitutional changes installing *shura* in place of democratic elections.

While the scheme outlined above sounds theoretically viable, in practice the situation becomes more complicated. This stems particularly from the blurring of

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<sup>12</sup>See, for example, arguments for active Muslim participation in the 1997 General Election in Britain in the cover story 'Election 1997: Who Should the Muslims Vote?', *Impact International*, April 1997.

distinction between the state and the ruling elite in post-colonial Muslim states, leading to the unreserved use of the state apparatus to defeat the political enemies of the ruling clique. The legal status of Islamic parties has not barred secular-nationalist Muslim governments from wilfully employing a range of devices to hamper the activities of Islamists. The political impediments become more blatant when Islamic parties reach the verge of capturing power, or when having garnered a sufficient majority in general elections, the parties face the difficult task of assembling and operating governments smoothly while the secular elite maintains control over state organs.

Several examples from this decade bring to light the plight of Islamic parties whose 'moderate' approach towards constitutional democracy has not been appreciated by their secular-nationalist rivals when it involves legal transfer of power or even toleration of a credible threat to the establishment. In Algeria, the seemingly inevitable victory of the FIS in the second round of parliamentary elections of 1991-92, after having convincingly won a spate of local and first round legislative elections, was arbitrarily denied by a military intervention purportedly benefiting from foreign technical assistance. The military junta cancelled the elections, forced politicians to relinquish authority, established itself in power and launched a vicious campaign to liquidate the Islamists.<sup>13</sup> In Turkey in 1997, the coalition government headed by the Islamist, Professor Necmettin Erbakan of the Refah Party, was unceremoniously manoeuvred out of power by a secularists' intrigue involving military generals, President Demirel and secular-oriented politicians who were put into power entrusted with the reversals of pro-Islamic policies of the Refah-led coalition.<sup>14</sup> In Jordan, the

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<sup>13</sup>The bloody civil war has continued to the present day. According to Islamic sources, the government campaign has involved infiltration of the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) which then committed massacres of innocent civilians. By blaming perpetration of horrific bloodshed upon Islamic terrorists, the government seeks to justify its operation to eradicate Islamists by equally violent methods. As reported by *Newsweek* (16.6.97), suspicions of government-perpetrated atrocities are shared by many Algerians and Western experts such as Clement Henry of the University of Texas at Austin. *The Economist* (6.9.97) gives credence to increasing speculation that some of the gruesome murders may have been "the work of factions in the security forces opposed to the president" by pointing out that "some of the villages being terrorised are themselves Islamist strongholds." This view was later echoed by France's Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, whose country's backing has been crucial for the survival of the Algerian government; he said of the Algerian situation: "Here we have a fanatical and violent opposition fighting against authorities who themselves, to a certain extent, use violence and the state power" (ibid. 11.10.97). Fergus Bordewich's (1997) report on Algeria quotes the United States State Department: "Security forces carried out extrajudicial killings, were responsible for numerous cases of disappearance, tortured or otherwise abused detainees, and arbitrarily arrested and held incommunicado many of those suspected of involvement with armed Islamic groups." For further details, see exclusive reports in the cover story 'Algeria: Government In Spite of the People', *Impact International*, May 1997; by Mark Dennis in *Newsweek* (30.6.97), and by Robert Fisk in *The Independent*, 31.10.97.

<sup>14</sup>See reports on Turkey: 'Between Allah and the Army', *Newsweek*, 30.6.97; 'The increasing loneliness of being Turkey', *The Economist*, 19.7.97; interview with Erbakan's successor Mesut Yilmaz, 'We Have Done a Lot', *Newsweek*, 11.8.97, and 'Hollow reform', *The Economist*, 16.8.97. For an Islamic

Islamic Action Front (IAF), which secured a significant number of parliamentary seats in 1989 and 1993, announced its decision to boycott the 1997 elections in protest against a drastic rise in restrictive legislation and an overall retreat of the democratisation process.<sup>15</sup>

On the whole, the tentative experience of Islamic political parties in the democratic process of post-colonial Muslim states shows that even in a relatively tolerant political environment, Islamic parties would be tolerated only up to the point where their presence is just enough to legitimise the established order. In authoritarian states, Islamic parties are usually proscribed. Encountering severe limitations and lack of a peaceful initiative apart from succumbing to defeat and incurring humiliating penalties, and further driven by a firm belief in the apostasy of Muslim leaders who repudiate the *shariah*, some Islamists have chosen to take up arms in their fight against the secular state.<sup>16</sup>

In Malaysia, the need for a militant Islamic struggle has been obviated by a relatively tolerant political environment and a political culture which abhors violence.<sup>17</sup> The orderly transfer of power in the state of Kelantan after a stunning electoral victory by PAS over the incumbent National Front government in 1990 and the success of PAS in retaining control over Kelantan in 1995, constitute evidence that on paper, the democratic wishes of an Islamic-oriented electorate are constitutionally respected by the secular-nationalist elite. Such precedents may raise hopes of grassroots Islamists that the 'political opposition' approach offers a viable alternative towards an Islamic state.<sup>18</sup> Such a project may now be initiated in Kelantan, whose experience offers examples for the formulation of electoral strategies to capture other

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perspective of the secular establishment's silent war against Turkey's Islamist government, see cover story reports in *Impact International*: 'Who's Afraid of Erbakan?', March 1997, and 'The Conflict in Turkey', November 1997.

<sup>15</sup>See regional reports on Jordan in *The Economist*: 'A not so loyal opposition', 30.8.97, and in *Impact International*: 'Bringing the country into disrepute', May 1997; 'Ikhwan to boycott elections: Islamic Front left high and dry', August 1997, and 'King, the loser', November 1997.

<sup>16</sup>On the issue of the apostate status of Muslim rulers who reject the *shariah* and the arguments for ousting them, see Dr. Omar Abdurrahman's *The Present Rulers and Islam: Are they Muslims or not?* (1990). The author, widely regarded as the spiritual-ideological leader of radical Egyptian Islamists, was accused of legally sanctioning the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, and is now serving a prison sentence in the United States for his alleged role in the bombing of New York's World Trade Centre in 1993.

<sup>17</sup>The peaceful political climate explains why the government has invariably invoked images of violence that would allegedly be perpetrated whenever it wanted to crush its political opposition conveniently labelled as anti-state or subversive elements. The pugnacious portrayal of its political enemies by the national media often serves to justify the government's use draconian measures such as the ISA (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.1).

<sup>18</sup>As triumphantly proclaimed by the PAS Deputy President Abdul Hadi Awang in connection with its status as the chief component of Kelantan's state government: "*We already have a vehicle to implement an Islamic state*" (*FEER*, 3.9.92).

states and the federal legislature.<sup>19</sup> But the practical difficulties of administering changes from a secular to an Islamic system are highlighted by the obstacles encountered by the PAS-led government in its bid to introduce the *shariah*, as embodied in the *hudud* laws, after seven years of power in Kelantan.

As the cornerstone of PAS' 1990 election manifesto, the implementation of *hudud* laws would inevitably feature prominently in the Kelantan government's plans. As a prelude, the newly-elected state government initiated small-scale Islamic measures such as ending extravagant state functions, banning gambling, partially outlawing consumption of liquor and extending maternity leave. The non-Malay minorities were appeased by appointing their representatives to the state legislative assembly and reaching a compromise over alcohol proscription (*FEER* 31.1.91). Even after the *hudud* debate had got under way, PAS understandably distanced itself from the radical image it had cultivated since 1983 (cf. chapter 4: 4.7.4). While affirming *hudud* laws as an ultimate aim of the state government, Kelantan Chief Minister-cum-PAS *Mursyid al-'Am* Nik Aziz Nik Mat asserted that immediate implementation had been ruled out in order to avoid accusations of cruelty by detractors (*BM* 3.2.91). So dilatory was PAS in its legislative programme on *hudud* that UMNO was prompted into challenging PAS to realise its rhetoric by submitting constitutional proposals to enable the implementation of *hudud* laws in Kelantan (*FEER* 28.5.92, *BH* 11.11.92). Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad proclaimed that the federal government was willing to allow PAS to enforce *hudud* laws in Kelantan, even if it necessitated amendments to the Federal Constitution. To Dr. Mahathir, Islamic teachings offered many extenuating circumstances which disputed the appropriateness of *hudud* laws in present-day Malaysia, and PAS' rhetoric on *hudud* laws was a political gimmick whereby the federal government could be blamed for allegedly thwarting the legislative path of *hudud* (*ibid.* 17.4.92, *UM* 17.4.92). Dr. Mahathir's extraordinary concession, which understandably caused consternation in non-Muslim circles, was then interpreted as a political ploy to woo Malay-Muslim voters in a forthcoming state by-election in Bukit Payung, Terengganu (*FEER* 28.5.92). The tactic appeared to have paid off when the National Front snatched the seat away from PAS.<sup>20</sup> But it also strengthened PAS' resolve to push through plans on the *hudud* laws.

The Kelantan state government's procrastination in putting forward proposals for *hudud* laws could be explained by two factors. Firstly, the relative inexperience of

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<sup>19</sup>The success of PAS in expanding its power into other states forms one scenario by which Malaysia can be transformed into an Islamic state in the future, as explored by Hussin Mutalib (1993: 81-82).

<sup>20</sup>The by-election on 21.4.92 was called after a court declaration that the 1990 election result, which gave PAS victory by a majority of seventeen, was null and void due to technical errors in voting. This time, the National Front candidate pulled off a 389-vote majority. PAS sources however claimed that victory was denied to them by UMNO's disreputable tactic of importing non-resident voters whose travelling expenses were fully covered (*FEER* 7.5.92).

PAS' *ulama*, most of whom were trained in religious sciences in the traditional mould, in drafting legal documents for contemporary application. Such deficiency necessitated requesting the assistance of non-PAS academic scholars (*UM* 20.4.92), some of whom were staggered to discover the considerable lack of preparation and effort on the part of PAS' committee responsible for drafting the *hudud* proposals (Ashaari Muhammad 1992b: 102-103). Secondly, the lack of understanding of *hudud* laws among both Muslims and non-Muslims in Kelantan (*BH* 11.6.92). Since premature implementation may prove politically counter-productive, PAS was compelled to conduct state-wide explanatory sessions, even though the considerable time spent for them exposed them to accusations of prevarication (Nagata 1994: 71). Despite its sluggishness, PAS' strategy of bringing the issue to the public showed signs of bearing fruit by late 1992. Chief Minister Nik Aziz Nik Mat claimed that his government's clarification of *hudud* laws had convinced Kelantanese, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to accept their implementation (*UM* 19.10.92). Although the claim was disputed by Chinese opposition leaders (*BM* 1.11.92, *FEER* 3.9.92), independent polls did suggest that non-Muslims in Kelantan did not face discrimination and were reasonably content with proposals to turn Kelantan into a full-fledged Islamic state, so long as their businesses were not interfered with (Hussin Mutalib 1993: 82).

The long-awaited *hudud* enactment bill was eventually debated and passed by the Kelantan state legislature as the *Kanun Jenayah Syariah (II) 1993* (KJS 1993: Islamic Criminal Law Bill 1993). Its implementation, however, was conditional upon amendments to the Federal Constitution intended to accommodate the expansion of jurisdiction of *shariah* courts, and effectively exalting the status of Islamic law as the supreme law of the land in Kelantan (Ahmad Ibrahim 1994: 56-59). Such a notion was taboo to the secular government, who in the meantime rallied sympathetic *ulama* from among academics and religious functionaries to its endeavour of exposing the weaknesses and impracticalities of KJS 1993 (Nagata 1994: 71). While deficiencies of KJS 1993 were pin-pointed and revisions were proposed to the document, hardly any of the invited scholars rejected the implementation of *hudud* laws in principle (cf. Ahmad Ibrahim 1994: 59-64). But the federal government considered the scholars' critical comments of KJS 1993 as sufficient grounds to reject what it dubbed the 'PAS *hudud*'. In a personal letter to the Kelantan Chief Minister clarifying the decision, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad cited, among other things, concern that the proposed laws would potentially create chaos by implementing a two-tier system of justice separating Muslims and non-Muslims who would remain under existing secular laws (*Harakah* 22.7.94, 25.7.94). Understandably appalled by the federal government's renegeing its previous promise to allow the implementation of *hudud* laws in Kelantan, PAS leaders challenged the federal government to propose its own version of *hudud* or

accept their invitation for a dialogue to break the deadlock. Instead of responding constructively, Dr. Mahathir replied somewhat mockingly that the 'UMNO *hudud*' was already in the Quran (ibid. 3.10.94, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat 1995a: 155). Although independent research by the Malaysian Bar Council acknowledged the concurrence of KJS 1993 with Islam (*Harakah* 7.10.94), the political environment in Malaysia ensures the political inefficacy of such opinions without the ruling elite's backing. Until today, the elite, unabashed at their denial of democratic rights to the Kelantanese, appears content to let the *hudud* issue rest until such a time when UMNO recaptures Kelantan from PAS.

Demoralised by its incapacity to carry out its most important pledge to the Kelantan electorate, PAS has gradually undergone a reversal of fortunes. As the 1995 general elections approached, the ruling elite seemed intent upon provoking PAS into reviving its radical posture, in order to discredit it in public eyes. When the UMNO General Assembly of 1994 proposed a motion to urge PAS to drop from its name the term 'Islam' for supposedly connoting disunity, PAS interpreted it as an attack on the sanctity of the Islamic struggle itself (ibid. 12.12.94, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat 1995a: 69). The fierce outburst from PAS leaders was handily exploited by UMNO to portray PAS as a prevaricator and a security threat, resulting in PAS being given a stern warning by the Police Chief to stop arousing public tension (*NST* 10.12.94, 16.12.94; *New Sunday Times* 11.12.94, 8.1.95, 5.2.95). The establishment's media assaults on PAS were handed a boost by the widely publicised arrest of a prominent Kelantan PAS leader for sexual impropriety, the case of which was summarily dismissed by Chief Minister Nik Aziz Nik Mat as a conspiracy (*NST* 2.2.95, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat 1995a: 73-75).<sup>21</sup>

Ill-equipped to confront the secular elite's propaganda machine, PAS faced the 1995 elections on the defensive. In Kelantan, where the PAS-led coalition was once in full control of, the loss of two state legislative seats and seven parliamentary seats dealt a severe blow to PAS. In its second term, the PAS government has been besieged with further problems. On PAS' own admission, its rule in Kelantan had been grossly undermined by undue interference from the federal authorities and the Kelantan royal family (*BH* 14.6.96, *The Star* 14.6.96). In mid-1996, PAS' coalition partner *Semangat 46* decided, citing a series of irreconcilable rifts with PAS,<sup>22</sup> to sever links with PAS, dissolve its party and rejoin UMNO (ibid. 22.6.96, *BH* 12.7.96, 19.8.96, 7.10.96). This

<sup>21</sup>A Vice-Chief of PAS Youth well-known for his outspokenness, Mohamad Sabu was caught red-handed allegedly being in a compromising situation with a friend's wife in a hotel room. Both defendants were eventually acquitted on grounds of insufficient evidence.

<sup>22</sup>The most contentious issue was arguably PAS' decision to table a bill to curb the powers of the Kelantan sultan, who was a kin of the *Semangat 46* President, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (*BH* 27.6.96). See the chronology of events from the beginning to the end of the PAS-*Semangat 46* coalition in *The Star*, 15.7.96, 19.8.96.

has left PAS with a majority of only five seats in Kelantan's state legislative assembly. With its decline in strength, PAS has conveniently moderated its image by forging closer ties with the federal government, acknowledging the federal government's financial help for development projects and even toying with the idea of a coalition pact with UMNO in Kelantan (ibid. 1.8.96, 22.10.96, 17.11.96). On official occasions, senior PAS leaders have publicly reaffirmed PAS' commitment to democracy, and advised younger members to forsake radical methods and maintain a moderate profile (ibid. 5.4.97, 30.5.97). These manoeuvres have taken place amidst continuous attacks on PAS' rule in Kelantan by its former partners of the defunct *Semangat 46*.<sup>23</sup>

PAS' failure to administer Kelantan according to its cherished ideals sheds some light on the weaknesses of the party political alternative towards an Islamic state. Over-concentration on electoral issues and campaigning has deprived PAS of resources to cultivate comprehensive elements of an Islamic state within the party mechanism. This can plausibly be done only by grassroots *dakwah*. A continuous period out of power implanted an opposition mentality in the PAS leadership, such that when victory was secured, albeit at state level, its lack of infrastructural preparation for governance was conspicuous. The failure to realise its objective of an Islamic state in Kelantan owed as much to PAS' glaring technical incompetence which eroded public confidence in it, as to the federal government's obstinate refusal to revamp the country's secular constitution. The realities of federal-state relations in Malaysia further circumscribe PAS' Kelantan government's capacity to manoeuvre. The state government continually relies on federal funds for development projects, and it is powerless to counter the ruling elite's perennial strategy of tying votes for the National Front with development (*FEER* 28.2.91, 23.1.92). The creation of a Federal Development Department responsible to the federal government, and especially to monitor federal projects in Kelantan, compounds the state government's problems of coordinating development initiatives in an Islamic-oriented fashion (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1996: 15-16). Realistically, PAS' political objectives can only be achieved by mustering at least a two-thirds majority of federal parliamentary seats, by which it can amend the Federal Constitution. But judging by the present political map, such a scenario remains far-fetched until PAS broadens its appeal beyond its traditional strongholds in the north and northeast of Peninsular Malaysia. Neglect of the *dakwah* approach has cost PAS dearly in terms of long-lasting grassroots support. A long-term strategy of grassroots *dakwah* will do well by raising the probability that

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<sup>23</sup>For example, *Semangat 46* Youth Chief Mohd. Rozali Yusof accused PAS of running Kelantan's state government like the Nazis (*BH* 24.8.96); former *Semangat 46* Deputy Liaison Chief in Kelantan, Shukri Mohamed, lambasted PAS' failure to tackle poverty and pressing issues of development in Kelantan (ibid. 13.11.96); and former *Semangat 46* President Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah rebuked PAS for failing to administer Kelantan according to true Islamic principles (ibid. 8.11.97).

votes and offers of cooperation are made on the basis of inner conviction in PAS' struggle rather than pure political convenience.

## 8.2.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT ALTERNATIVE: THE DILEMMA OF ELITE-BASED POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

In post-colonial societies, where dominant political institutions are heavily characterised by 'neo-patrimonialism' which results in a state which exerts a pervasive influence upon ordinary people's lives,<sup>24</sup> there is a persuasive argument for Islamists to adopt the 'establishment alternative'. This entails ostensible participation in the established political order as associates of the ruling establishment, whose thinking and political priorities the Islamists seek to mould covertly or overtly in a direction conducive to the eventual establishment of an Islamic state. Such an option may be taken on the presumption that "*the fundamental and overriding function of the state is to realise and maintain the organisational prerequisites of the capitalist social order*" (Alavi 1982: 292).<sup>25</sup> If the nature of the state is to be transformed peacefully, its *raison*

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<sup>24</sup>'Neo-patrimonialism' is properly defined as "*a form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines*" (Clapham 1992: 48). For details of the post-colonial state, see *ibid*: chapters 3-4.

<sup>25</sup>In his study which sparked off the debate on post-colonial states, Alavi (1972) identifies the 'military-bureaucratic oligarchy' as those who staff the state apparatus in post-colonial societies, which can be called peripheral-capitalist societies, in contrast to societies in advanced capitalist countries. Within peripheral-capitalist societies, Alavi identifies three fundamental classes, viz. the indigenous bourgeoisie, the neo-colonial metropolitan bourgeoisie and a non-feudal landowning class. Under colonial capitalism, the colonial state was created to serve the requisites of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in the imperial economy. While the basis of the structure of the colonial state would necessarily lie in the metropolitan structure, the colonial state was designated with the additional task of creating a state apparatus through which dominion could be exercised over all indigenous social classes. The result was a post-colonial state equipped with a powerful government and a military-bureaucratic apparatus used during the colonial period to subordinate native classes, but which had become grossly over-developed and somewhat superfluous during independence. It had outlived the function for which it was created.

In a situation of a weak indigenous bourgeoisie, the initiative has been left upon the state to generate capital accumulation. Hence the advent of 'state capitalism' in post-colonial societies, acquiring for the state a prominent place in the production process of post-colonial societies. In Alavi's terminology, the state apparatus assumes "*a new and relatively autonomous economic role,*" whereby the state "*directly appropriates a very large part of the economic surplus and deploys it in bureaucratically directed economic activity in the name of promoting economic development*" (*ibid.*: 62). The state's relative autonomy means that it does not act singly on behalf of any one of the fundamental classes, but rather mediates their competing interests. In his exhaustive study of Pakistan's experience since Partition, Alavi (1983) draws lengthy examples to show that none of the three economically dominant classes can properly be designated as the ruling class which exerts exclusive command over the state apparatus. But this does not necessarily imply that the state acts in harm against any one of them; on the contrary, the state acts to preserve the capitalist social order based on the institution of private property, and all the three fundamental classes have a common interest in this. The state in post-colonial society is bound by the 'structural imperative' of operating in a capitalist society; its actions are to an extent governed by the objective requirements of the processes of capital accumulation

*d'être* must be changed to serve the purposes of a new, in this case Islamic, social order. To achieve this, the elite holding to the levers of power must either voluntarily embrace the Islamist ideology or offer to hand over authority to an Islamist elite who have been sufficiently equipped with practical knowledge on the operation of the modern state and the bases of grassroots support. Both necessarily gradual processes complement each other, and both necessitate the Islamists' temporary toleration of the political system they seek to overhaul. Piscatori (1986: 130-133) has discussed the partial success of this approach of becoming 'fifth columnists' to help infiltrate the establishment from within in Indonesia. In Malaysia, its tentative success is apparent from the generally more Islamic direction the state has taken since the *entree* of Islamist figures into the ruling elite in the 1980s (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.3). But Islamists who join the establishment in order to beat the ruling elite at its own game inevitably embroil themselves in a true moral dilemma. As determined agents of change, their toleration of the prevailing socio-political system entails active participation at the highest level. In this, they expose themselves to a double risk.

On the one hand, as new entrants to the dominant order, the Islamists risk being suspected by diehard secularists of harbouring opportunistic designs to revamp the secular-nationalist paradigm on which the Malaysian state was built. Islamists' entry into the ruling establishment may initially be advantageous in terms of providing it with Islamic legitimacy, but in the long term, as the Islamic camp expands and begins to threaten the programmes and promotion prospects of the secular elite and their grassroots supporters, the fragile unity between Islamists and secularists may well disintegrate. The Islamists risk rejection from the dominant elite after the regime's Islamic image is believed to have become firmly entrenched amongst the masses. The Islamisation measures initiated by the Islamists but now considered as superfluous to the regime's political aims may then undergo reversal. To maintain its need of the Islamists, the secular elite has to be convinced that the Islamic measures already taken are plainly not enough. It will have to draw a delicate balance between appeasing its Islamic-oriented constituency and avoiding potential opposition from its non-Muslim partners and secular-oriented Muslims.

On the other hand, in order to ensure their long-term survival among the ruling elite, the Islamists may endeavour to establish their own power base in the elite's grassroots constituency. Under constant pressure to present themselves as bona fide members of the elite, and to outplay their secular counterparts in the competition for political influence, the Islamists might be tempted to adopt similarly crafty methods as their rivals'. Such methods may involve the usual processes of bargaining, negotiation

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and capitalist development. As such, the post-colonial state is only relatively, rather than absolutely, autonomous. On the appropriateness of Alavi's model of the post-colonial state to Malaysia, see Loong Wong (1993).

and lobbying, all of which do not necessarily hinder unethical practices. In their endeavour to join the elite club, the Islamists are thus liable to sacrifice their moral principles and commit themselves or at least turn a blind eye to the corrupt political game which they once so fervently denounced. The Islamists risk eroding their original bases of grassroots support as religious-oriented Malay-Muslims become disillusioned with their morally questionable antics and their lame excuses for not being able to implement Islam further. Being part and parcel of the dominant establishment now, the Islamists' reputation among grassroots Muslims may suffer by virtue of being implicated in the concoction and execution of less than Islamic government policy. For the Muslims will ask themselves: what is the point of supporting the political Islamists if they exert no influence upon policy-making, to at least obstruct legislation unfavourable to Islam? The Islamists' lofty ends may ultimately be cited to justify the disputable means they have utilised, but besides the opposition of morally upright Muslims to the notion that 'the ends justify the means', the ends themselves may end up being questioned by grassroots supporters. It is feasible to foresee a situation whereby an Islamist who joins the ruling elite with the highest Islamic credentials and moral scruples becomes entrapped by political wheeling and dealing and overwhelmed by the trappings of political power and material wealth, and so ends up being a bastion of the establishment he was supposed to reform.

The scenario above may be observed with reference to the experience of political Islamists in Malaysia. Anwar Ibrahim's entry into UMNO and the government in 1982, while alienating the radical sections of Islamists, was greeted with a reserved enthusiasm by others, for many of whom the name 'Anwar Ibrahim' conveyed a slick but trustworthy image (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.2). As the positive impact of Anwar's conversion to the establishment began to manifest itself in the government's Islamisation process (cf. chapter 3: 3.5.3), Anwar's protégés were persuaded into following his footsteps, eventually staffing bureaucratic and political organs of the establishment (cf. chapter 4: 4.7.1). But as the Islamists' influence upon the direction of the ruling party and the government became more pronounced, as reflected in Anwar's meteoric rise to powerful positions, the secular-nationalists mounted a fightback to recover lost ground. This has triggered open factional in-fighting within the ruling elite, as eloquently demonstrated in the 1993 UMNO elections, which witnessed a comprehensive dislodging of the UMNO old guard at the hands of Anwar's faction whose uncharacteristic rise to power smacked of scant regard for UMNO traditions (Case 1994). The elite's acceptance of Islamists into its fold may initially have been a political ploy to raise the regime's legitimacy in the era of Islamic resurgence, but ultimately it precipitated serious intra-elite rifts.

The secular-nationalist backlash was never going to proceed easily, as Anwar, benefiting from the wide patronage given by his positions in party and government, had cultivated immense grassroots support to the extent of winning over influential secular-oriented politicians to his faction.<sup>26</sup> The chasm within the ruling elite, instigated by Anwar Ibrahim's seemingly unstoppable rise to the zenith of power, has been manifested at the highest level in the purported rift between him and Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (cf. Gomez 1995). So widespread were rumours of a rift that both Anwar and Dr. Mahathir have had to dispel them in public.<sup>27</sup> But such unsubstantiated reports have gained credence by Dr. Mahathir's procrastination in appointing Anwar as Deputy Premier and his obvious reluctance to indicate when he wishes to relinquish power.<sup>28</sup> Since 1995, the Anwar-led juggernaut has been partially reversed by countervailing moves of his opponents, allegedly marshalled by Dr. Mahathir himself. For example, intense speculation that Anwar's close associates from his ABIM days would feature prominently in the UMNO candidate line-up for the 1995 general elections proved to be over-optimistic, as many were eventually sidelined (*ibid.*: 8). The line-ups for the post-election cabinet and state chief ministerships were also tilted in favour of Dr. Mahathir's loyalists (*ibid.*). In one clear-cut case, the pro-Anwar Chief Minister of Kedah, Osman Aroff, whose tenure had been tainted by allegations of corruption, was brusquely whisked out of office and replaced by the pro-Mahathir Sanusi Junid (Mitton 1996, *Massa* 6.4.96). As the 1996 UMNO elections approached, stern warnings were issued by Dr. Mahathir against the prevalent practice of 'money politics', with which many of Anwar's allies were associated (*BH* 23.8.96). The outcome was a strengthening of Dr. Mahathir's hand within UMNO's leadership; for instance the pro-Mahathir Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, was elected as Vice-President at the expense of the pro-Anwar incumbent, Muhyiddin

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<sup>26</sup>In the 1993 UMNO elections, among influential politicians who aligned themselves with Anwar Ibrahim were Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Chief Minister of Selangor; Muhyiddin Yassin, Chief Minister of Johore; Rahim Tamby Chik, Chief Minister of Malacca, and Najib Razak, Defence Minister and incumbent UMNO Youth Chief. Dubbed the *wawasan* (vision) team, they together made a clean sweep of the party's high ranks. Anwar clinched the deputy presidency; Muhammad, Muhyiddin and Najib were elected as Vice-Presidents, and Rahim became Youth Chief. For details, see Case (1994).

<sup>27</sup>See for example Dr. Mahathir's denials: 'Tiada keretakan - PM: Ku Li di belakang fitnah hubungan Mahathir-Anwar' (No rift - PM: Tengku Razaleigh behind slander of Mahathir-Anwar relationship), *UM* 1.11.94; 'I have faith in Anwar, says PM', *The Star* 7.8.96, and 'Anwar pengganti saya: Dr. Mahathir' (Anwar will succeed me: Dr. Mahathir), *BH* 23.11.96. For Anwar's statements, see 'I sometimes had my doubts too, says Anwar', *The Star* 9.8.96.

<sup>28</sup>For example, Dr. Mahathir's statement "I will continue as long as I am needed" (*The Star* 25.7.96). According to Daim Zainuddin, government economic advisor, Anwar Ibrahim's predecessor as Finance Minister and his purported rival, Dr. Mahathir had confided to him that he wanted to be around for the opening of the controversial Bakun Dam in 2002 (*AM* 14(6) 1994: 20). Amidst media speculation accompanying Dr. Mahathir's two-month holiday in May-July 1997, he insisted to a press conference in London that his appointing Anwar as Acting Prime Minister was not a preparation to hand over power to his deputy (*BH* 22.5.97).

Yassin. In response to the overall results, Dr. Mahathir expressed satisfaction that his advice to delegates to reject corrupt candidates had been heeded (*ibid.* 12.10.96).

Writings of independent observers have indicated growing public dismay with Anwar Ibrahim's ruthless manipulation of power and wealth to outmanoeuvre his factional opponents. The rise of money politics within UMNO has been inextricably linked with the political jockeying of Anwar's network which include former ABIM confidantes (Gomez 1993, 1995). Members of Anwar's faction have been variously implicated in financial scandals and blatant vilification of factional opponents via the media, in which they have controlling interests (*ibid.*, Case 1994: *passim*). Among grassroots Islamists, Anwar's realpolitik and grievous political methods have raised serious doubts about his credibility as an Islamic leader (*cf.* Mohd. Sayuti Omar 1990). His reputation having been tarnished by his personal failings and financial peccadilloes associated with his UMNO faction,<sup>29</sup> Anwar will have been further discredited by his collective responsibility to defend the government's less than Islamic measures such as the opposition to the proposed implementation of *hudud* laws in Kelantan and the clampdown on Darul Arqam.<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether Anwar has remained at heart a genuine Islamist, or whether he has been transformed by unavoidable circumstances and interests into a secular-oriented politician capitalising on Islamic slogans. Although the Islamic state of Malaysia could be near to realisation if and when Anwar succeeds Dr. Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister (*cf.* Hussin Mutalib 1993: 86-89), it is possible to envisage a stiffening of opposition to him by secular-oriented rivals resentful of the uncouth manner in which Anwar rose to the heights of power, and by Islamists increasingly alienated by Anwar's concessions of fundamentals to the multi-cultural political labyrinth. Such concessions have included a softening of stance on the Islamic state, albeit in veiled language, as expressed by him in an interview:

I'd rather not make it a point to call upon the establishment of an Islamic State in Malaysia.

The more we do that, what do we gain?..... The Islamic State will be a natural outcome if

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<sup>29</sup>Several members of Anwar Ibrahim's original *wawasan* team have been publicly disgraced. Muhammad Muhammad Taib, having been arrested in Australia for attempting to transport an illegal sum of money out of the country, resigned as Chief Minister of Selangor in April 1997 (*BH* 13.4.97). In poison-pen letters widely distributed before the 1996 UMNO elections, Muhyiddin Yassin was heavily implicated in financial scandals; he consequently lost his deputy presidency and his position as Johore Chief Minister, and was transferred to the federal cabinet (*ibid.* 12.10.96). Rahim Tamby Chik resigned as Chief Minister of Malacca amidst embarrassing revelations of his sex affair with a minor and dubious business deals; his campaign to retain his post as UMNO Youth Chief in 1996 ended in a humiliating defeat (*FT* 20.9.94, *AM* 14(6) 1994, *Massa* 24.8.96). Najib Razak was briefly embarrassed by allegations of sexual misconduct with a pop singer (Gomez 1995: 7), but he appears to have emerged relatively unscathed and is presently Minister of Education. Of late, even Anwar has been implicated by poison-pen letters in a sex scandal (*BH* 25.8.97).

<sup>30</sup>For example, Anwar's statement: "*We have not rejected the hukum hudud but the time is not right yet. First people must fully understand what it is and there is the need for the legal infrastructure to be in place before it can be implemented*" (*New Sunday Times* 5.2.95); and 'Anwar on banning of Al Arqam', *MD* August/September 1994.

Islamic values and policies have gradually seeped into people's lives..... The Islamisation policies of the government, such as the establishment of the Islamic banks, Islamic university, propagation of Islamic values in government administration, and so on, are some of the things done to enrich the overall quality of life of Malaysians and Malaysian society. Both Muslims and non-Muslims, over time, can benefit from these policies. Of course, there is no guarantee that these policies will make Malaysia an Islamic state eventually, but we must not hurry it. [Anwar Ibrahim, from excerpts of interview reproduced in Hussin Mutalib (1993: 92-94)].

If Anwar Ibrahim's official statements as Deputy Prime Minister are to be taken at face value, it is reasonable to believe that if an Islamic state were to take place at all in Malaysia under Anwar, it will exclude the revivalist model which emphasises *shariah* as its core. Anwar insisted on the adequacy of the government's approach to Islam by contrasting PAS' proposed *hudud* laws which would allegedly "*lead to slander and oppression*" with the present Penal Code, which while "*still not perfect,..... is more assuring in ensuring that justice is done to combat crime and to meet the objectives of the shariah*" (NST 24.1.95). In his keynote address at a two-day international workshop on 'Islam in Southeast Asia',<sup>31</sup> Anwar appealed to distinctive features of Southeast Asian Islam to argue for a 'middle path', said also to have existed in Confucian and Aristotelian traditions, of solving problems of the *ummah* in the face of contemporary challenges:

By being moderate and pragmatic, we are far from compromising the teachings and ideals of Islam or pandering to the whims and fancies of the times. On the contrary, we believe that such an approach is necessary to realise the societal ideals of Islam itself, such as justice, equitable distribution of wealth, fundamental rights and liberties..... As Muslims and as Southeast Asians, we cherish this heritage of cultural and religious diversity. This 'living together' would not be possible without mutual tolerance or respect and being moderate and pragmatic in the conduct of our affairs..... Many of those who purportedly address the problems of the *ummah* tend to take a doctrinaire position *vis-à-vis* social, political and economic matters without due regard to the realities of times. This is why we need the Muslim intellectuals to articulate a moderate and pragmatic version of Islam which is more sensitive to the contemporary situation of the *ummah*. (ibid. 6.3.96).

The moderate version of Islam articulated by Anwar Ibrahim evidently made the solution of urgent socio-economic issues a priority over an attempted introduction

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<sup>31</sup>Co-organised by the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington, and Universiti Malaya, Petaling Jaya, March 1996.

of *shariah*-based legislation, the premature implementation of which "would be tantamount to having a form of religion without its substance or its content....." (ibid.). Such a pragmatic interpretation of political Islam, which cites extenuating circumstances to justify delaying the full implementation of *shariah*, would very probably be scoffed at by hardline Islamists as a rhetorical disguise over an opportunistic conversion to secular-nationalism. But Anwar's experimentation with modernist Islam has been lauded by western observers who tend to contrast it with the hostile image of Middle Eastern Islam.<sup>32</sup> On a wider level, Anwar's pragmatic stance is a reflection of the overall thrust of the Malaysian state's attitude towards the role of Islam in nation-building, which is to reconcile Islam with modernity (Nagata 1997: 140-142). In this mould, Malaysia envisions itself as leader of a rational and enlightened Islam: an idea which has been constantly popularised by Malaysian leaders at international Islamic functions and given credence by accolades from distinguished Muslim countries.<sup>33</sup> Without doubt, the apparent success of Malaysia's model of a modern Islamic polity has been boosted by the remarkable pace and duration of her economic growth.<sup>34</sup>

The watering down of Anwar Ibrahim's vision of Malaysia as an Islamic state exposes the reality of political Islamists wishing to accomplish their ambitions from within the dominant establishment. Plainly speaking, a convergence of principles with those of the ruling elite is a pre-requisite for political success. In return for providing Islamic legitimacy to the regime, the Islamist is offered fair channels for political manoeuvres. But the secularist-Islamist relationship being based on mutual benefits, it is naive to expect the secular elite to sacrifice their own principles in exchange for an Islamic state in which they will necessarily be marginalised. The most probable outcome of a mutual compromise between secular and Islamist factions of the elite is the emergence of a new national ideology which disavows both dogmatic secularism and radical Islamism but combines elements of both. While this confers advantages to both factions of elite politicians, the primary losers of such trade-offs are the

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<sup>32</sup>For example, Edward Mortimer, 'On the middle path: Both the west and the radical Middle East should listen to the reasonable voice of Islam coming from south-east Asia', *FT*, 10.7.96, and James Kynge, 'The world will have to rethink its prejudices if Malaysia's interpretation of Islam proves successful', *ibid.*, 26.4.97.

<sup>33</sup>For example, Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's claim that by showing that Islam is no obstacle to economic and technological development, Malaysia has been a role model to the Islamic world (*The Star* 25.2.97), and Education Minister Najib Razak's claim that Malaysia's education system is one of the world's best in providing religious studies to Muslim students (*ibid.* 19.8.96). For his services to Muslim causes, Dr. Mahathir has been honoured with the 1997 King Faisal Award by the Saudi Arabian government, who according to him, recognises both Malaysia's success in managing Islam in a multi-religious society and UMNO's struggle as being in agreement with Islam (*BH* 16.1.97).

<sup>34</sup>For an insightful analysis of the socio-political ramifications of Malaysia's stunning economic growth, see Ron Moreau's special report 'Favourite Son: Mahathir Mohamad believes that political stability plus economic growth equals ethnic peace. He is not about to let an election change Malaysia's winning formula', *Newsweek*, 24.4.95.

grassroots Islamists who dejectedly observe the political Islamists, upon whom such high hopes have been pinned, wilfully supplanting their ideals with a grotesque mixture between Islamist and secular ideologies. The political Islamists should deservedly quiz themselves about the motives of their joining the establishment if its end product is still distant from the pristine Islamic state, as embodied in the comprehensive application of the *shariah* in the legal system and the institution of *shura* in the political process. As for the pragmatic secularists, no harm is incurred by accepting piecemeal Islamic features into the state, especially since speaking under the banner of Islam has now become politically fashionable and necessary in some cases, so long as the dominant political paradigm remains broadly secular. The present approach of establishment Islam in Malaysia is aptly summarised by Nagata (1994) as an attempt to "*be Islamic without being an Islamic state.*" Her conclusion is instructive:

For the time being, the course of development for Malaysia in the immediate future appears locked into the compromise of pursuit of modernity under the cloak of Islamic correctness, and for every major policy to be authenticated by the appropriate religious spokesmen and *ulama*. This approach requires the almost impossible combination of appeal to investors from abroad, while maintaining an impeccable religious image with 'something for everyone' among the assorted Islamic and political interest groups at home. Achievement of this balance requires a substantial measure of authoritarianism in practice, but of a different order than that of an Islamic state..... The direction of Islamization in Malaysia at present bears more resemblance to a form of evolving civic religion, in which religion legitimises much of state action and policy, and transposes many of the interests of its people on to a sacred plane. In contemporary Malaysia this happens to be a thoroughly 'modern' form of Islam, in tension with competing, more 'fundamentalist' forms in PAS and some of the remaining *dakwah* movements. It represents a situation of uncertain and possibly temporary stability, which is ever vulnerable to destabilization as the result of unanticipated changes, either in the local political scene, or in the Muslim world community at large. (Nagata 1994: 85-86).

In the light of the emasculation of genuine Islamist challenges of all varieties to the present regime, the state of affairs outlined by Nagata above is likely to remain for some time, *ceteris paribus*. In practical form, the hybrid national ideology is epitomised by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's 'Vision 2020', which combines the virtues of robust economic growth with essential ingredients of a socio-political order which espouses Islamic values, towards achieving a 'fully developed country' status by 2020.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Mahathir is, arguably, an Islamic modernist in his own right, for whom the political achievements of other modernists like Turkey's Kemal Ataturk are worth

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<sup>35</sup>For a full elaboration of Vision 2020, see Mahathir Mohamad (1991) and Abu Hassan Adam (1992).

emulating.<sup>36</sup> His modernist ideas are occasionally expressed in his speeches on Islam. For example, addressing an international symposium on 'The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the Twenty-first Century',<sup>37</sup> he reprimanded orthodox jurists and reformists for injecting intellectual stagnation into the *ummah* by emphasising the form rather than the substance of Islam, and exhorted Muslims to come to terms with modern political realities by giving up forlorn endeavours to resurrect the Islamic empire and instead bolster coordination and cooperation within the present set-up of nation-states (*NST* 26.4.97). It is least surprising therefore that Dr. Mahathir's modern Islamic set-up does not uproot Malaysia's secular foundation. As a development theorist has noted of Vision 2020:

The latest Malaysian development strategy, Vision 2020, which was regarded by participants of a government-organised Congress as 'Islamic', redefines development as development of knowledge, efficiency and wealth minus moral and religious decadence. But the long-held neo-classical assumptions which regard technology and industrialisation as important motors for development and progress are still firmly upheld. Islamic values are used only to ensure the maintenance of moral and religious belief, while the neo-classical development philosophy remains as the dominant philosophy of its material development. (Muhammad Syukri Salleh 1994c: 2, fn. 5).

The undeniable fact of Malaysian politics in the post-NEP era is that pressure from Islamists has contributed to the increasing role of Islam in the Malaysian state. Although the purpose of including Islam as part of the state agenda and ideology may be subject to dispute, the implementation of piecemeal Islamisation measures represents progress to the Islamists. One expects the Islamists, with their ultimate aim of establishing Islam as the supreme defining creed of the state, to persist, by whatever means possible, to clamour for Islamic-oriented changes. One also suspects that if the different streams of Islamism in Malaysia were united or at least coordinated in a way which compensates the weakness of one with the strength of another, the pace of Islamisation will quicken. Any endeavour by political Islamists to reach the levers of political power and socio-economic influence, however, will necessarily be limited by the extent to which the state allows them to depart from the official national ideology and the politicians' perceptions of whether or not their vested interests are threatened.

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<sup>36</sup>According to a highly eulogistic biography of Dr. Mahathir, Dr. Mahathir is an admirer of Kemal Ataturk, "*even though he disagrees with Kemal's views on religion*" (Adshead 1989:51). This is hardly surprising, for the Kemalist revolution in Turkey had a considerable impact upon Malay nationalists of Dr. Mahathir's generation; UMNO itself was modelled on its Kemalist counterpart (Mehmet 1990: 27-28).

<sup>37</sup>Co-organised by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and IKIM, Petaling Jaya, April 1997.

### 8.2.3 TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As for the future direction of political Islam in Malaysia, it is as yet impossible to divorce the development of an Islamic polity from the imperatives of the secular-nationalist state. This can be seen from the defeat and the cowing of grassroots *dakwah* protagonists as exemplified by Darul Arqam and Jamaat Tabligh; in the realistic incapacity of political party Islamists to surmount state-induced obstacles to creating a mini-Islamic state in an area they politically control i.e. Kelantan; and in the state's neutralisation of genuine Islamist challenges from within the dominant political framework. This observation may also be true of other post-colonial Muslim societies where the state exerts the major ideological influence upon people's lives. Malaysia's political environment, however, is less oppressive in that Islamists are permitted to organise freely and articulate views, so long as the political boundaries, both formal and informal, are not transgressed. This environment, together with Malaysia's multi-religious and multi-ethnic character, form the practical socio-political framework in which future Islamists will have to operate.

Having neutralised genuine Islamist challenges to its hegemony over the country's Malay-Muslims, the state has continually tried to raise its Islamic legitimacy in a manner which questions the legitimacy of independent Islamic movements. For example, since blocking PAS' attempts to introduce *shariah*-based legislation in Kelantan, the state has commenced moves to streamline the Islamic legal administration<sup>38</sup> and tighten the implementation of existing Islamic measures.<sup>39</sup> Since

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<sup>38</sup>The revamp of the *shariah* court structure would establish a *Shariah* Judicial Department under the Prime Minister's Department to overcome the backlog of cases created by the wide disparity of *shariah* administration between states. Announcement of its creation was accompanied by the Prime Minister's call to review classical Islamic laws so that their innate spirit of justice always held sway over rigid adherence to procedural formulation of laws (*The Star* 24.7.96). He also gave assurances that existing criminal and civil laws were being reviewed in an effort to bring them in line with Islamic principles (*BH* 24.7.96). Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim followed suit by calling for an urgent reformation of *shariah* implementation to halt the injustice suffered by women whose cases were heard in the *shariah* courts (*ibid.* 26.8.96). Since early 1997, the Islamic Centre has been elevated to the new role of Islamic Development Department (JAKIM: *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*) with wider functions (*ibid.* 17.12.96). The restructuring of the *shariah* court system has been at a much slower pace because of the sluggish response from states whose powers would be correspondingly devolved to a centralised administration (*ibid.* 25.3.97). States have also been urged by the federal government to appoint their *muftis* to their executive councils, but this proposition has also been met with a mixed reaction, with PAS-controlled Kelantan being among the dissenting states (*ibid.* 8.4.97, 7.10.97). The first phase of streamlining was achieved by the Parliament's passing of a bill to coordinate the role of religious officials between federal and state levels, but even this was limited to the Federal Territory and four states, viz. Selangor, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan and Penang (*ibid.* 14.5.97, 13.8.97). In a meeting between federal government representatives headed by Dr. Mahathir and the fourteen state *muftis*, the *muftis* reportedly concurred to the proposal to refer their *fatawa* to the NFC (*ibid.* 3.9.97). The veracity of the reports having been disputed by the *muftis* themselves, the federal authorities agreed to conduct more regular meetings with the *muftis* in what seemed to be an effort to defuse strained relations with them (*ibid.* 7.9.97). In spite of the tense situation, the federal government has decided to proceed with its plans: JAKIM has announced its completion of six draft bills for further administrative streamlining, to be

crushing Darul Arqam, the state has vigorously clamped down on minority heterodox sects,<sup>40</sup> apparently demonstrating its seriousness in guarding the sanctity of the Islamic faith from all sorts of deviations. But the state's apparently successful marriage between its version of modern Islam and economic development may well be threatened by the acute currency crisis which has dogged Far Eastern economies since mid-1997.<sup>41</sup> In the wake of a possible economic downturn succeeding the

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tabled to the Council of Rulers in 1998 (ibid. 7.10.97). Amidst fears of a possible backlash from states' sultans, the federal government has assured them that their powers as Heads of the Islamic religion in their respective states would not be curtailed under the streamlining proposals (ibid. 12.12.97).

<sup>39</sup>Among other things, the federal government has declared its intention to ban Muslims from holding posts in gambling firms (*The Star* 3.8.96), to devise a modern-oriented curriculum for Islamic education (*BH* 20.8.96), to build an Islamic research hospital (ibid. 6.1.97), and to introduce the Islamic dress for Muslim nurses (ibid. 25.4.97). Possibly in order not to fall out of line with Islamic-oriented changes at national level, and also in response to the federal government's intent on taking over the Islamic jurisdiction of states (cf. fn. 38), the states' religious authorities have themselves initiated moves to enforce stricter implementation of Islamic laws. For example, Penang and Johore have proposed stiffer penalties for Muslims convicted of Islamic criminal offences (*The Star* 5.12.96, *BH* 23.5.97), Terengganu has affirmed its commitment to an Islamic economic package including the formation of an Islamic-based securities company (ibid. 15.3.97, 28.3.97) and Kedah has started a programme to revive the role of the mosque as a social and educational centre (ibid. 9.11.96, 14.1.97). However, statewide measures have not been short of controversy. The Selangor religious authorities' decision to apprehend three young female Muslims during a beauty contest and charge them in court with indecent body exposure sparked off a heated media debate in which the Selangor *mufti*, Ishak Baharom, was implicated with slighting state executive council members for not defending the religious authorities' action, and with accusing the Prime Minister of nearly committing apostasy by criticising the religious authorities' 'misuse of power' (cf. *BH* 4.7.97, 15.7.97, 23.7.97, 15.8.97, 26.8.97). Ishak Baharom's contract as *mufti* was eventually terminated, ostensibly on account of old age (ibid. 16.10.97). For an Islamic analysis of the affair, see 'Who's afraid of a little bikini? Row over standards of decency', *Impact International*, September 1997, and 'Mufti and the curse of a little bikini', ibid., November 1997. For criticisms of the religious authorities' approach, see articles by the social activist-cum-Prime Minister's daughter Marina Mahathir, 'Religion, where is thy beauty', *The Star*, 9.7.97, and by Uli Schmetzer, 'Malaysia: Muslim women feeling force of social crackdown', *San Jose Mercury News*, 19.11.97.

<sup>40</sup>At the height of its crackdown on ex-Darul Arqam members, the Islamic Centre revealed that it had identified sixty-five deviant teachings (*BM* 16.6.96). Since then, the authorities have moved against minor heterodox groups such as the Tabarani (*BH* 17.6.96, 18.6.96) and the Hakikat Insan (ibid. 23.7.96, 24.7.96), as well as against individuals such as Nordin Puteh who claimed to be Al-Mahdi (ibid. 27.6.96) and Meriam Ahmad Shahrudin who claimed to be 'Allah's Secretary' (ibid. 29.4.97). Eight leaders and top intellectuals of Malaysian Shiites, who arguably form the main deviationist threat since Darul Arqam, have been recently detained under the ISA (ibid. 7.11.97). Such tenacity appears to show that the state has not learned the lessons of its confrontation with Darul Arqam. In this respect, it is appropriate to quote *Impact International's* (July 1996) comment on the appearance of movements such as Al Arqam, that they are "a symptom of a greater malaise arising out of confusion and a vacuum of some kind in a society that is undergoing rapid changes." This comment would apply as well to other 'deviationist' movements which have proliferated in the 1990s. As suggested by *Impact*, the abiding solution to the problem would be education rather than confrontation (ibid.).

<sup>41</sup>The crisis, which has brought the Malaysian currency, the *ringgit*, to a historic low, has been steadily followed by shrinking share prices, loss of business confidence and the abrupt promulgation of austerity measures in anticipation of difficult economic times ahead. In reactive outbursts, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has singularly rebuked the activities of currency speculators for deliberately undermining the booming 'tiger' economies. His wanton accusation sparked off a furious row between him and George Soros, the Hungarian-American financier; an altercation which did not boost plummeting business confidence. At its peak, Dr. Mahathir blamed the currency crisis on a purported Jewish conspiracy to undermine Muslim economies (Soros is of Jewish origin) (cf. chapter 3: fn. 26). This incurred the wrath of Washington. Dr. Mahathir has resisted the idea of stepping down from power

financial upheaval, pundits are already calling for a revision to the Malaysian model of nation-building.<sup>42</sup> It remains to be seen whether Islamists will publicly propose a new and viable development model which postulates Islam as the engine rather than an auxiliary component of nation-building. That the Darul Arqam model may be resurrected, not necessarily by its former members themselves, should not be discounted, given its proven vitality as testified by Nagata:

Malaysia as a state is challenged by Islam both from without and within. One apparently unique alternative, promoted and lived by Arqam, of a utopian and indigenous style of Islamic rural and social development, has resonance, both within Malaysia and beyond. Although originating in a peripheral Muslim zone, its formation occurred at the confluence of numerous external and local forces, and now its impact extends well beyond Malaysia to other continents. The formal opposition religious party, PAS, is more predictable and visible and 'manageable' in the eyes of UMNO Malays than the mercurial and indeterminate *dakwah* sympathizers, including those of Arqam, who are thus vulnerable to accusations of heresy or bans. All the internal forms of Muslim resistance have their external connections with the wider *ummah*, where boundaries between local and international are not always readily distinguishable. (Nagata 1997: 148).

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despite significant external pressure. See the following reports: 'Malaysian business loses its poise', *FT* 29.8.97; 'Soros criticises Malaysian PM', *ibid.*, 22.9.97; 'Mahathir-Soros row hits ringgit', *ibid.* 23.9.97; 'Banking in Malaysia faces pain, not failure', *ibid.*, 8.10.97; 'Dr Mahathir and the markets: The prime minister of Malaysia's attempt to punish foreign speculators is both misguided and counterproductive', *The Economist*, editorial, 6.9.97; 'Asia: Mahathir's roasting', *ibid.* 27.9.97; Bill Powell, 'Mad Money Markets: If governments want to stymie speculators, they first need to find sensible policies', *Newsweek* 6.10.97; 'Vinegar by the bucket: Mahathir's sour words leave the nation puckering', *ibid.*; 'Malaysia: The coup that never was. But the 'media' did try very hard', *Impact International*, November 1997; 'Malaysia: Budgeting for austerity', *ibid.*, December 1997; 'Saya tidak akan letak jawatan' (I will not resign), *BH* 7.10.97; 'Mahathir jamin masalah dapat diatasi' (Mahathir assures problems will be surmounted), *ibid.*; 'Krisis mata wang angkara Yahudi' (Currency crisis: Jews are the culprit), *ibid.*, 11.10.97; 'Washington marah Mahathir sebut 'Yahudi'' (Washington resents Mahathir's singling out Jews), *ibid.*, 17.10.97. On the regional and global dimensions of the crisis, see 'Confidence tumbles with the fall: A structural shift in funding patterns is taking place in all sectors', *FT*, 23.9.97; 'Currency pains fail to dim hopes of gains by project investors: ASEAN turmoil may eventually benefit infrastructure deals', *ibid.*, 8.10.97; Bill Powell, 'Asia Stumbles: The global financial community is gathering in Hong Kong for what was meant to be a celebration of the Asian miracle. Think again', *Newsweek* 22.9.97; Bill Powell, 'Stocks Head South: Asia's problems are specific to Asia; its economies aren't that big; most Western companies don't have much exposure there. So relax, right? As the world learned last week: wrong', *ibid.* 3.11.97; Ian Buruma, 'Colonial Attitudes Never Die: They just get adopted by those who fought against colonialism. Therein lies one of Asia's problems', *ibid.*; Gerald Segal, 'Be Nice to Uncle Sam: He's done quite a lot for East Asia recently, without much in the way of thanks', *ibid.* 1.12.97; 'Tigers mauled by global hyenas', *Impact International*, October 1997.

<sup>42</sup>For example, James Kynge, 'Malaysia model in need of update', *FT* 10.10.97. As rightly pointed out by Kynge, the apparently successful Malaysian model had revolved around "suppressing negative news."

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored several intellectual issues, ranging from such general themes as the relationship between Islam and development and political Islam in Malaysia, to the specific theme of the distinctiveness of Darul Arqam as an Islamic social, economic and political movement. To a significant extent, findings from the case-study of Darul Arqam have been used to substantiate the more general arguments. For reasons of clarity, the following summary of this thesis' findings has been divided into four sections, corresponding to the four sets of research objectives outlined in chapter 1: 1.2. Numbers in squared parentheses refer to the relevant chapters, sections or sub-sections in the thesis. The findings are presented in descending order of priority insofar as they concern the modern social scientist interested in issues of universal academic significance. The author is well aware, however, that the Malaysian-related findings will be of more interest to Malaysian and Southeast Asian specialists.

#### 9.1 RESURGENT ISLAM AND SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY

Utilising primary data from Darul Arqam's experience, this thesis has questioned the academic wisdom of pre-supposing a necessarily peripheral role for religion in the modern task of organising society and the state [7]. It has been shown that beyond the realm of theoretical abstractions, Darul Arqam, above all, demonstrated that the comprehensive practice of revivalist Islam, even in sufi-messianic form, may not only not inhibit, but may also positively foster and even engineer the processes of economic development and modernisation [7.3, 7.5]. Darul Arqam showed that the ideological impact of sufi-messianic Islamism may counterbalance the structural imperatives of state-directed liberal capitalism, but only up to the point at which its *modus vivendi* with the dominant secular structures stops short of proclaiming an interest in political control of the state. The expansion of Darul Arqam's model threatened the ideological bases of both the secular liberal-capitalist state and diehard adherents of the theoretically inverse relationship between the rise of religious consciousness and modernisation. A tentative indication of Darul Arqam's success is pundits' recognition of Darul Arqam's successful portrayal of the

compatibility between Islam and development.<sup>1</sup> The present thesis, bolstering such claims through tangible findings, may be viewed as a further step towards dispensing with the widely held assumption that Islam is devoid of dynamic factors which could assist nation-building in the modern sense.

This thesis contends that if the exemplary case of Darul Arqam's model of societal development were taken seriously and objectively by pundits of all areas and persuasions, its theoretical ramifications may revolutionise the prevailing view of the relationship between Islam and modernisation. It is far too early, however, to expect Darul Arqam's success at movement level to be emulated by political Islamists at state level, both because politicians, even apparently Islamic-minded ones, often have vested interests in perpetuating the socio-political and economic status quo, and because they are practically bound by the imperatives of a secular national and international system which ties its members in an exchange relationship based on mutual needs [cf. 8.2.1, 8.2.2]. But this thesis has, exceptionally, thrown significant light on social science theory by attempting to introduce new parameters governing the relationship between religion in general, and Islam in particular, and modernisation.

## 9.2 ARGUMENTS ON THE CORE-PERIPHERY FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSE THE ISLAMIC WORLD

This thesis has questioned the intellectual paradigm through which many Western-based scholars have approached the subject of political Islam [1.4]. Their primary mistake, it has been argued, lies not in their division of the *ummah* into a Middle East core and a non-Middle East periphery per se, but rather in their arbitrary attachment of peculiar dynamics, values, norms and structures said to distinguish peripheral Islamic societies from their core counterparts [1.4.2]. Analytically, the core and the periphery have been virtually regarded as polar ends in degrees of Islamism; periphery being invariably treated as perpetually less Islamic than the core. In terms of ummatic developments and changes, the core and the periphery have been regarded as proactive and reactive respectively. The academic consequences have been serious; the periphery being widely relegated to a subordinate position *vis-à-vis* the core within the domain of 'Islamic studies' [1.4.3]. In the era of contemporary Islamic resurgence, the radical Middle Eastern trends, so symptomatic of the region's specific

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<sup>1</sup>cf. Judith Nagata's statement: "*Malaysia as a state is challenged by Islam both from without and within. One apparently unique alternative, promoted and lived by Arqam, of a utopian and indigenous style of Islamic rural and social development, has resonance, both within Malaysia and beyond*" (1997: 148; cf. chapter 8: 8.2.3).

institutional problems and authoritarian cultural norms, have been treated as if they represented the whole body of Islamism; hence the myth of a monolithic Islamic threat [1.4.1]. Such considerations seem to have coloured the views of not only Western scholars of Islam who have tended to generalise their analyses of the Middle East to cover the whole spectrum of the *ummah*, but also Western scholars of Malaysian affairs who have taken for granted that Malaysia's multi-religious character would necessarily drive it towards a secular model of nation-building [1.4.4].

The intellectual roots of the dichotomous approach outlined above can be traced to an orientalist scholarship which had served Western colonial interests. It is lamentable that almost half a century into the post-colonial epoch, the attempt to depart from such a skewed paradigm of viewing the Islamic world has been painstakingly slow, as pioneered by few academics scattered over several institutions, often not conforming to the intellectual traditions espoused by their own establishments. Retention of the fundamentals of the orientalist paradigm is implicit in the context of contemporary Islamic resurgence being presented as a revolt against political, economic and social exploitation in a manner similar to many Third World movements [1.4.1]. While many in the Muslim world might suspect a deliberate Western-masterminded conspiracy against Islam to perpetuate the dominance of the Occidental civilisation of the international order, recent publications which debunk the Huntingtonian conception of an inevitable 'clash of civilisations' between the Western and Confucian-Islamic world, raise hopes that all is not too gloomy for global security as far as the geopolitical impact of Islamic resurgence is concerned.<sup>2</sup>

### **9.3 FINDINGS ON POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA, IN BOTH HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY MOULDS**

With regard to Islamic political history in Malaya, this thesis has argued that the positive effects of preponderant sufi influence on Islamic practice outweighed its negative aspects, which have been unduly emphasised by many previous scholars [2]. The prevalence of tolerance, the tendency towards peaceful discourse and the negligible instances of the use of force generally found among the Islamic-oriented masses and leaders, may be attributed to the lasting implications of an accommodative, non-oppressive political culture largely influenced by sufism [2.3,

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<sup>2</sup>For example, see Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1995 - the authors of this study have been senior policy advisors in distinguished institutions and the foreign service of the USA, and Carla Power, 'Secularist Radicalism: Has the Islamic threat been replaced by a new form of fundamentalism in the Middle East', *Newsweek* 14.7.97.

2.4]. In the colonial era, while sufi-Islamic orthodoxy was being gradually eroded by secular reforms and moral decline, the Malay-Muslims, significantly, retained the sufi-influenced political culture of tolerance and accommodation. For example, the massive influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants did not encounter a hostile response from the indigenous population, although the Malay-Muslims did harbour suspicions as to the extent of their political rights within the new socio-political and economic milieu [2.5]. When feudal Malay leaders and Malay-Islamic reformists tried to dispense with the sufi heritage of Malaysian Islam: the former by advocating violence and the latter by negatively contrasting indigenous-traditionalist aspects of the heritage with supposedly pristine Middle Eastern trends, their respective defeat and withering away was a foregone conclusion on account of lack of mass support [2.6]. The achievement of independence at the hands of secular-nationalist Malay leaders, although lamentable for their lack of a comprehensive understanding of Islam, was more acceptable to the masses on account of the respect accorded to the traditional institutions of Malaysian Islam [2.7].

In this thesis, the examination of the origins of Islamic resurgence in contemporary Malaysia has established the relative importance of domestic factors over external linkages [3]. Once independence was achieved, the negative impact of secularisation outweighed the positive effects of tolerance, which had itself become a slogan justified in politically expedient and ethno-cultural rather than religious terms. Islam, understood in comprehensive terms as *din al-hayah*, had become de-institutionalised at all levels [3.2]. The post-independence delinking of Islam from the state was critical in triggering future demands for an Islamic-oriented polity; in this, Malaysia was a typical case within the *ummah*. Similarly typical were the socio-economic effects arising from the long-term processes of economic development and urbanisation. But the point of no return which crystallised Islamic resurgence as a force to reckon with in Malaysian politics and society was the implementation of the NEP following the racial riots of 1969. The NEP, directly through cosmetic Islamic measures and indirectly through the impact of its educational policies on the Malay-Muslim youth, gave long-term socio-economic measures short-term spillover effects which undertook strongly Islamist tones. While the contribution of external catalysts in fuelling the Islamic resurgence is acknowledged, the pre-requisites of the phenomenon in Malaysia are overwhelmingly supplied by endogenous factors [3.3]. This view contrasts with prevailing assumptions characterising relationships between the Islamic core and the periphery, whereby it was taken for granted that Islamic changes in the periphery, must, as a general rule, occur in reaction to similar phenomena in the core [cf. 1.4.3].

From the investigation into independent Islamic movements and the Malaysian state's response to their challenge, it has been discovered that the contemporary Islamic resurgence has significantly differed from any previous upsurge of Islamic activism and socio-political mobilisation [3.5, 4]. Most importantly, contemporary Islamists have mostly de-emphasised, if not outrightly rejected, the intellectual sources and doctrinal interpretations of their Islamic predecessors. These include, among other things, the classical sufism of the pioneering Islamic missionaries, the *Kaum Muda* modernism of the early twentieth century and the hybrid mixture of Islamic reformism and Malay nationalism which instigated demands for independence. In short, Islamic resurgence in contemporary Malaysia has witnessed significant departures from many aspects of the enduring Malay-Islamic heritage. This has been in line with developments in the wider *ummah*, where most Islamists follow a revivalist orientation which stresses the Islamic identity to the virtual exclusion of other societal traits [cf. 1.4.1].

While such a clear-cut approach is viable at the theoretical level, in the real world, Islamists have had to face the arduous task of reconciling revivalist Islam with political, economic and social settings which markedly differed from those of their intellectual forefathers and Islamic predecessors. Political rivals were no longer feudal Malay rulers or infidel colonialists, but democratically elected Muslims who paid lip service to Islam but practised the faith in a partial manner. In contrast with the oppressive political environment surrounding many of their Middle Eastern counterparts, Malaysian Islamists have had not only to contend with a less coercive state, but they also have had to adapt to state-initiated cooptation of Islamist figures and Islamisation endeavours, both of which together emphasised over, or rather to accompany provisional repression, were not necessarily unfavourable to their immediate interests [3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.5.3]. The multi-faceted response management strategy greatly differs from that employed by post-colonial states of the Middle Eastern core, with the possible exception of Jordan [cf. 3: fn. 54]. But it also reflected the enduring legacy of tolerance in Malaysian Islam, as mainly derived from the legacy of sufism.

At grassroots level, socio-economic changes have obliged the Islamists to devise a propagation strategy which encompassed upwardly mobile Malay-Muslims, and which accommodated the legitimate interests of non-Muslim minorities whose socio-economic influence had greatly risen since independence. Scholars have disagreed about the extent of the Islamists' success in reconciling the apparently conflicting demands between revivalist ideals and Malaysian realities, but it is fair to say that the penetration of revivalist Islam into the heart of Malaysian politics and society could not have come about if intractability of ideas had been a steadfast

practice of the Islamists. For example, in spreading the message to fellow Malay-Muslims, many Islamists were willing to capitalise on considerations of ethnic insecurity. In their long-term endeavour to establish an Islamic state, some Islamists seemingly accepted the olive branch from their secular adversaries to secure channels of political influence. The most crucial challenge facing Islamists in the years ahead will be how to reconcile the reality of a multi-faith, multi-cultural modern state, as envisioned by the ethnically heterogeneous ruling elite, with demands for an Islamic state. In particular, to what extent are they able and willing to convince their non-Muslim citizens that an apparent reduction of their status from full citizens to *dhimmi*s would be beneficial for them. Together with the relatively mild state response to Islamic movements, Malaysia's multi-ethnic character underpins the uniqueness of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia [3.6].

#### 9.4 FINDINGS ON THE DARUL ARQAM CASE-STUDY

The case of Darul Arqam provides a unique exception to the comparable patterns of Islamic resurgence in the core and the periphery. While the overall Islamist experience in Malaysia has seen pragmatism prevail over dogmatic interpretations of political Islam, in the case of Darul Arqam, the distinctively Malaysian character of Islamic resurgence became more pronounced. To start with, Darul Arqam was the only Islamic movement to have explicitly recognised the traditional heritage of Malaysian Islam, as grounded in sufi-oriented gradualism as its core component [4.4]. Darul Arqam's organisation reflected a synthesis between traditional leadership notions of sufi brotherhoods and modern concepts of management moulded by Islamic principles [4.5]. The culture expounded by Darul Arqam's system did not categorically discard Malay culture, but married its Malayness with Islam in a way which distinctively ensured the former's subordination to the latter. The other Islamic movements, while not disregarding sufism per se, relegated it to a subordinate position *vis-à-vis* other revivalist concerns such as intellectual development, missionary undertakings and political campaigning [4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3, 4.7.4]. This explains why in its formative phase, support for Darul Arqam was greatest among low-position Malays who were more at home with traditional Malay conceptions of Islam [4.2]. As young professionals' and graduates' fascination with the efficacy of Darul Arqam's organisational principles and mechanism grew, middle-class support for Darul Arqam became increasingly evident [4.3, 4.6]. This coincided with a period when the other Islamic movements came to realise the deficiency of their non-Malaysian orientation and revised their operating methods

accordingly. Whether the revision to suit Malaysian realities was a reaction to Darul Arqam's remarkable appeal is largely surmise [4.8].

Ironically, as domestic success bred overseas expansion and enabled the acquisition by Darul Arqam of a transnational status, its Malaysian slant not only endured but also expanded beyond expectations [4.3]. Its intellectual worldview and methodological direction of struggle were virtually dominated by the ideological tenets of its founder-leader, whose formal education had been entirely Malaysian-based [4.4]. Darul Arqam's Malaysian-orientedness reached the extent of proclaiming for Malaysia the role of leader of the global Islamic resurgence [7.3]. This was portrayed most strongly in its messianic declaration of Malaysia as the provenance of the youth of Bani Tamim and the venue of the pioneering Islamic state in modern times. The establishment of such a state would precipitate the advent of Al-Mahdi, whose ancestral roots could supposedly be traced to the large-scale emigration of Arabs, among whom were Prophet Muhammad's direct descendants, to the Far East. In the intellectual make-up of Darul Arqam members, the writings and ideas of non-Malaysian scholars unequivocally occupied an inferior position [6.5.2]. This was in stark contrast to their counterparts in other Islamic movements, who, while reforming their methodology to suit a Malaysian audience, continued to depend for intellectual guidance upon the works of foreign scholars affiliated to the international Muslim Brotherhood, the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Jamaat Tabligh, both of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

Paradoxically, Darul Arqam's overt Malaysian-orientedness, which had endeared it to a growing number of Malay-Muslims, was also to be the cause of its undoing [5]. Bearing in mind Darul Arqam's impeccable record of translating theory into practice, the Malaysian government had enough reason to worry about the political implications of Darul Arqam's messianic ideology. If Darul Arqam's version of an Islamic state was to prevail in Malaysia, existing power-holders would almost certainly fall into oblivion. Diehard secularists had further cause, on the basis of ideological principles, to oppose Darul Arqam. But the clampdown on Darul Arqam, orchestrated by both opportunistic and principled agents of the Malaysian state, lacked justification on grounds of both ends and means. While continually citing protection of the Islamic faith from theological deviationism as the sole motivation of its actions [5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3], the state ruthlessly employed political means of coercion and political language to such an extent that its claims of not having treated Darul Arqam as a political enemy were preposterous [5.5]. Lacking concrete evidence to pursue action against Darul Arqam, the state had to employ malign resources to convince the population of its case, as exemplified by its brutal propaganda campaign

[5.5.2], which was unprecedented insofar as it was waged by Muslim leaders against their co-religionists whose peaceful reputation was well-known [5.3].

From one perspective, it may be argued that Darul Arqam triggered its own demise by issuing statements giving the impression of an imminent political takeover. Although the Darul Arqam threat was more apparent than real, its cumbersome political statements lent credibility to its political potential. If the persistent issuing of such statements amounted to evidence of Darul Arqam's basking in its new role as a formidable political threat to the state, its political miscalculation and naivety was seriously exposed by its eventually docile capitulation to the state's demands. Due to its political immaturity alone, Darul Arqam possibly deserved its tragic fate.

Nonetheless, a large-scale crackdown on Darul Arqam was arguably also a matter of time. For Darul Arqam was the only Islamic movement to have survived the 1980s and early 1990s without bearing the incorrigible scars of state-initiated coercion, cooptation and Islamisation to neutralise the political challenge of Islamists. In 1994, politically sensitive and cumbersome statements by the Darul Arqam leadership, and its unprecedented decision to react to public vilification relatively aggressively, supplied the state with the long-awaited pretext to deliver the *coup de grace* on an Islamic movement which had obdurately refused even the slightest accommodation to the ways of the establishment [5.5.3]. The clampdown was effectively a reaction to the state's failure to present itself as a legitimate representative of Islam to grassroots Muslims whose religious loyalties were given instead to independent Islamic groups [5.5.1].

The other Islamic movements have been spared the wholesale repression perpetrated against Darul Arqam, precisely because they have willingly succumbed, in one way or another, to the imperatives of the established political and religious framework. Once operating within the framework, they are bound by its formal and informal rules in order to secure meaningful participation, hence the other movements' reluctance to unequivocally condemn the state's brutal suppression of Darul Arqam. In Malaysia, dissent from outside the dominant structures had stoutly remained a taboo despite the rapid socio-economic changes. By contrast, neighbouring governments and foreign-based human rights organisations and media vocally rebuked the Malaysian government's harsh measures against Darul Arqam. This shows that Darul Arqam was not universally recognised as a security or religious threat, as the Malaysian state persistently implied. Cloaked in religious garb, the state's political agenda, which was possibly coupled with an economic agenda as suggested by conjectural evidence [7.5], pertaining to Islamic movements in general and Darul Arqam in particular, was accomplished.

The empirical case-study of former Darul Arqam members in 1996 has revealed some interesting findings [6]. Belying its sufi credentials, which one may argue confers on Darul Arqam the mantle of indigenous-traditionalist rather than doctrinaire-revivalist Islam [cf. 3.3], Darul Arqam's patterns of membership background-composition and political orientation have been found to conform to the typical picture of contemporary Islamism [6.5.1]. The intense level of commitment demanded from Darul Arqam members necessarily restricted their scope of communication with life outside the Darul Arqam system [6.5.2]. Maintaining this communication was the responsibility of Darul Arqam's leadership-intellectual elite. Despite its seemingly autocratic organisational structure, former Darul Arqam members have been found to be open towards externally-induced changes if circumstances warranted them. Thus, they found no difficulty in dispensing with Darul Arqam as a movement-organisation so long as they could hold to the more integral aspects of Darul Arqam's doctrine.

On the positive side, it was the strict code of the leader-led relationship, so common in sufi brotherhoods, which enabled Darul Arqam to maintain cohesiveness and to weather internal crises and external pressure throughout its existence [6.5.2, cf. 4.8]. The enforced dissolution of Darul Arqam may have had positive effects in altering the followers' view of their leaders in a more rational, as opposed to mystical, direction, thus strengthening the leader-led bond [6.5.3]. The dissolution also presents a golden opportunity to cement closer communication with the outside world without being dogged by the anti-Darul Arqam prejudice diffused by the state-controlled media. With the tendency of former Darul Arqam members to perceive the consequences of its organisational demise in terms of advantages to the wider Islamic struggle, it is hardly surprising that most of them have been found to be satisfied with how they were coping with the post-repression era. Unlike traditional sufis, they refused to retreat to the life of recluses upon defeat. As an example of practical Islamists, Darul Arqam members epitomised the successful integration between sufi-traditionalism and doctrinaire-revivalism. This thesis has suggested this trend to be called 'sufi-revivalism' [4.4].

The most important aspect of the survey must be the revelation that despite all logistic odds stacked against a revival of Darul Arqam, former Darul Arqam members have not in the least thought that the days of Darul Arqam's distinctive brand of political Islam had been numbered [6.4, 6.5.4]. A termination of organisational status has not been perceived as tantamount or conducive to a necessary consignment of Darul Arqam's doctrine to oblivion. Despite an outward submission to the state's compulsive demands, they have been found to have retained an unswerving loyalty to Darul Arqam's fundamental principles and a belief in their movement's eventual

success on the political stage. The state's failure to extinguish core aspects of the Darul Arqam doctrine means that there always lurks a possibility of a Darul Arqam revival in whatever form it may assume, not necessarily its original one.

The pertinent aspects underlying Darul Arqam's astonishing growth and resilience have been identified as members' messianic conviction in the destined roles of their spiritual progenitor, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah Al-Suhaimi; their leader, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, and their movement as understood as a doctrine, not solely as an institution; and a continuous economic vitality underpinning a plurality of business establishments and their operations [6.6]. Both aspects supplied ex-Darul Arqam members with the inner religious strength and logistics respectively to persevere in realising an exemplary Islamic way of life, the culmination of which would have been the eventual establishment of an Islamic state in Malaysia. Both aspects break with established trends and practices of contemporary Islamic resurgence not only in Malaysia but also throughout the *ummah*. Both aspects present new perceptions to both analysts and practitioners of political Islam. Darul Arqam's messianic ideology introduces novel spatial and temporal horizons to the theory of Islamic eschatology [7.2, 7.3]. Darul Arqam's economic experience casts doubt upon sociological perceptions which pitted Islam in a mutually incompatible relationship with economic development [7.4, 7.5].<sup>3</sup>

The evident success of Darul Arqam as an Islamic social-cum-economic movement, despite falling short of its Islamic state ideal, presents valuable lessons to Islamists who have neglected spiritual, messianic and economic aspects of their cause; to researchers who have downgraded the potential contribution of sufi-revivalism towards the contemporary struggle for an Islamic state; and to anti-Islamist states and propagandists who have unduly focused upon a small component of militant Islamists in their attempt to pin down an 'Islamic threat'. Globally, if Darul Arqam's revivalist theories on the primacy of the Malay world are vindicated or at least acted upon by large segments of the *ummah*, the possibility of redefining the existing core-periphery relational framework of the Islamic world has to be seriously considered. Within Southeast Asia, Darul Arqam's views on the primacy of the role of the Malay world in contemporary Islamic resurgence has found resonance in academic quarters,<sup>4</sup> although it has yet to penetrate Middle Eastern and Western scholarships of Islam.

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<sup>3</sup>The nearest comparable twentieth century sufi-economic experience, although less in scale as compared with Darul Arqam's, is perhaps the case of the Murids of Senegal, whose economic enterprise has been noted by Gellner (1973: 202-206) and Marcus Mabry and Alan Zarembo, 'Africa's Capitalist Jihad: On the world's street corners, profit is prayer for marabout entrepreneurs', *Newsweek* 7.7.97 (cf. chapter 7: fn. 32 and the relevant text).

<sup>4</sup>For example, see Hilmy Bakar Almascaty, *Ummah Melayu: Kuasa Baru Dunia Abad ke-21* (The Malay Race: The New World Power of the Twenty-first Century), Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing,

In the light of the Malaysian state's success in eliminating Darul Arqam as a movement-organisation, it is fair to say that at least for the near future, the destiny of political Islam rests safely in the state's hands [8]. In many ways, Darul Arqam represented the last bastion of independent Islamists who had resisted effective incorporation into the structural imperatives of Malaysia's liberal-capitalist system. But this does not necessarily augur ill for the prospect of Darul Arqam's distinctive brand of political Islam. Its political manifestation will indeed remain subdued for some time yet, but if former Darul Arqam members' firm determination and confidence are taken into account, the diffusion of Darul Arqam's system of ideas will not only continue, but may even accelerate, depending on how well they capitalise on the new opportunities offered in the post-repression era.

## 9.5 A NOTE ON FUTURE RESEARCH

It is anticipated that the particularity of this study, focusing on just one Islamic movement which, in addition, operates within peripheral structures of the Muslim world, might attract the critical reaction that unconventional cases in the periphery cannot be generalised towards anticipating changes in the core and for that matter, in the *ummah*. In any case, it has not been the intention of this study to postulate such a far-reaching generalisation [cf. 1.2]. The present author admits that the Darul Arqam example is like a bubble in an ocean where cases contradicting Darul Arqam abound. At this stage, it suffices to hope that the distinctive contribution of this study provides food of thought for students of contemporary political Islam, and spurs them towards multiplying efforts to unravel unconventional areas of academic investigation, which may yield startling findings. In this thesis, such unconventional areas include grassroots political Islam in the periphery, the role of sufi-messianism in contemporary political Islam, the affairs of Islamists who have undergone repression and Islamic movements' approach to economic organisation. These are the areas which deserve priority treatment in any future research on political Islam.

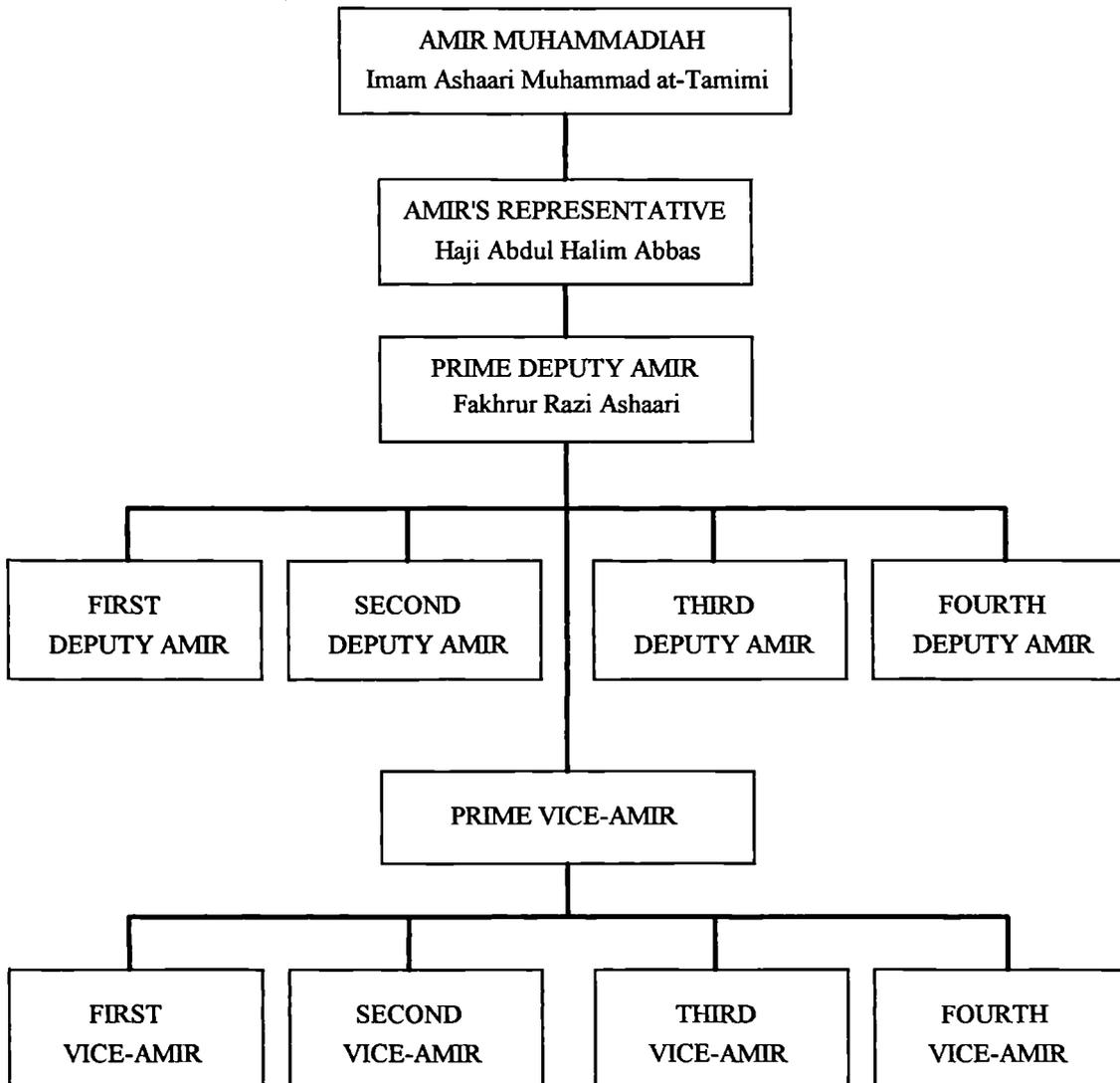
At the conventional level, the success of Darul Arqam's model of societal development has cast doubt on the common view that Islam necessarily exercises a negative impact on nation-building. This view, once axiomatic, needs to be seriously re-examined with real world examples from not only the Islamic heartlands but also its periphery. With new developments in the international political and technological

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1994. In his preface, this Indonesian scholar acknowledges the influence of Abdul Halim Abbas, the former deputy *Sheikh Al-Arqam*, on his thinking (p. xix).

domains, it has, however, become extremely challenging for contemporary Islamists and concerned academics to argue for religion's dynamic role within the hegemony of an overwhelmingly secular liberal-capitalist world. Future scholars may, for example, wish to consider religious reaction to the homogenising consequences of globalisation and the arrival of the information age as an indicator of religion's capacity of reconciling itself with modernity.

## APPENDIX A1: LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF DARUL ARQAM (AUGUST 1993).



Note: Membership of the *Syuyukh* Council comprised the above position holders, the twelve departmental *mudirs* and the fourteen state *Amirs*.

Source: Darul Arqam (1993), *25 Years of Darul Arqam: The Struggle of Abuya Syeikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad At Tamimi*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Abuya, p. 92.

## APPENDIX A2: LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF DARUL ARQAM (JUNE 1994).

### MAJLIS SYUYUKH (Executive Council of Darul Arqam)

AMIR MUHAMMADIAH

Abuya Ashaari Muhammad At-Tamimi

AMIR'S REPRESENTATIVE 1  
Haji Abdul Halim Abbas

AMIR'S REPRESENTATIVE 2  
Fakhrur Razi Ashaari

DEPUTY AMIR'S REPRESENTATIVE 1  
Nizamuddin Ashaari

DEPUTY AMIR'S REPRESENTATIVE 2  
Hashim Ahmad

DEPUTY AMIR 1  
Sheikh Rahim Ahmad

DEPUTY AMIR 2  
Nasrullah Ashaari

DEPUTY AMIR 3  
Shuib Sulaiman

DEPUTY AMIR 4  
Md. Nasib Zawawi

PRIME VICE-AMIR 1  
Sobri Abdul Ghani

PRIME VICE-AMIR 2  
Khairil Anuar Ujang

VICE-AMIR 1  
Zulramli Ghazali

VICE-AMIR 2  
Fadhil Yassin

VICE-AMIR 3  
Lokman Hakim Prodten

VICE-AMIR 4  
Hashim Jaafar

ASSISTANT  
PRIME AMIR 1  
Hassan Mokhtar

ASSISTANT  
PRIME AMIR 2  
Tajul Ariffin Abdul  
Rahman

ASSISTANT  
PRIME AMIR 3  
Abdul Rahim Abdul  
Rahman Prodten

ASSISTANT  
PRIME AMIR 4  
Abdul Aziz Ismail

#### ASSISTANT AMIRS

1. Mohamad Abu Bakar	2. Dr. Mansor Md. Nor
3. Jailani Jasmani	4. Dr. Shukri Salleh
5. Zainal Abidin Yusof	6. Ibrahim Mohammad
7. Abdul Rahim Jusoh	8. Ahmad Salim Omar
9. Hamim Rahmat	10. Ahmad Yassin
11. Ahmadi Rafi'e	12. Abdul Rahman Effendi

## SECRETARY OF MAJLIS SYUYUKH

Hassan Mokhtar

## COMMITTEE OF DEPARTMENT OF SHEIKH AL-ARQAM

## AMIRS WITHOUT STATES

1. Zabidi Mohammad	2. Jailani Bahauddin	3. Mohd. Som A. Jalil
4. Dinie Juri	5. Harun Che Rawi	6. Abu Bakar Ajee
7. Rojhan Ghazali	8. Lutfi Mohd. Hamim	9. Salleh Adam
10. Pahrol Mohd. Joui	11. Shaari Ismail	12. Shaarani Zaidun
13. Abdullah Ahmad	14. Mohd. Saudi Idris	15. Ghazali Imam Hamzah
16. Abdul Rashid Salleh	17. Mohd. Mahir Saidi	18. Dr. Zahari Osman
19. Gimam Irrawadi	20. Ramadhan Rafliis	21. Jaafar Ahmad
22. Zawawi Aman		

## CHIEF SECRETARY

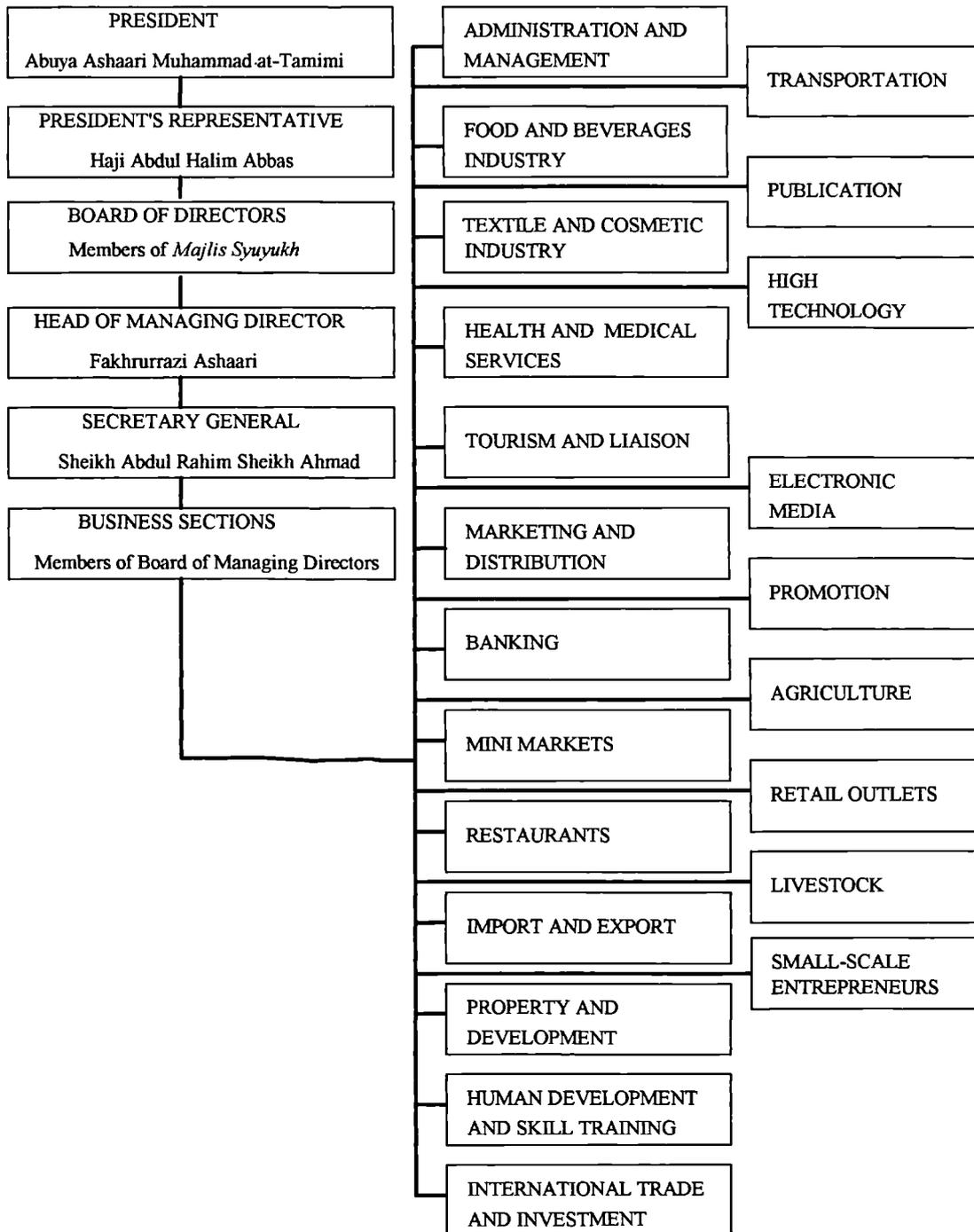
Sheikh Abdul Rahim Sheikh Ahmad

## DEPUTY CHIEF SECRETARY

Hassan Mokhtar

Source: Darul Arqam (1994), *Senarai Perubahan Jemaah Kepimpinan dan Struktur Jemaah Peringkat Pusat / Zon / Negeri Jemaah Aurad Muhammadiyah* (List of Changes to the Leadership and Structure of the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* Organisation at Central / Zonal / State levels), Kuala Lumpur: Majlis Syuyukh Al Arqam.

## APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF AL ARQAM GROUP OF COMPANIES (AUGUST 1993).



Sources: Darul Arqam (1993), *25 Years of Darul Arqam: The Struggle of Abuya Syeikh Imam Ashaari Muhammad At Tamimi*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Abuya, appendix; Darul Arqam (1993b), *AGC: Al-Arqam Group of Companies*, Kuala Lumpur: Al-Arqam Information Department.

## APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF *FATWA* BANNING DARUL ARQAM AND ITS LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (AUGUST 1994).

On 5.8.94, the National *Fatwa* Council, under the chairmanship of the Royal *Mufti* Ahmad Tajuddin Abdul Rahman, issued a *fatwa* banning Ashaari Muhammad's Darul Arqam movement, after a unanimous agreement by members that Darul Arqam was deviant. Ten aspects of Darul Arqam's teachings were considered by the Council to have deviated from Islam:

- "1. The belief that Sheikh Muhammad As-Suhaimi, the founder of *Aurad Muhammadiyah* (the philosophy of Al Arqam), would be resurrected as Imam Mahdi, a messiah.
2. The belief that Sheikh Muhammad As-Suhaimi had a conscious meeting with Prophet Muhammad in the Kaabah and received the *Aurad Muhammadiyah* from him.
3. Adding false information to a prayer by saying that Sheikh Muhammad As-Suhaimi was Imam Mahdi and giving him equal status to the four Righteous Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.
4. Wrongly defining the meaning of Verse Three of Surah An-Nisa' (Chapter IV: Women) in the Quran by claiming that the origin of marriage began with two wives and then the third and fourth. This conflicted with the accepted translation and opposed the consensus of recognised scholars on marriage.
5. The claim by Al Arqam leader Ashaari Muhammad that he had a conscious meeting with Prophet Muhammad and his followers and had a dialogue with the Prophet.
6. Al Arqam followers were so entranced by their leader that they idolised Ashaari and believed he could perform miracles, was a saint and protector.
7. Ashaari also claimed that the Prophet acknowledged the bona fides of Al Arqam teachings.
8. It was claimed that Ashaari was given the power of *Kun-Fayakun* (be and shall be) possessed by Allah. The claim could give rise to *shirk* (polytheism), by comparing Allah with His creations.
9. Al Arqam failed to observe state Islamic laws and enactments and other written laws regarding Islamic affairs, did not comply with decisions of recognised scholars of the Sunni sect and ignored advice and rulings of state *ulama* and *mufti*.
10. Ashaari claimed he was a descendant of Bani Tamim Arab when in fact he was of the Bawean Malay descent."

The *fatwa* imposed a ban on Darul Arqam's practices, materials and activities. Specifically, it prohibited members of the public from:

"1. Adopting Darul Arqam's ideology, philosophy and practice which go against Islamic teachings and practice.

2a. Using Darul Arqam's publicity materials such as photographs, posters, graphs, circulars, film slides and newspaper advertisements.

2b. Possessing Darul Arqam's books, magazines, pamphlets, films, audio tapes, laser discs, phonography, compact discs and all forms of recordings.

2c. Displaying any symbol, diagram or sign that could identify the group with any movable or immovable property.

3. Becoming a member or leader, holding *ceramah* (religious talks), conducting classes or becoming involved in economic, social, art, cultural or other activities for the purpose of upholding and expanding the movement."

As a consequence of the *fatwa*, the following actions, applying full weight of the law, were to be taken against Darul Arqam:

"1. Under the Education Act, all Darul Arqam schools are to close because they are not registered with the Education Ministry or any religious authority. Students are to be put in special classes in government schools.

2. Under the Companies Act, Registrar of Companies' regulations prohibit the use of words connected with Islam, like the names of friends of the Prophet, for a company name or logo, without the approval of the Islamic Centre. Al Arqam is the name of a friend of a Prophet. It did not seek approval and this by itself will render the symbol invalid.

3. The Societies Act specifies that the symbol of any society must be approved by the registrar. The use of Ashaari's photograph on badges worn by Darul Arqam followers is disallowed. The Act prohibits the collection of money.

4. The Printing Presses and Publications Act imposes a ban on the movement's publications.

5. District councils are to remove any symbol associated with the movement.

6. The National Film Development Corporation is to prohibit any film production by the movement.

7. Under the Internal Security Act, it is up to the police to use their discretion to enforce the ban.

8. The Public Services Department will act against civil servants who are members of Darul Arqam.

9. Darul Arqam's assets may be frozen if it can be established these assets are not registered under the name of movement but under the names of individual members."

Sources: *The Star*, 6.8.94; *The Sun*, 6.8.94.

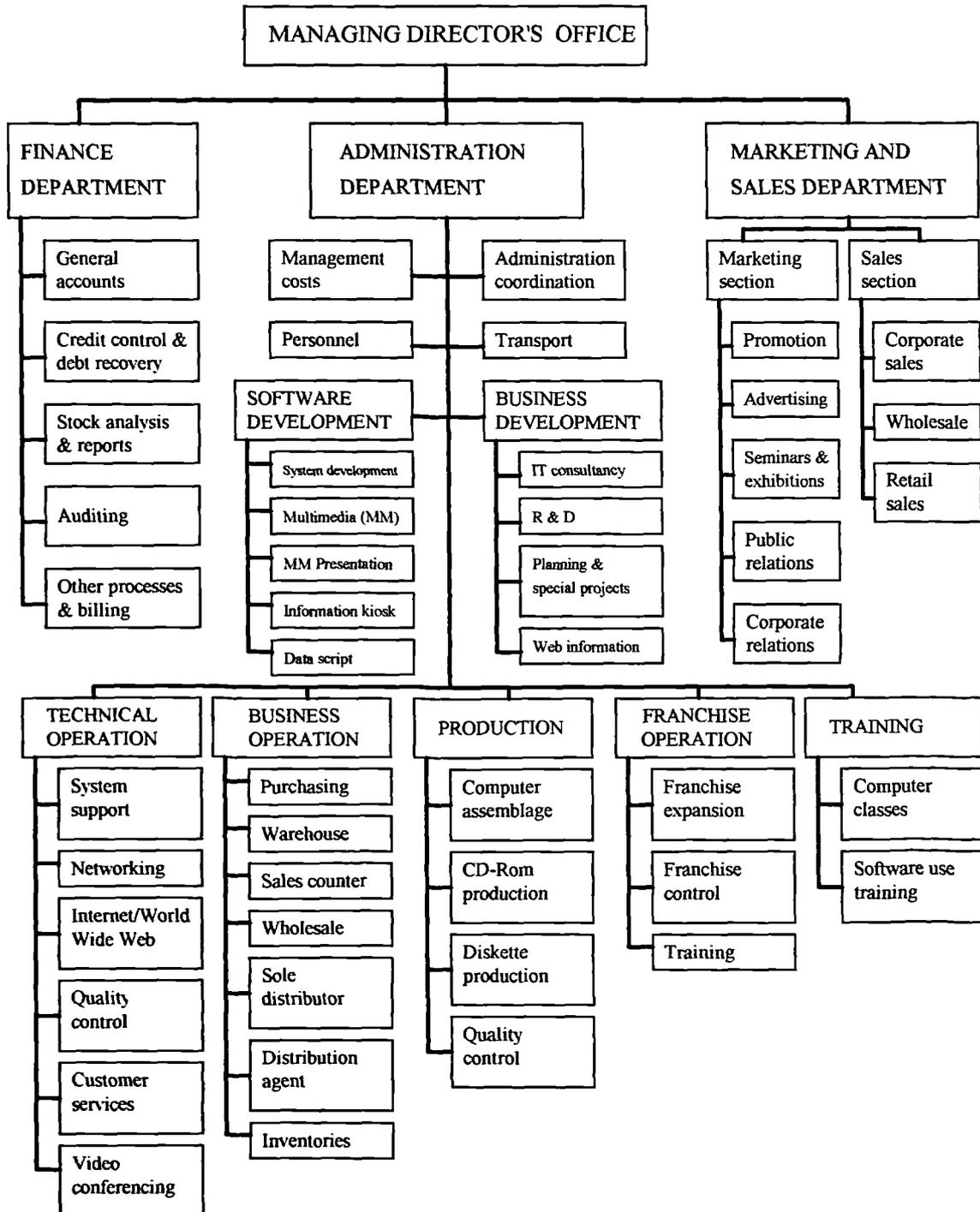
**APPENDIX D: EIGHT MAJOR COMPANIES RUN BY FORMER DARUL ARQAM MEMBERS IN KUALA LUMPUR AND SURROUNDING AREAS (MARCH-APRIL 1996).**

NAME OF COMPANY	LOCATION OF HEAD OFFICE	MAIN ACTIVITIES
Aeilah Group Sdn. Bhd.	Bandar Baru Selayang, Selangor.	Cafeteria, supply and distribution of drinking water
ULFAH Trading Sdn. Bhd.	Bandar Baru Selayang, Selangor.	Human resource management, gas supply, engineering, excursions and tours, marketing, education.
ABI Resources Group Sdn. Bhd. <sup>1</sup>	Bandar Baru Selayang, Selangor.	Computer sales and services, accessories, programming, networking, training, desk-top publishing.
OVA Productions Sdn. Bhd.	Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, Kuala Lumpur	Studio rental, recording services, sound and light equipment supplier and technical services, Islamic cultural performance.
KARYAONE Sdn. Bhd.	Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, Kuala Lumpur.	Book and magazine publishing
Insaniah Motivational Centre	Kompleks Puduraya, Kuala Lumpur	Motivational courses, expeditions, camping.
Spectral Technology Sdn. Bhd.	Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, Kuala Lumpur	Vibration/sound measurement and instrumentation, balancing of rotating machinery, predictive maintenance programme in vibration monitoring, corrective alignment.
EKSKOM Advertising	Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, Kuala Lumpur	Exhibition-cum-communication facilities, product promotion.

Note: The initials 'Sdn. Bhd.' following company names denote 'Sendirian Berhad', meaning private limited company.

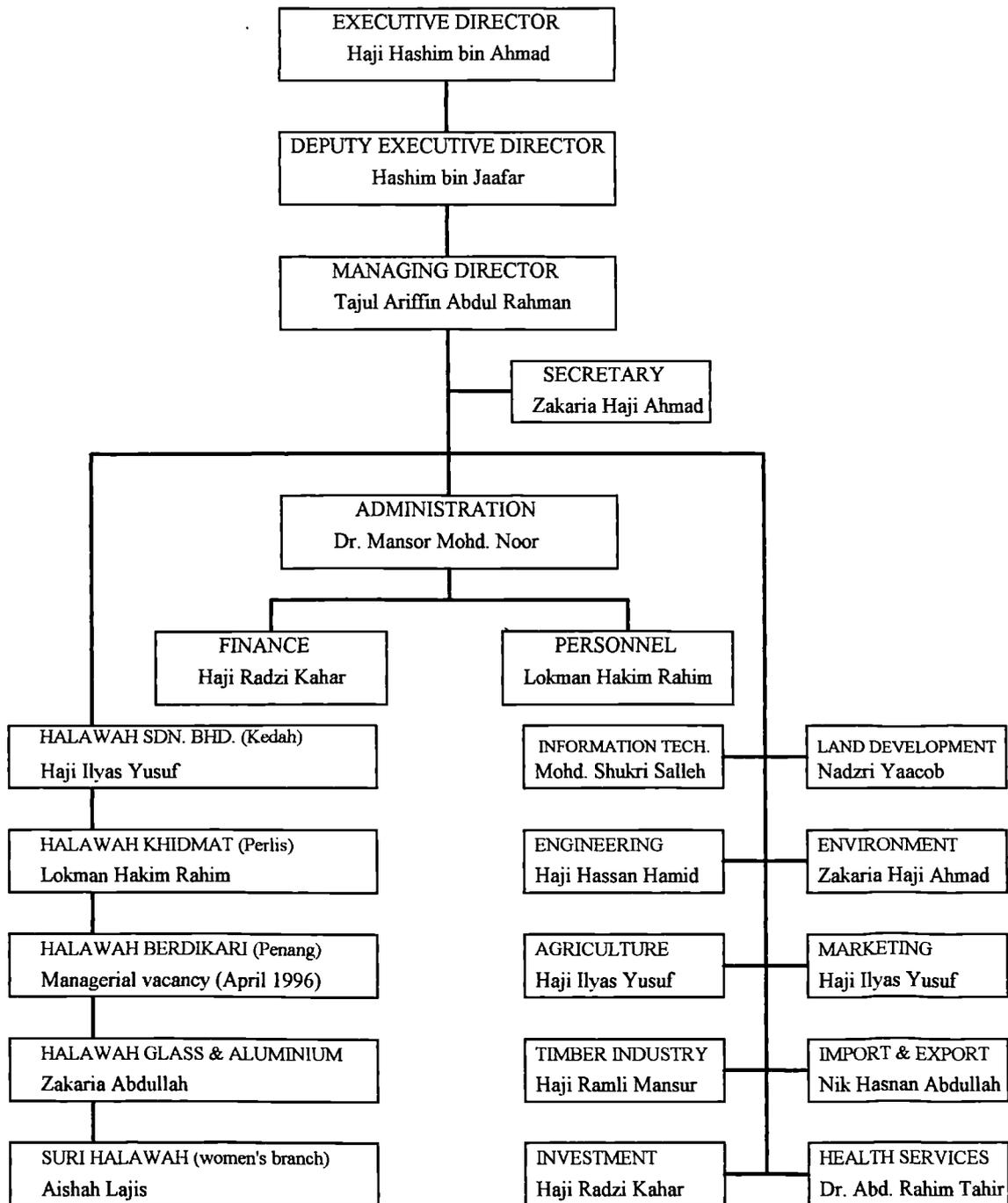
<sup>1</sup>For ABI Resources' organisational structure, which is indicative of the company's technical sophistication and ambitious expansion plans, see appendix D1.

**APPENDIX D1: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ABI RESOURCES GROUP SDN. BHD. (MARCH 1996).**



Source: *Kertas Kerja dan Rancangan Perniagaan Teknologi Maklumat* (Working Paper and Business Plans for Information Technology), Bandar Baru Selayang: ABI Resources Group Sdn. Bhd., 1996.

## APPENDIX E: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF HALAWAH HOLDINGS SDN. BHD. (APRIL 1996).



Source: *Dasar dan Peraturan bagi Pentadbiran Zon Utara* (Policy and Regulations for the Administration of the Northern Zone), Alor Setar: HALAWAH Holdings Sdn. Bhd., 1996.

## APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR FORMER DARUL ARQAM MEMBERS IN PENANG (MARCH-APRIL 1996).

Sections:

- A. Background of Respondent
- B. Involvement in Darul Arqam and attitudes to life in the Darul Arqam era (before November 1994)
- C. Period of 'crisis' (June-October 1994)
- D. Situation and attitudes to life after the Darul Arqam era (November 1994-April 1996)

### A. Background of Respondent

1. Age
  - 1 - < 25 years
  - 2 - 25 - 40 years
  - 3 - > 40 years
  
2. Sex
  - 1 - Male
  - 2 - Female
  
3. Status of Marriage
  - 1 - Married
  - 2 - Unmarried
  - 3 - Divorced
  
4. Level and Stream of Education
 

4.1 - Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 - Academic / Secular stream
4.2 - Secondary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 - Religious stream
4.3 - Pre-University	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 - Darul Arqam stream
4.4 - University / Higher Educational Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 - Irrelevant (did not enter specified level of education)
  
5. Occupational Status
  - 1 - Manual labourer, Factory operator, Salesman, Small-scale entrepreneur, Farmer, Fisherman
  - 2 - Teacher, Secretary, Technician, Clerk, Middle-scale entrepreneur
  - 3 - Director, Manager, Engineer, High-ranking officer, Corporate entrepreneur, Professional
  - 4 - Irrelevant (e.g. housewife)

6. Place of origin  
1 - Urban area

2 - Rural area

**B. Involvement in Darul Arqam and attitudes to life in the Darul Arqam era (before November 1994)**

1. When did your involvement in Darul Arqam activities begin?  
1 - 1968-79

2 - 1979-86

3 - 1987-93

4 - after 1993

1.1 Where?

1 - Secondary school

2 - Higher educational institution

3 - After working

4 - Place of origin

2. What factors attracted you towards Darul Arqam? (Number according to the following categories: 1 - very important, 2 - important, 3 - quite important, 4 - not important).

2.1 - Potential for self-improvement

2.5 - Sufi *tariqah* aspects

2.2 - Method of struggle

2.6 - Cultural aspects

2.3 - Missionary aspects

2.7 - The 'promised' group

2.4 - Economic aspects

2.8 - Attracted to leader

3. From which sources did you start to harbour interest in the Darul Arqam group?

1 - Friends

4 - Mass-media

2 - Relatives

5 - Darul Arqam publications

3 - Spouse

6 - Others

4. Were you a

1 - Full-time Darul Arqam member

2 - Part-time Darul Arqam member (working for another employer)

4.1 Official capacity in Darul Arqam

1 - Leadership

4 - Education

2 - Economy

5 - *Dakwah*

3 - Agriculture

6 - Others (state):.....



9.1 Where did you interact with them?

1 - Residence

4 - Place of work

2 - Place of social gathering

5 - Other places

3 - Shop

10. How far did you participate in social programmes not organised by Darul Arqam?

1 - Always

3 - Seldom

2 - Sometimes

4 - Never

11. Did you buy products of other manufacturers if they were produced by Darul Arqam?

1 - Yes

2 - No

12. (Full-time member) Was the *maasy* which you received adequate?

1 - Yes

2 - No

13. (Part-time member) What percentage of your monthly income did you contribute to Darul Arqam?

1 - 50-100%

2 - 20-49%

3 - <20%

4 - No fixed percentage

14. How far did you read books other than those written by Abuya and other Darul Arqam authors?

1 - Always

3 - Seldom

2 - Sometimes

4 - Never

15. Number the following authors, according to the given categories, about their books which you have read?  
(1 - extremely like, 2 - like, 3 - do not like, 4 - extremely do not like, 5 - never read his book)

15.1 - Abuya Imam Ashaari at-Tamimi

15.8 - Imam Ghazali

15.2 - Ustaz Abdul Halim Abbas

15.9 - Hamka

15.3 - Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat

15.10 - Abul Ala al-Maududi

- |   |                          |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 15.4 - Ustaz Ismail Kamar                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15.11 - Dr. Yusuf Qardhawi                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15.5 - Mohd. Sayuti Omar                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15.12 - Maulana Zakariya (author of <i>Fadhail Amal</i> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15.6 - Syed Hussein Al-Attas (soothsayer) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15.13 - Syed Hossein Nasr                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15.7 - Dr. Muhammad Syukri Salleh         | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |                          |

16. In your opinion, what was the primary factor of Darul Arqam's economic success?

- |                          |                                |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 - <i>Taqwa</i> (piety) | 4 - <i>Barakah</i> (blessings) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 - Hard work            | 5 - Strength of organisation   |                          |
| 3 - Business skill       | 6 - Others (state):.....       |                          |

17. How would you categorise the leader-led relationship within Penang's Darul Arqam community?

- |                      |                       |                          |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 - Very close       | 4 - Not close         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 - Close            | 5 - Extremely distant |                          |
| 3 - Moderately close |                       |                          |

18. Were local leaders open-minded in terms of willingness to discuss matters and to consider opinions of their followers?

- |         |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|
| 1 - Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 - No  |                          |

19. Have you ever voted in a general election?

- |         |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|
| 1 - Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 - No  |                          |

19.1 If yes, what factor encouraged you to vote for a particular candidate?

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 - The Islamic message brought by his party        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 - The message of development brought by his party |                          |
| 3 - The individual's potential to uphold Islam      |                          |
| 4 - His good character                              |                          |
| 5 - Your personal acquaintance                      |                          |
| 6 - Other factors                                   |                          |

20. Did you agree with the statement 'religion and politics do not mix'?

1 - Yes

2 - No

20.1. If no, would you agree that Darul Arqam was a political movement, albeit with its own approach to politics?

1 - Yes

2 - No

20.2 If you agree that Darul Arqam was a political movement, does this mean you were convinced that at the pinnacle of its struggle, Darul Arqam would gain political power and transform Malaysia into an Islamic state?

1 - Yes

2 - No

21. How would you describe your overall life during your days in Darul Arqam?

1 - Very good

4 - Less than satisfactory

2 - Good

5 - Disappointing

3 - Moderate

**C. Period of 'crisis' (June-October 1994)**

1. Describe your overall feeling throughout the 'crisis' in 1994?

1 - Anxious

4 - Happy

2 - Sad

5 - Apathetic

3 - Angry

6 - Others (state):.....

2. Do you feel Darul Arqam was the victim of government's injustice and aggression?

1 - Yes

2 - No

3. In your opinion, what was the real motive behind the government's pressure against Darul Arqam?

1 - To eradicate deviationist teachings

3 - Political motive

2 - To check Islamic movements

4 - National security strategy

4. What was your feeling when the news of Abuya's arrest reached you?
- 1 - Surprised and could not believe Abuya was apprehended
  - 2 - Surprised at the authorities' willingness to act so aggressively
  - 3 - Angry
  - 4 - Accept the fate calmly
  - 5 - Apathetic
  - 6 - Happy
5. How did government's aggression and arrest of Darul Arqam leaders under the ISA affect the lifestyle of Darul Arqam members?
- 1 - No effect - activities as normal
  - 2 - Activities threatened and declined
  - 3 - Activities increased
6. What was your attitude at watching Abuya's confession on television on 20. 10. 94?
- 1 - Still convinced of the group's struggle
  - 2 - Felt deceived by Darul Arqam's struggle all these years
  - 3 - Doubts of the group's struggle arose
  - 4 - Apathetic
7. To you, what was the motive behind Abuya's agreement to confess?
- 1 - Abuya sincerely changed his beliefs
  - 2 - Strategy (art of survival)
  - 3 - To reduce tension between the authorities and Darul Arqam
  - 4 - Abuya was forced
  - 5 - Do not know
8. How do you accept Darul Arqam's dissolution on 30. 10. 94?
- 1 - Refuse to accept - you wish to continue Darul Arqam
  - 2 - Accept openly and follow Abuya
  - 3 - Accept, but with conviction in the group's struggle marred

9. From your observation, how did the following groups react to Darul Arqam's dissolution?  
(1 - Happy, 2 - Sad, 3 - Apathetic, 4 - You do not know).

- |                             |                      |                   |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 9.1 Your family             | <input type="text"/> | 9.4 Rural Muslims | <input type="text"/> |
| 9.2 Other Islamic movements | <input type="text"/> | 9.5 Non-Muslims   | <input type="text"/> |
| 9.3 Urban Muslims           | <input type="text"/> |                   |                      |

10. How far was the role of the media in influencing the public perception of Darul Arqam?

1 - Very influential

2 - Quite influential

3 - Not influential

11. Did Darul Arqam commit any wrongdoing, such that the authorities were justified, on a legal basis, in their stern measures against Darul Arqam?

1 - Yes

2 - No

**D. Situation and attitudes to life after the Darul Arqam era (November 1994 - April 1996)**

1. How has the quality of your life been since Darul Arqam's dissolution?

1 - Increased

2 - No change

3 - Declined

2. If you were formerly a full-time Darul Arqam member, what do you do now to raise a living?

1 - Private business

2 - Business in enterprise pioneered with ex-Darul Arqam colleagues

3 - Agriculture

4 - Work in the public or private sector

3. How often do you contact your ex-Darul Arqam friends or participate in programmes organised by them?

1 - Very frequent

2 - Frequent

3 - Sometimes

4 - Seldom

5 - No contact

4. Since Darul Arqam's dissolution, how has the brotherhood among former members been?

1 - Better

2 - Worse

3 - No change

4 - Do not know

5. (If unmarried) Do you hope that your marriage be arranged by your ex-Darul Arqam colleagues?

1 - Yes

2 - No

6. Opinions of former leadership: (number according to: 1- Yes, 2 - No)

6.1 Do you still regard the former Darul Arqam leadership in Penang as your leaders in the Islamic struggle?

6.2 Are they more accessible now?

6.3 Are they more amenable to discussion and more receptive to followers' opinions?

6.4 Are they able to mould you to persist to struggle for Islam despite various tribulations?

7. After the tragedy that had befallen Darul Arqam, is Abuya's theory about an Islamic revival from the 'East', by which he meant the Malay world, still defensible in the light of present political facts in Malaysia?

1 - Yes

2 - No

8. Can the comprehensiveness of Islam be accomplished through other methods than that espoused by Abuya?

1 - Yes

2 - No

9. In your opinion, can Islam be implemented in comprehensive terms without political power?

1 - Yes

2 - No

10. Number the following leaders according to the categories below:

1 - extremely like, 2 - like, 3 - do not like, 4 - extremely do not like, 5 - do not know him.

10.1 - Abuya Imam Ashaari at -Tamimi

10.8 - Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Muhammad

10.2 - Haji Abdul Halim Abbas

10.9 - Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim

10.3 - Dr. Muhd. Nur Manuty - ABIM President

10.10 - Dato' Seri Sanusi Junid

10.4 - Shaari Sungib - JIM President

10.11 - Tun Ghafar Baba

10.5 - Haji Nik Aziz Nik Mat

10.12 - Dato' Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman

10.6 - Tan Sri Rahim Noor - Police Chief

10.13 - Dato' Dr. Yusof Noor

10.7 - *Utusan Malaysia* Chief Editor

10.14 - Dato' Mufti diRaja Ahmad Tajuddin

11. Would you give your support to any political leader who aspires to pursue the Islamic struggle through existing modern political methods?

1 - Yes

2 - No

12. In the present situation, would you vote for any party in a general election?

1 - Yes

2 - No

13. If the *Yang diPertuan Agong* gives his consent for Darul Arqam to operate as freely as before, are you willing to resume your Islamic struggle through the approach of Darul Arqam as you had known it?

1 - Yes

2 - No

14. What was your feeling when your conviction that an Islamic state under Darul Arqam's patronage would eventually come about in Malaysia failed to materialise?

1 - Sad

2 - Surprised with disbelief

3 - Calm

4 - Apathetic

5 - Angry

6 - Others (state):.....

15. Are you still convinced that Malaysia will become an Islamic state in the near future?

1 - Yes

2 - No

16. Does the dissolution of Darul Arqam bring any benefit to: (1 - Yes, 2 - No)

16.1 you?

16.3 the Islamic struggle?

16.2 Malaysian society?

17. In retrospect, how important are the roles of the following groups in leading to Darul Arqam's demise? (1- very important, 2 - important, 3 - quite important, 4 - not important).

17.1 - Politicians

17.4 - The mass-media

17.2 - The security apparatus

17.5 - International Islamic enemies

17.3 - The *ulama*

17.6 - Lax Darul Arqam members

18. How far have you succeeded in coming to terms with the reality of life after the dissolution of Darul Arqam, whether socially, economically, mentally and spiritually?

1 - Extremely successful

2 - Successful, but with few problems

3 - Not very successful, many problems

4 - Still not successful, too many problems

## APPENDIX G: TABULATED RESULTS OF FIELDWORK SURVEY IN PENANG

Data recorded in Tables A, B, C and D represent results of responses to sections A, B, C and D respectively in the survey questionnaire reproduced in appendix F of this thesis. The questionnaire was administered to thirty respondents in March-April 1996. Findings of the tabulated results are discussed in chapter 6: 6.5.

In all the tables, figures are expressed as percentages. It is assumed that derived percentages are equal to valid percentages. Where there are missing cases, which are small in number and arguably negligible in any case, hypothetical figures are used as proxy results, as gauged from the respondent's answers to previous questions and discussions with ex-Darul Arqam colleagues considered close to the respondent, to help indicate how the respondent would most likely respond to the particular question. Further, number zero among the figures indicates that nobody has chosen a particular option which nevertheless exists among the choice of answers. When an option does not exist, the space at which a row and a column meet each other is left blank.

Table A: Questionnaire results of Section A: Background of Respondent.

QUESTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
1	13.3	66.7	20	
2	66.7	13.3		
3	90	10	0	
4.1	100	0	0	0
4.2	93.3	6.7	0	0
4.3	56.7	0	0	43.3
4.4	53.3	0	0	46.7
5	26.7	46.7	16.7	10
6	6	20	80	

Table B: Questionnaire results of Section B: Involvement in Darul Arqam and attitudes to life in the Darul Arqam era (before November 1994).

Note: Table continues to next page.

QUESTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5	OPTION 6
1	6.7	56.7	36.7	0		
1.1	7.1	42.9	39.3	10.7		
2.1	74.1	22.2	0	3.7		
2.2	68	20	4	8		
2.3	51.9	40.7	0	7.4		
2.4	33.3	50	8.3	8.3		
2.5	37.5	45.8	12.5	4.2		
2.6	29.2	37.5	25	8.3		
2.7	73.1	11.5	0	15.4		
2.8	84	12	4	0		
3	60	6.7	6.7	6.7	13.3	6.7
4	60	40				
4.1	17.2	44.8	6.9	27.6	0	3.4
4.2	10	10	23.3	3.3	53.3	
5	6.7	6.7	10	13.3	63.3	0
6	26.7	53.3	16.7	3.3	0	
7	60	13.3	20	6.7		
8	46.7	3.3	10	40		
8.1	8.3	12.5	0	0	79.2	
9a	100	0				
9b	96.2	3.8				
9.1	21.4	10.7	14.3	42.9	10.7	
10	3.3	53.3	43.3	0		
11	73.3	26.7				
12	88.9	11.1				
13	0	26.7	13.3	60		
14	13.3	63.3	23.3	0		
15.1	96.7	3.3	0	0	0	
15.2	21.4	60.7	10.7	0	7.1	
15.3	0	7.4	11.1	3.7	77.8	
15.4	0	33.3	14.8	3.7	48.1	
15.5	0	70.4	14.8	0	14.8	

15.6	3.6	71.4	14.3	3.6	7.1	
15.7	0	65.4	0	0	34.6	
15.8	44.8	55.2	0	0	0	
15.9	0	65.5	6.9	0	27.6	
15.10	0	26.9	3.8	3.8	65.4	
15.11	0	34.6	3.8	3.8	57.7	
15.12	3.7	37	3.7	3.7	51.9	
15.13	0	0	0	0	100	
16	20.7	3.4	0	62.1	13.8	0
17	10	50	33.3	3.3	3.3	
18	100	0				
19	26.7	73.3				
19.1	9.1	0	36.4	27.3	9.1	18.2
20	13.3	86.7				
20.1	84.6	15.4				
20.2	96.2	3.8				
21	40	40	20	0	0	

Table C: Questionnaire results of Section C: Period of 'crisis' (June-October 1994).

QUESTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5	OPTION 6
1	6.7	46.7	3.3	3.3	16.7	23.3
2	86.7	13.3				
3	0	20	76.7	3.3		
4	16.7	43.3	3.3	36.7	0	0
5	70	20	10			
6	96.7	0	0	3.3		
7	0	56.7	40	3.3	0	
8	0	96.7	3.3			
9.1	16.7	36.7	43.3	3.3		
9.2	31	27.6	17.2	24.1		
9.3	0	50	32.1	17.9		
9.4	21.4	14.3	50	14.3		
9.5	0	25	46.4	28.6		
10	48.3	48.3	3.4			
11	6.7	93.3				

Table D: Questionnaire results of Section D: Situation and attitudes to life after the Darul Arqam era (November 1994 - April 1996).

Note: Table continues to next page.

QUESTION	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5	OPTION 6
1	23.3	73.3	3.3			
2	14.3	76.2	4.8	4.8		
3	23.3	63.3	10	0	3.3	
4	30	23.3	46.7	0		
5	100	0				
6.1	100	0				
6.2	85.7	14.3				
6.3	92.9	7.1				
6.4	100	0				
7	100	0				
8	6.9	93.1				
9	83.3	16.7				
10.1	100	0	0	0	0	
10.2	3.8	42.3	38.5	15.4	0	
10.3	0	14.8	51.9	18.5	14.8	
10.4	0	3.7	37	7.4	51.9	
10.5	0	33.3	58.3	8.3	0	
10.6	0	14.8	66.7	14.8	3.7	
10.7	0	7.4	44.4	29.6	18.5	
10.8	0	18.5	51.9	29.6	0	
10.9	0	22.2	48.1	29.6	0	
10.10	3.6	96.4	0	0	0	
10.11	4	96	0	0	0	
10.12	0	11.1	25.9	63	0	
10.13	0	14.8	29.6	55.6	0	
10.14	0	24	20	28	28	
11	33.3	66.7				
12	24.1	75.9				
13	57.1	42.9				
14	13.3	10	46.7	6.7	0	23.3
15	100	0				
16.1	70.4	29.6				

16.2	70.4	29.6				
16.3	75	25				
17.1	44.4	40.7	14.8	0		
17.2	53.6	32.1	10.7	3.6		
17.3	69.2	23.1	3.8	3.8		
17.4	59.3	40.7	0	0		
17.5	66.7	22.2	7.4	3.7		
17.6	24	52	8	16		
18	63.3	36.7	0	0		

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