CHAPTER V

Conclusions
Southeast Asia is at the cultural as well as the geographic crossroads of Asia, where Sinic, Hindu, Islamic and Western civilizations have met and interacted for almost a millennium. A far from homogenous Muslim arc stretches from southern Thailand through the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Java, parts of Kalimantan and Sulawesi, to the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao in the southern Philippines, there are Christians, animists or mixed communities in Maluku, Sulawesi, Borneo, the Nusa Tenggara islands of Indonesia and Papua, a Hindu majority in Bali, a predominantly Catholic population in the Philippines, diverse cultures, largely Theravada Buddhist, in mainland Southeast Asia, and ethnic Chinese communities throughout the region. Peninsular or western Malaysia is home to large ethnic Chinese and Hindu minorities. Indigenous people such as Dayaks and Kadazan, mostly animists or Christians, constitute majorities in several provinces in the central and eastern Malaysia.

Islam was brought to Southeast Asia by Arab, Persian and Indian traders and spread largely through the conversion of elites, thus, it developed under completely different conditions as compared to the other regions in the Muslim world, where the religion was established by the Arabs. In Southeast Asia, the continuity of elites under the new religious dispensation permitted the preservation of strong pre-Islamic elements. By the end of the thirteenth century, the new religion had become entrenched in the Malay Peninsula and
Sumatra, and spread throughout the region from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

Islam in Southeast Asia is not only uneven in its geographical contiguity, but also extraordinarily diverse internally. This reflects the region's cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity and the presence of substantial non-Muslim communities, which by and large have accustomed the Muslims in Southeast Asia to coexistence with other religious and cultural traditions. Although there are common themes, the interaction between Islam and political, ethnic and territorial issues unfolds differently from country to country, region to region, and island to island.

In Indonesia, Islamic observance ranges from the orthodox in Aceh to the more diluted form of Islam known as kejawen in parts of Java. In eastern and central Java, the majority of Muslims are traditionalists, a tendency that incorporates strong elements of Sufi mysticism and pre-Islamic Javanese traditions far removed in form and spirit from the Wahhabi severity and intolerance. Traditionalists are represented by Nahdatul Ulama, the largest social-welfare organization in the Muslim world with a claimed membership of over 40 million people.

The organization was founded in 1926 by a group of kyai (traditional Islamic teachers) alarmed by the inroads made by the modernists. It cooperated with the nationalists in the struggle for independence against the Dutch from 1945 to 1949. In the interest of national unity, its leaders agreed
that independent Indonesia was not to be organized as an Islamic state. *Nahdatul Ulama* participated in elections until 1984, when it abandoned formal political activities and rededicated itself to religious, social and cultural activities.

Although representing traditionalist Islam, the Nahdatul Ulama leadership has endeavoured to adapt to modern conditions. Under the chairmanship of Abdurrahman Wahid (president of Indonesia in 1999-2001), the curriculum in the *Nahdatul Ulama Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) was reformed and secular subjects added. The leadership also worked through associated foundations and research institutes to promote a democratic civil society and reconcile Islam and nationalism. Nahdatul Ulama tends not to identify non-Muslims as the source of Muslims' problems, and is hospitable to inter-faith dialogue and cooperation.

The second important tendency within Indonesian Islam is modernism, which aims to 'purify' Islam from 'heterodox' practices. Modernists are largely drawn from among the urban population and professionals. The founders of the *Muhammadiya* movement, established in 1912 as the institutional expression of the Indonesian modernist movement, wanted to banish 'superstitions', for example, some of the practices associated with traditionalist Indonesian Islam. Their model of education was the Dutch school system with the inclusion of religious subjects, and they stressed the primacy of rational thinking (*ijtihad*) as opposed to blind obedience to the
traditional *ulama*. The Dutch system was also the main source of inspiration for the replacement of the Middle Eastern model of religious education by influential Islamic educational institutions such as the *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (IAIN-the State Institute for Islamic Studies).\(^1\)

Indonesian modernists believe in adjusting *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) to current conditions. Thus, Muhammadiya chairman Ahmad Syafii Maarif has criticized Achenese militants for 'simplifying' *shari'ah* by seeking to enforce *jilbab* (Muslim headscarves) for women and *rajam* (death by stoning) for adulterers. A more pluralistic interpretation is advanced by the scholar Nurcholish Madjid, who argues that those who want to insert *shari'ah* into the Indonesian constitution do not have a proper understanding of it. According to Madjid, every individual can design their own *shari'ah*. Attempts to impose it on the state are doomed to fail.\(^2\)

Indonesia has not proved to be a fertile soil for Wahhabism. The Padri movement in western Sumatra in the 1820s and 1830s was Wahhabi-inspired, but did not leave a lasting impression. At its foundation, the Muhammadiya was influenced by conservative but less extreme Salafi teachings.\(^3\) The Muslim Brotherhood took root in Indonesia, but now stands for toleration. More recently, Saudi foundations have been active in Indonesia. The *Rabita al-Alam al-Islami*, a Saudi non-governmental organization (NGO), funds about 180 Indonesian institutions. The Suharto government tried to control
Saudi money by making it compulsory for funds to be channeled through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but this no longer appears to be the case.

As in Indonesia, Islam in Malaysia was deeply influenced by 'traditional' practices and beliefs derived from Hinduism and animism. From the seventeenth century onwards, returning scholars from the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt introduced a more *sharia*-oriented or scriptural interpretation of Islam. In modern times, Islam in Malaysia has become more homogeneous and orthodox. The development of a centralized religious authority to oversee Islamic affairs in the Malay States began under the British. *Shari'ah* and *adat* (customary law) were codified and subordinated to the British legal code and the enactments of the colonial administration. Religious officials were engaged as government functionaries at state level. After Malaysia's independence in 1957, the constitution gave the country's nine sultans the final say in matters relating to religion. The result was an enforced Sunni orthodoxy. Heterodox religious movements, largely tolerated in Indonesia, were suppressed in Malaysia as 'cults'. In 1994 the government banned a major Islamic movement, Darul Arqam, accused of spreading deviationist teachings. The movement's goal was to implement a wholly Islamic way of life, though it had also criticized the government and the established religious authorities. Darul Arqam was also controversial in Indonesia, but the decision to ban it was left to provincial administrators.
The ethnic composition of Malaysian society is another factor in the country’s religio-political development. Malays, the politically dominant ethnic group, constitute only a little over 50% of the population. The other main groups comprise of ethnic Chinese (24%), Indians (8%) and non Malay indigenous groups. Political insecurity has produced a greater insistence on ethnic and religious solidarity, reinforced by the status of Islam as a pillar of Malay identity. In Indonesia, by contrast, Muslims make up some 88% of the population, and the national identity is defined in non-religious terms.

A third factor strongly influencing Malaysian Islam is the *dakwah* movement (literally 'the call'), which promotes a return to orthodox Islam. Traditional beliefs in spirits and magic rituals still persist among rural Malays, but have been attenuated by Islamic propagation. Muslim organizations in Malaysia engage in two kinds of *dakwah* activities, one is Islamic education for their members, and the other the propagation of Islam and Islamic practices to the public at large. Islamic religious education comprises, at the elementary school level, an informal network of *madrasas*. Islamic education received a strong impulse in the consolidation of Malay political consciousness.

In Singapore, Muslims constitute about 15% of the population. For the most part they are ethnic Malays, though there are also small minorities of Indian and Pakistani origin. Malays have been an important component of the Singaporean population since the establishment of the British settlement by
Sir Stamford Raffles. Raffles set aside the Kampong Glam area for Sultan Hussein Shah and his followers, an unsuccessful claimant to the sultanate of Johor, and recognized Hussein as sultan and secured a treaty that gave the British the right to establish a trading post on the island. A new treaty in 1824 conceded to the British East India Company full sovereignty over Singapore. In 1826, the Company's holdings in Singapore, Malacca and Penang were consolidated into one administrative entity, the Straits Settlements. By the 1830s, Singapore had become the most important trading city in Southeast Asia, with a European administration and a multiethnic but mainly ethnic Chinese population.

Throughout the British rule, the ethnic components of Singapore remained separate communities, with their own languages, religions and ways of life. With the onset of decolonization, the issue of political control raised tensions between the Chinese and Malay communities, both within Singapore and in the Malaysian Federation of which Singapore was a part between 1963 and 1966. There were serious communal riots in Singapore in 1964. Since then, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) has endeavoured to build an ethnically inclusive society. The government ensures that all ethnic communities are adequately represented in parliament, and promotes inter-communal contacts through educational and social institutions.
Malay Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunni, and adhere to the Shafi’i school of Islamic jurisprudence. The administration of Muslim religious affairs is regulated by its law which established the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Singapore Islamic Religious Council) to administer the collection of Muslim tithes (zakat) and charitable trusts (awkaf), supervise the construction and administration of mosques and madrasas, issue fatwa on points of religious law, and manage the hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca). The members of the Council are nominated by Muslim societies and appointed by the president of Singapore. The Council advises the President on all things relating to Muslim affairs.

Brunei is a unique political entity in Southeast Asia, in some ways the remnant of an earlier era. The Sultan is the absolute ruler, and also the head of Islam. The official version of the religion is Sunni Islam and, as with all Malays, the Shafi’i School of jurisprudence is adopted. Other interpretations are tolerated, but not the propagation of heterodox teachings. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries the Sultanate of Brunei, which extended throughout northern Borneo, was one of the most important Islamic centres in Southeast Asia, with close links with Islamic religious authorities in the Malay Peninsula and the Middle East. Many Bruneians studied in centres of Islamic learning in Arabia and performed the hajj. After the Wahhabi teachings came to dominate Islamic education in Arabia in the 1920s, al-
Azhar University of Cairo, with its then more open and moderate approach to religion, became the principal destination for Brunei's religious scholars. From the 1980s, Darul Arqam, known in Brunei as the Jama'at Arqam and Tablígh movement, a fundamentalist group active in Indonesia, extended their activities to Brunei. Darul Arqam was banned in 1991, when its proselytizing became too aggressive. The government maintains tight control of political and religious activities (an Islamic teacher, for instance, is required to have a license). As a result, no Islamic party or radical Islamic movement has emerged. The Islamic revival in Brunei has instead been channeled into cultural manifestations of orthodox Islam, for instance in a greater emphasis on Islamic education, public appearance and dress.

The oil boom of the 1970s and Brunei's expanding revenues in the latter part of the twentieth century allowed Bruneians to participate more actively in international exchanges and worldwide Muslim religious activities, and to undertake concrete acts of solidarity with Muslims elsewhere.

Philippine Muslims are collectively known as Moros, the name given to them by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, or as Bangsamoro (literally 'the Moro nation'). Most of them are Sunni following the Shafi'i School. Christian Filipinos have been oriented culturally towards the West, initially towards Spain, which brought Catholicism, then later towards the US, which brought the English language, democratic political institutions and American
popular culture and lifestyle. The Muslims of the southern Philippines, on the other hand, remain rooted in the Islamized Malay world.\textsuperscript{12}

Islam had been introduced in the fourteenth century spreading throughout the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao. There are at least 13 distinct ethno-linguistic communities of Moros. The most important in Mindanao are the Naranao and the closely-Ilanun around Lake Lanao, and the Maguindanao of Cotabato. In the Sulu archipelago, the most important groups are the Tausug on the island of Jolo (Sulu), the Yakan of Basilan island, the Samal in Tawi-Tawi and adjacent islands, and the Jama Mapun of Cagayan de Sulu. Together, they constitute approximately 17\% of the population of the southern Philippines.\textsuperscript{13}

Like other Southeast Asian Muslims, the Moros have retained many pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals. Before the Islamic resurgence of the late twentieth century much of the knowledge about Islam among the Moros was handed down by word of mouth, and was connected with folk beliefs. There was general ignorance of the Qur\'\textsuperscript{\text{"\text{"an}}, and even of the most rudimentary teachings of Islam. The adat or customary law was markedly different from shari\textsuperscript{\text{"ah}, and animism and animistic rituals abounded.\textsuperscript{14}

The Muslim areas of the southern Philippines experienced an Islamic resurgence after World War II. This religious revival was intertwined, as in Malaysia, with ethnic nationalism. It was also influenced by the religious revival in neighbouring Muslim countries, in particular by the \textit{dakwah}
movement of Malaysia and by the return of Philippine Muslim scholars from centres of Islamic learning in the Middle East. With Saudi financial support, the Mindanao ulama began to build mosques and madrasas. Before the Islamic resurgence there were relatively few mosques in Mindanao, and these were mostly built of wood and bamboo. By the 1970s, hundreds had been built, and of more permanent materials obviously influenced by Middle Eastern and South Asian architectural styles. The Islamic resurgence also saw changes in the dress code and status of women. The Muslim elites that had previously favoured Western-style clothes now embraced Islamic dress. Muslim women, who had always worn the traditional malong (a tubular woven fabric worn by both men and women) now began to wear Arab-style dress and to take on the hitherto unfamiliar practice of veiling.

On the mainland of Southeast Asia, there are three distinct Muslim communities in Thailand: ethnic Malays in the south; an ethnically-mixed community in Bangkok; and Chinese Muslims in the north. The more integrated Bangkok Muslims have no difficulty in identifying themselves as Thai. The same is true of the Chinese Muslims, although in the north Muslim attitudes towards nationality remain coloured by earlier aggressive efforts to assimilate ethnic minorities. In the south, there was greater resistance to assimilation; religion became coupled with politics and fuelled an armed separatist movement.
Malay Muslims constitute approximately 80% of the population in the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Ethnic Malays also constitute a majority in the province of Satun, although here integration has been more successful. Most Muslims in Satun now speak Thai language, and the province's main communications links are northwards to central Thailand, rather than south to Malaysia.

In recent years the Thai government has adopted a more liberal approach towards southern Muslims, taking steps to improve the economic and social conditions, encouraging their participation at all levels in the administration, allowing teaching in the local Malay dialect and funding the construction of mosques. Islamic school, both government and privately funded, are thriving throughout south of Thailand.

When the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975, there were 150,000 to 200,000 Muslims in Cambodia. One estimate puts today's figure at 217,000 or 2% of the total population.¹⁷ Most Cambodian Muslims are ethnic Malays or Cham, the majority adhere to the Shafīʽi school of Sunni Islam, though traditionalist Cham combine Islamic beliefs with ancient non-Muslim traditions and rites.¹⁸ Revival interpretations of Islam were unknown in Cambodia until 1991, when the country emerged from a decade and a half of Khmer Rouge terror and civil war and opened up to the outside world. Since then, external funding, largely Saudi, has financed an expansion of the country's Islamic infrastructure, from about 20 mosques in 1991 to 150, and
another 200 places of worship and an extensive Islamic schooling system. Penetration of Cambodian Muslim society by foreign elements was facilitated by the devastation of the religious establishment under the Khmer Rouge. only 20 of the 113 most prominent Cham clergy survived.\textsuperscript{19}

Most sources estimate that 4% of the population of Burma (Myanmar) is Muslim.\textsuperscript{20} Muslim leaders believe that the figure may be as high as 10% but there has been no official census since Burma gained its independence from the British in 1948. The majority of Burmese Muslims are descendants of Indian Muslims who settled in Burma under the British. Unlike other Southeast Asian Muslims, their cultural orientation is towards South Asia, rather than the Malay world. There is also a separate group of Muslims with an older history in Burma, the Rohingya, whose contact with Islam dates back to the Arab traders of the eighth century. The succeeding centuries saw an influx of Arabs, Persians, Indians and Turks, who intermarried with the local inhabitants.

During the British colonial period and the early years of independence, Muslims played an important role in the administration and civil society, as well as in business and cultural activities. From the early 1960s, successive military regimes have sought to strengthen their support by identifying with Theravada Buddhism, the majority religion, and have sanctioned varying degrees of discrimination against Muslims. Much of the current concern about
possible Islamic revivalism in Burma centres on Rohingya organizations based along the country’s border with Bangladesh.

In summary, Southeast Asian Muslims are participating and members of the International Islamic community. Limiting discussion to the five ASEAN states of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, and Singapore, as mentioned above, the first two have Muslim majority populations, while the latter three have significant Muslim minorities. With the increase in literacy and the increase of available literature, the worldwide Islamic resurgence is making itself felt. In general, the Islamic revival movements, which are usually categorized under the rubric ‘dakwah’ movements, appear to be urban-centered.

Many diverse international Islamic organizations have an impact on Southeast Asian Muslims. One of the most influential is the organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers, for example, has played a mediating role between the separatists group MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and the Marcos regime in attempting the nine years separation struggle in the Southern Philippines.

In addition to diplomatic ways, the international Islamic organizations have also played increasingly important financial and educational roles in the region. Organizations such as WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth) and IIFSO (The International Islamic Federation of Student Organization) are active at a regional, and also national level. Rabitah, the Saudi-based Muslim
organization has funded several projects of \textit{PERKIM} (a Malaysian missionary organization founded by Tunku Abdul Rahman, first Malaysian Prime Minister, in 1960)\textsuperscript{31}, and also \textit{dakwah} activities in other ASEAN countries.

Although there has been some bilateral aid between Middle Eastern and ASEAN countries, such financial aid has made relatively little impact. Also, there has been much talk of Muslim economic solidarity, little real foreign aid and investment has been forthcoming. This is due to a reluctance by recipient governments to accept such funds. The Malaysian and Indonesian governments, keep a close check on internal religious movements which receive funding from outside the country.\textsuperscript{22}

The contemporary Islamic resurgence in Malaysia and Indonesia has another important component which nationalism has allowed access. There is currently a move, on the part of some Malaysian and Indonesian revivalists, not only to align themselves with the international Islamic movement, but also to assess their own past.

In Indonesia this reassessment of the post-war relationship between the secular nationalists and the Islamic nationalists centres on a re-evaluation of the evolution of the Pancasila (national ideology). According to Saifuddin Anshari, four changes proposed by Soekarno which were made in the original version of the Jakarta Charter, and argues that their deletion from the final draft fundamentally altered the extent of Islamic influence in the evolving Indonesian nation-state structure.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, Indonesia evolved into a self-
declared secular state. Although Islam is not recognized as the official religion of the country, the first principle of Pancasila exhorts a belief in *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*, The One God. The legal system in Indonesia is also not based on the *Shari'ah*, but rather is primarily a legacy of the Dutch colonial era.

The reassessment in Malaysia concerns the role of the Malay-Muslim Islamic-oriented nationalists, particularly during the post-war pre-independence period (1945-1957). This involves a re-examination of such organizations as the Hizbul Muslimin, the genesis of PAS, and the Islamic ideological formulations of its first presidents, particularly Burhanuddin al Helmy. Al-Helmy embodied both streams of Malay-Muslim opposition to UMNO rule, that is, the Islamic and the leftist. According to the 1957 Constitution, Islam is the religion of the state. There are, however, strict restrictions on the jurisdiction of these state shari'ah courts, and public law is based on a western legal system inherited from Great Britain. Regarding provision for the religious affiliation of the political elite, only the Prime Minister is required to be of the Islamic faith.

The specific direction that this growing momentum towards an emphasis on the quality of the role of Islam in Malaysia is difficult to predict.

In the context of Islam in Southeast Asia, there is an important countervailing dichotomy which will also play an increasing role in influencing the development of the fundamentalist modernist equation, the
majority-minority issue. There are two manifestations of this, first, the Muslim majority versus non-Muslim minority, as in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia, and second, the Muslim minority versus a non-Muslim majority, as in the case of Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore. One key element with reference to Malaysia is to rationalize a role for the large non-Muslim constructed which can accommodate the diversity of population composition. There seems to be a tendency on the part of Muslim reformers in Malaysia and Indonesia to stress universalistic ideals of mankind, and such as social justice, land reform and corruption-free government, which, transcending the concerns that affect only Muslims, embrace problems which confront all citizens of the nation-state irrespective of religion and ethnicity. It is emphasized that the concerns of the Islamic umma are the concerns of umma of mankind.

The basic issue for Muslim minorities in non-Muslim states, on the other hand, is to what extent a distinct Muslim identity in the universalistic sense can be maintained, and how much assimilation to a dominant nation-state pattern will prevail amongst Muslim nationals. Within the context of Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, the dominant pattern takes into consideration two factors of relevance; one linguistic, and the other ideological. In Thailand, Thai is the dominant language and Buddhism forms the basis for the national ethos. In the Philippines it is Tagalog which is the dominant language and Catholicism which forms the dominant component of
the nation-state ethos. In Singapore the policy is to preserve a multilingual balance within a secular nation-state ethos.

In Malaysia, the presence of a large Chinese and Indian, non-Muslim minority, and, in Indonesia, the presence of Christian and Hindu Buddhist minorities, pose practical problems. In Thailand and the Philippines the concentration of Muslim minorities in the southern geographical regions of these nations has led to problems of state integration. These problems have been aggravated in the 1970s. Singapore's small size, and its ambitious public housing projects have led to a physical integration of the, largely Malay, Muslim community. A National Council of Islamic Affairs has been set up to cater amongst other things, to the administration of the country's mosques and religious schools. In addition there is a Shari'ah court to register and administer Muslim marriage, divorce, adoption, property and inheritance disputes. In Thailand there also appears to be a trend to provide some autonomy in such matters as religious education and the administration of civil religious law. Assuming that this trend continues and that the Muslim region is not repressed, but allowed to function in limited spheres.

Such developments will be determined by the fact that this majority-minority issue is intimately related to the position of the Malay-Muslim people in Southeast Asia. Malay-Muslims are found from Southern Thailand to the Southern Philippines. The perceived status of the Malay-race as the indigenous race of the archipelago and geographical distribution transcending
the boundaries of the present nation-states, may also lead to the emergence of a certain regional Muslim identity. The recent formation of RISEAP (Regional Islamic Organization of Southeast Asia and the Pacific), with headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, heralds a regional ideological perspective which will complement both the national and universalistic ideological perspectives.

In addition in Malaysia, it is worth emphasizing that religion does not derive its political significance in Malaysia from the conflict between different faiths. The issue must be viewed primarily as a component of the more general rivalry between the Malays and the non-Malays. Religious appeals for political ends are confined to the Malay community and are directed at unifying that community by emphasizing its separate identity and interests. Religious and anti-non-Malay slogans almost always go hand in hand and are aimed at persuading the Malays to be more vigilant in safeguarding their pre-eminence in the country's political life and to be less compromising in their relations with other communities. For example, during both the 1959 and 1964 elections, it was alleged that the PMIP had made rural Malay voters swear on the Qur'ān that they would vote for its candidates. Apparently votes were solicited on the grounds that the contest between the PMIP and the UMNO was not merely one between the candidates of the two political parties but between "messengers of the Prophet" and the "infidels". The party was alleged to have insisted that it was
**haram** (forbidden) for Muslims to cooperate politically with non-Muslims, and a great deal of attention was given to its "whisper campaign" in the less sophisticated Kelantan state that those who supported political parties that had non-Muslims (for example, the Alliance-BN) would be regarded as infidels.²⁵

A stumbling block in the face of PAS's efforts to promote a distinctively Islamic agenda has been its failure to relate Islamic precepts to modern life. PAS, for instance, has repeatedly failed to articulate a model for inter-religious cooperation in the context of the multi-religious and multicultural Malaysian society. Its cynical manipulation of Malay-Chinese cooperation for electoral gains is a case in point. The failure of PAS to relate the universalistic vision of Islam to its socio-political situation has alienated the non-Muslim communities and strained its relationship with Chinese-based political parties. PAS's parochialism and its inability to forge a working relationship with non-Malay political parties continue to be a stumbling block in its efforts to gain wider support among the Malaysian electorate, both Malay and non-Malay.²⁶

Therefore, it is unfortunate that over the decades Islam in Malaysia has come to be seen in communal perspectives. The Islamic party of Malaysia (PAS) has all along demanded the "restoration of Malay sovereignty" primarily because of the indigenous status of the community. What is important to us is that its demand has invariably been presented in the name of Islam. Even a cursory analysis of PAS's philosophy will reveal that its
insistence upon Malay political pre-eminence, Malay economic pre-eminence and Malay cultural pre-eminence have been articulated as a way of protecting the integrity of Islam. What is at the kernel of Islam is not ethnicity or ancestry but unity of God. And the one significant implication of that unity is the unity of the whole mankind. The Qur’an for instance, observes.

"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, not that ye may despise each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you"). Surah al- Hujrat: 13

This concept of unity is in fact linked to the idea of equality within the human community as suggested in the Holy Qur’an:

("And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: Ye are members, one of another: Those who have left their homes, or been driven out there from, or suffered harm in My..."")

27
Cause, or fought or been slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath;- A reward from the presence of Allah, and from His presence is the best of rewards.

") Surah Al-i-Imran: 195

In commenting upon this Surah Yusuf Ali notes,” In Islam, the equal status of the sexes is not only recognized but insisted on. If sex distinction which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters, still less of course would count the artificial distinctions such as rank, wealth, position, race, colour, birth, etc.”

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Notes and References


3. The term Salafi derives from salaf (ancestors), specifically the first three generations of pious Muslims during and after the revelation of the Qur’an. Salafis adhere to what they believe was original practice of Islam in its early years. See Dawat-us-Salafiyyah, http://muttaqun.com/salafiyyah.html.


7. Malays are also identified with the bumiputra-literally, sons of the soil, to whom special privileges have been extended since the 1970s.

8. Hussin Mutalib, op. cit., p. 34.


11. Ibid., pp. 82-83.

'The Diverse Culture of Mindanao', www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Mindanao/Mindanao_Culture/mindanao_culture.htm.

Peter Gowing, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.


www.adherents.com/Na_325.html.

The Cham's roots lie in the ancient Kingdom of Champa, which once extended through south and central Vietnam.


www.adherent.com/Na_335.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunku_Abdul_Rahman


