In the first chapter of this thesis, the attempt has been made to describe and depict on the socio-cultural environment of Southeast Asia before the coming of Islam to the region. Broadly speaking, in this chapter has been described that why the region was called as further India or sometimes little China. Much of the Indian cultures and rituals have been practiced in Southeast Asia and sometimes even Southeast Asian languages have been influenced by Indian languages.

As the spread of Islam to various parts of coastal India set the stage for its further expansion to island Southeast Asia, Arab traders and sailors regularly visited the ports of Southeast Asia long before they converted to Islam. Initially the region was little more than a middle ground, where the Chinese segment of the great Eurasian trading complex met the Indian Ocean trading zone to the west. At ports on the coast of the Malayan peninsula, east Sumatra, and somewhat later north Java, goods from China were transferred from East Asian vessels to Arab or Indian ships, and products from as far west as Rome were loaded into the emptied Chinese ships to be carried to East Asia. By the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., sailors and ships from areas within Southeast Asia - particularly Sumatra and Malaya - had become active in the seaborne trade of the region. Southeast Asian products, especially luxury items, such as aromatic woods from the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra, and spices, such as cloves, nutmeg, and mace from the far end of the Indonesian archipelago, had also become important exports.
to both China in the east and India and the Mediterranean area in the west. These trading links were to prove even more critical to the expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia than they had earlier been to the spread of Buddhism and Hinduism.

As the coastal trade and shipping of India came to be controlled (from the 8th century onward) by Muslims from such regions as Gujarat and various parts of south India, elements of Islamic culture began to filter into island Southeast Asia. But only in the 13th century after the collapse of the far-flung trading empire of Srivijaya, which was centred on the Straits of Malacca between Malaya and the north tip of Sumatra, was the way open for the widespread proselytization of Islam. With its Great War fleets, Srivijaya controlled trade in much of the area and was at times so powerful that it could launch attacks on rival empires in south India. Indian traders, Muslim or otherwise, were welcome to trade in the chain of ports controlled by Srivijaya. Since the rulers and officials of Srivijaya were devout Buddhists, however, there was little incentive for the traders and sailors of Southeast Asian ports to convert to Islam, the religion of growing numbers of the merchants and sailors from India. With the fall of Srivijaya, the way was open for the establishment of Muslim trading centres and efforts to preach the faith to the coastal peoples. Muslim conquests in areas such as Gujarat and Bengal, which separated Southeast Asia from Buddhist centres in India from
the 11th century onward, also played a role in opening the way for Muslim conversion.

As was the case in most of the areas to which Islam spread, peaceful and voluntary conversion was far more important than conquest and force in spreading the faith in Southeast Asia. Almost everywhere in the islands of the region, trading contacts paved the way for conversion. Muslim merchants and sailors introduced local peoples to the ideas and rituals of the new faith and impressed on them how much of the known world had already been converted. Muslim ships also carried Sufis to various parts of Southeast Asia, where they were destined to play a vital role in conversion as they had in India. The first areas to be won to Islam in the last decades of the 13th century were several small port centres on the northern coast of Sumatra. From these ports, the religion spread in the following centuries across the Strait of Malacca to Malaya.

On the mainland the key to widespread conversion was the powerful trading city of Malacca, whose smaller trading empire had replaced the fallen Srivijaya. From the capital at Malacca, Islam spread down the east coast of Sumatra, up the east and west coasts of Malaya, to the island of Bornco, and to the trading centre of Demak on the north coast of Java. From Demak, the most powerful of the trading states on north Java, the Muslim faith was disseminated to other Javanese ports and, after a long struggle with a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in the interior, to the rest of the island. From
Demak, Islam was also carried to the Celebes, the Spice Islands in the eastern archipelago, and from there to Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

This progress of Islamic conversion shows that, the port cities of coastal areas were particularly receptive to the new faith. Here the trading links were critical. Once one of the key cities in a trading cluster converted, it was in the best interest of others to follow in order to enhance personalities and provide common basis in Muslim law to regulate business deals. Conversion to Islam also linked these centres, culturally as well as economically, to the merchants and ports of India, the Arab Countries, and the Mediterranean. Islam made slow progress in some areas such as central Java, where Hindu-Buddhist dynasties contested its spread. Factually the earlier conversion to these Indian religions had been confined, mainly to the ruling elites in Java, and on the other hand islands were left opened for mass conversions to Islam, which the Sufis eventually exploited. The island of Bali, where Hinduism is deep rooted at the popular level, remained largely impervious to the spread of Islam. The same was true for most of the mainland of Southeast Asia, where centuries before Islam, Theravada Buddhism reached from India and Ceylon, and won the fervent adherence among the ruling elites as well as in the peasant masses.

In the second chapter of the thesis, an attempt has been made on the varieties of Asian Muslims in the ASEAN countries. As the Southeast Asian region were influenced by different external forces in the course of its long
history. In the early centuries of the Christian era, the sprawl of the Indian and Chinese civilizations stretched in the region. Subsequently, the Arabs and Europeans entered the area. The arrival of various external groups contributed to the growth of heterogeneity in the region's societies. Southeast Asia's initial contact with Islam is undoubtedly a by-product of Arab trade in the region, and Arab traders arrived with Islamic faith to the regions in eighth century.

Islam became identified with state power in Southeast Asia from the fifteenth century, shortly after the foundation of the trading empire of Malacca, based on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. But after the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century, Muslims dispersed to other parts of the Indonesian archipelago where Islam became most deeply accepted among coastal trading communities. In Java, Islam was later adopted by local princes to underpin and support their mythical power but primarily as a cultural veneer on entrenched animist and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs whose syncretic legacy is to be found in eastern and central parts of the island. The Islamic faith was also employed to mobilize opposition to Dutch colonial control. Within Southeast Asia, the most significant Islamic communities can be found in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

In contrast to the Arab Countries, Islam in Southeast Asia is far more multi-religious and multi-cultural. This diversity is exemplified in Muslim majority countries such as Brunei, and in Indonesia and Malaysia with their significant non-Muslim minorities as well as the Muslim minorities'
communities of Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar. In Indonesia, Islam becomes more visible in the political and institutional landscape, from the government to NGOs. Multiple and diverse voices had discussed and debated the status and role of Islam in Indonesian society. Muslim scholars and professionals in Indonesia are producing some of the most creative thinking on religious and social reform, democratization, pluralism, and women’s rights in the Muslim world.

In the Southeast Asian mainland, Islam is in minority position like Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. With the exceptions of Cambodia and Singapore, heightened ethno-religious identity in the face of discrimination by the dominant culture has led to abortive separatist violence which has been met with repressive reaction. Cham, the Islamic minority in Cambodia are the displaced survivors of the Kingdom of Champa (once located in central Vietnam), which was extinguished by the southwards drive of the Vietnamese in the fifteenth century. They enjoyed a tolerated existence after independence till 1970s. and then they became victims of civil war and the bestiality of the Khmer Rouge. A significant number escaped as refugees to Malaysia, since the downfall of the Khmer Rough regime in 1979, the Cambodian Cham have virtually disappeared as a separate community.

In third chapter, The Malaysian domestic political process rests within the framework of a constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, based
on the British model. Islam contributed significantly to ideas and offices of political authority and was anchored in Malay identity. Historically, it has constituted only one ingredient of Malay political life and has had to compete with and accommodate at least two other fundamental organizing concepts, Malay kingship and Malay nationalism. The unity of the state was symbolized by Islam.

Islam in Malaysia's domestic context serves as an expression of confessional, ethnic, interest in a society that is ethnically divided between Malays and non-Malays. The political perception of Malaysia as inherently Malay with special rights due to that ethnic community is balanced against the large-scale presence of other ethnic communities as an irreversible fact and by the constitutional commitment to the parliamentary process which enables communal representation. The poly-ethnic complexity of Malaysian society has been shaped against the political context of Malay dominance and by the fragile "balance" of the Malaysian population overall.

A Constitutional guarantee to Malay special rights was "bargained" against a corresponding recognition of just solid right for the non-Malay communities. The exchange of Malay political leadership for unhindered Chinese economic activity served as the unwritten covenant, although some Malay opposition continued against such inter-communal co-operation and the "selling away of the birthright of the Malays", led in particular by Islamic Party of Malaysia-PAS. Nevertheless, the electoral success of the first inter-
communal coalition party, the Alliance (a tripartite coalition) representing the main ethnic communities through United Malays National Organization-UMNO, the Malayan Chinese Association-MCA, and the Malayan Indian Congress-MIC, in 1955 and the dominance of UMNO within that organization helped its claim to a mandate of leading Malay to independence.

The Islamic revivalist movement, popularly known as the Dakwah (literally, "to summon or call") movement, emerged in Malaysia in the 1970s. Importance of the Dakwah movement was that, Islam became highlighted as a pillar of Malay identity. The state was forced to respond, to this revivalist movement by giving increasing attention to Islam, and the subsequent adoption of an Islamization strategy of its own. The pivotal moment in the institutionalization of the revivalist movement occurred in 1969 at the University of Malaya, when the National Association of Muslim Students established a Muslim youth organization named Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia-ABIM, or the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement. ABIM grew to a position of strength in the mid-1970s under the stewardship of student activist Anwar Ibrahim. The year 1969 was also marked by a series of bloody race riots resulting tensions between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese. Dr. Mahathir Mohammed began his political career with such pro-Malay zeal, but he was expelled from the party, which he leads nowadays, in 1969 his book, *The Malay Dilemma*, which called for political reforms giving Malays privileges over other races, was banned.
The Dakwah movement not only achieved a formidable position in the political sphere, but also transformed Malay thinking and culture. The government felt threatened by the opposition PAS and the student-based Dakwah movement. It decided to approach any Islamic issue in a positive manner, politically and economically. Dakwah groups were co-opted and the government embarked on projects such as subsidizing pilgrimages to Mecca and helping to set up the International Islamic University and a think-tank called the Institute of Islamic Thought. Other Islamic-oriented programs were introduced after Anwar Ibrahim joined UMNO in 1982, and by the end of the 1980s more and more of the government's policies had been "ABIMized."

As Prime Minister, Mahathir co-opt the mainstream influence of Islamic thinking and had also greatly expanded ties with the international Islamic community, yet he had been a consistent and forthright opponent of Islamism. In 1994, Mahathir moved decisively to ban Al-Arqam, a Sufi sect based on radical Islamic principles and founded in Malaysia in 1968. So great was the Association of South East Asian Nations' (ASEAN) fear of the sect that the religious affairs ministers of the six ASEAN states at the time met in Malaysia to discuss measures to be taken against it. The day after the ASEAN meeting, Malaysia's National Fatwa Council issued a decree forbidding the sect from spreading its teachings or running its substantial businesses in Malaysia.
Mahathir's dramatically ousted his apparent heir, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in 1998, and had transformed the political opposition in Malaysia, which saw its greatest opportunity to challenge the Mahathir hegemony by riding a wave of popular discontent over cronyism, corruption, and restrictions to democracy and civil liberties. PAS, the Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party, and the new Justice Party headed by Anwar's wife Wan Azizah came together in an uneasy electoral coalition to challenge the ruling party in the 1999 national elections.

A silent participant was, of course, Anwar. However, he was not universally viewed as a beacon of hope. His critics view him as having tried to import an Iranian-style Islamic revolution when he first came to prominence in the 1970s. In the early 1980s he travelled to Teheran to meet with Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. He set about forging links with Islamic movements in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. His choice of Kuala Lumpur's mosques as a venue from which to launch his "reformasi" campaign was perhaps not coincidental.

Malaysia's future is less precarious than Indonesia's, despite the weakness of its civil society and the lack of press freedom. Prime Minister Mahathir has been a consistent opponent of Islamism, Islamic movements such as Al-Arqam have been sidelined, and Mahathir is still sidelining those, who align themselves closely to former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. There is the danger that a more conservative UMNO will use Islam
for partisan purposes and pick up on the prevailing Islamist sentiment, but, if anything, UMNO has been weakened dramatically by the Anwar episode as has Malaysia by the financial crisis, although on this score a recovery of sorts has been unfolding. The challenge for the future will be the containment of the Dakwah movement and UMNO's ability to head off a groundswell of support for the socially conservative PAS.

In the fourth chapter attempt is made to examine the success and failure of Islamic religio-political party in the multi-religious and multi-cultural society of Malaysia. Malaysia gives us a good glimpse to the complexity of religion-politics interplay in contemporary Muslim society. Malaysia gained independence from the British rule after almost two centuries. The independence was negotiated by Malay bureaucrats who were groomed within the British colonial administration. The Malay resistance to the British colonial power took the form of quiet and peaceful withdrawal of cooperation, refusing to work for British plantations and mining. The British administration retaliated by importing foreign workers from Southern India and China.

The anti-British movement was led by Malay National Party (MNP) and later became known as Parti Al-Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), and its rival UMNO (the United Malay National Organization). Anti-British sentiments were sparked by the growing economic power and influence of ethnic Chinese under the British rule. In the course of reasserting the Malay rights
and interests the two parties were confronted with the question of "who is Malay?" Whereas UMNO chose race, language, and custom as the criteria of Malayness, MNP opted for the criteria of religion, race, and language. The choice of Islam as a fundamental criterion for Malayness set MNP apart from UMNO, and soon became a defining element in the evolution of its identity. MNP twice changed its name before settling with its current one. The Party was renamed Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) in 1951, and again Party Al-Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in 1973. The adoption of a Malay name was meant to underscore its commitment to replacing the English with Bahasa Melayu, the Malaysian language, as the official language of the country.

Indeed, Islam and its impact on Malay identity and future have been the overriding question confronting Malaysian Muslims. The question may be stated thus: How can the Muslim community develop without giving up its Islamic identity and character? The way PAS and UMNO answer the above question set them apart. UMNO's answer often comes at the side of attaining economic power and strength. UMNO's position has been articulated by its president, Mahathir Mohammad, who argues that the only way for the Malay to maintain their distinct Islamic lifestyle is by attaining economic power. PAS leaders, on the other hand, insist that the development agenda advanced by UMNO is gradually eradication the Islamic core of the Malay.

A stumbling block in the face of PAS's efforts to promote a distinctive 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 multi-cultural Malaysian society. Its cynical manipulation of Malay-Chinese cooperation for electoral gains is a case in point. PAS's failure 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. It is undeniable that the Islamic movement has been an essential force in the development of Malaysian society. PAS and the array of smaller organizations and groups have been actively involved in moulding social values and attitudes, and shaping public institutions and policies. Islamic organizations and groups have been reacting to policies and actions taken by UMNO leaders rather than playing a proactive role. The posture adopted by Islamic groups is very often apologetic, aimed at mitigating the negative influences of the developmental policies promoted by the government, rather than advancing an alternative developmental vision of their own.

And in the last chapter, 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 causes 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.