

## The Changing Function of Religion among Rural Malays

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### Introduction

Malays are Moslems and Islam is the symbol of their identity. The modern world has evoked various responses in the sphere of religion. Remarkable changes in such religious behavior as daily prayer, Friday assembly, pilgrimage, and religious offerings have been observed in urban areas, while changes in rural areas seem to be limited to certain institutions. I would like to present some of these in this short note.

### I Weakening Educational Function

*Pondok*, which literally means a hut, denotes a particular type of religious school. The name derives from the small huts surrounding religious teacher's residence and teaching place (*madrassah*), where students live and cater for themselves. *Pondok* schools are found in the northern states of the Malay Peninsula, in some provinces of southern Thailand, and in Java and Aceh in Indonesia. The teachers at these *pondok* schools are supposed to have spent a long time studying in other *pondok* schools or at some institution in Mecca. They open their *pondok* schools on their own or their parents' land, or on a piece of land donated for religious purposes. The popularity and reputation of a particular *pondok* school depends on the teacher's personality and experience, and, in this sense, it will last only for one generation, although in fact it may be continued by the teacher's son or son-in-law.

At a famous *pondok* school, the students are expected to attain a high level of religious knowledge, to be able to read Arabic and write *Jawi*, and to understand the Islamic law system. At an unknown rural *pondok* school the curriculum is very poor. Thus, the number of years spent at a *pondok* does not necessarily reflect the level of education. For example, the villagers of Galok in Kelantan attained only very low literacy through their *pondok* education; if they had spent less than two years at the *pondok* school, they could barely read and write (see Table 1).

*Pondok* schools were important forces in the socialization of youth before formal secular education was introduced into rural Malay communities, and they are still important to Thai-speaking Moslems who live among Buddhists for transmitting the Islamic religion to their descendants. Thus, the number of boys at *pondoks* in Thailand has shown no sign of decrease. In contrast, the recent spread of formal education in

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Malaysia, especially at the lower secondary level in the Malay medium, has been threatening *pondok* education. Moreover, as the roman alphabet (*rumi*) is taught at secular schools, the use of *Jawi*, taught at *pondok* schools, is becoming more limited. A remarkable decrease in *pondok* school experience is found among Galok villagers; almost half of those over fifty years in 1970 had stayed for sometime at a *pondok* school in their youth, while only 12.5% of villagers in their twenties had been to a *pondok* school (see Table 2).

**Table 1** Literacy of Galok Villagers by Years of Staying in *Pondok* School

Years	Literacy			Total
	Illiterate	Can Read <i>Jawi</i> but not <i>Rumi</i>	Can Read Both <i>Jawi</i> and <i>Rumi</i>	
less than 1 year	1			1
1 year	5	1		6
2 years	2			2
3 years	5	2	1	8
4 years	1			1
5 years	2	2	1	5
6 years		1		1
7 years		1		1
8 years & more	1	1	1	3
Total	17	8	3	28

**Table 2** *Pondok* Experience of Galok Male Residents by Age-Group

Age-Group	Total Population	Those Experienced <i>Pondok</i> Education	%
20-29	40	5	12.5
30-39	36	9	25.0
40-49	30	12	40.0
50-	38	18	47.4
Total	144	44	30.6

In spite of the general decrease of *pondok* students, the number of students in some famous *pondok* schools has not decreased because of the good education they offer. Some attract students from even more distant states than before. Some are trying to modernize by introducing other subjects. Here I will describe one such school near Kota Bharu. It was founded in 1931 by the present teacher's grandfather. In 1970, about three hundred huts were arranged in a three-acre compound. Most of the residents were boys, although about fifty old people and fifty girls were also living there. The girls' residential area was separated from that of the boys. The girls were attending

the Arabic school next door started by the present teacher in 1958, which provided not only religious education but also a secular one to those who had completed their primary education. The original *pondok* school was run by three religious teachers, and thirteen new teachers were employed in the Arabic school.

Enrollment of youth in small rural *pondok* schools has however declined. The *pondok* school in Galok falls in this category. It was founded by the present religious teacher (who was 57 years old in 1970) in 1937 using one acre of his father's land. He studied religion at *pondok* schools in the vicinity when he was young and visited Mecca as an ordinary pilgrim in 1953. There were about fifty boys at his *pondok* school in the golden

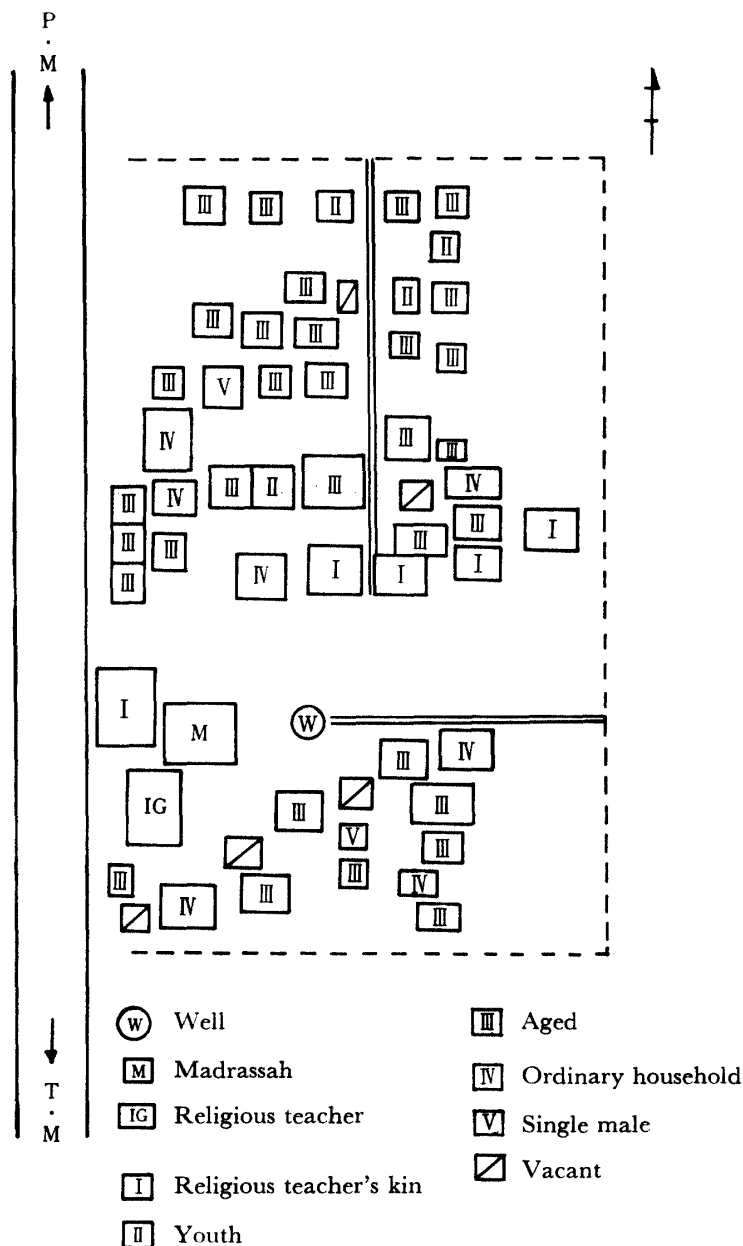


Fig. 1 Plan of Galok Pondok School

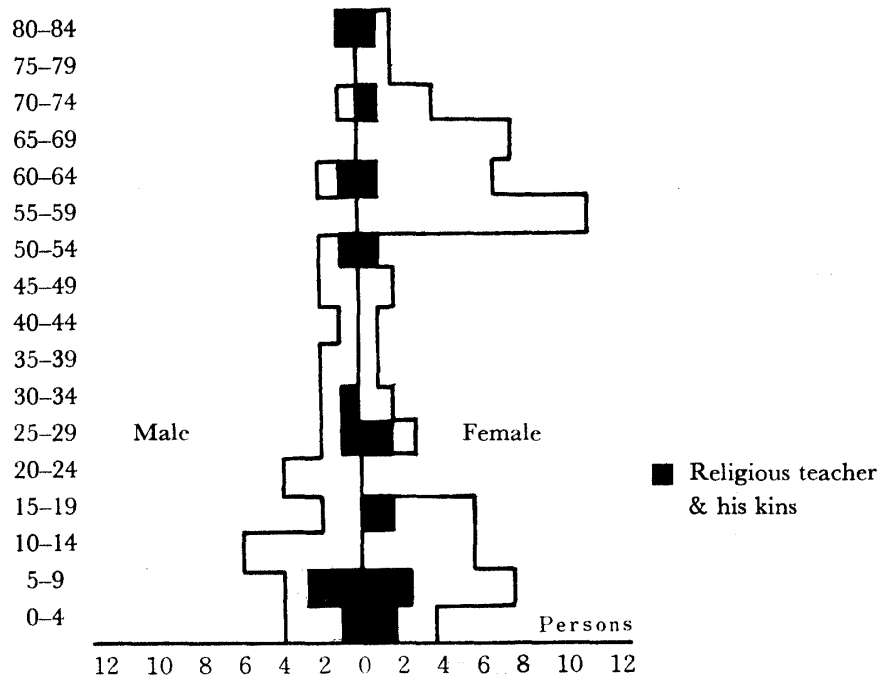


Fig. 2 Residents of Galok Pondok Area by Sex and Age-Group

Table 3 Number of Households in Galok Pondok Area by Category and Years Stayed

Years Stayed	Category	Religious Teacher & his Kins	Youth	Aged	Ordinary Household	Single Males	Total
less than 1 year				3		2	5
1 year				6			6
2 years			2	2			4
3 years				2			2
4 years				5			5
5 years			1	3			4
6 years			2	1			3
7 years				1			1
8 years				2			2
9 years		1					1
10 years		2		3	1		6
11 years							
12 years							
13 years				2			2
14 years							
15 years & more		4		2	5		11
unknown					1		1
Total		7	5	32	7	2	53

period, but by 1960 there were only about twenty, and in 1970 only five boys were studying there (see Figs. 1, 2, Table 3). In obscure *pondok* schools near towns the number of boys was increasing, as many used the *pondok* school as a place to stay so they could attend the secular school in town. Most of the educational functions of the *pondok* schools have been transferred to formal secular schools.

## II Reinforced Mediatory Functions

The religious teacher of a *pondok* school is often believed to have some magical power endowed by God. He sometimes prepares purifying water and amulet papers for the villagers, who say that he has such magical power that he can prevent his two wives from quarreling. Praying with him is believed to be effective for entering heaven after death. Traditionally, a religious teacher performed two different functions at the same time; an educational function through his knowledge and a mediatory function through his magical power. The latter function is becoming more important as he is losing his educational role. Although the educational system in some of the famous *pondok* schools has been improved in response to the times, many rural *pondok* schools now accommodate the aged who wish to pray with a teacher endowed with supernatural powers. A polarization is now taking place among the *pondok* schools.

The number of old people in small obscure *pondok* schools has obviously increased. In 1970, three-fifths of the huts of the Galok *pondok* school mentioned earlier were occupied by old people, thirty of whom, the majority, were old women. Only two old men were staying there, one with his wife, the other with his grandchild. These old people were mostly from villages within ten miles. Some of the old women continued to work, some rented out their paddy fields or rubber estates for a small sum, and others were dependent on their children, grandchildren, or other kin (see Table 4).

**Table 4** Old People in Galok *Pondok* Area by Income Status

Income by Own Means (M\$)	Independent or Assisted	Independent	Partly Assisted	Supported by Others	Total
0				11	11
1- 49			3		3
50- 99		1	3		4
100-199		2	4		6
200-299		4			4
300-399		1	1		2
400-499					
500-599		1			1
600-699					
700-799		1			1
Total		10	11	11	32

The spiritual tie with the religious teacher and the daily association with other old people encouraged not only to those who had lost their near relatives but also those who still have them. Some of the old women prefer *pondok* life to family life with their married children, and thus life at a *pondok* has a positive meaning as a chosen alternative. Five of the thirty-two old people have visited Mecca as pilgrims, on the government-chartered pilgrim boat.

Changes in the character of *pondok* schools were observed not only in Kelantan but also even earlier in Kedah. The survival of a *pondok* school now often depends on old people. But the fact that the personality of the aged religious teacher attracts the old people suggests the possibility of decline of a *pondok* school after the death of the present teacher.

In Malay villages, one or two married children traditionally established independent households in their parents' compound, which custom offers a mechanism for avoiding both conflicts between and isolation of the two generations. The increasing numbers of old people entering *pondoks* cannot be attributed to pressures from homelife. In spite of this, lack of demand by village society for *pondok* schools are beginning to function as old people's homes. Although it may be desirable to provide these *pondok* schools with some kind of subsidy so that they can, in fact, be reorganized into old people's homes, this is not likely just yet. The present situation will be a transient phase.

### III Re-interpretation of the Islamic Idea

Islam is an important foreign element which sets behavioral criteria for the Malays. Islamic law is extremely adaptable in its application. Here I will give an example concerning the treatment of divorce. The following four types of divorce are permitted under the law. (a) *Talak* is a unilateral repudiation by the husband; (b) *pasah* is divorce granted by a religious judge in cases where the whereabouts of one spouse is unknown; (c) *tebus talak* means the wife purchases *talak*, and this is used in cases where the wife wants a divorce; (d) *ta'alik* is divorce which can be requested by the wife if the husband contravenes special conditions agreed to in the marriage contract. Actually most divorces are obtained through *talak* in Malay society. *Talak* does not need the wife's consent and can be carried out freely. In addition, the husband will almost automatically consent to the wife's proposal of divorce, meaning that divorce can take place very easily. On the other hand, according to *Hadith* (tradition), God finds divorce the most offensive of all acts tolerated by Him, and this opinion may be emphasized as a deterrent. Thus, diametrically opposed interpretations of Islamic law are possible, and any interpretation may be fully upheld by the religion.

The kinship structure of Malay society readily allows divorce. This is supported by the fact that in the society of the Jakun proto-Malays, whose kinship structure is almost identical to that of the Malays but who have not been influenced by Islam, divorce

is quite common, though not as common as in Malay society. Thus, when Islamic law was accepted by such a society it is likely that divorce become much easier. One reason is that divorce can be justified as an individual's action in God's name and it is free from the community control which prevails in tribal societies. Conversely, contact with Christian society, or with the traditional thinking of Christianity that divorce should not be permitted, has led to emphasis of similar thinking in the Islamic tradition. This thinking has probably spread through the initiatives of the intellectual and the religious elites rather than developing from the populace.

Of three villages investigated, the traditional type of divorce in accordance with Islamic law is found in Galok in Kelantan.<sup>1)</sup> In place of a *kathi*, the *imam* of the village handles the notice of divorce in an impartial, businesslike manner. A husband issuing a declaration of *talak* must pay a M\$12 registration fee to the religious court, 40% of which is retained by the *imam*. This sum exceeds the daily wage of a laborer and is income which the *imam* cannot ignore.

The Malays of Melaka, because of the location of their state, have frequent contact with Europeans and Chinese and the influence from their cultures is considerable. In about 1960, the State Religious Department (*Jabatan Ugama Islam*) was set up, the number of religious judges was reduced and the system of religious administration was unified. This office is instrumental in discouraging divorce; the religious judge and his representative, the *imam*, try to persuade people who come to resist a divorce to give up the idea. In addition, a famous religious teacher who happened to live in the village surveyed (Bukit Pegoh) also stressed the undesirability of divorce. The village in Kedah, Padang Lalang, falls somewhere between these two, tending toward the traditionalism of Kelantan (see Table 5).

Table 6 shows the marriage and divorce statistics of the three states in which the three villages are located. Judging from the ratio of the number of divorces to marriages, the divorce trend is highest in Kelantan, followed by Kedah and Melaka. The divorce rate in Melaka has been low since early times. From 1962, however, it showed a phenomenal decrease, and in 1966-1970 was only 12 per 100 marriages. In contrast to Melaka, divorce in Kelantan has traditionally been as frequent as 80 per 100 marriages. Recently there has been a gradual decline in the divorce rate, though without the sharp drop seen in Melaka, and in 1966-1970 the divorce rate was 56 per 100 marriages. This decrease is clearly observable in coastal districts but is not so clear in inland areas. In Kedah, it is not possible to ascertain the trend clearly because of lack of data, but a slight decline is observed in 1964 compared with the figures for pre-1957.

Change is not only taking place in Malaysia. Followers of Islam in Singapore (mainly Malays) in recent years have registered a decrease in the number of divorces.

1) See Yoshihiro Tsubouchi, "Islam and Divorce among Malay Peasants," in Shinichi Ichimura edited *Southeast Asia: Nature, Society and Development* (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1976).

**Table 5** Number and Percentage of Ever-Divorced by Sex and Age-Group  
Galok (Kelantan)

Age-Group	Male			Female		
	Ever-Married	Ever-Divorced	%	Ever-Married	Ever-Divorced	%
10-19	—			11	1	9.1
20-29	31	3	9.7	40	8	20.0
30-39	33	9	27.3	34	13	38.2
40-49	30	14	46.7	38	19	50.0
50-59	22	15	68.2	23	12	52.2
60-	16	10	62.5	19	8	42.1
Total	132	51	38.6	165	61	37.0

Padang Lalang (Kedah)

Age-Group	Male				Female			
	Ever-Married	Ever-Divorced	Not Clear	%	Ever-Married	Ever-Divorced	Not Clear	%
10-19					5		1	
20-29	29	3		10.3	57	10	4	17.5
30-39	58	7	1	12.1	61	7	3	11.5
40-49	37	8		21.6	31	6	2	19.4
50-59	23	5		21.7	32	6	7	18.8
60-	26	10	1	38.5	31	7	10	22.6
Total	173	33	2	19.1	217	36	27	16.6

Changes in number of marriages and divorces among Moslems in Singapore are shown in Table 7. The decrease in divorce in Singapore, even more than in Melaka, has been promoted institutionally, backed by the law reform of 1957 (effective from December 1958) and the concomitant establishment of a matrimonial court. The law was strengthened in 1966 to further restrict divorce. In comparison, the role of local Moslem leaders in Singapore has not been as great as in Melaka; although divorce is condemned as offending the will of God, in practice it is controlled by using the law.

In Indonesia, too, there have developed various movements to restrict divorce. As Table 8 shows, a decrease in the number of divorces appeared from about 1965. Changes in number of marriages and divorces in Java by region show a remarkable decline in divorce in the cultural centers of Java, including the cities of Jakarta and Yogyakarta.

The kinship structure of the Malays freely permits divorce. If Islam had not entered Malay society, this characteristic of the kinship structure would have been reflected directly in the phenomenon of divorce, which undoubtedly was common. Against this background, Islam has served both to stimulate divorce and, contrarily,



**Table 6** Changes in Marriages and Divorces in the Three States of West Malaysia

Year	Kelantan			Kedah			Melaka		
	Marriages	Divorces	Rojok	Marriages	Divorces	Rojok	Marriages	Divorces	Rojok
1930							1,358	653	97
1931							1,118	548	70
1932							1,233	537	69
1933							1,369	551	66
1934							1,640	526	66
1935							1,549	519	57
1936							1,466	545	74
1937							1,771	595	53
1938							1,576	461	46
1939							1,452	514	57
1940							1,690	629	64
1941							2,063	587	75
1942							1,892	629	75
1943							3,066	940	101
1944							3,223	1,344	166
1945							2,793	1,699	216
1946							1,936	993	87
1947							1,859	759	75
1948	12,488	11,625	683	7,724	5,032	884	1,767	711	52
1949	13,256	11,384	1,007	7,222	4,645	1,116	1,924	670	66
1950	12,326	11,163	768	8,945	5,170	1,117	2,159	729	78
1951	13,131	10,247	923	9,621	4,977	1,323	2,693	805	100
1952	11,391	9,298	805	7,266	4,801	1,061	2,235	633	77
1953	11,092	8,777	657	6,778	4,285		1,943	648	70
1954	10,003	7,549	681	5,789	3,968	1,087	1,871	604	60
1955	11,639	7,660	702	5,814	3,634	984	1,945	632	54
1956	13,830	7,846	749	4,836	3,173	737	2,099	625	69
1957	7,611	4,747	467	6,940	3,924	982	1,939	560	66
1958	10,723	8,530	644				1,969	536	60
1959	10,054	6,856	738				1,977	582	56
1960	9,810	6,363	668				2,003	564	61
1961	7,176	5,068	514				1,865	544	50
1962	8,399	5,463	517				1,441	213	18
1963	7,987	5,278	1,447				1,687	315	9
1964	8,264	5,270	584	5,105	2,589	671	1,633	263	26
1965	8,275	5,052	519				1,773	260	18
1966	8,177	4,395	810				1,672	170	13
1967	6,933	4,489	458				1,813	225	11
1968	7,703	4,423	419				1,772	225	12
1969	8,668	4,518	546				1,860	204	13
1970	8,136	4,352	583				1,908	240	6
1971							2,025	210	4

Source: The original figures were collected by the religious offices in each state. This table is compiled from the works of Shirle Gordon, "Marriage/Divorce in the Eleven States of Malaya and Singapore," *Intisari*, 2, No. 2 (n.d.); Djamour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore*; Teruyo Umeda, "Women in Malaya — A Report of the Fieldwork in Kedah," *South East Asian Studies*, 3, No. 5 (1966, in Japanese); Narifumi Maeda, "The Changing Peasant World in a Melaka Village — Islam and Democracy in the Malay Tradition," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1974); Tsubouchi, "Marriage and Divorce among Malay Peasants in Kelantan, Malaysia," *South East Asian Studies*, 10, No. 3 (1972).

**Table 7** Marriages and Divorces among Moslems in Singapore

Year	Marriages	Divorces	Divorces per 100 Marriages	Year	Marriages	Divorces	Divorces per 100 Marriages
1921	2,055	1,133	55.1	1950	2,506	1,501	59.9
1922	2,073	1,239	59.8	1951	2,699	1,526	56.6
1923	2,113	1,205	57.0	1952	2,658	1,474	55.5
1924	3,089	1,285	41.6	1953	2,445	1,417	58.0
1925	2,616	1,311	50.1	1954	2,457	1,357	55.2
1926	2,633	1,335	50.7	1955	2,472	1,247	50.4
1927	2,554	1,466	57.4	1956	2,414	1,074	44.5
1928	2,556	1,421	55.6	1957	2,303	1,201	52.1
1929	2,469	1,428	57.8	1958	2,332	1,149	49.3
1930	2,307	1,366	52.9	1959	2,116	577	27.3
1931	2,177	1,264	58.1	1960	1,814	574	31.6
1932	2,084	1,277	61.3	1961	1,560	401	25.7
1933	2,006	1,260	62.8	1962	1,483	447	30.1
1934	2,163	1,132	52.3	1963	1,690	430	25.4
1935	2,070	1,159	56.0	1964	1,698	324	19.1
1936	2,039	1,182	58.0	1965	1,928	365	19.0
1937	2,320	1,208	52.1	1966	1,911	301	15.8
1938	2,065	1,241	60.1	1967	1,894	374	19.7
1939	2,014	1,145	56.9	1968	1,971	200	10.1
1940	2,213	1,249	56.4	1969	1,972	244	12.4
1941	2,440	1,267	51.9	1970	2,272	219	9.6
1942	2,949	1,139	38.6	1971	2,471	241	9.8
1943	3,582	1,705	47.6	1972	2,662	no data	
1944	2,907	2,165	74.5				
1945	2,982	2,046	68.6				
1946	3,095	1,734	56.0				
1947	2,784	1,588	57.0				
1948	2,605	1,545	59.3				
1949	2,516	1,401	55.7				

Source: 1921-1964 Djamour (1959), p. 117 and Djamour (1966), p. 129, p. 183; 1965-1968 *Singapore Year Book 1968*, p. 80; 1969-1970 *Singapore 1971*, p. 262; and 1971-1972 *Singapore 1972*, p. 63, p. 265.

to limit it. In the former case, the interpretation of Islamic law which justifies divorce as an individual's action in God's name further facilitated divorce. In the latter case, the restraint on divorce should be explained by the response of Islam to a wave of modernization rather than by the simple idea that the elements of restraint are inherent in Islam. The significance of religion is not lost, but a re-interpretation is taking place. And the movement originating in towns is now slowly permeating the rural areas.

**Table 8** Marriages and Divorces among Moslems in Indonesia (in thousands)

Year	Marriages	Divorces	Rojok	Divorces per 100 Marriages	Rojok per 100 Divorces
1950	1,276	629	43	49.3	6.8
1951	1,443	815	61	56.5	7.5
1952	1,310	783	59	59.8	7.5
1953	1,417	723	76	51.0	10.5
1954	1,383	735	56	53.1	7.6
1955	1,313	760	62	57.9	8.2
1956	1,086	584	42	53.8	7.2
1957	1,148	598	40	52.1	6.7
1958	1,242	672	49	54.1	7.3
1959	1,320	697	56	52.8	8.0
1960	1,254	654	55	52.2	8.4
1961	1,162	606	48	52.2	7.9
1962	1,036	593	45	57.2	7.6
1963	1,321	670	56	50.7	8.4
1964	1,130	613	46	54.2	7.5
1965	1,178	578	48	49.1	8.3
1966	1,097	513	37	46.8	7.2
1967	804	325	20	40.4	6.2
1968	1,042	468	24	44.9	5.1
1969	1,099	411	24	37.4	5.8
1970	854	298	11	34.9	3.7
1971	867	276	9	31.8	3.3
1972	989	303	10	30.6	3.3
1973	768	238	8	31.0	3.4
1974	785	217	8	27.6	3.7

Source: *The Statistical Pocketbook of Indonesia*, each year from 1953–1963 and the 1970–1971, 1972–1973 and 1974–1975 editions.

### Concluding Remarks

Religion is fundamentally challenged by modernization. I have examined the response of the Malays in three different spheres. First, the weakening educational function of religious schools for young people; second, reinforced ties between religious teachers and old people in the *pondok* school; third, re-interpretation of religious teaching and laws regulating divorce. In all these instances, the function of religion in Malay society is clearly observed, even though the religion itself may be subject to attack. In contrast, it seems that secular ideas have played a more important role in Japan. For example, the decrease of divorce which occurred in Japan before World War II was supported not by religious ideas, but by a re-interpretation of the *ie* (traditional family system) and the newly introduced Western idea of the conjugal family. The secularization of the activities of priests in Japan, which was supported by hereditary professions, was remarkable. Islam which lacks a hereditary priesthood and depends on the personality of the leader may well follow a different course in response to modernization.

## Comments

by AFIFUDDIN Hj. Omar\*

Before I comment on the content of Dr. Tsubouchi's paper in a logical manner, I would like to state my bias and epistemological orientations. I think it is the function of structural functionalists whether in anthropology or sociology to consider the cultural variable as *the* determining factor. However, I am trained in a different school of thought in that I consider cultural variables as a reflection of the economic situation or the economic structure. My comments, therefore, will be based purely on this perspective. Secondly, I will comment on the question of the relevance of the data to the conclusions made and, thirdly, I will try to comment on the question of the findings for development planning apart from satisfying my intellectual curiosity.

The question that I would like to pose and that I observe even for the other papers, is the bias to the Weberian approach which suggests the moulding of Malay values within a rationality framework as propagated by Max Weber in his famous or what some sociologists say is his major practical joke in sociology, that is, that the Protestant Ethic is central to development. In my view, the socio-economic elements of Malay society should be considered seriously in the analysis rather than the controlling function of cultural values and attitudes over the economic activities and orientations of the Malay people. I will touch on Prof. Kuchiba's work in the Muda region which I am most familiar with to show how or on what basis comparisons of Malay and Japanese societies can or cannot be made. My question here is why look only on tradition as the determining factor. Why not look on the socio-economic values or the everyday life functions of the Malay people? For instance, taking the content of the study by Dr. Tsubouchi, the economic role of the *pondok* is not shown. In my study in the Muda region and also in Zaharah Mahmud's study on the historical geography of Kedah and Perlis, the role of *pondok* institutions has been as the major economic initiator in the settlement of the region as a whole, in the opening of Kedah state and the Muda region. This is a very important indication that *pondok* institutions are not merely religious institutions, they are a medium whereby the Malay people are modernized, not in the Weberian sense but in the creation of a Malay egalitarian society. If one sees the development of most of the rice plains in the country like the Muda, Kemubu and Krian, the facilitating role of the *pondok* institution can be observed. In Krian, the *semanggol* institution was the major force in bringing a new consciousness to this Malay territory. This was especially true during the Japanese occupation during which the *semanggol* institution, *pondok* or *madrasah* became the major synthesizer of Malay political beliefs and facilitated Malay modernization. In the Muda region itself

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where most of the *pondoks* in the country are found, they reflected the Malay nationalistic movements during the war and post-war periods. The *ulama* played an important role in setting up the *Seberkas* which was formed on socialistic-economic principles. This later turned into a cooperative effort and, later, became one of the precursor parties of the present UMNO. This is what I mean in attempting to define the role of the *pondok* institution as an initiator in the development of Malay society.

The second question is: "has Islam itself played a predominant role in influencing the attitudes and values of the Malay people?" Is it Islam acting as a body of beliefs, a body of theological, political and economic beliefs which influenced Malay cultural attitudes? The author himself mentioned the supernatural leadership of the *ulama* or the *guru pondok*. As we know, most Malays, whether urban or rural, are mainly nominal Muslims. The role of the *ulama* or the *pondok* leader is very important in structuring or re-structuring the beliefs of the rural Malays particularly. So my question relates to whether Islam has played a predominant role and function and whether this itself has been changing, as implied in the title of the paper.

Finally, the question of the utility of the findings to development planning arises. This is an area where we must be very careful in terms of interpreting the findings which take on different paradigms which I will not touch upon because I am not an expert in Islamic knowledge.

I would like now to go on to Prof. Kuchiba's study which is related to what I have just mentioned about: its utility to development planning. Prof. Kuchiba's study is very relevant to the present development strategy in Malaysia which is characterized by a prevalence of organizational structures. Sometimes we tend to be lulled into the belief that by creating more organizations and government agencies, development will follow. To me, however, the proliferation of organizations or the bureaucratic structural differentiation must be followed by productivity in social, economic and political fields as well as the re-distribution of peace, which facilitates increases in productivity, distribution of esteem, power and wealth among the people. Prof. Kuchiba's study poses many questions to the relevance and validity of some of the rural development approaches and thinking in the country, and Dr. Maeda's work reinforces in detail some of this thinking. For instance, the blurring of village boundaries brings up the question of relevance of the village or *kampung* as a unit of analysis or a unit of development activity. Further, it raises the question of individual orientations versus universal orientation or what Prof. Kuchiba and Dr. Maeda call guided interaction versus group orientation. The settlement process of rice plains through history has to be studied to understand the organizational structure of what now are called *kampungs*. Certainly these types of *kampungs* are not formed on the same basis as the villages found in riverine valleys. This has been shown very well in Zaharah Mahmud's thesis on the historical geography of the Kedah Plain. We cannot, for instance, compare rice plain society and riverine

rice society because the social structures are formed under different situations. Rice plains in terms of historical geography are settled later than the riverine valleys and they are formed under different social and geographic situations. The differences between these two types of communities are very significant in the diffusion of innovation or new technology or in terms of organizational activities that are being undertaken by the Farmers' Organization Authority, MADA and KADA at present. Since we are using an organizational strategy, it is very essential to discriminate between different types of villages. This raises the point that Dr. Mohd. Nor Ghani mentioned: are the present Jawatankuasa Kemajuan Kampung relevant in terms of development planning? As I observe them in the Muda region, they are nothing more than a welfare group for the extension of government assistance. They are not organizations which function according to economic principles or have economic goals; they are a sort of interest groups which articulate the interests of only certain sectors of rural society. The relevant question is should we create another identity framework which transcends "village" boundaries and which are functionally linked to the wider social, political and economic network of the nation, of the region or of the state. For instance, the point mentioned by Prof. Kuchiba about an increase in indebtedness among the *padi* peasants/in Kampung Padang Lalang shows that the rice farmers are very much linked to the wider economic framework, for instance, the banks, cooperative societies and other financial institutions. If we accept the need to create another identity framework, I do not share Prof. Kuchiba's worries about the prevalence of factionalism or Dr. Mohd. Nor's worries about the prevalence of factionalism being a deterrent to rural development. I see this factionalism as a precursor to the formation of a new organizational identity framework. I believe in the functional role of conflict rather than the *laissez faire* belief that conflict breeds violence as we have seen in Baling in 1975. Individually oriented farmers are early in adopting technological and other innovations. These are the major positive elements currently prevalent in the rice plain communities in Krian, Kemubu, Tanjung Karang and Muda. Conflict is, of course, an impediment to organizational effort as mentioned by Prof. Kuchiba but in my experience, I find that this is only a preliminary impediment. The point is that after a certain amount of linkages are forged with the wider economic, political and social framework, better organizations are structured to facilitate the attainment of group goals.

I would like to conclude by saying that apart from having a differing philosophical or epistemological foundation from those used in these studies, I must say that they have managed to bring out many relevant questions pertaining to development and related to academic issues. If we start thinking in another framework, not necessarily Marxist but in terms of a dialectical framework, I think we can promote a development strategy which does not necessarily follow the Japanese model nor the Western or Protestant Ethic model but which will follow what we could call a Malaysian or Southeast Asian model.