FROM CAIRO TO KUALA LUMPUR:
THE INFLUENCE OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ON
THE MUSLIM YOUTH MOVEMENT OF MALAYSIA (ABIM)

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In 1969, a group of graduating Malay Muslim students from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur gathered to ponder post-university life. The group consisted of high ranking members of the National Association of Muslim Students Malaysia (*Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia*, or PKPIM), and they were apprehensive about their future. As student activists, they were prominently identified as the prime mobilizers of an "Islamization effort" on campus and beyond, with the goal of reviving Islam as a way of life. Graduation would effectively put an end to the momentum they had built, as they had no means by which to continue their activities as post graduates. Yet they believed that their noble mission was far from over. A member of the group, Anwar Ibrahim, eventually suggested that they form a new Islamic movement for university graduates, and the idea for the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*, hereafter ABIM) crystallized.

From its founding in 1971, ABIM steadily rose in the ranks of Malaysia's socio-political arena as a popular and influential youth movement. Many Malaysian scholars of Islam have argued that ABIM's success stems from the ideas and inspiration it received from prominent Islamic thinkers and intellectuals, such as Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Rashid Rida and Malek Bennabi. Moreover, ABIM's primary source of influence draws from the ideas and experience of Hasan Al-Banna, the famed Egyptian scholar who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. The Brotherhood is considered the most influential Islamist movement in the world, and it has made considerable impact on a myriad of Islamist movements across the globe—in the process expanding its

influence to Europe, Africa and Asia. In Southeast Asia and particularly Malaysia, ABIM has been described as the country's best representative of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This thesis first presents an historical account of the early interactions between Malaysian Muslims and their counterparts in Egypt pre-Muslim Brotherhood, and how Islamic reformist ideas emerged in Malaysia through these interactions. It will then analyze the multifarious levels of contact between Malaysian Muslims, including ABIM's founding members and Brotherhood figures, and how Brotherhood doctrines arrived on Malaysian shores. In addition to demonstrating the ideological and spiritual influence of these doctrines on ABIM, this thesis will address how Muslim Brotherhood models aided ABIM in its organizational framework. Several examples reveal how these models successfully provided ABIM with the tools and strategies to launch an Islamic revivalism that would sweep across Malaysia. The thesis will then provide a comparative analysis between ABIM and other Malaysia-based Brotherhood-like movements that challenged ABIM's status as the recognized Malaysian "sibling" of the Brotherhood. Finally, the conclusion offers thoughts on the post-Islamic revivalism era in Malaysia and its implications for ABIM's future.

I

ARAB WORLD AND MALAYSIA: THE EARLY INTERACTIONS

Malay Muslims in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia have long historical and traditional ties with the Middle Easterner since the arrival of Arab traders and merchants from the Hadhramaut region since the early fourteenth century. With the flourishing of Malacca in Malaya as an important seaport and trade route in Southeast Asia by the late fifteenth century, Arab traders have flocked to the region in huge numbers and remained in the Malay archipelagos. Not only did these Arab merchants and traders engage in trade and commerce activities, but more significantly, they also brought the religion of Islam with them. While there have been many arguments contending on how Islam was first spread to the Malay archipelagos in Southeast Asia, the arrival of the Arab traders and merchants to Malacca could be described as the most conventional and widely acceptable narrative.

As Islam became more widely professed in the region, contact between both worlds began to increase, especially in the realm of religion where Malays began to annually commute to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. Over time, Malays were also exposed to other socio-political aspects of the Arab world. Religious education in the Middle East became attractive to many Malay students who were eager to deepen their knowledge of Islam, which was unavailable in colonial Malaya (now Malaysia) and Indonesia at the time. The Malay students viewed countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia highly, regarding them as the bastion for religious knowledge and education. For this reason, they have chosen Islamic education

institutions in Medina, Jeddah and Cairo to pursue their tertiary education.[1] Egypt was considered especially important particularly due to its hosting of Al-Azhar University, a world renowned university on the study of Islam at the time.

Records showed that Malay students from both Malaya and Indonesia were already in Cairo by the early twentieth century, although it is believed that some of them may have arrived much earlier. While the Islamic education institutions in both Saudi Arabia and Egypt offer strong curriculum with regards to Islamic studies, Malay students had strong preference to study in Egypt. According to one Malay student, "*In Mecca, one could study religion only; in Cairo, politics as well.*"[2] This indicates that when it comes to the Arab world, students were not only attracted to Islamic education and learning but also the political dynamics of Egypt. This happened due to the fact that students in Mecca were only attending classes on religious subjects. However, in Cairo, according to William Roff, the students were able to benefit from the lively political and intellectual dynamics of Egyptian society. It was in Cairo that Malay students from both Indonesia and Malaya were exposed to overt political discussion on the concepts of Pan-Islamism, Pan-Malayanism and anti-colonial nationalism.[3] As a consequence, Malayan rulers began to express concern over what the young Malay students may be exposed to and what consequences it may bring upon their return to Malaya. The Sultan of Selangor[4] disapproved of sending Malay students to study in Egypt, not merely because of the expense but also "because it introduces them to undesirable matters" and added: "*These young men see and are taught about*

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[1] Fred R. Von Der Mehden *Two Worlds of Islam: Interaction Between Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) p. 2
[2] William R. Roff "The Life and Times of Haji Othman Abdullah" *Peninjau Sejarah Kuala Lumpur*, I, (2 December 1966) p. 63
[3] William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 89.
[4] One of the fourteen states in Malaya

things that can do them no good."[5] While it was not mentioned what the "things that can do them no good" may have been, it could be assumed that the Sultan was referring to Middle East political activism. As such, there was already a concern over the issue of influence from the Arab world, specifically Egypt on Malay Muslims in Southeast Asia at the time. These concerns remain today, as evidenced by the fact that the Malaysian government has been keeping tabs on the activities of more than 11,000 Malaysian students currently studying all over Egypt. Malay students in Cairo related that they were unhappy with life in students' hostels in Cairo and with the Malaysian government's efforts to ensure that they attended classes and not get involved in politics.[6]

According to van der Mehden, the Malay students who pursued higher education in the Middle East have usually been of a conservative religious bent, although the government in Malaysia regards them as possible recruits for radical Islamic and political thinking.[7] However, there are also arguments that the educational experience received by Malaysian students in Western societies such as the United Kingdom has had a more radicalizing effect compared to those who studied in the Middle East. One of the ways to substantiate this theory is based on the idea that their interactions with other Muslims students from other countries who may have had radical tendencies, combined with their often traumatic experience of living in a non-Muslim society has increased these students' Malay-Muslim identity and radicalized them religiously.[8] In many occasions, this has been the case. One of the ways that the *Jamaat Tabligh's* ideas were

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[5] Transcript "Minutes of Durbar" enclosed in File 90/1927 Pejabat Sultan, Pahang cited from William R. Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920s" *Indonesia*, Vol. 9 (April 1970) p. 74
[6] Mona Abaza, "Some Research Notes on Living Conditions and Perceptions Among Indonesian Students in Cairo" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 22, (1991) pp. 347-360
[7] Von Der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam* p. 82
[8] Ibid. p. 85

transmitted into Malaysia was through the Malay Muslim students interactions with *Tabligh* members in the United Kingdom.[9] However, it is important to note that the students who had studied in Western academes within Western environment did not necessarily adopt radical ideologies, as seen in the case of *Jemaat Tabligh*. In most situations, Malay students returning from the United States and United Kingdom that may have interacted with Middle East students who were religiously and politically inclined were often described as moderates. The founding members of ABIM clearly represent this and will be explained further.

1.1: The Egyptian Influence on Malay Nationalism:

As mentioned, Egypt had a profound effect on Malay students, due to the political dynamics and environment it provides to the students outside of the classroom. The Malay students from Indonesia and Malaya that were "politically enlightened" were able to organize themselves and produced a publication in Malay entitled the "*Seruan Azhar*" (Call of Azhar)-its first issue published in October 1925. Its purpose and aim was essentially to create political awareness amongst the many Malay and Indonesian students studying in Al-Azhar University. In more specific ways, it was used as a conduit to trigger spirits of nationalism amongst these students. According to Mahmud Junus, the first editor of *Seruan Azhar,* the journal "is for our homeland, because we recognize Indonesia and the (Malayan) Peninsula as one community, one people, with one *adat*[10], one way of life, and what is more, virtually one religion. With this 'call', students present in Egypt can associate themselves with their homeland while at the same time making known their ideas for the betterment of their people and their birthplace".[11] In this instance, one of the driving forces that Egypt had on Malay students was that it provided them a

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[9] Based on author's personal observation.
[10] Malay word meaning culture
[11] William Roff "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920s" *Indonesia* Vol. 9 (April 1970) p. 77

sense for freedom and independence from colonial rule under the British in Malaya and the Dutch in Indonesia. However, what made the Egyptian influence on these Malay students different was the fact that it coupled nationalism with religion and religiosity, the latter lacking from Malay students that studied in Western institutions and were also exposed to nationalism.

Upon graduation and return to Malaya, these students began to develop an interest in expanding the role of Islam in political and social life. One of the ways they hoped to achieve this was through the notion of Islamic reform. While in Egypt, these students were exposed to the ideas of Egyptian Islamic reformists and thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Rashid Rida. Their ideas and thoughts, which were documented by Rashid Rida in the journal *Al-Manar* (The Lighthouse) was significant in propagating the notion of Islamic reform and modern Muslim thought. The main objectives of *Al-Manar* were to examine the decadence of Muslim political institutions, underline the danger of European colonialism in the Muslim world and promote the idea that Islam was compatible with modernity and reason.[12] The significance of *Al-Manar*, according to Abushouk was the discourse it had with its readers in Southeast Asia.[13] These interactions were important as they began to shape and develop reformist ideas amongst Malay Muslims in Southeast Asia. Hence, it proves that there was already an audience that would be receptive to the ideas of Islamic reform in Malaya at the time, aside from the Malay students that had graduated from Egyptian universities.

One of the issues that prompted reaction from the Malay students against the British colonialists was the secularization of education through the setting up of "English Medium Schools". The

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[12]Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk "Al-Manar and the Hadhrami Elite in the Malay-Indonesian World: Challenge and Response" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, 17, (2007) p. 303
[13] Ibid, p. 305

British colonialists believed that English styled education was important to cater to the needs of the country or the state of intellectual development, or to the social culture attained by the inhabitants."[14] In essence, British-style education was the only way to bring the nation forward. This was perpetuated by the establishment of several elite colleges such as the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK)[15], dubbed the Eaton of the East and many English missionary schools, where Malayan children, including Malays were encouraged by the British to attend these schools, even though it was against the wishes of their parents.[16] The "eliteness" and modern form of education offered by the English schools ultimately overwhelmed whatever prospects the Malay medium and religious schools had.

Many Malays who had developed a sense of nationalism, including the Malay students who graduated from Egypt were clearly not pleased with what was taking place with regards to education. Together with the local *ulamas*[17] who were already teaching in *pondoks*[18] and *madrasahs*[19] in Malaya, they began to make efforts to confront the encroachment of Western imperialism on traditional Malay Muslim values and rectify the perception that religious education was backward. They believed that the way to approach the problem is by reforming the Islamic education process in Malaysia. One of the prominent Malays who returned from Egypt was Shaikh Tahir Jalal al-Din, who was viewed as an Islamic reformist as reflected through his writings in Islamic journals such as *Al-Ikhwan* and *Saudara*. Among the ideas he

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[14] Khoo Kay Kim "Malay Society, 1874 -1920's" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 2 (September 1974), p. 185
[15] According to Syed Hussain Ali, MCKK was formed to educate "Malays of good families" and to train them to fill subordinate posts in government services.
[16] Esmail Bin Haji Mohammad Salleh, "Pentadbiran Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Di Negeri Perak Sebelum dan Selepas 1949," in Khoo Kay Kim, ed. *Islam di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, n.d.), p. 121
[17] Religious/Spiritual Guides in Islam
[18] Traditional small-scaled religious schools in Malaya
[19] Religious schools

proposed was for the Malay Muslim society to utilize the Quran and the prophetic traditions as the best solution to its backwardness.[20] As Islamic reform began to resonate and take popular form within the Malay Muslim society, there emerged resistance from the traditional *ulamas*, who have labeled the ideas propagated by the Islamic reformists as deviant. The traditionalists, who were labeled as *Kaum Tua* (the old group), were clearly threatened by the rising popularity and influence of the reformists, who were dubbed the *Kaum Muda* (the young group) since they were mostly represented by the younger generation. Despite of the obstacle faced, the *Kaum Muda* or reformists was able to make significant achievements. According to Siddiq Fadzil, they succeeded in elevating the intellectual horizons of the Muslim society through *ijtihad* (juridical opinion) and reducing *taqlid* (imitation) based upon the critical understanding of the Quran and the *Sunnah* (prophetic tradition).[21]

1945 was described as an important year for the reformers, through the formation of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (Malaysian Nationalist Party-PKMM). It was formed by Mukhtaruddin Laso and Dr. Burhanuddin al-Hilmy, a medical doctor who was initially trained in Islamic philosophy and political thought in Aligarh University, India. PKMM had aspirations for a free and independent Malaya, and was strongly opposed to British colonial rule. Although PKMM initially had socialist elements, it eventually moved beyond this through Burhanuddin's introduction of Islamic political thought into the party.[22] His strategy paid off as it received

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[20] Muhammad Hussein Mutalib "Community of Islam and Sons of the Soil: The Islamic Reassertion in Peninsular Malaysia, 1963-1984" (PhD diss., Sydney University, May 1985) pp. 36-37

[21] Siddiq Fadil "Gerakan Islam di Malaysia: Satu Tinjauan Sepintas Lalu," in Khoo Kay Kim, et. al. eds. *Malaysia Masa Kini* (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1986/1987) p. 122.

[22] Ibid, p. 123

support from the majority of the Islamically oriented Malays.[23] It is believed that a majority of PKMM members were the reformists or *Kaum Muda*. PKMM became the first formal vehicle for political Islam in Malaysia. However, PKMM did not survive long as the party was banned by the British in 1948 over its activities.

Another milestone for political Islam in Malaysia was through the formation of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). PAS, formed in 1951 was initially the religious section of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the most dominant political party in Malaya at the time whose primary aim was to unite the Malays in Malaya and work towards independence. The *ulamas* that formed the leadership of PAS at the time were dissatisfied over UMNO's prioritizing of Malay nationalism over Islam as the main ideology for the party. At the same time, PAS members were also at loggerheads with UMNO over the idea of an Islamic state for Malaya at the time. These two issues became the main sources of discontent between the two and continue to shape political discourse in Malaysia today.

In the early years, PAS maintained its support from a majority of traditional *ulamas*, *ustazs* (religious teachers) and students who were enticed and influenced by Islamic culture.[24] More significantly, students who graduated from the Arab world formed the core leadership of PAS. These students, despite the Malay nationalism ideals they embraced in Egypt, wanted to continue their "Islamic endeavors" within a political environment that would satisfy and suit them. Hence, UMNO's placing more importance and emphasis on Malay nationalism was unable to provide

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[23] Mohammad Nor Manutty "*Perceptions of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia: A Critical Analysis of ABIM's Role and its Impact Among the Muslim Youth*", (Unpublished Phd dissertation, Temple University, 1989) p. 42
[24] Ibid., p. 45

them with the satisfaction they needed. As a consequence, PAS became the right movement for them. This was further solidified with the appointment of Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Hilmy as the President of PAS in 1956, who highly espoused the ideas of Islamic political thought. By the mid twentieth century, PAS was the ultimate choice for the majority of Middle East trained Malay students that had political aspirations. For PAS's leadership, the students were also important for the party as they also served as potential recruits that could be groomed as budding future leaders of the party. PAS's leaders are known to travel to the Arab world and visit Malay students studying in universities in Egypt such as Al-Azhar and also in the other Arab countries. The current PAS Deputy President, Nasharuddin Mat Isa was himself visited by and recruited by the top leadership of PAS when he was a student in Jordan.[25]

Upon gaining independence from the British in 1957, Islam was given an important place in the Malaysian constitution and state structure, while guaranteeing the religious freedoms and rights of other races and ethnicities in the country. That being the case, the Malayan society was still fresh from the "non-religious" experience they underwent during colonialism. Westernization was closely linked with modernism, and the Malay Muslim societal views and thinking were largely shaped and influenced by this. The governing coalition led by UMNO was highly popular and influential in Malaysia and it was virtually impossible for PAS to overcome their popularity. On the aspect of education, parents were clear in terms of choice of schooling and education for their children. Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra and Malaya's first Ambassador to the United States, Tun Dr. Ismail were educated in Cambridge University, the United Kingdom and University of Melbourne, Australia, respectively. While there was no official government policy

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[25] He joined PAS during his student years in Jordan where he met prominent PAS leaders who visited such as Ustaz Fadzil Noor, Tuan Guru Hadi Awang and Mursyidul Am Nik Aziz.

that favored Western university qualifications over those from the local education institutions, Malay Muslim families opted for Western based education over Islamic or religious based schools, seeing the prospects offered by the former. According to Manutty, *pondoks* and *madrasahs* began to lose their influence in many parts of the country, particularly in the ethnically Malaysian states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis. Manutty also argued that apart from weaknesses in the curriculum, Malaysian parents are less willing to send their children to these religious based institutions because their children can receive better job opportunities from the education offered by the government.[26] This proves two things; that religious education had less value compared to other secular subjects and that society continues to draw examples from successful individuals who were trained in the Western-modeled government schools. PAS was effectively placed on the sidelines by the overwhelming popularity and acceptance of UMNO and the governing coalition, and was unable to provide a serious challenge to the government. Ultimately, Islam did not play a major and significant role for the Malaysian society after independence 1957 and throughout the 1960s.

1.2: The May 13th 1969 Tragedy:

Malaysia went through a very alarming crisis on May 13th 1969. For the first time since achieving independence in 1957, Malaysia saw a breakdown in race relations between the Malays and the Chinese in the country. The General Elections in 1969 marked an important milestone for Malaysia as the Chinese based opposition parties made significant gains in the Malay majority country. Several Malay leaders, who were unhappy with how the Malaysian Chinese celebrated their gains, organized a counter procession on May 13th 1969, leading to serious clashes on the streets throughout the country. While the government immediately

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[26] Manutty, "*Perceptions of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia*" p. 57

adopted several policies to rectify the socio-economic imbalance reflected in a Chinese dominated economy, the event had a lasting impact on Malay society, particularly the youth. The May 13th tragedy was effectively a wakeup call for the Malays, that after 12 years of independence, they were still behind in the country's development. Issues such as poverty within the Malay society, the status of the national language and perceived backwardness of the Malays struck a chord with many Muslim youths. It was during the aftermath of May 13th 1969 that the Malay youths and university students began to turn towards Islam in addressing these issues. Kamaruddin Muhammad Nur, an Islamic youth leader from the University of Malaya recalled the events post 1969:

> "*It was an explosive time. There were lots of issues….Malay poverty, language, corruption. And after May 13, you just got hooked on immediately. It was all a question of the survival of the ummah, of the Malay race. Previously, we had been thinking about all these problems outside Islam, when actually we could have solved them through Islam.*"[27]

By the end of the 1960s, Malay students, particularly from the University of Malaya became more engrossed with the idea that a return to Islam was needed in addressing these issues. Within the dormitories of the university, the students sat down, organized themselves in a movement, and successfully launched an Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.

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[27] Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1987) p. 11

1.3: Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia and Founding of ABIM:

The organization called The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*-ABIM) emerged in Malaysia during the Islamic revivalism period at the beginning of the 1970s. Their *da'wa* (Islamic propagation)[28] activities had made a lasting impact on the public, particularly the youths and were instrumental in leading the society to effectively embrace Islam as a way of life. According to Zainah Anwar, a former leader of a women's feminist movement in Malaysia who had studied Muslim student movements in the 1970s and 1980s, ABIM's formation was an event pivotal to Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.[29] That being the case, Islam has always been part of the Malaysian socio-political fabric prior to the founding of ABIM,[30] as witnessed through the role of PAS. Nevertheless, the significance of the Islamic revivalism in the 1970s was that it brought ABIM to the Malaysian mainstream.

ABIM was founded in 1971 and started off as an offshoot of two organizations, the Malay Language Society (*Persatuan Bahasa Melayu*-PBM) of the University of Malaya and the National Association of Muslim Students Malaysia (*Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia*-PKPIM), which was founded in June 1961. The PKPIM became one of the most important and influential student organizations in Malaysia in the 1960s. Despite of the plethora of youth organizations available for Malay students to choose from, such as the Federation of Malay Students Association (*Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung*-GPMS) and Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC), PKPIM remained popular as it was established on the platform of Islam. PKPIM achieved the peak of its popularity and success by the 1960s, and its

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[28] *Da'wa* usually denotes to the preaching of Islam, meaning "to summon" or "to invite" in Arabic.
[29] Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 17
[30] For further information, see Firdaus Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics: Its Origins and Early Development* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1985).

members decided to form an organization that would allow them to continue being involved in youth and Islamic activism upon completing their studies.

The Islamic objectives of the PKPIM could be witnessed on the campus of the University of Malaya. Its members went on many *da'wa* campaigns against what the organization considered as immoral and unethical activities by students influenced by Western pop culture such as Halloween parties and balls.[31] Upon graduation, the core members of PKPIM and also the PBM went on to form ABIM as their new mode for *da'wa* activism. Anwar Ibrahim, one of the founding members of ABIM delivered an opening speech at the launch of ABIM during PKPIM's tenth Annual General Meeting, held at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia in 1970. He justified the establishment of ABIM by declaring "*ABIM leaders have to prove that their criticisms were not only voiced loudly during their presence on campuses (when they were members of PKPIM) but they have to continuously struggle.*"[32]

The early ABIM did not just comprise former University of Malaya graduates. Zainah Anwar observed that the young people who make up as the most active members of ABIM were graduates and also young professionals, forming the most receptive social group to the ideology of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia.[33] Chandra Muzaffar mentioned that a good proportion of ABIM members were from the middle class, though it also has working class members.[34] ABIM's primary and overarching objective during its nascent years was to reform the mind and

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[31] Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 14
[32] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 73
[33] Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 2
[34] Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987) p. 48

spirit of Malaysia's Muslim society through every possible means,[35] but it hoped to achieve this by banking on the energy of its youth members, as reflected in the following aims:

a) To provide a platform for graduating students from universities and colleges who had been involved in *da'wa* activities to continue their Islamic activism;

b) To fill the vacuum of organizations catering to the interests of Muslim youth at all levels in Malaysian society; and

c) To generate an Islamic revival in Malaysia.[36]

During its early inception, ABIM operated according to the same modus operandi established by PKPIM. However, as ABIM was able to absorb more members and larger following from society, it immediately outgrew PKPIM. Nonetheless, their relationship continued until today, where graduating PKPIM members would naturally join ABIM upon leaving campus. This relationship was important as it provided ABIM with groomed and well trained members, familiar with the objectives of Islamic *da'wa*. As a result, Kamaruddin Mohd. Nor, former member of both PKPIM and ABIM, has aptly described ABIM as PKPIM's "big brother".[37]

The diversity of its members and its appeal towards the middle class Muslims who were graduates from universities abroad provided ABIM a professional, suave outlook for an Islamic movement which in Malaysia had long been associated with ancient traditions and backwardness. ABIM has a vast array of members worldwide with representation in the United

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[35] Manutty, *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 76
[36] "Revival of Islam in Malaysia" (Kuala Lumpur:ABIM, n.d) p. 1-2
[37] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 75

Kingdom, United States, Egypt, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand.[38] However, what is unique about ABIM is the fact that it does not impose restrictions on membership. ABIM members came from three different levels of educational background, namely English schools, Malaysian schools and Arabic schools, but in joining ABIM, they did so with a common vision of serving Islam. However, this has also created many divergent views within the organization. Members with religious backgrounds and trained in Islamic schools were labeled as conservatives while those who attended English medium based schools were seen as "liberals".[39] Nevertheless, ABIM took this with a dose of optimism, arguing that Islamic ethics allows and accommodates differences in opinion.

This stark contrast between ABIM and the other Islamic movements/organizations in Malaysia has allowed the emergence of two different categorizations of Islamic movements or Islamic "revivalists" in Malaysia. One was described as being more moderate in beliefs and practice and the other was conservative but not necessarily hardline. The moderate group is best represented by ABIM and the conservatives were mostly members of PAS in the 1970s. The major difference between the two is essentially their views and approach vis-à-vis Islamization of Malaysia. ABIM holds the bottom up view, i.e. Islamizing the *ummah* or the population first before getting to the upper echelons of the social structure while PAS takes the conventional view of top down Islamization-one that could only be achieved through the establishment of an Islamic state.

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[38] Ibid., p. 94
[39] Ibid., p. 95

Another reason to explain the need for ABIM when there was already PAS was the fact that PAS had adopted a more "nationalist" approach and stance in the 1960s upon the demise of Dr. Burhanudin Al-Helmi and under the leadership of Asri Muda. I argue that an Islamic reform culture was absent and non-existent under Asri as he was more occupied with the idea of Malay nationalism. Many ABIM members were disappointed with the path PAS had taken under Asri, and by the early 1970s, the youths that had a lot of aspirations about reform through Islam decided to join ABIM instead, seeing how ABIM was making serious efforts to inculcate an Islamic reform culture in Malaysian society.

The rise of PKPIM and later ABIM was a consequence of what Manutty described as an "Islamic identity crisis" among the youths, who at the time were searching for new meanings in Islam.[40] Despite the provisions and placement of Islam in the constitution and through the effecting of several Islamic based socio-economic and cultural policies, it did not provide any satisfaction for these youths and university students. For them, the mainstream environment shaped by UMNO and the government remained "secular" and was not Islamic, and this was the source for ideological tension. The rise of ABIM is in many ways an expression of strong idealism among the educated Malaysian youths, who sought reform of the society vis-à-vis Islam.

The May 13 tragedy provided ABIM with a reason to propose a return to Islam as a solution to the problems affecting Malay society. The Islamic revivalism that began in Malaysia in the early 1970s was also successful due to the popularity and acceptance of several *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform) ideas propagated by ABIM and its members. In the following chapter, I argue that the work of Muslim Brotherhood figures such as Hasan Al-Banna and Hasan Al-Hudaybi

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[40] Ibid p. 59

supplied the tools and framework that allowed ABIM to instigate and operate a successful

revivalist movement.

ABIM AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

In general, social movement theorists agree that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is one of the most transnational Islamist movements in the world. From its humble beginning in the small town of Ismailliyah in Egypt, groups and movements similar to the Brotherhood could be found in many Arab and Muslim countries. Richard Mitchell alluded to the existence of the Brotherhood in Syria, Jordan, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East.[41] An Egyptian scholar, Ishak Musa Husaini also pointed out the tendency and ability of the movement to organize international networks around the world.[42]

In many ways, the spread and expansion of Islamists movements widely differ from other forms of movements. As argued by Quintan Wiktorowicz, "whereas Western social movements typically mobilize through SMOs, movements in Muslim societies are more likely to utilize the dense associational networks of personal relationships that characterize much of politics, economic activity and culture."[43] More significantly, these relationships are not necessarily formalized as having a central command, as according to Wiktorowicz, even formal Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, are constituted by dynamic networks that extend beyond the parameters of formal organizational space to connect activists to other Islamists,

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[41] Richard Mitchell *Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 173

[42] Ishak Musa Husaini *The Moslem Brethren: The Greatest of Modern Islamic Movements* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1986) p. 73

[43] Quintan Wiktorowicz *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003) p. 22

friends, families and associates.[44] The informal relationship between ABIM and the Muslim Brotherhood will be elaborated further in this chapter.

Beyond the Arab world, Muslim Brotherhood influences have also reached the shores of Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia. The significance of Malaysia and Indonesia here is the fact that they both have the largest Muslim population in the region. Hence, Muslims from both countries were very receptive towards ideas and information on Islam coming from the Arab world, based on their high regard for the region being the bastion of Islam.

PAS had been in existence in Malaysia since the 1950s. However, it was not seen or acknowledged as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood at the time. This was largely attributed to the fact that PAS adopted a highly political stance and was fundamentally a political party, while the Muslim Brotherhood is not since its inception in 1928. However, it was PAS members that first received the "revelations" from the Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members, even making direct contact with Hasan Al-Banna and Sayid Qutb in the 1940s and 1950s. The reason why they were never able to expand their Brotherhood ideas will be explained further.

In Malaysia, many have suggested that the Brotherhood model is best represented by *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM). Manutty argued that ideologically, PKPIM and ABIM were inspired by the religious and social idealism of the two then-popular international Islamic movements, the Muslim Brotherhood and *Jamaat-i-Islami* of Pakistan.[45] Yon Machmudi, an Indonesian academic also stated that ABIM was the best channel in the dissemination of Muslim

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[44] Ibid p. 23
[45] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 73-74.

Brotherhood ideas through its relations with international Muslim youth organizations.[46] I argue that ABIM members were and are still influenced by two of the Brotherhood's most important figures, Hasan Al-Banna and Sayid Qutb. In recent years, they have been inspired by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian Mufti[47] who is also a member of the Brotherhood. Here, I argue that the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas were transmitted to ABIM and also PAS members in two forms, via direct contact and communication, and through the media and printed materials.

2.1: Direct Contact and Communication:

Pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood by the Egyptian government after its ban in 1954 compelled many of its members into fleeing Egypt and head to many destinations, including Europe and Southeast Asia. One of the ways to describe how Muslim Brotherhood ideas were spread in Malaysia was the fact that several Muslim Brotherhood members travelled to Malaysia themselves and contributed to the dissemination of the ideology. Zakaria mentioned that Sheikh Taqiyyuddin, Secretary of the Brotherhood's branch in Cairo fled to Malaya and spread Muslim Brotherhood ideas to Malays in the Northern state of Kedah. One of his students included Jaiz Anwar, former PAS Youth Chief.[48] In addition, several Muslim Brotherhood members were already present in Malaysia in the 1960s, such as Dr. Nabil al-Tawil, a member of the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood who was then working at the University of Malaya. He helped spread the Brotherhood's ideology of *tajdid* (renewal) and *Islah* (reform) to Malay

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[46] Yon Machmudi *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008) p. 138
[47] Spiritual guide in Islam
[48] Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria *Pengaruh Pemikiran Sayyid Qutb Terhadap Gerakan Islam di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Jundi Resources, 2007) p. x

Muslims students at the University of Malaya, particularly students from the Islamic Studies Department.[49]

2.1.1: Within the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS):

More significantly, there is evidence to suggest that there was contact between Malay Muslim students and the Muslim Brotherhood and its members in the late 1940s before the demise of Hasan Al-Banna. According to Fauzi Zakaria, the former Presidents of PAS, Dr. Zulkifli Muhammad (1963-1964) and Haji Yusuf Rawa (1982-1988) were the first Malays from Malaya to have had direct contact with Muslim Brotherhood members and the organization's ideas. As a student in Egypt in the 1940s, Dr. Zulkifli attended weekly religious lectures called the *Hadith al-Thulatha* delivered by Hasan Al-Banna at the Brotherhood's headquarters.[50] More significantly, upon the demise of Al-Banna in 1949, the lectures were continued by Sayid Qutb. As a consequence, they became more familiar with Qutb and his ideas. Among the viewpoints that they were impressed with was Qutb's rejection of secular notions such as nationalism, socialism, and capitalism, which he described as *jahiliyyah* (deviant) philosophies. These notions were later documented in his book, *Fi Zilal Al Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an) that was read by many, including Malay students, who were exposed to the Brotherhood.

Dr. Zulkifli returned to Malaya upon graduating from Egypt and joined PAS. In 1963, he was appointed as the party's President and through his position, he decided to pursue greater relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and its network in the Middle East. He dispatched Haji Yusuf Rawa, an Executive Member of PAS to Egypt and Iraq in a mission to introduce PAS as an

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[49] Ibid, p. 139
[50] Ibid, p. 126

Islamist movement and establish relations with the Islamist movements there. While in Egypt, he met with Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazali, a former High Council Member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and was advised to go to Iraq as the President of Iraq at the time, Abdul Salam Arif was supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. He then visited Iraq and called on the Iraqi Minister of *Waqf* (Endowment), a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq. During that meeting, the Minister agreed to offer ten scholarships to Malay students to study in Iraq, and PAS was given the privilege to select those students.[51]

In 1964, after conducting a selection process, PAS chose ten students to be sent to Iraq. Among them were Hassan Shukri, former Deputy President of PAS (2003-2005), Hashim Jasin, PAS Chief Commissioner for the State of Perlis, Dahlan Muhammad Zain, former Chairman of ABIM Perlis, and Azmi Ahmad, Chairman of ABIM Kedah. These students were enrolled in the University of Baghdad and graduated with a degree in Islamic Law and Arabic Philosophy. According to Hassan Shukri, as they were pursuing the degree from 1964 to 1968, they were formally trained according to the ways of the Muslim Brotherhood from a prominent Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood member.[52] As such, it would be argued here that they were the first PAS and ABIM members to have been trained in the Muslim Brotherhood through a formal setting.

Upon graduation, they returned to Malaysia and pursued their interests in political activism by joining PAS. In 1969, Hasan Shukri was elected as PAS Youth Chief. The Youth members of PAS were impressed by his speeches and eloquence in promoting the notion of Islamic reform and returning to Islam as a way of life which was propagated by Hasan Al-Banna. While Shukri

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[51] Ibid., pp. 126-127
[52] However, this prominent member was not named by Hassan Shukri.

and other PAS members that had been inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood tried to spread the movement's ideas, they were unable to do so due to the fact that PAS's President at the time, Asri Muda was less concerned with the notion of *tarbiyya* (education) and was not focused on indoctrinating PAS members with Muslim Brotherhood ideas. As a matter of fact, he felt that they were more of a hindrance and would only pose more problems for PAS.

Asri's clear rejection of absorbing Muslim Brotherhood styles and approaches into PAS was attributed to the fact that he had a strong Malay nationalist bent and wanted to pursue this as the mainstream ideology for PAS. However, this only put him at odds with the majority party members and created a significant tension and conflict. As Asri became more disconnected from the realities within his party, he was finally forced to resign in 1983. Asri's departure was largely ascribed to the sudden influx of ABIM members who left to join PAS in an effort to "purify" the party and position it again as a true Islamist political party.[53] Again, this proved how the Brotherhood's ideology had affected and clashed with nationalistic ideals. Upon Asri's exit, Muslim Brotherhood's ideas finally flourished and spread comprehensively amongst PAS members.

2.1.2: Within the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM):

While several ABIM members had received their "Al-Banna revelations" in the Arab world, the Muslim Brotherhood's foundations in ABIM were initially laid down by several of its founding members; Malay students that graduated from British and American universities in the 1960s. These students had come into contact with Muslim Brotherhood members who had studied and

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[53] ABIM's constitution does not permit members to join political parties and may only do so upon departing from the organization.

lived in the United Kingdom and the United States and were instantly exposed to ideas and thoughts of the organization. One of them was Abdul Wahab Abdullah, who upon returning to Malaysia became the first President of ABIM in 1971.[54] Sanusi Junid, who studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science, also became ABIM's Deputy President from 1972 to 1973. Razali Nawawi, a graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London also became the second President of ABIM from 1972 to 1974. Razali was able to build on his experience with the Brotherhood and its literatures as he had been exposed to them in the early 1960s as a student in Al-Azhar University. According to Kamal Hassan, Razali was already introduced to the notion of Islamic reform through Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manar* and the Muslim Brotherhood through his teacher Ustadh Abu Bakar Hamzah while in Cairo.[55]

Before the existence of ABIM, these students organized themselves informally and formed what could have been the foundation of ABIM. Razali Nawawi, together with two other Malaysian students, Dahlan Hj. Arshad and Ibrahimsa, were the pioneers of the Islamic youth movement in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and actively organized sessions to discuss the ideas of Muslim Brotherhood scholars, including Hasan Al-Banna, Sayid Qutb, Dr. Said Ramadan[56] and Abu'l Hasan Ali al-Nadawi.[57] As the interests in the Muslim Brotherhood grew and their own numbers expanding, Razali and the other Malay students in the United Kingdom founded the London-based Malaysian Islamic Study Group (MISG), which was affiliated with the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS).[58] The main objective of the organizations affiliated with

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[54] Muhammad Kamal Hassan "The Influence of Mawdudi's Thought on Muslims in Southeast Asia: A Brief Survey" in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 93, July/October 2003, p. 432
[55] Ibid, p. 433
[56] Dr. Said Ramadan is Hasan Al-Banna's son in law. However, he is more prominently known as Tariq Ramadan's father, a scholar on contemporary Islamic thought.
[57] Kamal Hassan *The Influence of Mawdudi's Thought on Muslims in Southeast Asia* p. 433
[58] Ibid p. 432

FOSIS was centered on propagating Islam as a way of life, effectively using the methods and approaches of Hasan Al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood. While doing so, they hope to spread their ideas to a larger audience.

As these students returned from the United Kingdom, they joined ABIM to continue their Islamic and *da'wa* based activism. The professional education and experiences gained living in a Western environment gave ABIM an added advantage compared to other Islamist movements in Malaysia, especially PAS. They were highly fluent in English, and were also professionals in a wide range of fields. As such, they were able to attract other professionals to join ABIM. By the late 1990s, it could be said that ABIM had successfully produced many Islamic oriented professionals in Malaysia.

Malaysians studying in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s had also made contact with the ideas and thoughts of Hasan Al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood through their interactions with other international students, particularly those from the Middle East and South Asia. Most of the Malaysian students joined the Muslim Students Association (MSA), a dominant Muslim student's organization in North America that evolved over the years and is today the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).[59] Through the MSA, these Malaysian students gained further knowledge of the Brotherhood, Al-Banna and Qutb through the interactions and discussions they had. Like their colleagues from the United Kingdom, they too joined ABIM upon returning to Malaysia.

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[59] Ibid. p. 436

Closer to home, ABIM had also received significant contributions from Indonesians who had been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. During its nascent years, ABIM was strongly affiliated with Islamic youth movements in Indonesia, such as the *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (Muslim Students Association-HMI) who invited them on *da'wa* training trips to Indonesia.[60] Imaduddin, a former member of the HMI was known to be a mentor of ABIM during the early 1980s. During one of the visits he made to Malaysia, he became attracted to some of ABIM's methodologies, such as the *usrah*[61] model and applied it in Indonesia when he returned.[62] ABIM's links with Indonesian Islamic movements and organizations were also broadened and expanded in the 1990's through new partnerships forged with the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Islam Indonesia* (ICMI),[63] led by BJ Habibie, a German trained engineer who went on to become Indonesia's Vice President and eventually President by the late 1990s. ABIM and ICMI shared an important trait, which is the fact that they were led and were mostly comprised of moderate middle class Malay professionals. The relationship established between ABIM and Islamists in Indonesia was one of the early examples signifying how ABIM was also a transnational Islamist movement that was able to go beyond boundaries.

2.2: Media and Communication:

Aside from direct contact and interaction, the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas were disseminated in Malaysia through its books and publications. While they were originally in Arabic, ABIM and also PAS members managed to translate them into Malay in order to reach greater and larger

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[60] Zainah Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 19
[61] Technically meaning family in Arabic but in this sense, it refers to a communicative method through personal meetings amongst members, popularized by the Muslim Brotherhood.
[62] Yon Machmudi *Islamising Indonesia* p. 138
[63] "ABIM*" Naningku Blogspot* May 23rd 2009 http://naningku.blogspot.com/2009_05_01_archive.html (Accessed on December 14th 2010)

audiences in Malaysia. The translation was done by Malays who had graduated from Middle Eastern universities and had an excellent command of the Arabic language. Aside from the Arabic language skills they possessed, they were also influenced by those ideas themselves; strongly believing in Al-Banna and Qutb and felt that it was important for others who do not read Arabic to access these ideas and learn about them.

Upon completing his studies in Mecca in the 1950s, Haji Yusuf Rawa returned to Malaya and joined PAS. While in Mecca, he came across Muslim Brotherhood ideas, particularly Sayid Qutb and became highly attracted to Qutb's ideas. He decided to pursue his interest in those ideas by helping to spread them in the Malay Peninsula. He introduced a magazine called *Al-Islah* (The Reform), which included articles on new forms and modes of Islamic thought and reform. What was more significant was the fact that the magazine also included the Malay translation of Sayid Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Quran* (In the Shade of The Quran), which appeared as a series in the magazine.[64] The translation done by Haji Yusuf might possibly be the first translation of any Muslim Brotherhood work into Malay.

After Haji Yusuf, other Arabic speaking members of PAS had also taken initiatives to translate Muslim Brotherhood works into Malay. One of them was Salahuddin Abdullah, the PAS State Secretary for Kelantan, who had translated Sayid Qutb's *Ma'alim Fi al-Tariq* (Milestones) into Malay in 1967. As the case with the first Malay translation of *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*, his translation first appeared as a series in Islamic magazines such as *Al-Islah* and *Pengasuh* (The Guide). The

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[64] Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria *Pengaruh Pemikiran Sayyid Qutb* p. 126

translations of *Ma'alim Fi Tariq* were finally compiled in a book called *Petunjuk Sepanjang Jalan*[65].

Muslim Brotherhood's ideas were not just limited within movements and organizations as they also prospered in university campuses. In 1963, a group of students from the Islamic Studies Department at the University of Malaya formed an informal organization called *Al-Rahmaniyyah* with the hope of performing *da'wa* and spreading Muslim Brotherhood ideas. Their mentor was Ismail Nawwab, an Arabic Language instructor in the University of Malaya who was also a Muslim Brotherhood member. They published a magazine called *Al-Nur* (The Light) which was a collection of essays on Islamic renewal and reform from Muslim Brotherhood scholars. However, their venture was less successful as they were limited within the confines of the university campus and did not make any efforts to expand beyond the university gates.

The spread of Muslim Brotherhood ideas through publications became more intense upon the formation of ABIM. Siddiq Fadzil, ABIM's President from 1982 to 1991 was highly enthused with Sayid Qutb's ideas and thoughts. As a youth, he was attracted to Qutb's viewpoints which he described as "revolutionary and anti-Western". They made a strong impression on him as he felt that they were very reminiscent with the situation in Malaysia in the 1960s. Fadzil made an important contribution by translating Qutb's *Fi Zilal al-Quran* into Malay called *Dibawah Naungan Al-Quran*, which was first published as a series in ABIM's magazine, *Risalah*. *Risalah* also contained many ideas and articles on the Muslim Brotherhood and was widely disseminated in Malaysia.

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[65] Ibid p. 135

The translation of Muslim Brotherhood works continues today through Sanggar Bestari, ABIM's publishing house. It produces and distributes many books on Islam written by various Islamic thinkers from the Arab world and other parts of the Muslim world such as Abula A'la Mawdudi, Hamka, and Malek Ben Nabi. Some of the more recent translations of Muslim Brotherhood works include those by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, whose popularity in Malaysia has rapidly soared over the last decade. Among his works in Arabic that had been translated into Malay include *Ghayru Al-Muslimin Fi Al-Mujtama' Al-Islamiyy*, translated to Malay as *Golongan Bukan Muslim Islam Dalam Masyarakat Islam.* These publications continue to be read by youths, especially university students that remain inspired by the ideas of Islamic reform. In certain cases, they were also used as recommended readings by academics from religious institutions in Malaysia.

2.3: The Travelling Theory:

People-to-people movement certainly had an impact on how Muslim Brotherhood ideas were transmitted to Malaysia. The experience of the Brotherhood in Egypt served as the beacon for Islamists in Malaysia in attempting to emulate their success. The movement of individuals that led to the dissemination of Muslim Brotherhood ideas and influence in Malaysia corresponds to what Peter Mandaville described as the "travelling theory" in which not only human beings but also ideas travel from one place to another. However, by extensive travel, an idea can take on new critical consciousness, both in itself and in influencing other ideas after undergoing travel.[66] This has been the most critical point in elucidating the Muslim Brotherhood's influence on Islamists in Malaysia, such as ABIM. While the influences were strong and effective, ABIM has developed an autonomous order and maintained its own program and agendas that were

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[66] Peter Mandaville *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 85

developed according to the local needs based on social, political and economic factors. At the same time, they remain committed to the Brotherhood's principles and ideals modeled on Hasan Al-Banna, Sayid Qutb and others. That said, the real strength of ABIM was its ability to synthesize modern western thought and practices some of its members were accustomed to when studying in Britain and fusing it with Islam, providing ABIM an edge and making it highly attractive as an Islamist movement. The results could be witnessed within local university campuses and classrooms, where ABIM members who graduated from Britain and the United States served as academics.[67] This was something PAS leaders and members were unable to do.

Direct contact and communication proved to be more effective in transmitting Muslim Brotherhood ideas in Malaysia. Compared with the production of numerous publications, the ideas moved faster and were easily transmitted through people-to-people interaction. This was evident in the success of ABIM's formative years where it rose as an important Islamist movement in Malaysia within a short span of time. One of the ways to explain this would be through understanding the adoption of religious practices in Islamic history, which stresses the significance of direct contact.[68] This highly corresponds with the Sufi nature of the Muslim Brotherhood which also insists on close human interaction as one of its communicative methods.

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[67] A variety of courses such as *Foundations of Islamic Economics*, *Islamic Capital Market* and *Accounting for Islamic Banks* at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) were developed by former ABIM members who were professors at the university.

[68] Yon Machmudi "Islamists and Political Participation: A Case Study of Jemaah Tarbiyah in Indonesia" (paper presented at the international workshop on Islamism and Political Participation in Southeast Asia: Global Contexts and Trends held by the Lowy Institute for International Policy International Workshop, Sydney, 8-9 April 2010) p. 5

ABIM'S ADOPTION OF MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD CONCEPTS AND MODELS

During its infancy years, ABIM was an organization that tried to make a strong impression on the Malaysian socio-political scene and gain popular support for its ideals and beliefs. When it first started in 1971, the ideological and organizational shape and form that the organization took was fashioned according to two influential Islamist movements; the *Jemaat-e-Islami* of Pakistan and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. This was largely due to the high level of influence that the Brotherhood and the *Jemaat* has had on ABIM's founding members, the Malay students in Malaysia and other parts of the world that had the opportunity to interact with the Brotherhood and *Jemaat* members. I argue that in 1971, the Muslim Brotherhood/*Jemaat-e-Islami* modeled-ABIM was building on the ideas and inspiration that both Al-Banna and Mawdudi had for their respective societies in Egypt and India/Pakistan through the adoption of their *da'wa* methods and approaches in rendering Islam as a way of life in Malaysia.

ABIM used the Muslim Brotherhood as a benchmark for its platform in a variety of ways. The Brotherhood's goal of popularizing Islam among the masses appealed to ABIM, as its members envisioned a similar development in Malaysia. The Brotherhood also called upon Sufism as a means to frame its message, which ABIM mimicked. Sufism also suited Malaysian society. Malaysian Muslims have traditionally been adherents of the *Ahlus Sunah Wal Jemaah*[69], and as a result are more familiar with and accepting of Sufi traditions and practices. Besides the fact that the Brotherhood is known to be a Sufi organization, its founder, Hasan Al-Banna, was himself a

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[69] Literally, People of the Tradition and Congregation

Sufi and was raised in accordance with Sufi[70] traditions. ABIM faithfully adopted Sufi terms used by members of the Brotherhood, such as *murshid* (guide), *ikhwan* (brothers) and *wazifah* (the remembrance of God). How ABIM uses these and other terms within its organizational structures and practices will be discussed below.

In making the Muslim Brotherhood its primary model, ABIM also tried to capitalize on how creatively Al-Banna have crafted and contrived the Muslim Brotherhood in fusing modern Western thought into the organization but within a spiritual framework. Al-Banna once mentioned: "We need to drink from the springs of foreign culture to extract what is indispensable for our renaissance."[71] In many ways, this provided ABIM with the idea and premise of launching its own "Islamic renaissance" in Malaysia yet making it attractive for many. It became one of the effective strategies for ABIM in getting its message across towards Malay Muslims in Malaysia who were still at the time, in full admiration of the remnants of colonialism and Westernism and were less enlightened on religion and Islamic teachings. ABIM has cleverly yet carefully merged religious and Western thought into a single product that would appeal to Malaysian audiences and effect serious changes in society. However, this was done without introducing something radically different and at the expense of local cultures and traditions, an important tenet and approach espoused by ABIM.

In the areas of religious practice, ABIM, like many Islamic based organizations and movements in Malaysia has adopted specific religious practices introduced by other Islamic based

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[70] An inner, mystical dimension of Islam, with the objective of "the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God"

[71] Lya Brynjar *The Society of the Muslim Brothers: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998) pp. 76-79

movements and organizations worldwide. For example, the *Jemaat Tabligh* movement of Malaysia introduced the reading of a religious textbook called *Fadilat al-Salat* by Maulana Zakariyya Al-Ansari after *Asr* (afternoon) prayers.[72] In the case of ABIM, it has recommended its members the daily recitation of *al-ma'thurat*, a collection of Quranic verses and prayer formulae commissioned by Hasan Al-Banna and introduced by ABIM member Abdul Ghani Shamsuddin.[73] To formalize and institutionalize this ritual, ABIM also published a book in 1983 entitled *Ke Arah Memahami Al Ma'thurat* (Towards Understanding the *Al-Ma'thurat*) written by Abdul Ghani Shamsuddin himself with details of the *Al-Mathurat* and how Al-Banna himself had carried out the ritual.[74] The book is still used by ABIM members today, particularly during religious gatherings and meets.

Nevertheless, beyond rituals, ABIM has set itself apart from many youth organizations in Malaysia through its adoption of specific Muslim Brotherhood models, ideologically and organizationally. A selective look at how some of these Muslim Brotherhood models were applied in ABIM could be traced from the following:

3.1: Ideology:

ABIM has framed its mode of activism under two main Islamic principles: *tajdid* (renewal) and *Islah* (reform) of the Muslim society by imparting *da'wa* (call to Islam) and *tarbiyya* (process of education) as the most appropriate method for the younger generation.[75] One of the main issues that affected ABIM in the 1970s was the issues of social justice and inequality faced by Malays

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[72] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 134
[73] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Transnational Islam in Malaysia," *NBR Project Report* April (2009): p. 145
[74] For further information, see Abdul Ghani Shamsuddin *KeArah Memahami Al Ma'Thurat* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Fajar, 1985).
[75] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 79

in the 1970s due to inadequate governmental policies. In order to "renew and reform" the Malays in Malaysia, ABIM utilizes the concepts and methodology of *Islah* (reform of society), *ta'awun 'ala'l-birr* (cooperation of good ends), *silm* (peace) and *musalaha* (reconciliation).[76] In some ways, these are similar to the tenets and ideals of the Muslim Brotherhood when it was founded in Egypt in 1928. Essentially, ABIM was looking at a way of reforming the Malay Muslim society in Malaysia and as such, they had a precedent on how to go about with the experiment via the similar process undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

In envisioning an Islamic society for Malaysia, ABIM was seen as embracing several of Al-Banna's principles and guidelines as laid out in his book, *Majmu'at Rasa'il* such as *Da'wa Salafiyya* (to refuse any activity which are in contrary to the Quran and the *Sunnah*), *Tariqa Sunniyya* (emphasizing the necessity to practice the teachings of Muhammad), *Haqiqa Sufiyya* (placing morality as an identity), *Rabitat 'Ilmiyya Thaqafiyya* (effort to increase science and knowledge abilities), *Shirka Iqtisadiyya* (ensuring economic strength and fair distribution), and *Fikra Ijtima'iyya* (committed to contributing to resolving social problems).[77] In addition, two of Al-Banna's other popular ideas embraced by ABIM was *Wahdatul Fikr* (Unity in Ideas) and the concept of *tasammuh* (tolerance).[78] What was important for ABIM leaders and members at the time was the fact that these doctrines were modern, contemporary and more significantly applicable in Malaysia's socio-political context. As such, this was perhaps the reason why the Al-Banna and Muslim Brotherhood model was highly pursued by ABIM members at the time.

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[76] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "The Response of Muslim Youth Organizations to Political Change: HMI in Indonesia and ABIM in Malaysia" in William Roff, *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987) p. 194

[77] For more information, see Manar Hasan *Outlawed and Outspoken: The Muslim Brotherhood in Pursuit of Legal Existence and Intellectual Development in Egypt* (Berkeley: UC Berkeley, 2005), accessed April 19, 2011, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/uploads/lib/RFG8MF7QQX3ZNZD.pdf

[78] Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia *Risalah juru bicara umat: kumpulan rencana pengarang risalah sempena 10 tahun Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), 1971-1981*(Kuala Lumpur, ABIM, 1981) p. 29

These Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Banna ideas were continuously mentioned or cited either in the speeches of ABIM's leaders and through its official publication, the *Risalah* magazine.

As a result of the Muslim Brotherhood ideological influences, ABIM's philosophy in Malaysia appears to be distinct in a sense that it mixes socialism and capitalism but done within a distinctive Islamic framework. However, as mentioned, ABIM's main prerogative was to achieve "Islamic renaissance" in Malaysia and it should not be done at the expense of local cultures and traditions in Malaysia, as reflected in the Quranic exhortation *Amr bil Ma'ruf wa Nahy an al Munkar* (Enforce that which is accepted [by the community], and prohibit that which is rejected)[79] which ABIM has also adopted as part of its *da'wa* maxim.

3.2: *Da'wa*:

The two important doctrines ABIM has derived from the Muslim Brotherhood are the concepts of *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* (education). For all Islamist movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, *da'wa* denotes the act of propagating Islam. In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood and ABIM, *da'wa* or propagating Islam includes programs on cultivating theology (*tawhid*), moral issues (*akhlaq*) and thought (*fikrah*). These are issues and aspects that are crucial in the process of gaining popularity among their intended audience; students who have become disillusioned with the politics of their times. In the Malaysian context, *da'wa* was not meant as an act of converting non-Muslims to Islam, but rather building stronger Islamic foundations amongst nominal Muslims, which became the personal mission of ABIM. Razali Nawawi, ABIM's first President was among the first to articulate the call to *da'wa* by ABIM members during his Presidential speech in 1974 when he mentioned:

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[79] Ibid, p. 3

"We are commanded by Allah to be active in society, to call upon society, to direct society, to lead society, in order to perform good, because it would bring honor to mankind, peace to society and harmony to the Muslim Ummah. Our struggle to perform da'wa for virtuous, will consume time, effort and spirit that we are ready to sacrifice.[80]*"*

It was evident that the calls to *da'wa* made by ABIM members were directly linked with similar calls made by Brotherhood leaders, Hasan Al-Banna, Sayid Qutb and Hasan Al-Hudaybi. Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM's third President holds the view that ABIM's *da`wa* is associated with the notion of reforming society (*islah*). He derives this idea from Sayid Qutb who classified the Muslim community into two categories; the ignorant (*Jahiliyyah*) and those who attempt to follow Islam as a way of life. In order to make ABIM's *da'wa* more effective, he suggests that ABIM members be trained as good missionaries in order to transform the ignorant into practicing Muslims.[81] Again, ABIM's *da'wa* mission reflects levels of similarities with the Muslim Brotherhood's propagation in Egypt in the early 1930s. The influence that the Muslim Brotherhood provided for ABIM members in this case was the method.

With the grand new ideas and innovation ABIM had vis-à-vis *da'wa,* the real challenge was for ABIM to translate them into real practical means. To implement its *da'wa*, ABIM had to train its members to be capable *du'ah* (preachers) and were provided intensive information and training through series of lectures, conferences and seminars on leadership. The idea of ABIM members serving as *du'ah* is crucial in realizing and implementing the movement's aims and objectives.

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[80] Razali Nawawi, Presidential Address at the 3rd ABIM Annual Conference, delivered at Sekolah Dato Abdul Razak, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia August 1st 1994.
[81] Badlihisham Mohd Noor, "*Da'wa* in the Pronouncements of the ABIM Leaders (1970s-1990s)," *Jurnal Usuluddin, 26* (2007): p. 89

The notion of being excellent preachers and guides were drawn from Hasan Al-Hudaybi's conception of *Du'ah La Qudah* (Preachers, Not Judges). The broad idea of this is that the Brotherhood members were supposed to act as *Da'i* (Preachers) while not making judgments that were negative and derogatory. Essentially, the idea is for ABIM members to not engage in the act of *Takfir* (accusing others as non-believers). Former ABIM President Siddiq Fadzil gave a lot of importance on the meaning of *Preachers, not Judges* during his time as the President of ABIM. In accordance with what Hudaybi had mentioned, Fadzil stated that the role of a *qadi* is to judge and punish wrongdoers, while the role of a *Da'i* is to nurture and guide one to the correct path; a sinner to repent; a *jahil* to knowledge and a *kuffar* (unbeliever) to Islam.[82] To further sanctify this Hudaybi doctrine, ABIM translated *Du'ah La Qudah* into Malay as *Pendakwah, Bukan Penghukum*, which has been used as a guide by ABIM members.

The effect of Hudaybi's doctrine on ABIM members was very positive. One of the main effects it had was that ABIM gave a high level of importance towards the mission of producing quality individuals as *du'ah* or missionaries. Siddiq Fadzil was seen as the main proponent of this agenda. He clearly specified what sort of roles a *da'i* should play based on the Hudaybi doctrine. In a speech he delivered during the 20th ABIM Annual Convention, he mentioned: "A missioner (*da'i*) is not a clown nether is he an orator who attacks his opponent; rather he is a divine trustee who advocates and preaches good deed and prohibits evil amongst the people."[83] The fact that Fadzil prohibits attacking one's opponent signifies the form of propagation ABIM was striving towards based on the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood.

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[82] Siddiq Fadhil, "Da'i Pembina Aqidah Pembangun Ummah" in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Muktamar Sanawi ABIM: Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, ed. Siddiq Fadzil (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, 1989) pp. 84-85.
[83] Siddiq Fadhil *Islamic Movement in the 90s: Vision and Strategy* (Petaling Jaya: ABIM, 1992) p. 8

In terms of an ideal and exemplary missionary, Hasan Al-Banna has been described by Siddiq Fadzil as having the best character of a *da'i*. He described Al-Banna as a *da'i* that is *husn ul khuluq* (possessing good morals) and does not create enemies with anyone. ABIM has also taken an Al-Banna saying as an inspiration, where he mentions: "*ayna al-kazimina al ghayza wa ayna al afina ani annas*" (where are those who are able to contain their anger and where are those who are willing to forgive).[84] More recently, ABIM has looked towards other Muslim Brotherhood figures as ideal and prototypical models. The example of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi as an ideal *da'i* or missionary has been mentioned on numerous occasions by ABIM leaders. Siddiq Fadzil gave a lot of emphasis and importance to the fact that Yusuf Al-Qaradawi rejected harshness and stringency in Islamic propagation, as aggression was only suitable when dealing with criminals or while at war.[85] Fadzil further alluded that many leaders in the Islamic movements and organizations have failed to differentiate between truth (*al-Haq*) and falsehood (*batil*) and the question of correctness (*as-sawab*) and the wrong (*al-khata'*). This, combined with a rigid interpretation of *Amr bi l-Ma'rūf Nahy ana l-Munkar* has led to some Islamist groups to adopt a stance seen as strict and inflexible in Islamic *da'wa*. It was obvious that Fadzil was referring to PAS' form of propagation, which was less reconciliatory compared to ABIM. ABIM's moderate approach is important as it guarantees the continued popularity of ABIM and other Islamist movements in Malaysia.

In moving with the times, ABIM members were also able to transcend classical and conventional *da'wa* methods that were utilized by Muslim Brotherhood members. A reflection of how modern and sophisticated these *da'wa* missions have become can be seen in one of Fadzil's speeches

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Siddiq Fadhil *Da'i Pembina Aqidah Pembangun Ummah* p. 8

where he mentions: "An organized and pre-planned *da'wa* must be based on scientifically researched data, the use of up-to-date techniques, the determination of target group according to their priorities and the ability to choose precise theme for the betterment of society (*islah*)."[86] At the same time, ABIM also adhered to new unconventional methods introduced by Qaradawi, who mentioned that *da'wa* could be done through social services by taking into account four factors, namely:

i)   Realizing that *da'wa* is actually a duty tasked by God;

ii)   *Da'wa* should not be restricted to simply verbal and writings, in the absence of action;

iii)   Since not all *da'i* would have exceptional oratorical and writing skills, performing social community services should be used as an alternative; and

iv)   *Dai's* or preachers should not wait for the establishment of an Islamic state to prove that Islam is capable of administering. At the same time, preachers should prove and show the potential for an Islamic state through social services and charity.[87]

Due to these innovative ideas and new levels of sophistication introduced by ABIM, there was no question that ABIM's *da'wa* was the driving force behind the decade of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia in the 1970s.

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[86] Siddiq Fadhil *Islamic Movement in the 90s: Vision and Strategy* p. 8
[87] For further information, see Siddiq Fadil *Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Perjuangan: Ucapan Dasar Muktamar Sanawi ABIM Ke-11* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1982)

3.3: *Tarbiyya*:

According to Sufi tradition, *Tarbiyya* refers to a practice of spiritual supervision carried out by a spiritual leader of a Sufi group called the *murshid* (guide), with the goal of cultivating and enhancing the spiritual quality of pupils under the guidance of their teacher.[88] *Tarbiyya* was adopted by Hasan Al-Banna as an educational method of the Brotherhood, not only for spiritual enhancement but also as a way to transfer Islamic knowledge and other skills needed by the movement's followers.[89] Similarly, *tarbiyya* itself was deliberately applied by Al-Banna out of admiration for the Sufi teaching model. Thus the nature of the Muslim Brothers leadership has reflected the very basic nature of Sufi organization.[90]

In comparison, it could be said that ABIM has faithfully adhered to the *tarbiyya* models of Muslim Brotherhood. According to Manutty, ABIM's perceptions of *tarbiyya* are apparently an exact duplicate of the Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual paradigm. He further mentions that the difference between the two movements is that ABIM seems to highlight on many occasions the significant role of the local Sufis in the propagation of Islam in the region.[91] Another important distinction is the fact that ABIM has carefully crafted its *tarbiyya* approaches to suit the needs of the local Muslim population. This distinction is important to make, as mentioned by Fadzil:

> *"Realising that Malaysia is not Egypt, neither is it Pakistan or Iran or any other*
>
> *countries in the world, rather Malaysia is Malaysia with its unique characteristics, we*

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[88] Yon Machmudi *Islamising Indonesia* p. 136
[89] Hasan al-Banna, *Memoar Hasan Al-Banna Untuk Dakwah dan Para Dainya*, trans. Salafuddin Abu Sayyid and Hawin Murtadho (Solo: Era Intermedia, 2004), p. 46
[90] Lya Brynjar *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, p. 9.
[91] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 233

are convinced that Malaysian problems should be solved through the experience of Malaysia."[92]

In that statement, Fadzil's message was for ABIM to be an Islamist movement by itself and not end up being a carbon copy or an offshoot of the Brotherhood in Malaysia. This had been the message and approach taken by ABIM as the movement began to gain its footing in Malaysia.

One of the most important contributions made by ABIM vis-à-vis education was *Yayasan Anda Akademik*, a private secondary school that provides continuing education to the mostly Malay dropouts from government schools. *Yayasan Anda Akademik* was established in 1971 and Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM's President at the time became its first headmaster. A majority of ABIM members were also its first teachers. *Yayasan Anda Akademik* was considered unique at the time. While it provided secular education which students would receive from the national secondary schools, *Yayasan Anda* also provided compulsory courses on Islam such as Islam as a way of life, Islamic movements, the difference between Islam and other religions, Islamic economics and Islamic political systems."[93] Islamic dress codes were also enforced, particularly on female students where they were asked to cover their heads in a *telekung*-the Islamic headscarf. Zainah Anwar observed that these girls, who successfully pursued their tertiary level education at the University of Malaya became the first veiled Malay women on campus.[94] The argument here is that the *tarbiyya* experience they received at *Yayasan Anda Akademik* and their breaking of traditions at the University of Malaya through displays of piety proves two things: that ABIM's *da'wa* methods were positive and fruitful and that ABIM had expanded its membership and

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[92] Siddiq Fadhil *Islamic Movement in the 90s: Vision and Strategy* p. 4
[93] Zainah Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 18
[94] Ibid

network through these new recruits by having its own academic institution. Again, this displays how effectively ABIM has been able to mobilize its resources through *da'wa*.

Based on what it had acquired from the Muslim Brotherhood, ABIM believes that both *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* are the most systematic educational process to build up Malay Muslims towards perfecting their role as vicegerents in the world. Within its own framework of *tarbiyya*, ABIM was able to develop various activities such as *halaqa* (religious lectures), *liqa* (meeting) and religiously themed seminars and workshops. These activities are seen as a manifestation of the *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* principles to nurture an Islamic society. However, ABIM is faced with the continuous challenge to cultivate its *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* in Malaysia's socio-political landscape.

3.4: Other Forms and Modes:

3.4.1: Leadership Styles:

The Muslim Brotherhood produced many charismatic and powerful personalities in Hasan Al-Banna, Sayid Qutb and Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Their names were synonymous with the Brotherhood and their roles, ideas and scholarship has continued the popularity of the movement worldwide, including Malaysia.

ABIM leaders have long looked at Muslim Brotherhood personalities as suitable role models for the organization. Anwar Ibrahim, ABIM's charismatic third President is known to be directly influenced by Al-Banna's leadership and intellectuality. It was evident that both of them shared several similarities. For one, they both had captivating charisma which was essential in gaining new celebrants, particularly the youth to their movement while ensuring continued support.

While Al-Banna was more appreciative of Islamic scholars and ideologues such as Jamaludin Al Afghani and Rashid Rida, Anwar Ibrahim developed a unique affection towards classical and contemporary Western philosophies and doctrines, while remaining true to Islamic principles. A look at Anwar Ibrahim's book, *The Asian Renaissance* reveals many non-Islamic thinkers and philosophers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Sun Yat Sen and Jose Rizal.[95] In a talk he gave at Georgetown University in February 2011, he even alluded that ABIM members were made to read Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* when he was president.[96] Through these instances, it was evident that Anwar Ibrahim had transcended the traditional way of thinking and appreciation towards scholarship normally adopted by leaders of Islamist movements. Again, this was one of the driving forces of ABIM's popularity in Malaysia during the 1970s and 1980s.

Siddiq Fadzil, ABIM's fourth President was more obvious with his affection for Muslim Brotherhood personalities and how he has chosen to adopt some of their styles into his leadership of ABIM. While he was known to have been the first in ABIM to popularize Sayid Qutb in the movement, he appeared to be more in the mold of Hasan Al-Hudaybi. The latter's most important contribution was the *Preachers, Not Judges* book and it was evident that Fadzil was highly influenced by this book. In many of his Presidential address towards ABIM members, he has spoken on the importance of non-confrontational propagation in Islam as mooted by Hudaybi and has also popularized Hudaybi's major work, *Du'ah La Qudah*, which at the time was not as popular in Malaysia compared to works produced by Al-Banna or Qutb.

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[95] For further information, see Anwar Ibrahim *Asian Renaissance* (Singapore : Times Books International, 1996)
[96] Anwar Ibrahim, Talk at Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, entitled "Revolution and Democracy in the Muslim World" February 10th 2011.

It was apparent that by the time both Hasan Al-Banna and Anwar Ibrahim were no longer in their respective organizations, Muslim Brotherhood and ABIM faced difficulties in trying to sustain the momentum and popularity they had built. While Al-Banna's successor, Hudaybi, was unduly described as "a singularly dull-witted and colorless ex-magistrate"[97] Fadzil, who succeeded Anwar Ibrahim did not suffer a similar fate. He did face a difficult time trying to sustain the popularity and to a certain extent, relevancy of ABIM after Anwar Ibrahim left to join the government. To his credit, he was able to guide the organization and remained President for 10 years. Under Fadzil, ABIM was able to move beyond the image of Anwar Ibrahim. An important observation was made by Kamal Hassan, where he noted:

"*Perhaps Anwar Ibrahim as Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports and later as Minister of Agriculture will find the exuberance and eloquence of Siddiq rather irksome though not unbearable, for in a sense he is listening to his own voice in the past. He could not, however, take exception to Siddiq's strong worded criticism of the Islamization program of the Mahathir administration which Anwar helps to popularize, for he knows full well that Siddiq is only being faithful to the goals of ABIM.*"[98]

The succession crisis faced by Hudaybi and Fadzil was one of the similarities that could be traced between the two movements. However, what was more essential was how two of ABIM's Presidents, Anwar Ibrahim and Siddiq Fadzil used the Muslim Brotherhood leadership manual as useful guidelines of how they wanted to lead and shape ABIM. It was the personalities and experiences accumulated by Muslim Brotherhood leaders that played an important role for

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[97] Anwar Sadat *Revolt on the Nile* (New York: J. Day Co., 1957) p. 111
[98] Kamal Hassan *The Response of Muslim Youth Organizations to Political Change*, p. 186

ABIM's leaders in ensuring the success, popularity and continuance of the movement in Malaysia.

3.4.2: The *Shura* Council:

One aspect that sets ABIM apart from other organizations in Malaysia is the fact that it has a *Shura* Council, which was based on the General Consultative Council (*Majlis Shura al-am*) of the Muslim Brotherhood. *Shura* is a decision making process in Islam, where members consult one another and arrive at a decision through consensus. In Islam, the concept of *Shura* assures human control of human affairs within the bounds of the law.[99] The Muslim Brotherhood believed that the political structure of an Islamic state also needs to be bound by three principles: 1) the Qur'an is the fundamental constitution, 2) the executive ruler is bound by the teachings of Islam and the will of the people and 3) government operates on the concept of consultation (*shura*).[100]

Following the mechanism adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood, ABIM's Highest Council of the *Shura* (*Majlis Tertinggi Shura ABIM*) occupies the highest position in the organizational structure, although it was not institutionalized in the early phases of ABIM's growth.[101] As significant as it was, the Muslim Brotherhood gives high emphasis on qualifications vis-à-vis membership in the *Shura* since it would guarantee the dignity of the Council as the most respected body of the movement. ABIM has also faithfully adhered to these conditions. Among the stipulations set by ABIM includes possessing excellent Islamic characteristics such as piety (*taqwa*), justice (*al-Adl*) and wisdom (*al Hikmah*). It was also useful for *Shura* Council members

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[99] Richard Mitchell *Society of the Muslim Brothers* p. 243
[100] Ibid, p. 246
[101] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 89

to have basic understanding of the *shariah* or Islamic law. ABIM's conditions were similar to the 10 'legists' set by Al-Banna's condition for the *Shura* membership in the Brotherhood, i.e. having background on general knowledge and men that are heads of families, tribes and other organized groups.[102] However, ABIM has stated clearly and articulately is the fact that a member of the *Shura* must not be involved actively in any political organizations that are contrary to the objectives of ABIM.[103]

The effects of the *Shura* on ABIM's decision making process have been fairly positive. It is noted that thanks to the *Shura*, there has been less "power struggle" in the movement when it comes to competing for positions in the movement's organizational hierarchy. More significantly, it has been able to settle many disputes within the movement, especially the crisis ABIM experienced when Anwar Ibrahim, its President in 1982 left to join UMNO.[104] Through the *Shura* Council, ABIM was also able to assume a "political" position and support Anwar Ibrahim via the *Reformasi* (Reformation) movement that called for the ousting of Dr. Mahathir, Malaysia's Prime Minister, and his government for the controversial sacking of Anwar Ibrahim from the Malaysian government.[105]

To this day, ABIM continues to utilize *shura* as its primary decision making process tool. To a certain extent, decision making through *shura* may have also made ABIM to appear less democratic as an organization. However, it was never a contentious issue for ABIM to handle.

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[102] Richard Mitchell *Society of the Muslim Brothers* p. 168
[103] *Peraturan Tetap Majlis Tertinggi Shura ABIM* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, n.d) p. 1
[104] In 1982, at the invitation of Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Anwar Ibrahim shocked his supporters by deciding to leave ABIM and join the ruling party UMNO and the government. While the decision disappointed many of ABIM's members, Anwar's rise in the administration was meteoric, being appointed Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in less than a year.
[105] Anwar Ibrahim was sacked from his post as Deputy Prime Minister in 1998 based on allegations of sexual misconduct, which many believed were fabricated by his political enemies

As a matter of fact, decision making through *shuras* became widespread and was popularized on other Islamic based institutions, such as universities. A majority of student movements and associations at the International Islamic University Malaysia has adopted the *shura* as a way of appointing Executive Council members, including the President of the organization.[106]

3.4.3: Cadre and Succession:

ABIM leaders give high significance and importance to the issue of succession to ensure that their next generations of leaders are ready and capable to assume the leadership mantle of the organization once they are called to lead. This is also important for ABIM to ensure the survivability and continuity of the movement itself.

To achieve this purpose, ABIM has developed a well-known cadre training program called the *tamrin kader*. Its curriculum has been carefully devised and is supervised by the Training Implementation Committee of ABIM. The objective of the training program is to provide theoretical and practical aspects of Islam to its members, specifically those it has identified having the potential to succeed the current crop of leaders. Participants are trained in the aspects of *aqidah* (belief), *shariah* (law), *akhlaq* (morals) and *sirah* (prophetic biography).[107] Uniquely, the *tamrin kader* also conducts courses on comparative analysis of different world religions and conflict of modern ideologies,[108] effectively distinguishing ABIM from other Islamic movements in Malaysia who had fashioned their *tarbiyya* and *da'wa* methods for local domestic audiences but was essentially absent of a larger worldview.

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[106] Based on author's observation as a student at the International Islamic University Malaysia in 1996-2002
[107] Based from author's personal experience as a student at the International Islamic University Malaysia from 1998-2002
[108] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid *Transnational Islam in Malaysia*, p. 145

I argue that ABIM's *tamrin kader* and the importance of succession was based on Al-Banna's original vision of training and mentoring during the early years of the Muslim Brotherhood where he developed and trained a cadre of young, highly motivated Muslim Brotherhood members who ultimately became preachers, and were equipped with modern teaching methods, independent from the government and the religious establishment, and supported by an effective use of the new mass media.[109] While the evidence of direct influence is not obvious, the continued succession process within the Muslim Brotherhood has given ABIM members reason to pursue its own program for organizational transition. Hence, it could be said that *tamrin kader* is a direct product that was designed to specifically correspond to this need.

3.4.4: The *Usrah* Network:

The concept of "networks" in a social movement is crucial as it allows for the expansion of the movement beyond the peripheries of its comfort zone that could lead to greater mobilization. Islamic movements are also not exempted from this important phenomenon. As mentioned by Wiktorowicz, "even formal Islamic organizations are constituted by dynamic networks that extend beyond the parameters of formal organizational space to connect activists to other Islamists, friends, families and associates."[110] ABIM corresponds to this specifically by what is dubbed the "*Usrah* network". *Usrah* is another concept borrowed from the Muslim Brotherhood which literally means "family" but technically refers to a gathering in small units, normally comprised of five to twenty members and headed by a leader known as the *naqib*.

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[109] Lia Brynjar *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* pp. 53-57
[110] Quintan Wiktorowicz *Islamic Activism* p. 22

For Hasan Al-Banna, *usrah* was not merely to serve spiritual enhancement but it was also developed as a way to transfer Islamic knowledge and other skills needed by his followers.[111] Through the establishment of a small "family" unit, solidarity and a sense of togetherness among members are developed. In addition, the *usrah* is hoped to inculcate specific Islamic values such as knowing (*ta'aruf*), understanding (*tafahum*) and supporting (*tafa'ul*) one another.[112] The main objective of the usrah is to allow Muslims to live better in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

While the *usrah* is known to have been the most important training and educational process for the Muslim Brotherhood, the same could be said about the ABIM *usrah*. An ABIM *usrah* would typically meet weekly or once every two weeks to cultivate and foster a greater sense of brotherhood among ABIM members, while projecting and planning future activities of the organization."[113] What is significant about the ABIM *usrah* in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood is the fact that it comprehensively utilizes the Muslim Brotherhood's literature. Common Muslim Brotherhood texts used in an ABIM *usrah* include Hasan Al-Banna's *Majma' Al Rasail* (Collection of Letters) and *Risalah At-Taalim* (Principles of Knowledge) and Sayid Qutb's *Fi Zilal Al-Quran* (In the Shade of the Quran), which has been translated into Malay as *Dibawah Naungan Al-Quran*. Kamal Hassan mentioned that *Fi Zilal al-Quran*, "has been considered one of the most important texts for exegesis in the *usrah* institution."[114] In addition, books by other important figures of the Muslim Brotherhood such as Fathi Yakan, Said Hawwa,

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[111] For further information, see Hassan Al-Banna *Madjmu'at al-Rasa'il* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Islamiyya li-l-Tiba'a wa-l-Nashr, 2004).
[112] Hassan Al-Banna, *Usrah dan Da'wah* (Kuala Lumpur: Ikhwan Agency, 1979), p. 4.
[113] Manutty *Perceptions of Social Change* p. 240
[114] Ibid p. 238

Abd al-Karim Zaydan and Mustafa Mashhur were also highly regarded and widely distributed[115] during the *usrah* sessions. As a consequence, its members were also able to engage in analytical discussions revolving around those ideas and conceptions. Ultimately, the *usrah* became an exercise that is also intellectually stimulating for ABIM members.

Records showed that the first ABIM *usrah*, albeit unofficial was organized in 1968, when the pioneering leaders of ABIM who were students in the United Kingdom at the time met in London. Razali Nawawi, ABIM's President from 1971 to 1974 was appointed as its first *naqib*. The Muslim Brotherhood text they utilized for this *usrah* was *Fi Zilal Al-Quran*, which made it significant because of the fact that it was organized a few years after Sayid Qutb's demise. Hence, the practice of *usrah* was already established among ABIM members even before the movement came into being. Officially, ABIM held its first *usrah* among its high executive council members called "*usrah exco*" in 1972.[116]

ABIM has been able to spread its influence into university campuses through its *usrah* which were linked in a network like fashion. ABIM, through the "*usrah* network" is currently present on university campuses in Malaysia, particularly the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and University of Malaya (UM). These *usrah* networks established by ABIM members on campuses are unofficially connected to ABIM but upon graduation, students who were trained in these *usrahs* would most likely continue their campus activism and by joining ABIM. In the case of IIUM, the *usrah* has been institutionalized as a compulsory co-curriculum activity outside the classroom and is conducted once a week. The

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[115] Ibid
[116] Mohamad Fauzi Zakaria *Pengaruh Pemikiran Sayyid Qutb Terhadap Gerakan Islam di Malaysia,* p. 141

naqibs are generally members of ABIM or PKPIM, and this provides an opportunity for him to share and discuss details about ABIM and the *da'wa* activities of the organization, albeit in a very discreet fashion. Strategically, through the *usrah*, the *naqibs* would be able to identify potential recruits for the organization. As a consequence, it is unsurprising to see today that a large number of IIUM graduates constitute the majority of ABIM's office bearers and members.

3.4.5: Publications:

One of the important tenets of a social movement according to Tilly is the social movement repertoire. Social movement repertoire is an employment of combinations from among several forms of political action, one of which is pamphleteering. [117] In the case of ABIM, it has gone beyond pamphleteering by publishing its monthly journal called *Risalah*. *Risalah* contained many essays and articles written by ABIM members who were academics and scholars and contained many views about Malaysia, which were at times critical of the government. While there were other Islamic based publications at the time, *Risalah* was different in a sense that it became a very effective tool in generating support and new membership for ABIM. The publication became a victim of its success when the government went to the extent of banning it for five years from 1975-1980.[118] Today, *Risalah*, including some of its previous issues, has been made accessible on the internet.

While not a direct product of the Muslim Brotherhood's influence on ABIM, *Risalah* also served as a voice of the Brotherhood in Malaysia. Its publications cited ideas propagated by Brotherhood figures, particularly Hasan Al-Banna, Sayid Qutb and even Umar al-Tilmisani.

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[117] Charles and Lesley J. Wood *Social Movements, 1768-2008* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009) p. 4
[118] "The *Daawah* Process is More International" *Impact International* July 10-23, 1981

Risalah asserted in an article that Muslims in Malaysia should accept Islamic revivalism, citing the Sayyib Qutb adage, "*Al-Mustaqbal li hadha addin*" (The future belongs to Islam.)[119] In another *Risalah* article, the author mentioned how Siddiq Fadzil admitted to the aggressive radicalism in Sayid Qutb's thinking and ideas, such as his denunciation of certain Muslims as *jahiliyyah* (unbelievers). However, according to the author, Fadzil mentioned that Muhammad Qutb, Sayid Qutb's younger brother, claimed that his elder brother's ideas had been misinterpreted.[120] These instances display the focus and importance that ABIM through *Risalah* gave to Muslim Brotherhood figures and their ideas.

With the advancement of technology and the popularity of the internet, ABIM has its own website[121] where aside from news and activities, contains many articles written by its members. However, it has been struggles for prominence due to the popularity of other Islamic oriented websites, particularly the website of PAS's official organ, *Harakah,[122]* in addition to the plethora of blogs on Islam maintained by other Islamic scholars who are not members of ABIM.[123]

3.5: Results on the Mainstream:

ABIM's adoption of Muslim Brotherhood models produced meaningful results for the organization. However, its impact on Malaysia was even more overwhelming and significant. The Islamic revivalism period in Malaysia that was ABIM driven transformed Malaysian Muslim society to become more religious and devout towards Islam. This religious revitalization

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[119] Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia *Risalah juru bicara umat* p. 27
[120] Koleksi Risalah ABIM (Bil 3 / 1998) http://reocities.com/Athens/forum/8108/siddiq5.htm
[121] ABIM's official website, http://www.abim.org.my/
[122] Harakah Daily's website, http://www.harakahdaily.net/v2/
[123] One of the popular religious blogs is by Dr. Asri Zainul Abidin, the former Mufti of the State of Perlis called *Minda Tajdid* (The Mind of a Reformist), accessible at http://drmaza.com/ (Accessed on March 16th 2011)

has also given new life to the ongoing and necessary debate about the Malay cultural and political entity.[124] Judith Nagata mentioned "In contrast with just over a decade ago, the Malaysian urban scene of today is remarkable for its highly visible Islamic consciousness, with widespread evidence of new devoutness."[125] This new sense of devoutness was witnessed in many places and many social institutions such as schools, universities and government offices.

Religious education became more popular in Malaysia as a consequence of ABIM's *da'wa*, in addition to the Arabic language. Arabic words such as *muktamar* (meeting), *harakah* (movement) and *islah* (reform) were adopted into the Malay language as a result of their frequent usage by ABIM. With the introduction of Islamic banking and finance in Malaysia in 1983, trade and commerce terminologies in Arabic also became widespread. Again, these efforts, which were spearheaded by ABIM has made the movement distinct from other Islamic organizations in Malaysia.

As ABIM became more prevalent in Malaysia, it also became the subject of much concern for the government. They feared that ABIM might spread ideas that could flame an Islamic revolution witnessed in Iran in 1979. According to Muhammad Kamal Hassan, "its (ABIM) rise was considered detrimental to the political interests of the National Front and UMNO in particular. As a result, ABIM has had to bear the brunt of the establishment's wrath and suspicion from its creation in 1971 until the end of the decade"[126] However, ABIM was in many ways a positive phenomenon. It has given expression to popular energies and moral enthusiasm,

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[124] Clive S. Kessler "Islamic Revivalism and Political Disaffection in Divided Society" in *Southeast Asia Chronicle,* October (1980): p. 10

[125] Judith Nagata "Islamic Revival and the Problem of Legitimacy Among Rural Religious Elites in Malaysia" in *Man* New Series, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Mar., 1982), p. 44

[126] Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *The Response of Muslim Youth Organizations to Political Change* p. 183.

particularly among the youths; inspired and determined to channel Muslim Brotherhood models and philosophies into Malaysian society.

BEYOND ABIM: THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA

By now, it had been established that ABIM was the pioneer in engineering the widespread appeal and popularity of Al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in Malaysia. The Muslim Brotherhood methods and mechanisms that were also adopted by ABIM have helped transform the organization into a dominant driving force in the Islamization process of Malaysian society from the 1970s onwards. With no other actors involved, ABIM had been given all credit to the success of the Islamic revivalism period in Malaysia. The fact that ABIM did not preoccupy itself with the idea of effecting change by having political power was crucial to this achievement. In other words, their aims and goals were focused on peaceful social change. Its nonpartisan position appealed to a majority Malay Muslims, regardless of whatever political standpoint and views they might have held. Ahmad Totonji, an Islamic activist and co-founder of the International Institute for Islamic Thought (IIIT), a Virginia based organization closely linked with the Muslim Brotherhood, praised ABIM for this very fact. He mentioned that "it was wise not to involve ABIM in the political work; it was wise to keep *da'wa* separate from politics."[127] Clearly, this was another confirmation to justify why ABIM was the more appealing Islamist movement in Malaysia and not PAS.

As previously mentioned, it was PAS members who first came into contact with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, even to the extent of meeting Al-Banna himself. It had been proven that they had been exposed and influenced by Al-Banna, Qutb, and the rest of the Brotherhood

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[127] Rachel Ehrenfeld "Clinton's Moderate Islamist", *American Center for Democracy*, November 2010. http://acdemocracy.org/viewarticle.cfm?category=Islamic%20Banking&id=1075 (Accessed December 29th, 2010).

decades before ABIM even existed. However, it was noted that PAS members tended to interpret individuals like Qutb and Al-Banna in especially rigid ways.[128] The party's preoccupation with the internal strife between the leadership and grassroots members of the organization also led to its inability to effectively apply the ideas they had learned into tangible action and results. When the leadership transition finally took place in PAS by the end of the 1970s, ABIM had already achieved fame and recognition for its efforts in Malaysia. The Muslim Brotherhood had been strongly embedded and institutionalized in ABIM, and PAS's reputation as an Islamist movement and political party had taken a severe thumping. Hence, at the time, it was ABIM, and not PAS, which was considered as the *bona fide* Malaysian "*Ikhwan*"[129] (brotherhood).

4.1: Transcending the Brotherhood:

The 1980s and 1990s were seen as very momentous decades for ABIM. While being vocal and at times critical of the Malaysian government, its stance on many social issues affecting the Malay Muslim population in Malaysia only served to solidify its position. ABIM's popularity was widely attributed to the leadership of Anwar Ibrahim, its charismatic third President. According to Nagata "Anwar can only be placed in the category of 'spontaneous arisen' leaders, and like most of his kind, he has the gift of touching the interests and sensitivities and of gauging the level of sophistication of his audience with great skill."[130] Anwar was also described as a "powerful and charismatic speaker who aroused his audiences with his 'pounding-the-pulpit' style, his oratorical skills and his convictions."[131]

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[128] Von Der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam* p. 83
[129] A simplified way of referring to the Muslim Brotherhood from its Arabic name, *Ikhwanul Muslimin*.
[130] Judith Nagata *The Reflowering of Malaysian: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984) p. 88
[131] Zainah Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 12

In 1982, after being persuaded by the offer from Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister at the time, Anwar made a very controversial decision to join UMNO and the government, the very institution he vehemently criticized while in ABIM. Anwar justified his actions by mentioning that the only way for him to affect serious changes in Malaysia was if he was to do it from the inside and within the system.[132] This decision was highly confounding as many had seen Anwar as the right candidate to be the next President of PAS. However, Anwar's entry into the government led to two very adverse effects. First, many in ABIM were disillusioned and disappointed with his decision and decided to leave ABIM to join PAS, in protest. Second, due to Anwar's entry into the government, ABIM's profile as an organization was further raised. With his new position as a Minister and member of the Cabinet, coupled with Dr. Mahathir's policy of absorbing Islamic values into the administration (*penerapan nilai-nilai Islam dalam pentadbiran*),[133] ABIM was handed the opportunity to be a partner with the government, albeit this had to be done surreptitiously due to the organization's nonpartisanship.

Within the government system, Anwar had the opportunity to implement many of his ABIM policies. One of the key institutions he helped establish was the first Islamic bank in the country in 1983. It is assumed that Anwar wanted to emulate the first successful Islamic bank in Egypt related to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Mit Ghamr Savings Bank that was established in 1963.[134] It was also evident that Anwar was affected and influenced by the models of Islamic economics and *riba* (interest) free financing, which was concretized by Islamic scholars during the late

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[132] Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Ahmed Shabery Cheek, "The Politics of Malaysia's Islamic Resurgence" *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 10, No. 2, (April 1988), pp. 856-858
[133] Mohammad Kamal Hassan *The Response of Muslim Youth Organizations* p. 183
[134] Timur Kuran "The Economic Impact of Islamic Fundamentalism" in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty et al. (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 313

1970s and early 1980s.[135] Nonetheless, the Malaysian Islamic banks became an immense success and hugely popular by the 1980s and 1990s. The Islamization strategies applied by Anwar within the government were not necessarily dictated by the Brotherhood spiritual leaders in Cairo or other parts of the world, but in fact they were designed in accordance with the domestic suitability and religious needs of Malaysia's local environment and context. This was also in accordance with ABIM's stated position that despite being influenced by the Brotherhood, it would operate within Malaysia's local context and not Egypt's. This was one example of how Anwar Ibrahim and ABIM had decided that it no longer needed to strictly abide by the Muslim Brotherhood manuals and transcend beyond their Arab world paradigm.

With Anwar in the government, the sign of success was imminent and seemed highly promising. There were also reactions within ABIM vis-à-vis strategies and implementing them. ABIM began to see that its situation was no longer the same as the Muslim Brotherhood since its most prominent member was now within the system. With regards to this, one of the most notable shifts within ABIM was ABIM's "rejection" of Sayid Qutb's ideas. Siddiq Fadzil, who assumed the ABIM leadership after Anwar, was described as attracted to Qutb due to his revolutionary and anti-Western stance. Fadzil felt that Qutb's ideas were "suitable" for ABIM based on the political and social antipathy of Malay youth towards Western ideas at the time. However, with Anwar now in the government, Fadzil changed his position regarding Qutb. He felt that Qutb's ideas were more suitable to defeat Western thought and with ABIM's complimentary role and status within the Malaysian government system, these notions were no longer suitable. With tangible success already witnessed in the form of Islamic banking and an Islamic university,

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[135] Khurshid Ahmad, a member and scholar of the *Jemaat-e-Islami* was among the first to conventionalize the concept of interest free banking. For more information see John L. Esposito and John O. Voll *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 39-53

Muslims in Malaysia would prefer ideas which are more constructive, suitable with the spirit of Islamic revivalism championed by ABIM.

With Anwar Ibrahim as a dominant actor in the Malaysian government as Minister of Education and later the Minister of Finance, ABIM's position was indirectly strengthened. However, the relations and partnership were never acknowledged openly and were very much done covertly. Nonetheless, ABIM benefitted from Anwar being in the government and more significantly, his international network of friends. Anwar Ibrahim could be described as the most internationally connected youth leader in Malaysia at the time, thanks to his popularity and affiliation with Brotherhood disciples worldwide. Prior to joining the Malaysian government, Anwar also held important positions in international youth organizations such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), where he was appointed as its representative for the Asia Pacific region and the International Islamic Federation of Students' Organization (IIFSO), overseeing day-to-day operations as executive director. Thanks to Anwar, ABIM was able to move beyond local and domestic audiences and raise its international profile. ABIM was able to link up with Islamists from other parts of the world, such as in Indonesia and the Middle East. It was said that WAMY and IIFSO gathered Islamists worldwide who were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and both provided platforms for international networking. In certain ways, these formal congregations allowed ABIM to maintain its Muslim Brotherhood affiliation but in networking form.

Recognizing ABIM's ability to market Malaysia vis-à-vis Islam internationally, the government provided the opportunity for the movement to contribute proactively in international issues

affecting Muslims worldwide. This further concretized ABIM as a partner in nation building[136] during the Presidency of ABIM's fourth President Dr. Muhammad Nur Manutty. Under his stewardship, ABIM members were given the privilege of participating in international meetings on conferences on issues affecting Islam and the *Ummah* (Muslim Community). Dr. Manutty himself was given the privilege of representing Malaysia during peace talks between the *mujahideen* factions in Afghanistan that were held in Kabul in March 1993, where Malaysia was charged with negotiating a settlement deal.[137] ABIM was also omnipresent in major crises affecting Muslim nations in the 1990s. During the Bosnian War and "ethnic cleansing" committed by the Serbian military towards Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1993, ABIM was strongly committed in not just voicing criticism but actively assisting the Malaysian government to reduce the plight of the suffering Yugoslav Muslims. With the help of other organizations, ABIM assisted in setting up donation funds and offering assistance to Bosnian refugees in Malaysia. Mustapha Ceric, Bosnia-Herzegovina's *Mufti* (Chief Cleric) recognized that ABIM was the first organization from Southeast Asia to have openly supported the plight of Muslims in Bosnia.[138] Many of these achievements had to be credited to Anwar Ibrahim, whose presence and role in the government was crucial to the success of ABIM's partnership with the government.

While ABIM has not relied as much on Muslim Brotherhood manuals during its decades of development, it continues to enjoy special bonds that remain faithful to contemporary Muslim Brotherhood scholars. The most popular Brotherhood figure that ABIM has enjoyed intimate ties with is Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Described as the intellectual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi has visited Malaysia on numerous occasions since the 1970s

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[136] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia* p. 145
[137] Mohd. Anuar Tahir *Pendirian Politik ABIM* (Petaling Jaya: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1993) p. 22
[138] Ibid. p. 23

and has remained very close with ABIM members, particularly with Anwar Ibrahim. Qaradawi's recent visit to Malaysia was in December 2009, where during a religious sermon he delivered in a mosque in Shah Alam, he issued a *fatwa* (advisory opinion) in defense of Anwar Ibrahim over the purported sexual allegations he was facing and the false lies spread by the *fasiq* (morally corrupt).[139] While the *fatwa* was his own and not an official opinion of the Muslim Brotherhood, it is assumed that many Malaysians considered this *fatwa* as a strong endorsement for Anwar from the religious establishments in Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood itself. Fascinatingly enough, during this same visit, Qaradawi was also given the *Tokoh Maal Hijrah* (Prophet's Pilgrimage) award by the Malaysian government on the first day of the Muslim *Hijrah* year, acknowledging his contributions to "extensive knowledge and selfless contribution to serve Islam and Muslims, the development of Islamic culture for the benefit of the *Ummah*".[140]

In more recent events, in February 2011, Malaysian Muslims were quick to condemn the Prime Minister Najib Razak from what appeared to be his denunciation of Yusuf Qaradawi and the Muslim Brotherhood. During his official visit to Istanbul, Turkey in February 2011, the Prime Minister was alleged to have asked Qaradawi and the Muslim Brotherhood to "reject violence and extremism".[141] This statement was construed by many Muslim groups, including ABIM as the Prime Minister suggesting that Qaradawi and the Brotherhood as proponents of violence and

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[139] "Fatwa Mutakhir Yusuf Qardawi mengenai Konspirasi 2 terhadap DSAI" *Anwar Ibrahim's Blog*, March 16th, 2010, http://anwaribrahimblog.com/2010/03/16/fatwa-mutakhir-yusuf-qaradawi-mengenai-konspirasi-2-terhadap-dsai/ (Accessed March 1st 2011)
[140] "Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi Wins Malaysia's Hijra Award" *Slashnews.co.uk*, December 15th 2009 http://slashnews.co.uk/news/2009/12/15/5971/Sheikh-Yusuf-AlQaradawi-Wins-Malaysias-Hijra-Award (Accessed March 1st 2011)
[141] "Anwar tells Najib to apologise to Qaradawi over 'terror' remark" *Harakah Daily*, February 26th 2011 http://en.harakah.net.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2346:anwar-tells-najib-to-apologise-to-qaradawi-over-terrorist-allegation&catid=36:headline&Itemid=70 (Accessed March 2nd 2011)

religious extremists. However, the Prime Minister immediately denied that he had labeled Qaradawi and the Brotherhood such but clarified in mentioning:

> "*I've never said that the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist group. I said they could participate in the elections on the condition that they reject violence or extremist ideology as the general impression is such (Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist group) and it's not my opinion,*"[142]

The reactions generated from this particular episode were evidence to prove that the Muslim Brotherhood, through its personalities, remains a significant force amongst Malaysia's Islamic communities, including ABIM.

4.2: ABIM Under Yusri Mohamad:

The unceremonious sacking and imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim from the government in 1998 had a significant impact on ABIM. Due to its strong ties and allegiance with Anwar despite its impartiality, ABIM took part in the street protests and demonstrations against the injustice meted out to him. These "pro-Anwar disturbances" were then dubbed the *Reformasi* (reform) movement, with the aim of demanding justice for Anwar and remove Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad from office, who was perceived as corrupt and had remained in power for far too long. During this period of political upheaval, several members of ABIM opted for overt political activism, choosing to join either PAS or the newly established National Justice Party (*Parti*

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[142] "Najib denies calling Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group" *The Malaysian Insider* February 27th 2011 http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-denies-calling-muslim-brotherhood-a-terrorist-group/ (Accessed March 2nd 2011)

Keadilan Nasional-KeADILan).[143] The experiment achieved mixed results, based on the outcome of the 1999 General Elections. While the opposition coalition managed to reduce the government coalition's parliamentary seats from 94 to 72, the performance of ABIM members under PAS or KeADILan was not significant. Perhaps the most noteworthy performance was from Kamaruddin Jaafar, ABIM's former Secretary General, who won the Tumpat parliamentary seat under a PAS ticket.

However, the *reformasi* movement failed to sustain the momentum it had built since 1998 and its influence began to wane. This was largely attributed to the fact that the Islamists and the liberal-secular currents of the movement could not offer the same remedies for Malaysia's perceived political maladies. While Islam was seen as the solution for the Islamists, the liberals on the other hand wanted to prescribe modern progressive democratic principles irrespective of religious affiliation. This was the main point of contention between the Islamists, including ABIM and the rest of the opposition. Their disagreement had huge consequences and implications. As observed by Hamid, "While *reformasi's* general and vague appeal for reform proved useful in the short term to galvanize the political sensitivities of the masses, its failure to deliver results within the context of Malaysia's patronage politics sapped its energies in the long term."[144]

In 2005, Yusri Mohamad, a doctoral candidate in law at the International Islamic University Malaysia was chosen as President of ABIM. Yusri became the first ABIM President since the *reformasi* movement began. Immediately, Yusri showed signs that he was planning to move ABIM beyond its street demonstration years. In a media interview, Yusri demonstrated his

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[143] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Islamist Realignments and the Rebranding of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia" *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 30.2 (2008) p. 220
[144] Ibid. p. 221

eclecticism with his depiction of ABIM's pathway and approach towards reclaiming its relevance and even dominance as an actor in contemporary Islamism.[145] He even acknowledged that *reformasi* was an unfortunate episode which distracted ABIM away from its core elements and primary goals.[146] For Yusri, it was very unIslamic to be confrontational, when avenues for discussions exist.[147] What Yusri had notably observed was the fact that Sufism no longer holds a special position in ABIM, and that it has become "the neglected dimension of the Islamic movement". It was clear that Yusri's remedy for ABIM was for the movement to return to basics, and look at the Muslim Brotherhood manual again. In one of his first speeches as ABIM President, Yusri relates how in the original scheme of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan Al-Banna was an avid practitioner of *tariqah* (spiritual path).[148] In other words, it could be said that the *reformasi* movement may have steered ABIM away from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The significance of Yusri and his colleagues in ABIM was observed by Hamid, where he mentions: "the new coterie of ABIM leaders are invariably drawn from the post-NEP generation of Malay-Muslims whose upbringing has been conditioned by pro-*Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) politics and policies up till their undergraduate days in Malaysian universities, where severe restrictions on student activism had been entrenched by the mid-1980s."[149] Hence, I argue that this new generation of ABIM leaders may have developed an inclination towards pro Malay politics and policies.

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[145] "Giving voice to Islam" *Sun2Surf,* February 17th 2006 http://www.sun2surf.com/articlePrint.cfm?id=13032 (Accessed January 15th 2011)

[146] Yusri Mohamad *Jatidiri Gerakan Mendepani Cabaran Zaman: Ucapan Dasar Presiden, Muktamar Sanawi ke-36 Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) & Seminar Islam dan Cabaran Semasa* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM 2007) pp. 8-9

[147] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid*, Islamist Realignments* p. 226

[148] Yusri Mohamad *Jatidiri Gerakan Mendepani Zaman* pp. 8-9

[149] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Islamist Realignments* p. 231

Under Yusri, ABIM's relationship with the government also changed over the years. It maintained its pragmatic approach in its views towards the government, and held constructive dialogues with Cabinet members such as the former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of Islamic Affairs, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Minister of Education Muhyiddin Yassin.[150] At the same time, Yusri also engaged with members of the opposition, meeting Abdul Hadi Awang, President of PAS, to pledge cooperation on youth programs.[151] Again, this shows a shift in relations and approach taken by Yusri and his colleagues as opposed to the previous ABIM leadership.

Yusri's ABIM has also declared war against forces attempting to subvert the primary role of Islam in Malaysia's polity through devious ideas such as liberal Islam, religious pluralism and unbridled human rights.[152] ABIM has demanded an explanation from the government on its policy of permitting the distribution of the Malay language Bible in Malaysia.[153] The concern of ABIM and several Islamic quarters in Malaysia was that it might arouse the interest and desire to convert to Christianity by Malay Muslims who might read it in their native language. In a different but related case, ABIM was vocal in its condemnation over the usage of the word Allah by non-Muslims in Malaysia. The controversy, which started in early 2010 emanated from the decision by the Malaysian High Court to allow *The Herald*, a Christian weekly newspaper, to use the world Allah in its publication. Yusri stated on the record that ABIM believed it was not right

[150] "Pemansuhan UPSR-PMR: Pernyataan Keprihatinan WADAH, ABIM & PKPIM" *Wadah Pencerdasan Umat Malaysia*,September 21st 2010, http://www.wadah.org.my/kenyataan-media/56-info-wadah.html (Accessed December 14th, 2010)

[151] "ABIM dan JIM temui pemimpin PAS", *Siasah Daily*, April 3rd 2008 http://siasahdaily.blogspot.com/2008/04/abim-dan-jim-temui-pemimpin-pas.html (Accessed March 1st 2011)

[152] Yusri Mohamad, *Kemurnian Risalah Paksi Kejayaan Misi Dakwah: Ucapan Dasar, Muktamar Sanawi ke-35 Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM)* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 2006) pp. 23-26

[153] "Pengedaran Bible Bahasa Melayu: ABIM Tuntut Penjelasan Lanjut" *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM),* http://www.abim.org.my/component/content/article/9-siaran-media/134-pengedaran-bible-bahasa-melayu-abim-tuntut-penjelasan-lanjut.html (Accessed on March 31st 2011)

for other religions to use the word Allah in describing their God.[154] This was then followed by a similar statement from Khairul Faiz Morat, ABIM's Vice President for International Relations during a television talk show program called Inside Story aired on Al Jazeera English.[155] In many ways, such positions are radically different from what the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt may have taken vis-à-vis Muslim-Christian relations. Oddly enough, while Yusri has advocated for ABIM members to reread the Brotherhood manuals, they took a different path when it came to specific issues dealing with the sanctity and special position of Islam in Malaysian society. While the Brotherhood has taken a highly progressive position vis-à-vis interfaith relations in Egypt, ABIM's stance on the same subject proved to be a hard and regressive one.

4.3: New "*Ikhwans*"?

When Anwar Ibrahim left ABIM to join UMNO and the government, many of its members left the organization, either in protest or apathy. A number of them decided to join PAS, as some went to form new organizations and movements. This created the possibility that aside from ABIM, new Brotherhood inspired and affiliated movements could emerge in Malaysia. Essentially, some of these movements were created to compete with ABIM not just to gain prominence and recognition from the Islamic quarters of Malaysia, but also taking up the true mantle as a representative of the Brotherhood in Malaysia. Some of these new *Ikhwans* also appear aggressive in wanting to surpass each other to display who has the most affection for Al-Banna and the Brotherhood. As mentioned, ABIM's influence and association with the Brotherhood went through different phases over the years, where it appeared to have slightly

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[154] "Malaysia-Whose God?" *101 East on Al Jazeera English*, January 14th 2010 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDac5GXjLMo (Accessed on January 31st 2011)
[155] Khairul Faizi's comments invited strong criticisms from non-Muslims who watched the program. See "Religious Violence in Malaysia" *Inside Story on Al Jazeera English* January 12th 2010 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cV89G-wrgDQ&feature=relmfu (Accessed on January 31st 2011)

waned during the time of the *reformasi*. As a consequence, ABIM had been criticized by most of these new organizations as "a reformist group without the qualities of a revolutionary movement."[156] A selective analysis of three of these different movements is carried out to see how they are similar and different to ABIM vis-à-vis adoption of Muslim Brotherhood styles and approaches.

A. Islamic Representative Council (IRC):

The Islamic Representative Council or the IRC was founded in 1975 by Malaysian students in Brighton, United Kingdom.[157] As it was founded only four years after ABIM, it could be said that the IRC wanted to compete with ABIM for influence amongst Malaysian students in the United Kingdom at the time. Similar to ABIM, IRC members also interacted with Middle Eastern and South Asian research students and lecturers who dominated Britain's Islamic societies at the time. Through their interactions, the idealistic Malay youngsters were immediately influenced by the Islamist doctrines of the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Jemaat-e-Islami* that were promoted by their colleagues. Hence, the style of exposure and influence of IRC members is the same compared to ABIM.

However, the IRC had very unconventional methods in *da'wa*. They rejected the moderate approach of ABIM and instead, "believed in establishing secret calls as the best means to spread its Islamic message."[158] According to Zainah Anwar, "the secret cell approach was attractive to fledgling minds who adopted a "black and white" approach" through which society was perceived in terms of an oversimplified hard-and-fast dichotomy between the Muslims and the

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[156] Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 30
[157] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia* p. 148
[158] Ibid. 148

infidel, the Islamist and the apostate.[159] Here, IRC's interpretation of Muslim Brotherhood methodologies is different compared to ABIM.

The IRC also envisioned itself as the de facto Malaysian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood[160] but was frustrated by the Brotherhood's apparent recognition of ABIM, where IRC had been in fierce rivalry with on the university campuses.[161] In order to compete, a majority of IRC members returned to Malaysia upon graduation from the United Kingdom and joined academia. As a result, they were able to enjoy support within university campuses, a long and traditional domain of ABIM. Despite its limited network compared to ABIM, the IRC also expanded its international credentials through links with other Islamic student organizations worldwide and the Muslim Brotherhood diasporas in the United States, Canada and Egypt.

In the 1980s, IRC members embarked on a radical strategy of penetrating into leadership positions of other Islamic movements in order to generate "change from within" that would subscribe to IRC's standards of operations. One of the organizations it attempted to infiltrate was PAS. However, after repeated failures to disseminate its clandestine and radical approach, their conspiracies were revealed.[162] As a consequence, the IRC's and its members were vilified; its influence lessened and it effectively vanished.

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[159] Zainah Anwar *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia* p. 27-30
[160] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia* p. 148
[161] K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery Cheek, "Malaysia's Islamic Movements," in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds.), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992), p. 100.
[162] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia* pp. 148-149

B. Society for Islamic Reform (*Jemaah Islah Malaysia*-JIM):

Even years after its dissolution, the former IRC members continued to suffer from a reputation associated with sinister and unsuccessful forays into the upper echelons of other organizations.[163] In an attempt to formalize and legalize their presence, they decided to officially register themselves as a movement. In 1990, the Society for Islamic Reform (*Jemaah Islah Malaysia*-JIM) was established.[164] Its first President was Saari Sungib, an engineering graduate of Aston University in the United Kingdom. Compared to ABIM, JIM was very transparent with regards to its Muslim Brotherhood affiliations. One of its mission statements was "adapting the Muslim Brother's ideas and perceptions of Islam to a Malaysian setting".[165]

Similar to ABIM, JIM frames itself as a "social and *da'wa*" organization and believes in a concerted effort of guiding society towards Islam, rejecting the monopoly of socio-religious power by any one group or faction."[166] In terms of methodologies, JIM has also faithfully adhered to the Muslim Brotherhood mode of operations where it also has *usrahs* where the thoughts and ideas of Muslim Brotherhood scholars were discussed, aside from works produced by its President Saari Sungib.

Leaderships of JIM have stressed the defense of the *shariah* (Islamic law) at all costs as their movements' top priority. Uniquely, they closely link those efforts with demands to protect the constitutional rights of Malays, who are alleged to have been marginalized in their own country

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[163] Ibid., p. 149
[164] Badlihisham Mohd. Nasir "Masa Depan Gerakan Dakwah di Malaysia" *Pemikir* Vol. 28 (October-December 2001), pp. 122-23
[165] Anne Sofie Roald *Tarbiya:Education and Politics in Islamic Movements in Jordan and Malaysia* (Lund: Lund Studies in History of Religions, 1994) p. 279
[166] Badlihisham Mohd Nasir, "Dakwah Gerakan Islam Tanahair: Sorotan Terhadap PAS, ABIM dan JIM," in *Dakwah Gerakan Islam Alaf Baru*, eds. Ahmad Redzuwan Mohd Yunus, Badlihisham Mohd Nasir and Berhanundin Abdullah, (Bangi: Jabatan Pengajian Dakwah dan Kepimpinan, Fakulti Pengajian Islam UKM, 2000), p. 17

despite their majority position.[167] This position parallels ABIM and has placed JIM at the forefront of issues affecting the Malay Muslim population in Malaysia. Today, JIM is viewed as a proactive Muslim NGO and has provided real competition for ABIM vis-à-vis championing Malay Muslim rights.

C. Malaysian Muslim Solidarity *(Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia-ISMA):*

The Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (*Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia*-ISMA) was first established in 1997 as Malaysian Muslim Students Solidarity (*Ikatan Siswazah Muslim Malaysia*). In terms of stated objectives, ISMA does not differ much compared to ABIM and JIM. Its ultimate goal and vision is making Islam the ultimate way of life in Malaysia[168] through the typical *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* methodologies adopted by ABIM.

While ISMA may appear to be just another Islamist movement inspired by the Brotherhood, it is radically different because it aggressively promotes its affiliation and loyalty to the Brotherhood in Egypt. In February 2010, ISMA organized a convention to discuss Hasan Al-Banna's thoughts called *Resolusi Konvensyen Pemikiran Hasan Al-Banna Dalam Melakar Agenda Bangsa*,[169] the first official convention on Hasan Al-Banna ever organized in Malaysia. During the Parliamentary elections in Egypt in November 2010, ISMA released statements about the Muslim Brotherhood's participation in the elections and how the whole electoral process was a

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[167] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid "The New Challenges of Political Islam in Malaysia" (paper presented at the Asia Research Centre Conference on 'New Modes of Governance and Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific', Murdoch University, Perth, 12–13 February 2009).

[168] "Profile" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/info-isma/profil/ (Accessed on March 30th 2011)

[169] "Resolusi Konvensyen Pemikiran Hasan Al-Banna Dalam Melakar Agenda Bangsa" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* February 2nd 2010, http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/resolusi-konvensyen-pemikiran-hasan-al-banna-dalam-melakar-agenda-bangsa/ (Accessed on March 20th 2011)

fraud, which led to the Brotherhood boycotting the second round of voting.[170] Fascinatingly, in a more transparent manner, ISMA's President, Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman even wrote to Dr. Muhammad Badi'e Abdul Majid Sami to congratulate him on his appointment as the eighth *Mursyid Al-Amm* (General Guide) of the Brotherhood.[171] It is believed that ISMA is overt in its admiration of the Egyptian Brotherhood due the fact that its members were mostly former religious studies students in Egypt, particularly at Al-Azhar University.[172]

With regards to the race of winning the coveted true Malaysian *Ikhwan* prize, I argue that ISMA has trumped its competitors in ABIM and JIM. However, whether or not it is able to emulate the success and recognition ABIM has achieved internationally remains to be seen.

D. Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS):

In the case of PAS, it is not exactly a new *Ikhwan* but based on most of its recent changes in actions, PAS has been seen as a revived and rejuvenated *Ikhwan*. PAS has benefited from a new global order, spurred by catalytic events such as 9/11 and the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, which were perceived as attacks on Islam. Islamists movements and political parties worldwide were highly critical of those actions and were drawn in unison as a consequence. This has made PAS's contemporary relations with Islamists worldwide more established and obvious, especially with the Brotherhood. In a show of support and solidarity, Abdul Hadi Awang, President of PAS wrote a letter to the Egyptian Ambassador in Malaysia in April 2008 regarding

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[170] "Ikhwan boikot Pilihanraya Mesir pusingan ke-2" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* December 10th 2010, http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/2010/12/ikhwan-boikot-pilihanraya-mesir-pusingan-ke-2/ (Accessed January 10th 2011)
[171] "Congratulatory message to Prof. Dr. Muhammad Badee" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* January 23rd 2010 http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/2010/01/congratulatory-message-to-prof-dr-muhammad-badee/ (Accessed on February 14th 2011)
[172] "Ikhwan Muslimin in Malaysia" *Rihlat Al Jannah*, May 8th 2010, http://abuhumaira.blogspot.com/2010/05/ikhwan-muslimin-in-malaysia.html

the unjust prison terms sentenced to a leading member of the Brotherhood in Egypt, Khairat Al-Shater.[173]

In terms of its political participation in Malaysia, PAS has clinched strong political endorsements from the Muslim Brotherhood. A few days prior to the 12th Malaysian General Elections in March 2008, Dr. Kamal al-Helbawy, the official spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe from 1995 to 1997 urged Malaysians to support PAS in the elections. [174] After making significant gains in the elections, PAS Secretary General, Kamarudin Jaffar and Central Committee Member Dr. Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi made a trip to London to meet with Muslim Brotherhood representatives. They were received by Syeikh Ibrahim Munir, the Head of the Brotherhood in London, who acknowledged that their success was significant as it signified the "return and rise of Islam" in the East.[175] A few months later, at its 54th General Assembly in August 2008, PAS hosted Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood representative Dr. Amman Said as its guest of honor.[176]

Perhaps the most significant political advice PAS ever sought from the Muslim Brotherhood was in July 2008. After the government coalition suffered significant losses, UMNO, being the dominant Malay political party approached PAS' leaders covertly and suggested the idea of

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[173] "Surat bantahan PAS kepada kerajaan Mesir" *Parti Islam SeMalaysia*, April 17th 2008, http://pas.org.my/v2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=565:surat-bantahan-pas-kepada-kerajaan-mesir&catid=20:kenyataan-rasmi&Itemid=99 (Accessed on January 15th 2011)

[174] "Interview with Dr Kamal Helbawy on Malaysian Election" *hemateropah Youtube Channel* March 5th 2008 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZ9YZvN4tlE&feature=player_embedded#at=38 (Accessed on January 15th 2011)

[175] "Ikhwan UK ucap tahniah kepada pemimpin PAS" *PAS.org.my*, May 20th 2008, http://www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=925&Itemid=2 (Accessed on January 15th 2011)

[176] Aniz Nazri "Dr. Amman Said suntik semangat kepada perwakilan ulama," *Muktamar Tahunan PAS ke-54*, August 14th 2008, http://muktamar54.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=1 (Accessed on January 15th 2011)

forming a unity or joint government for the states of Perak and Selangor which had been won by the opposition. The problematic issue was that the Chinese-based opposition party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) had made the most gains, leaving PAS and UMNO as the minorities in these Malay majority states. The idea of the unity government is to ensure that political power remains concentrated in Malay Muslim hands in both states. Without discussing the UMNO proposal with his party members and his partners in the opposition coalition, Abdul Hadi Awang left for London to seek advice from the Muslim Brotherhood leaders on the right course of action for PAS.[177] The advice he received was never divulged, but the unity government never materialized and the opposition coalition ruled both states, albeit installing Malay opposition members as Chief Ministers.

All these instances attest to the strong bonds currently witnessed between PAS and the Muslim Brotherhood, an element that is evidently missing from ABIM today. Compared to ISMA, PAS' relationship with the Brotherhood is much more tangible, as ISMA's admiration of the Muslim Brotherhood was markedly less in physical contact. It is also safe to assume that PAS has currently overcome ABIM as the "*Ikhwan* representative" in Malaysia, even though it may not wish to acknowledge the existence of any formal relationship and arrangement.

4.4 The 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the *Ikhwans'* Response:

The 2011 Egyptian revolution was significant for Malaysians for two reasons. The first is the fact that Muslims in Malaysia held Egypt in high regard as the sanctuary for religious knowledge and

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[177] Joceline Tan "Hadi and Nik Aziz at odds over whether to leave Pakatan" *The Star*, July 16th 2008, http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/legal/general_news/hadi_and_nik_aziz_at_odds_over_whether_to_leave_pakatan. html (Accessed March 12th 2011)

learning. Thousands of Malaysian students flock to Egypt every year to enroll in various Egyptian universities where the majority of them would attend Al-Azhar University. Secondly, Malaysians were interested to see the role of Islam within the revolution, as they were highly aware that the Muslim Brotherhood is a dominant force in the Egyptian opposition. Hence, they were interested to see if "Islam" would triumph over the dictatorship and authoritarianism of President Hosni Mubarak.

At the official level, the response from the Malaysian government was mild. Prime Minister Najib Razak only mentioned that it was the right of the Egyptian people to determine their future and appoint their leaders.[178] The government's focus was mostly on bringing home more than 11,000 Malaysian students studying in the country. On the contrary, the response from PAS was remarkable. They organized and led demonstrations in front of the Egyptian and American Embassy[179] in February 2011 in solidarity with Egyptians and supported their revolution. The message PAS delivered was for the Mubarak regime to stop using violence and from imprisoning Egyptians that were seeking change through peaceful means.[180]

The other smaller *Ikhwans* have also responded to the Egyptian revolutions. JIM participated in the protests led by PAS, which had also gathered other non-government organizations (NGOs)

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[178] Farish A. Noor "Anti-Mubarak protests in Malaysia: How Arab issues travel" *East Asia Forum,* February 14th 2011, http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/02/14/anti-mubarak-protests-in-malaysia-how-arab-issues-travel/ (Accessed on February 20th 2011)

[179] The American Embassy was viewed as a strong ally of President Mubarak

[180] Nasrudin Hasan Tantawi "Himpunan Solidariti Ummah Jumaat Ini" *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* February 1st 2011 http://pas.org.my/v2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3367:himpunan-solidariti-ummah-jumaat-ini&catid=1:terkini&Itemid=2. (Accessed on February 20th 2011)

and opposition political parties in Malaysia.[181] Compared to the other Islamists, ISMA's website had given extensive coverage of the Egyptian revolution, even outdoing PAS in reporting. The focus of its coverage was on the role of the Muslim Brotherhood during the revolution, with information on the ground provided by its members in Cairo, who were students at Al-Azhar University. After the fall of the Mubarak government, ISMA also published the official statement from the Muslim Brotherhood, which it translated into Malay.[182] This significant detail was absent from the website and organs of ABIM, PAS and JIM. Without halting its reporting by the time the revolution concluded, its latest news items also revolves around the Freedom and Justice Party which has been established by the Brotherhood to participate in the next Egyptian general elections.[183]

As for ABIM, not much was reported regarding its involvement in the revolution. The only relevant news on ABIM and the revolution came when Yusri Mohamed, now its former President, made a statement in defense of Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Egypt's Grand Mufti. Sheikh Ali Gomaa was condemned by a prominent yet controversial Malaysian cleric, Dr. Asri Zainul Abidin who criticized him for the fatwa he issued asking the protestors to leave Tahrir Square and go home. Asri perceived this as Ali Gomaa's endorsement of President Mubarak and his regime, and also accused Ali Gomaa of only issuing *fatwas* on matters involving *furu'*

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[181] A Ralim M Yassen "Pimpinan JIM sertai perhimpunan serah memo" *Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia*, http://www.jim.org.my/v1/index.php/artikel/terkini/461-pimpinan-jim-sertai-perhimpunan-serah-memo (Accessed on February 20th 2011)

[182] "Kenyataan Ikhwan Muslimin Sempena Kejatuhan Regim Mubarak" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* February 12th 2011, http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/2011/02/kenyataan-ikhwan-muslimin-sempena-kejatuhan-regim-mubarak/ (Accessed March 12th 2011)

[183] "Ikhwan Mesir tubuh 'Parti Kebebasan & Keadilan'" *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA)* February 22nd 2011, http://www.ismaweb.net/v4/2011/02/ikhwan-mesir-tubuh-%E2%80%9Cparti-kebebasan-keadilan%E2%80%9D/ (Accessed March 25th 2011)

(ramifications) in *fiqh* (jurisprudence)[184]. Asri was strongly condemned by Yusri, who had high admiration for Gomaa.

4.5 Who is the Real "*Ikhwan*" in Malaysia?

The third generation of ABIM leaders have clearly taken ABIM on a different path and reinvigorated the movement. Their reputation suffered a serious beating due to their overt political involvement in the *reformasi* movement, ABIM under Yusri Mohamad went through self-engineered realignments, and has reestablished itself at the forefront of causes which propose a strong defense of Malay rights, albeit by injecting a significant dose of Islamic flavor.[185] This readjustment may have forced ABIM to forfeit some details from the *Ikhwan* manuals its leaders in the 1970s and 1980s have faithfully adhered to, making ABIM today more independent from its traditional Brotherhood posture.

The flourishing of new Brotherhood type movements or the Malaysian *Ikhwan* is obviously challenging for ABIM. It no longer enjoys the monopoly status as the sole Islamist social movement and faces competing threats by new organizations. With the proactive efforts and aggressiveness demonstrated by some such as ISMA, combined with PAS' rejuvenated ties with the Brotherhood worldwide, ABIM faces the danger of being placed at the bottom of the heap. However, based on worldwide recognition, affiliation and success, it is still relevant to say that ABIM remains acknowledged as the premier Malaysian movement most closely affiliated with the Brotherhood.

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[184] "Jawaban Terhadap Kritikan Dr Asri Terhadap Mufti Mesir" *Pena Yusri*, February 22nd 2011 http://pena-yusri.blogspot.com/2011/02/jawaban-terhadap-kritikan-dr-asri.html (Accessed March 12th 2011)
[185] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Islamist Realignments* p. 232

It is difficult to establish who the real *Ikhwan* in Malaysia is. Prominent figures argued that a critical analysis needs to be carried out. For example, according to ISMA's President Abdullah Zaik, among the factors that should be looked at are the types of *tarbiyya* adopted, the movement's *manhaj* (methods) and how comprehensive the movement applies Al-Banna's *Risalah Al-Taalim*.[186] However, the emergence of these groups in Malaysia is significant by itself. While there have been observations that there has been a lack of cooperation and coordination between these movements and also non-neutrality, they have successfully collaborated in responding to issues that affect the sacred position of Islam in the Malaysian constitution. Both ABIM and JIM met with PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang in April 2008 and had pledged cooperation in youth programs,[187] despite the different stances they both have in relation to the government's Islamic policies. Regardless of whether they are competing or not, they have ensured the spiritual survivability and continuity of Al-Banna and the Brotherhood in Malaysia.

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[186] "Siapa Ikhwan di Malaysia?" *Perjalananku: Blog Ustaz Abdullah Zaik*, June 2nd 2009 http://ustabdullahzaik.wordpress.com/2009/06/02/siapa-ikhwan-di-malaysia/ (Accessed March 12th 2011)
[187] "ABIM dan JIM temui pemimpin PAS" *Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS)*, 3 April 2008 http://pas.org.my/v2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=408:abim-dan-jim-temui-pemimpin-pas&catid=1:terkini&Itemid=2 (Accessed March 12th 2011)

CONCLUSION

ABIM's role as a *Tajdid* (renewal) and *Islah* (reform) movement in Malaysia has gone through phases and significant changes since its founding in the 1970s. Initially labeled as confrontational toward the government, ABIM has since made considerable contributions to the success of the Islamization of Malaysia, earning the tag "partner in nation building" by the 1990s[188]. That ABIM did not frame itself through the classical and traditional *ulama* outlook strongly appealed to urban middle class Malay professionals who would have normally shunned Islamic activism. These middle class Malays who were rooted in reformist religious beliefs and values formed the core of ABIM's scholars and intellectuals, and today contribute to nation building within an inimitable Islamic framework. Due to its many successes, Nagata has called ABIM the "most credible Islamist NGO in the country."[189]

While being indebted to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood for providing the necessary framework and tools with which to operate, ABIM has enjoyed better fortunes than the Brotherhood and has exceeded expectations in achieving its objectives in Malaysia. One reason for this is that ABIM developed unique assets, the most powerful being Anwar Ibrahim's leadership and charisma. Anwar's striking personality, combined with his intellectual prowess and ability to formulate sophisticated arguments, drew many fascinated young Malays to ABIM. While Anwar's entry into the government in 1982 may have slightly disoriented ABIM, in no way did the movement collapse. Rather, a smart partnership between ABIM and the regime emerged via Anwar,

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[188] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia*, p. 145
[189] Judith Nagata "The New Fundamentalism: Islam in Contemporary Malaysia" *Asian Thought and Society* Vol. 5, no. 14, (1980), p. 136

providing the movement the opportunity to implement its ideas. This collaborative component was absent from the Muslim Brotherhood manual, yet ABIM carried out plans without seeking divine guidance from Cairo.

ABIM in the post *reformasi* years is perhaps another story. As some of its leaders and members have acknowledged, *reformasi* has fundamentally weakened and distracted ABIM from its main objectives. The fact that the movement's constitution specifically disallows participation in political activities compounds this problem;[190] as such, many of its politically inclined members have left to join established political parties. And, with Anwar no longer in the government, ABIM's ability to effect and generate tangible policy changes in Malaysia has been impeded— particularly because the Malaysian public post *reformasi* decided that real change can only happen via the ballot box.

ABIM's *da'wa* and *tarbiyya* methodologies will be put to the test in a Malaysia that has racially and religiously evolved. The days of massive street demonstrations and youth activists imprisoned for championing rural peasants are now distant memories. Malaysia is witnessing the rise of a new Malay-Muslim middle class that is shaping the country's "new politics" with its struggles for such issues as participatory democracy, justice and human rights.[191] This new generation of Malaysian youth is less inclined to join ABIM, in part because religion plays a decreased role in their more liberal lives. As a result, the dynamics of Islam and politics in Malaysia are changing drastically. Furthermore, ABIM is facing stiffer competition from other

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[190] For further information, see *Perlembagaan ABIM* (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, n.d)
[191] Johan Saravanamuttu, "Is there a Politics of the Malaysian Middle Class?" in *Southeast Asian Middle Classes: Prospects for Social Change and Democratization*, ed. Abdul Rahman Embong, (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2001) p. 113

"Malaysian *Ikhwans*" who not only seek to captivate Malay Muslim audiences but are also desperate for recognition from their elder *Ikhwans* in Cairo and the diaspora. ABIM should not view this as a challenge but instead an opportunity for Islamist cooperation. It could opt to work together with these *Ikhwans* if it wants to ensure that Islam's special position and status is preserved in the Malaysian constitution. ABIM, together with the other *Ikhwans,* could formulate a *Manhaj Malazi*[192] (Malaysian methodology/approach) that is distinct from what Al-Banna, Al-Hudaybi and Qutb in Cairo devised in the mid twentieth century—an approach more relevant for Malaysian audiences. If this partnership takes shape, it will prove the theory that it is the Islamists in Malaysia who can serve as true agents of change, with a firm base (both historical and contemporary) in their overseas counterpart,[193] the Muslim Brotherhood.

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[192] For more information, see Yusri Mohamad, *Jatidiri Gerakan Mendepani Cabaran Zaman: Ucapan Dasar Presiden, Muktamar Sanawi Ke-36 Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) & Seminar Islam dan Cabaran Semasa* (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 2007), p. 27
[193] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Transnational Islam in Malaysia*, p. 165

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