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Perak and Islamic Education: PAS' Gateway to the West Coast

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Considered a gateway to Selangor, the jewel of Malaysia, Perak is PAS' new target and is a key state in facilitating the spread of their influence to the west coast. Facebook Page of PAS Perak at <https://www.facebook.com/pasperak>. Accessed 3 May 2023.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) baffled many when it claimed the highest number of parliamentary seats after the 15th General Election (GE) in November 2022. The numbers indicate that their influence is no longer restricted to the east coast, but that they are gradually making inroads into the west coast, as evident from the gains they made in Perak.
- While various factors may have contributed to the party's success, one factor which observers may have neglected is their investment in Islamic education. It is however arguable that Islamic schools, whether formal or informal, are a platform for the party to rally Malay/Muslim support.
- Focusing on Perak, this paper examines the role PAS has played in the politicisation of Islamic education. Through conversations with teachers, administrators and practitioners in the education sector, it was found that there are various issues which facilitate the spread of PAS' ideological teachings in schools. These include the lack of regulation in certain types of schools, students' indirect exposure to political issues, and loopholes concerning the license to preach in mosques.
- Seeing that their ideological teachings and conservative ideas are potentially extremist and detrimental to Malaysia's multi-racial and multi-religious setting, the paper proposes interventions to address the issue. These include the standardisation of hiring practices and syllabi in certain schools, and the need to revisit the idea of Sekolah Wawasan (Vision School) to encourage interaction across all educational streams, so as to limit inter-racial and inter-religious segregation and prejudice.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) has been gaining popularity in recent months, and this was especially evident in the electoral gains that the party made during the 15th General Election (GE) in November 2022. The elections saw Parti Keadilan Rakyat's (PKR) Nurul Izzah Anwar lose her Permatang Pauh seat to PAS' Muhammad Fawwaz. In January 2023, Fawwaz courted controversy in criticizing the open sale of alcohol in the state, with critics saying that he politicized religion and overstepped his role as Member of Parliament (MP).¹ His approach to such matters, and his victory in Permatang Pauh raises questions about the inroads that PAS might be making into Penang and further down the west coast.

In view of this, there have been discussions that the party's rise can be attributed to the spread of ideological teachings in Islamic schools, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of peninsular Malaysia.² Given this context, it is crucial to pay attention to the role that political parties play in relation to Islamic education. For example, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, a Malaysian scholar who has done extensive research on Islamic education in the country, states that the Sekolah Agama Rakyat (Community Religious School, SAR) "were believed to have come under the influence" of PAS through relations between members of the party and headmasters of the schools. These schools have played a "salient role" in ensuring support for PAS in the Malay heartland states of Terengganu, Kelantan and Kedah.³ In fact, PAS themselves once proclaimed that their involvement in establishing Islamic schools has contributed to their position as the strongest opposition party in Malaysia.⁴

This paper will therefore look at the role of PAS in the politicisation of Islamic education. While it cannot be denied that PAS has a strong grip on the east coast states of peninsular Malaysia, it is arguable that their influence is no longer restricted to those states, and that it has spread to Perak. Considered a gateway to Selangor, the jewel of Malaysia, Perak is PAS' new target and is a key state in facilitating the spread of their influence to the west coast.⁵

In order to understand the issues surrounding Islamic education and its politicisation, we conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, and practitioners from various types of Islamic schools in Perak, excluding the Sekolah Agama Kerajaan (Federal Religious Schools, SAK) and private international schools. It is noteworthy that the issue of PAS' involvement in Islamic education and the perceived indoctrination for the purpose of political survival kept resurfacing during the interviews. Furthermore, our discussions found that the concern about politicisation and PAS' increasing popularity was raised specifically in relation to the spread of extremist ideas which could be detrimental to Malaysia's multi-racial and multi-religious society.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERAK

There are two key reasons for Perak's significance. Firstly, as mentioned above, it was a key battlefield in GE15. PAS fielded Idris Ahmad, ideologue and former Minister for Religious Affairs, in Bagan Serai constituency. Alongside Deputy President Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man,

Idris is frequently touted as one of the men to replace the current party leadership. On the other side of the competition, Pakatan Harapan (PH) sought to secure the state by fielding Anwar Ibrahim—their prime ministerial candidate—in Tambun constituency. The presence of two strong candidates in Perak proved to be intense, with others stepping in to sow division. This was illustrated by the controversy surrounding Haji Razman Zakaria—Perak’s Leader of the Opposition for Perikatan Nasional (PN) and a member of the Perak State Legislative Assembly for the constituency of Gunong Semanggol—who publicly defamed Anwar and later apologized in the High Court.⁶

The rise of PAS in Perak should be studied within the context of the general rise of conservatism in Malaysia. This is important given that conservatism in the form of Salafi ideas has penetrated into Malaysian Islamic education. As Ahmad Fauzi noted in 2016, returning Islamic Studies graduates from countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Kingdom, and even from local universities, have modified the curricula in schools which offer both formal and informal education. These modifications were made to include Salafi texts and teachings. Thus, since the mid-1990s, “the national religious education system has been more likely to produce ulama who subscribe to Wahhabi-Salafi theological concepts”.⁷ This is of concern, as Salafi teachings tend to propagate conservative ideas on theological issues. In the Malaysian context, the spread of conservative theological ideas is alarming, as they could threaten inter-racial and inter-religious relations. Furthermore, if not effectively kept at bay, such ideas could develop into extremist ideas, whether physically violent or non-physically violent. It is therefore imperative to curb the spread of conservative ideas in Islamic schools, as it is what is being taught in schools that shape young Malay/Muslim minds. Several of our interviewees expressed this sentiment during our conversations with them.

This is linked to the second reason for Perak’s significance, which is that of the various types of Islamic schools found in Malaysia, Perak is one of the states in which most of these schools exist. Furthermore, all these schools exist in the Bagan Serai constituency.

PAS AND THE LANDSCAPE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

The landscape of Islamic education in Malaysia is complex and layered. There are five types of Islamic schools at the primary and secondary levels. First are the SAK and Sekolah Kebangsaan Agama (National Religious Schools, SKA) which are fully funded by the government through the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Second are the Sekolah Agama Negeri (State Government Religious Schools, SAN) which are run by an individual state’s Majlis Agama Islam (Islamic Religious Council). The latest statistics from Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (Perak Islamic Religious Department, JAIPK) indicate that as of 2022, there are seven SAN secondary schools registered in the state, an increase from three in 2018.⁸ Additionally, there are afternoon schools dedicated to Kelas Al-Qur’an dan Fardhu Ain (Qur’an and Fardhu Ain Classes, KAFA) and Kelas Al-Qur’an dan Fardhu Ain Integriti (Qur’an and Fardhu Ain Integration Class, KAFAI) which are also highly regulated by the state religious administrations. These classes are part of a programme to strengthen Islamic education and knowledge by emphasizing on reading skills of the Qur’an

and awareness of the obligatory acts which Muslims must perform. As of 2022, there are 663 KAFAs schools in the state, a drop from 676 in 2018.⁹

Third are the SAR and Sekolah Agama Swasta (Private Religious Schools, SAS).¹⁰ These are “independently managed but accept the use of the national curriculum so that their graduates can further their studies in formal institutions of higher learning”.¹¹ For example, there are such schools established by PAS, although loosely monitored by MOE. These include the pre-school level Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PAS Islamic Preschool, PASTI), Sekolah Rendah Integrasi Teras Islam (Tertiary Integration Islamic Primary School, SRITI), Sekolah Menengah Integrasi Teras Islam (Tertiary Integration Islamic Secondary School, SMITI), and Sekolah Rendah Islam Bahrul Ulum (Bahrul Ulum Islamic Primary School, SRIBU). However, while these are private schools, they also receive partial funding from their state government. For example, the PH-led Penang state government has allocated a large amount of funds for these schools on an annual basis, despite them being run by PAS.¹² Statistics indicate that as of 2022, there are 39 SAR primary schools and 17 SAR secondary schools in Perak, an increase from 21 and 15 schools respectively in 2018.¹³

On the other hand, there are also community and private religious schools established by Islamic non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who actively use educational institutions to promote and spread their ideologies. For instance, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, ABIM) is often regarded as the pioneer of modern Islamic education in Malaysia. They have established schools at each level of education, from pre-school to tertiary. These schools, which are all open to the public, include Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak (TASKI) for pre-schoolers, Sekolah Rendah Islam (Islamic Primary School, SRI), Sekolah Menengah Islam (Islamic Secondary School, SMI), Institut Pengajian Ilmu-Ilmu Islam (Institute for Studies in Islamic Sciences, IPII), and Institut Perguruan ABIM (ABIM Teachers’ Institute, IPA).¹⁴ Another well-known Islamic NGO, Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM), runs its own private schools. These are Sekolah Rendah Islam (SRI) and Sekolah Menengah Islam (SMI) Al-Amin.¹⁵

The fourth type of school is the traditional or informal type, specifically the *pondok* and *tahfiz* schools which are monitored by state religious authorities. These are informal in the sense that they formulate their own curriculum and do not follow any formal standard. According to Ahmad Fauzi and Amran Muhammad, these *tahfiz* schools are also plagued by “Salafi-centric ‘direct scriptural reading’ methodology”, alongside a “puritanical and literalist understanding of Islam”.¹⁶ Outside of schools, informal religious education also occurs in mosques. In contrast to the other types of schools listed above, it is the *tahfiz* schools which have increased the most in number. While there were 66 private *tahfiz* schools in 2018, statistics from 2022 show that there are now 91 schools. There was also a slight increase in *pondok* schools, from 16 to 21.¹⁷

Finally, the fifth type of school is the increasingly mushrooming private international schools which offer an Islamic studies curriculum. While these schools have their own sources of funding, they are regulated by the federal government.

Since their annual assembly in 1953, PAS has actively demanded that the federal government pay more attention to religious education. In that year itself, they demanded that the

government provide students of Islamic Studies with scholarships so that they could further their studies. Later, in their manifesto for the 1955 GE, they focused on five demands from the government: (1) free lessons for all children; (2) compulsory religious classes for all Muslim children; (3) classes for adults on carpentry and the economy; (4) empowering Malay schools as mainstream schools; and (5) placing emphasis on moral education in the school syllabus.¹⁸

Following that, the launch of PASTI schools in 1984 garnered much attention, which was then followed by the establishment of various Islamic schools in the states of Kedah,¹⁹ Kelantan,²⁰ Terengganu²¹ and Pahang.²² To further understand the effectiveness of PAS' education planning it is worth noting that there are three departments within the party which are responsible for the education sector. These are Jabatan PASTI Malaysia (Malaysian PASTI Department) which was formed in 1984, Jabatan SRITI Malaysia (Malaysian SRITI Department) which was formed in 2015, and Jabatan SMITI Malaysia (Malaysian SMITI Department) which was formed in 2018.²³ All three departments have to report to 11 individuals in the Majlis Perunding Dasar Sektor Pendidikan (Policy Council for Education Sector, MPDSP) within the party.

In 2019, PAS' education team presented a new set of strategic plans which addressed the scope, direction, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which they termed "Must Wins".²⁴ In charting a new direction for their schools, they stated that they aimed for the education sector to shape "righteous and intelligent" students, to encourage Malaysian students to choose Islamic education as their first choice, and to spread the message of Islam (*dakwah*) to the students' parents. As part of the new roadmap, they introduced specific plans for their PASTI, SRITI, and SMITI schools, such as teaching Mandarin and Tamil in the PASTI schools, and teaching Special Subjects (Islamic Thinking, Movements, and Politics) in the SMITI schools.

MAJOR FINDINGS: POOR REGULATIONS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCE

Based on our interviews, it was found that there are at least three issues which affect the spread of conservative and possibly extremist ideas in spaces for Islamic education in Perak. The first issue we observed concerns the lack of regulation in some schools, such as *tahfiz* schools. While these are monitored by state religious authorities and require a license to operate, there is a lack of proper regulation in these schools. For example, the schools are free to hire teachers as they wish. These teachers may not meet certain requirements, and at times, come from outside of Malaysia. Furthermore, the schools set their own syllabi, thus creating room for teachers to speak about topics which border on political propaganda and extremist ideas. Consequently, the statements that they make may be detrimental to inter-racial and inter-religious relations. This point was mentioned by two of our interviewees, one of them being a top administrator at the Perak Education Department, and the other a teacher and member of Parti Amanah Negara (Amanah) in Perak.²⁵ For example, it was mentioned that when teaching the Prophet's history (*sirah*) in class, some teachers make open-ended statements implying that non-Muslims in Malaysia are *kafir*—a derogatory reference to them.

However, the spread of such ideas cannot be easily curbed. Given that *tahfiz* schools only require a license, a building, and personal sources of funding to operate, it is fairly easy for them to be established. Furthermore, there is a thin line distinguishing the jurisdiction under which Islamic education comes. While education falls under federal jurisdiction, Islamic affairs fall under state jurisdiction.²⁶ It is thus debatable whether Islamic education could or should come under federal jurisdiction and be subject to greater monitoring and regulation. The issue of the lack of regulation also applies to the PASTI schools, whose teachers and administrative staff are PAS members.

The second issue that was observed relates to the indirect manner in which students are exposed to political or electoral issues. For example, it was recounted to us that in an Islamic school which receives assistance from the government, a teacher distributed calendars to her students. These calendars had a picture of Haji Razman Zakaria on them. Another example recounted to us was that students have been involved in extra-curricular activities such as performing in *nasheed* (performance of devotional songs) bands at events organised by PAS. These are therefore ways in which students are exposed to political propaganda or through which they may be conditioned to support a particular party.

The third issue concerns the influence from other states on religious discourse and affairs. For example, some interviewees shared that preachers and politicians from Kedah are invited to the mosques, which are sites of informal education. While the politicians legally do not have the *tauliah* (license) to preach in these mosques, the preachers, who are often party activists, do have the license to preach. While they are not permitted to touch on political issues during their sermons, there are still opportunities for them, together with the politicians, to talk about politics during *moreh* (mingling over food) sessions. This issue was raised by two of our interviewees involved in formal and informal religious education, one of whom is a village official in a mosque.²⁷ It was further shared with us that those who are invited from Kedah often spread political propaganda in favour of PN.

This issue is not helped by the fact that there is little control over who gets invited. This largely has to do with the *Pengerusi Qaryah* (a leader who is elected to oversee a few villages) who are responsible for maintaining order and serving as the middle man between state Islamic authorities and the Muslim community. They are also responsible for inviting preachers to speak in the mosque.²⁸ While the mosque imams are considered civil servants who are chosen and paid for by the state religious councils, the *Pengerusi Qaryah* are elected by the congregants. Often times, PAS and United Malays National Organization (UMNO) activists compete for the influential position. As a result of their different backgrounds and affiliations, it was shared with us that it is not unusual for there to be disagreements between the *Pengerusi Qaryah* and the imam about who should be invited to speak.²⁹

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

Based on these issues, our discussions with the interviewees brought to light some possible interventions for dealing with the spread of political Islam and potentially extremist ideas in Islamic schools. The first intervention concerns regulation and standardisation. The Perak state

government and religious council should only permit local preachers to teach in mosques, and to ban preachers from outside of the state. The federal government should also standardise the hiring practices and syllabus in *tahfiz* schools across the country, to ensure that extremist ideas are not taught in class. This is an issue which should be incorporated into the current government's recent launch of the National Tahfiz Education Policy.³⁰

Furthermore, in line with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's call for schools to combat extremism in the classroom, it is recommended that the government include the topic of religious extremism in school syllabi to ensure that students understand what extremism is, and the threat that it poses. This can be implemented alongside Minister of Education Fadhlina Sidek's announcement in December 2022 that her ministry is serious about tackling racism and extremism in schools.³¹

Another recommendation, suggested by one of our interviewees, is for MOE to consider former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's idea of setting up Sekolah Wawasan (Vision Schools).³² Introduced in the early 2000s, his aim was for the school to integrate the national and Chinese and Indian vernacular streams and have the students attend one school together.³³ The current government could rebrand this vision (Sekolah Madani, perhaps) and bring together the national and vernacular schools, as well as the Islamic schools. This would encourage interaction across all streams and prevent inter-racial and inter-religious segregation and prejudice.

Finally, the government should address the issue of non-partisanship in its civil service; some of our interviewees shared that civil servants from MOE are not neutral and often align themselves with certain political parties. If this is not addressed, it could lead to the obstruction of reform and the implementation of new policies.

Despite the concerns raised above, all is not lost. Matters concerning Islam are a state matter and come under the purview of the Malay Rulers within the state. In fact, the Perak ruler, Sultan Nazrin Shah, has spoken about the dangers of extremism and racism on multiple occasions.³⁴ Other rulers, including Tunku Ismail, the Crown Prince of Johor, and Tuanku Muhriz, the ruler of Negeri Sembilan, have also warned against such dangers to society.³⁵ This is in contrast to states such as Penang, where the lack of a Malay Ruler may make it harder to intervene on issues concerning Islam. The Malay Ruler thus plays an important role in protecting not only Islamic affairs, but also inter-religious affairs in their individual states. In the case of Perak, it is crucial that the ruler continues to speak against the spread of extremist ideas, to protect the state from the politicisation of Islam, and to intervene in managing issues relating to Islamic education.

List of Abbreviations for Schools

PASTI: Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PAS Islamic Preschools)
SAR: Sekolah Agama Rakyat (Community Religious Schools)
SAK: Sekolah Agama Kerajaan (Federal Religious Schools)
SAS: Sekolah Agama Swasta (Private Religious Schools)
SKA: Sekolah Kebangsaan Agama (National Religious Schools)
SMITI: Sekolah Menengah Integrasi Teras Islam (Tertiary Integration Islamic Secondary Schools)
SRITI: Sekolah Rendah Integrasi Teras Islam (Tertiary Integration Islamic Primary Schools)
SRIBU: Sekolah Rendah Islam Bahrul Ulum (Bahrul Ulum Islamic Primary Schools)

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Audrey Dermawan. 2023. "Permatang Pauh MP Gets Mixed Reactions over Alcohol Sale Objection". *New Straits Times*, 10 January 2023.
<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/01/869001/permatang-pauh-mp-gets-mixed-reactions-over-alcohol-sale-objection> (accessed 15 March 2023).
- ² Mohsin Abdullah. 2022. "Sekolah Pondok dengan 'Gelombang Hijau'" [Pondok Schools and the 'Green Wave']. *Free Malaysia Today*, 9 December 2022.
<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/opinion/2022/12/09/sekolah-pondok-dengan-gelombang-hijau/> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- ³ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. 2017. "Islamic Education in Malaysia". In *Handbook of Islamic Education*, edited by Holger Daun and Reza Arjmand (Cham: Springer, 2018), pp. 745–761.
- ⁴ Harakah Daily. "PAS dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Negara Ini" [PAS and the Development of Islamic Education in this State]. 23 September 2017.
<https://harakahdaily.net/index.php/2017/09/23/pas-dan-perkembangan-pendidikan-islam-di-negara-ini/> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- ⁵ Razman Zakaria. 2022. "PAS Perak Akan Pastikan Kerusi Dominan Melayu Dimenangi PN" [PAS Perak Will Ensure PN Wins Malay-Dominated Seats]. *Harakah Daily*, 17 November 2022.
<https://harakahdaily.net/index.php/2022/11/17/pas-perak-akan-pastikan-kerusi-dominan-melayu-dimenangi-pn> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- ⁶ See John Bunyan. 2023. "Perak PAS Chief Razman Says Sorry in Court for Claiming PM Anwar Backs LGBT, Communists". *Malay Mail*, 9 February 2023.
<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/02/09/perak-pas-chief-razman-says-sorry-in-court-for-claiming-pm-anwar-backs-lgbt-communists/54127> (accessed 15 March 2023).
- ⁷ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *The Extensive Salafization of Malaysian Islam*, Trends in Southeast Asia, no. 9/2016 (Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016), p. 17.
- ⁸ Kerajaan Negeri Perak. "Statistik Institusi Berdaftar Di Bawah Bahagian Pendidikan Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (JAIPK)" [Statistics on Institutions Registered under Education Division of Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIPK)]. *Portal Data Terbuka Malaysia*, 16 March 2023.
https://www.data.gov.my/data/ms_MY/dataset/statistik-institusi-berdaftar-di-bawah-bahagian-pendidikan-jabatan-agama-islam-perak-jaipk. The data provides statistics on the numbers of various types of schools registered under the education division from 2018 to 2022, as well as the number of teachers and students. There are no numbers for 2021, and this is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁹ Kerajaan Negeri Perak. “Statistik Institusi Berdaftar Di Bawah Bahagian Pendidikan Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (JAIPK)”.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the SAR has been politicized in the past. For further reading, see Bernama. 1999. “PAS Anggap Sekolah Agama Rakyat di Kelantan yang Terbaik” [PAS Considers Community Religious Schools in Kelantan to be the Best]. 5 July 1999 and Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Amran Muhammad, “From Community to the State to Individual Preachers: The Vicissitudes of Traditional Islamic Studies in Malaysia”, in *Challenging Expectations through Global Critical Insights*, edited by Khalid Arar, Rania Sawalhi, Amaarah DeCuir and Tasneem Amatullah (London; New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 247-264.

¹¹ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 2017. “Islamic Education in Malaysia”, in *Handbook of Islamic Education*, edited by Holger Daun and Reza Arjmand (Cham: Springer, 2018), pp. 745–761.

¹² Zainulfaqar Yaacob. 2015. “Sumbangan Tahunan SAR Kekal RM1.75 Juta. Peruntukan Hal Ehwal Islam 2015 Ditingkatkan kepada RM58 Juta” [SAR’s Annual Contribution Maintained at RM1.75 Million. Allocation for Islamic Affairs in 2015 Increased to RM58 Million]. *Buletin Mutiara*, 16 October 2016. <https://www.buletinmutiara.com/sumbangan-tahunan-sar-kekal-rm1-75-juta-peruntukan-hal-ehwal-agama-islam-2015-ditingkatkan-kepada-rm58-juta/> (accessed 11 March 2023).

¹³ Kerajaan Negeri Perak. “Statistik Institusi Berdaftar Di Bawah Bahagian Pendidikan Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (JAIPK)”.

¹⁴ It has been said that ABIM’s approach to religious education is based on the Muslim Brotherhood’s approach. For further reading, see Nor Adina Abdul Kadir, Mohd Farhan Abd Rahman, Hamidah Jalani, Muhd Imran Abd Razak, Ahmad Firdaus Mohd Noor, and Nurul Kamalia Yusuf. 2021. “The Contribution of Reformist Movement to the Development of Islamic Education in Malaya after Independence”. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11, no. 5: pp. 346–55.

¹⁵ Altaf Deviyati. “The Potential of Independent Religious Schools: A Case Study of Al-Amin”. *Brief IDEAS* no. 4 (2016): 1–11.

¹⁶ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Amran Muhammad, “From Community to the State to Individual Preachers: The Vicissitudes of Traditional Islamic Studies in Malaysia”, in *Challenging Expectations through Global Critical Insights*, edited by Khalid Arar, Rania Sawalhi, Amaarah DeCuir and Tasneem Amatullah (London; New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 247-264.

¹⁷ Kerajaan Negeri Perak. “Statistik Institusi Berdaftar Di Bawah Bahagian Pendidikan Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (JAIPK)”.

¹⁸ Harakah Daily. “PAS dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Negara Ini” [PAS and the Development of Islamic Education in this State].

¹⁹ The launch of PASTI led to the establishment of Sekolah Rendah Islam Darul Ulum (SRIDU) schools which rapidly expanded in Kedah. The primary schools included Sekolah Islahiah Diniah Memali, SRIDU Kupang Raudatul Muslimin Baling, Sri an-Nur Pendang. A secondary school, Sekolah Menengah Islam Darul Ulum (SMIDU) was latter established. These schools require minimal fees.

²⁰ After PAS took over Kelantan in the 1990s, the state government established Islamic schools at various educational levels. Some examples of the institutes of higher learning include Mahaad Dakwah wa al-Imamah, Kolej Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra, Institut Teknologi Darul Naim, and Mahaad Tahfiz Sains. All these schools come under the ambit of Yayasan Islam Kelantan (Islamic Foundation of Kelantan). A total of 20 *tahfiz* schools were also established.

²¹ After PAS took over Terengganu in 1999, they also built Islamic schools there. They established Sekolah Rendah Agama Bersepadu, Kolej Islam Sains Terengganu (KIST), and Kolej Sains dan Teknologi al-Quran (KOSTAQ).

²² PAS has been expanding the number of Islamic schools in Pahang, and reportedly said that they hope these schools will produce “youth who will align themselves with the struggle for Islam”. See Utusan Timur 2022. “PAS Tubuh Sekolah Menengah Integrasi Islam Pertama di Pahang” [PAS Builds First Integrated Islamic Secondary School in Pahang]. 25 January 2022.

<https://utusan.timur.com/2022/01/25/pas-tubuh-sekolah-menengah-intergrasi-islam-pertama-di-pahang/> (accessed 28 March 2023).

²³ As of 2020, there are 2,529 PASTI schools, 170 SRITI schools, and 6 SMITI schools in the country. In 2017, PAS also launched the Taman Auhan Tunas Insan (TASTI), a nursery programme for children aged below three years, separate from PASTI which caters to children aged four to six years. There are 30 TASTI schools across Malaysia. At the higher education level, PAS founded Institusi Pengajian Tinggi PAS (PAS Institution for Higher Education, IPTIP) which consists of Kolej Universiti Islam Zulkifli Muhammad (KUIZM) in Kuala Lumpur, which is located directly under PAS' clerical wing, Dewan Ulamak PAS Pusat (Central PAS Ulama Council, DUPP), Kolej Universiti Darul Quran Islamiyyah (KUDQI) in Terengganu, and Kolej Islam Darul Ulum (KIDU) in Kedah.

²⁴ Muhtar Suhaili As-Sarawaki. 2019. "Sektor Pendidikan PAS Terus Dipacu Gagah" [PAS Education Sector Continues its Vigorous Drive]. *Harakah Daily*, 23 December 2019.

<https://harakahdaily.net/index.php/2019/12/23/sektor-pendidikan-pas-terus-dipacu-gagah/> (accessed 31 March 2023).

²⁵ Interview with representative from Perak Education Department, Penang, Malaysia, 17 January 2023; Interview with member of Parti Amanah Negara, Perak, Malaysia, 11 January 2023.

²⁶ Governance in Malaysia is divided between the federal government and state governments. According to the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution, the federal government has the power to decide on various issues including education, finance, security, citizenship, and others. State governments have the power to decide on land, local government, Islamic affairs, and public works.

²⁷ Interview with imam at a mosque, Perak, Malaysia, 18 January 2023; Interview with a *pengerusi qaryah*, Perak, Malaysia, 18 January 2023.

²⁸ Those who are part of his executive committee also have the power to invite preachers.

²⁹ Interview with imam at a mosque, Perak, Malaysia, 18 January 2023; Interview with a *pengerusi qaryah*, Perak, Malaysia, 18 January 2023.

³⁰ Malay Mail. "PM Anwar to Launch National Tahfiz Education Policy Tomorrow". 10 March 2023. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/03/10/pm-anwar-to-launch-national-tahfiz-education-policy-tomorrow/59005> (accessed 15 March 2023).

³¹ Rebecca Rajaendram, 2022. "Education Ministry Sets Sights on Tackling Racism, Extremism, Gangsterism in Schools". *The Star*, 15 December 2022. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/education/2022/12/15/education-ministry-sets-sights-on-tackling-racism-extremism-gangsterism-in-schools> (accessed 15 March 2023).

³² Interview with representative from Perak Education Department, Penang, Malaysia, 17 January 2023.

³³ Malaysiakini. 2019. "Dr Mahathir Minta Rakyat Terima Model Sekolah Wawasan" [Dr Mahathir Asks Citizens to Accept the Sekolah Wawasan Model]. 4 October 2019. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/494492> (accessed 31 March 2023).

³⁴ Malaysiakini. "Sultan Nazrin: Don't Hand Country's Future to Racial, Religious Extremists". 20 August 2019. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/12/20/sultan-nazrin-warns-those-pushing-extreme-racial-religious-views/> (accessed 15 March 2023) and Free Malaysia Today. "Sultan Nazrin Warns Those Pushing Extreme Racial, Religious Views". 20 December 2022. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/488689> (accessed 15 March 2023).

³⁵ Ahmad Fairuz Othman. 2016. "Sultan Johor: Learn Islam from Those with Credentials". *New Straits Times*, 31 March 2016. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/03/136382/sultan-johor-learn-islam-those-credentials> (accessed 15 March 2023) and Zakiah Koya. 2022. "Enough of Extremism, Says Tuanku Muhriz". *The Star*, 1 December 2022. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/12/01/enough-of-extremism-says-tuanku-muhriz> (accessed 15 March 2023).

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