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ISLAMIC REFORMISM IN THE NETHERLANDS
EAST INDIES: THE ROLE AND THOUGHT OF ʿABD
ALLĀH B. ʿALAWĪ B. ʿABD ALLĀH AL-ʿATTĀS
(1844-1929)

BY

ALWI ALATAS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Human
Sciences (History and Civilization)

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human
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ABSTRACT

The Purpose of this study is to examine the thought and role of *Sayyid* ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawi al-ʿAttas (1844-1929) in the Netherlands East Indies and with particular emphasis on his financial and intellectual contributions to the development of Islamic reformism in the region. This study is based on a variety of primary and secondary source that enabled the researcher to highlight various aspects of *Sayyid* ʿAbd Allāh's life and career, and his involvement in intellectual Islamic discourse that took place in the 19th and the first part of the twenties centuries. A Historical and textual analysis method was adopted by the researcher so as to examine the sources of the study, and put the contributions of *Sayyid* ʿAbd Allah in their historical context. The overall output of the study is that the case of *Sayyid* ʿAbd Allah offers a better understanding of the features of the 19th and 20th century Islamic reformism, and the roles of the Hadhrami community in disseminating the idea of *islāh* and *tajdīd* in the Netherlands East Indies. It also paves the way for further biographical works on the distinguished figures of the Hadhrami community who remarkably contributed to the spread of Islamic reformism in the Malay world.

ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة فكر ودور السيد عبد الله بن علوي العطاس (1844-1929) في جزر الهند الشرقية، وبتركيز على إسهاماته المادية والفكرية في تطور الصحوة الإسلامية في الإقليم. وقد أسست الدراسة على مصادر أولية وثانوية متنوعة، مكنت الباحث من تسليط الضوء على جوانب مختلفة من حياة السيد عبد الله، وإسهامه في إثراء الحوار الفكري السلمي الذي انتظم القرن التاسع والنصف الأول من القرن العشرين للميلاد. وتبنى الباحث منهج التحليل التاريخي، ومنهج تحليل النصوص، وذلك لفحص مصادر الدراسة، ووضع إسهامات السيد عبد الله في إطارها التاريخي. وتتلور النتيجة الكمية لدراسة السيد عبد الله في تقديم فهم أفضل لمظاهر الصحوة الإسلامية في القرن التاسع عشر ونصف الأول من القرن العشرين، وفي استيعاب دور الجالية الحضرية في نشر أفكار الإصلاح والتجديد في جزر الهند الشرقية، وأيضاً في تمهيد الطريق لدراسة بعض الشخصيات الحضرية المهمة التي أسهمت في نشر الصحوة الإسلامية في عالم الملايو.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pemikiran dan peranan *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh b. ^ʿAlawī al-^ʿAttās (1844-1929) di Hindia Belanda (Indonesia) dan secara khususnya menekankan pada sumbangan keuangan serta intelektual yang diberikan terhadap perkembangan pembaharuan Islam di wilayah tersebut. Kajian ini didapati dari berbagai sumber primer dan sekunder yang memungkinkan pengkaji untuk menjelaskan berbagai aspek kehidupan dan perjalanan karier *Sayid* ^ʿAbd Allāh, serta penglibatannya di dalam diskusi intelektual yang berlaku pada abad ke-19 dan awal abad ke-20. Metod analisis teks dan sejarah digunakan oleh pengkaji untuk mengkaji sumber-sumber kajian, dan menempatkan sumbangan-sumbangan *Sayyid* Abdullah menurut konteks sejarahnya. Hasil kajian ini memperlihatkan bahawa perjalanan karier *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh menawarkan pemahaman yang lebih baik berkenaan dengan karakteristik pembaharuan Islam di abad ke-19 dan 20, serta peranan komuniti Hadhrami dalam menyebarkan gagasan *islāh* dan *tajdīd* di Hindia Belanda. Ia juga membuka jalan bagi karya-karya biografi lebih lanjut berkait dengan tokoh-tokoh masyarakat Hadhrami yang telah memberikan sumbangan signifikan dalam menyebarkan pembaharuan Islam di dunia Melayu.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (History and Civilization).

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Supervisor

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Human Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Alwi Alatas

Signature

Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Indonesian archipelago is an integral part of Southeast Asia. The region has experienced several changes through various historical eras, ranging from the pre-historic period to the advent of European colonialism. The strategic location and its natural potentiality led to the interaction with other nations and civilizations. This dynamic interaction did not only encourage the exchange of goods and transfer of faiths, but also the migration of people from different places and civilizations, such as the Chinese, Indians, and Arabs, who came to the region for economic and religious reasons. Some of them decided to settle in the host land, where they intermingled with the indigenous population, adopted their local culture and maintained some features of their own previous identities.

Among the migrants, the Arabs who came from the western part of Asia constituted an important group in terms of their interaction with the indigenous communities and communication with their homeland. As Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad wrote, “The movement of Arabs into the region was gradual, sporadic, and small in scale, though always significant.”¹ The majority of them came from Hadhramaut in Southern Yemen as traders and preachers of Islam. Their number increased rapidly in the 19th century as a result of the opening of the Suez Canal and the introduction of the steamboat. A few of them were influenced by the reformist ideas of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897) and his disciples, i.e. Muhammad

¹ Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad, “The Arabs in Southeast Asia,” American Institute for Yemeni Studies, <<http://www.aiys.org/webdate/omar.html>>, (accessed 4 July, 2006).

ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Ridā (1865-1935), who called for the reformation of Muslim society from within and positive interaction with Western civilization.

In the Netherlands East Indies,² the reformist ideas were mainly entertained by the members of the Hadhrami community, who transmitted them to the elite in Muslim society by publishing a number of magazines and newspapers in several cities such as Singapore, Jakarta and Surabaya. Islamic educational institutions were also established for the same purpose and based on religious and secular curricula.

One of the reformist figures in the Hadhrami community in the Netherlands East Indies is ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlawī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAṭṭās (1844-1929). He was one of the wealthiest traders in Batavia at that time. His pan-Islamic and pro-reform attitude, to some degree, created caution and suspicion among the colonial officers, though he himself was very close to some of them, above all Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936). However, the non-revolutionary character of Islamic reformism in the Netherlands East Indies had never led to severe conflict between the reformist movement and the colonial government.

Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh studied in the Hijaz during his youth. Being wealthy and loving travelling to several Muslim regions in the Middle East, he interacted with some Muslim reformists and brought back their ideas to his own country. He used his wealth to support modern Islamic organizations such as Jamʿiyyat Khayr and al-Irshād. In many cases, his attitude was in opposition to his *Sayyid* community. Though he was not a teacher and had no disciples, he expressed his ideas in some of his writings which will be discussed in this study.

² Some modern scholars tend to call the region the Dutch East Indies. But this study tries to maintain the historical name used for this region, i.e. the Netherlands East Indies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to give a descriptive analysis of the Islamic reformism in the Netherlands East Indies with special reference to the role and thought of *Sayyid* °Abd Allāh b. °Alawī b. °Abd Allāh al-°Aṭṭās (1844-1929). Through the course of the discussion the following issues will be addressed:

1. The features of Islamic reformism in the Middle East and its transmission to Southeast Asia through Hadhrami agents.
2. The nature and social life of the Hadhrami migrants in the Netherlands East Indies in the 19th and 20th centuries.
3. The life and career of *Sayyid* °Abd Allāh al-°Aṭṭās and his contribution to reform in his community and the series of challenges that he encountered during the colonial period.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study can be viewed from the point that *Sayyid* °Abd Allāh was one of the leading figures of the Hadhrami community in the 20th century and a key reformist in terms of his publications and interaction with his own Hadhrami community. Little attention has been paid to his rich life and career, except the work of Kazuhiro Arai who discusses his contribution within the wider framework of al-°Aṭṭās family. This leads us to claim that this study is the first work to discuss the life and thought of *Sayyid* °Abd Allāh in depth.

SOURCES OF THE STUDY

This study is based on several primary sources collected from Leiden University, the Indonesian National Archive and other public libraries in Indonesia, and also interviews conducted with some relatives of Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh.

The primary sources consist of five categories. The first includes the major works which Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh produced during his lifetime:³ *Al-Naṣīḥa al-Iḥsāniya*,⁴ *Manzūma Khayr al-Umūr*,⁵ *Hādzā Nadzmu Mawlīd an-Nabī al-Karīm*⁶ and *Perkakas Boewat Pendjaga Harta Orang jang Berniaga*.⁷ The first two are collections of poems which deal with some reformist issues.

The third book is a collection of poems praising the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This book is truly interesting because it reflects the sufi dimension of the Sayyid's personality, and leads us to ask the question: How did Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh reconcile between the sufi heritage and reformist teachings through his book of the birth of the prophet (*mawlīd*)? This issue will be discussed within the framework of the two conflicting schools of thought and the rationale of Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh. The last book contributes less to the issue of Islamic reformism. However, it is important in the sense that it was written in Malay and may explain the economic aspect of his life.

The second primary source is Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh's letters to Snouck Hurgronje. He was close to Snouck Hurgronje and some of his correspondence is available at

³ One of his family's companions, Mr. Asaat Shahab, claimed that he had seen two books of Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh in a library in Cairo, and one of these books is prefaced by Muhammad Rashid Riḍā. However, until the present time there is no evidence to support this claim.

⁴ ^cAbd Allāh b. ^cAlawī b. ^cAbd Allāh al-^cAttās al-^cAlawī al-Fāṭimī, *Al-Naṣīḥa al-iḥsāniya fī al-taḥrīr al-^calā al-^culūm wa-l-^cmāl al-amrāniya*, (Jakarta: n.p., 1909).

⁵ ^cAbd Allāh b. ^cAlawī b. ^cAbd Allāh b. Muḥsin al-^cAttās, *Manzūma khayr al-umūr fī asbābi al-amān fī al-^cawālim wa al-duḥūr*, (Jakarta: n.p., 1919).

⁶ *Al-Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh b. ^cAlawī b. ^cAbd Allāh b. Muḥsin b. Abū Bakr al-^cAttās, Hādzā nadzmu mawlīd an-nabī al-karīm*, (n.p. 1995).

⁷ Said Abdullah bin Aloeie bin Abdullah al-^cAttās, *Perkakas boewat pendjaga harta orang jang berniaga*, (Jakarta: Ogilvie & Co., 1890).

Leiden University. Through this correspondence, we can get a number of pointers to his life, outlook and connection with other figures.

The third category of primary sources is the archival materials available at the Indonesian National Archive and public libraries, dealing with various aspects of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh's life and career. The fourth category is periodicals and contemporary records, especially from newspapers such as *Boro-Budur* and *Hadhramaut* which excerpt his life. The information from these newspapers, although very limited, enlightens his educational background, teachers, journeys, intellectual network, philanthropic activities, and also the process of his burial when he passed away.

The fifth category includes intelligence and government reports such as the "Index of Arabs," a secret report written by W.N. Dunn, British officer in Singapore, to A. J. Balfour in London.⁸ This report was especially used by the British to identify the anti-British elements in the Hadhrami community in the Netherlands East Indies. In this report, *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh's family received special attention due to the support or opposition of its members to any particular government.

Oral sources or interviews conducted with the family of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh and some elders of the Hadhrami community also provided information on the Hadhrami social life in the 19th and 20th centuries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The secondary sources that deal with the issue of Islamic reformism in general and the Arab community in particular can be classified into three categories. The first

⁸ IO R/20/A/1409, W.N. Dunn, Singapore to A. J. Balfour, London, "Index of Arabs," 1919. The author received this index indirectly from Kazuhiro Arai.

category includes the works of Azyumardi Azra, especially *Jaringan Ulama*,⁹ which addresses the process of transmission of knowledge and ideas from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. This book, which deals with the 17th and 18th centuries, does not discuss the role of the mass media in the transmission of ideas, since such media was not in existence during that period. The mass media, i.e. newspapers, magazines etc, appeared later in the second part of nineteenth century. However, the study is significant in understanding the background of intellectual discourse that had taken place during the life time of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh and in seeing how it contributed to the development of Islamic reformism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Azyumardi's work not only explains the teacher-student relationships in transmitting Islamic knowledge, but also describes the general trend which emerged in that period, i.e. Neo-sufism which tried to combine mysticism (sufism) and the Islamic *sharīʿa*. A general trend was also evident in the period of this study, i.e. the idea of Islamic reform, which tries to introduce a middle way between the rigid traditionalism and the secular modernism as a response to Muslim deterioration and the threat of European colonialism.

Tarīqa ^ʿAlawiya, written by Umar Ibrahim,¹⁰ could be used in this category to understand the religious features of the *sayyid* or ^ʿAlawī community in general. As explained by this book, most of the ^ʿAlawī *sāda*, if not all, follow a particular sufi order (*tarīqa*), i.e. the *Tarīqa* ^ʿAlawiya, which had been founded by their ancestors. Departing from here, we could observe the interaction between the old Sufi orders and the new reform ideas and movement which emerged in the 19th century. It is also

⁹ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan ulama timur tengah dan kepulauan nusantara abad XVII dan XVIII: Melacak akar-akar pembaruan pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1994).

¹⁰ Umar Ibrahim, *Tharīqah Alawiyyah*, (Jakarta: Mizan, 2001).

important to analyze whether those who support Islamic reformism and modernity, especially the *sāda*, are against the *tarīqa* of their community or not.

The second category is the emergence of Islamic reformism in the Arab territories. Here, Hourani's¹¹ *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* is very useful in understanding the emergence and the development of the new ideas among the leading Muslim scholars at that time. It is not erroneous to conclude that the most influential Muslim thinkers during this period were Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad ʿAbduh.

Sami Abdullah Kaloti wrote a research about the influence of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad ʿAbduh on education. However, it predominantly explains the effort of ʿAbduh in transforming the educational system in Egypt.¹² In the Netherlands East Indies, the foundation of modern Islamic schools was among the principal measures accomplished by the leading pro-reform Hadhramis and Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh was one of them.

The third category, which deals with the Hadhramis in Southeast Asia and the spread of reform ideas among them, could be classified into two sub-categories. The first is general works on the Hadhrami community in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Hamid Algadri, one of the leading Indonesian Hadhramis in the political field, wrote *Politik Belanda terhadap Islam dan Keturunan Arab di Indonesia*.¹³ The book primarily deals with the policies conducted by the colonial government against Islam and the Arab community in the Netherlands East Indies, and the role of Snouck Hurgronje in designing such policies. He also gives

¹¹ Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹² Sami Abdullah Kaloti, *The reformation of Islam and the impact of Jamal-ad-din al-Afghani and Muhammad ʿAbduh in Islamic education*, (Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1974).

¹³ Hamid Algadri, *Politik Belanda terhadap Islam dan keturunan Arab di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Haji Masagung, 1988).

many examples of the positive role of Hadhrami figures in the Netherlands East Indies, including a little information about Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh.

Hussein Badjerei's book,¹⁴ though the main focus is the establishment and the development of al-Irshād, contains some useful information related to this study. As stated by the writer, this book quotes and explains some crucial moments in the development of al-Irshād based on its primary sources, i.e. the minutes of its organizational meetings, which had been lost for years. Its account of the conflict between the *sāda* and the Irshādis is really one-sided. He criticizes the *sayyids* a lot, but once he mentions a *sayyid* positively in this book, such as Sūrkitī's positive attitude towards Sayyid ^cAbd Allāh, it can be considered as genuine information.

We cannot neglect, of course, the work of van den Berg, *Hadramaut dan Koloni Arab di Nusantara*.¹⁵ This research was published at the end of the 19th century providing valuable information on the Hadhrami community in the Netherlands East Indies, their relations with pan-Islamism and the physical description of their homeland, Hadhramaut.

There are two other books which could be added to this category. The first is *Sejarah Masuknya Islam di Timur Jauh* written by al-Habib Alwi bin Thahir al-Haddad.¹⁶ This book mainly discusses the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia and its surrounding areas and the role of *sāda* in this activity. The second book is *Penyebaran Islam di Asia Tenggara* written by Dr. Muhammad Hasan al-Aydrus.¹⁷ It begins with the history of the ^cAlawī *sāda*, its first prominent figures (*imām*), and the entrance of the *sāda* into Hadhramaut. It also paid attention to the migration of some *sāda* to India

¹⁴ H. Hussein Badjerei, *Al-Irsyad mengisi sejarah bangsa*, (Jakarta: Presto Prima Utama, 1996).

¹⁵ L.W.C. van den Berg, *Hadramaut dan koloni Arab di Nusantara*, translated from French by Rahayu Hidayat, (Jakarta: Indonesian Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies/INIS, 1989).

¹⁶ Al-Habib Alwi bin Thahir al-Haddad, *Sejarah masuknya Islam di Timur Jauh*, translated from Arabic by S. Dhiya Shahab, (Jakarta: Lentera, 1996).

¹⁷ Muhammad Hasan al-Aydrus, *Penyebaran Islam di Asia Tenggara*, translated from Arabic by Ali Yahya, (Jakarta: Lentera, 1996).

and then to Southeast Asia, and their role in the process of Islamization, particularly in the latter region. These books are used in this study only as complements to comprehend the historical background of the ʿAlawī's migration to Southeast Asia.

The second sub-category is the academic works on the Hadhrami community. There are a number of scholars who paid attention to many issues in Hadhrami affairs; their migration and its impact, the conflict between the ʿAlawīs and the Irshādis, their political, economic and religious activities etc.

Ulrike Freitag's book¹⁸ will be raised here as the first example. It is an extensive research, which deals with various topics such as the Hadhramis diaspora in the 19th century, its economic and political impact on the homeland. It also discusses the careers of some important figures in Hadhramaut, the spread of reform ideas and other related issues. It is very constructive in giving a complete description of the Hadhrami community in Hadhramaut and its diaspora in Southeast Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Natalie Mobini-Kesheh wrote another important study on the Hadhramis in the first half of the 20th century.¹⁹ Her book, *The Hadhrami Awakening*, reveals the emergence of a new sense of identity among the Hadhramis, i.e. a sense of Hadhrami-ness. The book as a whole was devoted to the Hadhrami awakening and less attention is paid to Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh and his reformist contributions.

Deliar Noer's *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia* examines the modernist movement in the Netherlands East Indies and in one of its chapters discusses the role of the Hadhrami elite. The study also benefited from the edited book of de Jonge and

¹⁸ Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean migrants and state formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the homeland*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

¹⁹ Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadhrami awakening, community and identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900-1942*, (New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999).

Kaptein entitled *Trancending Borders* and the papers of the International Conference on *Hadhrami in Southeast Asia*, held in Kuala Lumpur in the middle of 2005.

The last academic research to be mentioned here is the dissertation of Kazuhiro Arai.²⁰ This dissertation studies al-^ʿAtṭās family in the homeland and the diaspora from the 17th century up to the middle of the 20th century. Beginning with *Sayyid* ^ʿUmar b. ^ʿAbd al-Rahmān (d. 1661), al-^ʿAtṭās family was founded quite late compared to the other *sāda* families, but it has many important members. Arai covers the family of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh in one of his chapters. However, it is not exclusively about *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh, but also discusses the other members of his family. By discussing *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh's family in one particular chapter, Arai acknowledges the importance of the *Sayyid* and his family in the Hadhrami community and the Netherlands East Indies. Thus, research which focuses on *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh could give a complete understanding of the development of Islamic reformism in the Netherlands East Indies through one of its main supporters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since this research is based on written and oral sources, the textual analysis method is adopted for the purpose of discussing and analyzing the case of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh in the Netherlands East Indies. The main complexity here is that the primary sources, particularly some writings of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh, are in the form of poems and this need to be analyzed from a historical perspective that would serve the main objective of the study. Together with oral sources, this approach gives a better understanding of the role of *Sayyid* ^ʿAbd Allāh as a reformist figure in the 19th and 20th centuries.

²⁰ Kazuhiro Arai, "Arabs Who Traversed the Indian Ocean: The History of the al-Attas Family in Hadramawt and Southeast Asia, c. 1600 – c. 1960," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2004).

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This thesis is composed of five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One explains the background, objectives, sources, literature review, research method and the scope of the study. Chapter Two observes the emergence and the development of reformist movement in the Muslim world, with special focus on the thoughts of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muhammad ʿAbduh. It also tries to depict the features of these reform ideas. Chapter Three deals with the Hadhrami community in the Netherlands East Indies, especially the ʿAlawīs, in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It examines the characteristics of this society, its religious beliefs and practices, and the spread of reformist ideas among them.

Chapter Four addresses the life and career of *Sayyid* ʿAbd Allāh, highlighting his family background, youth, education and teachers, journeys, friends and networks, and business and philanthropic activities. Chapter Five examines specifically his thought and attitude towards the condition of the Muslim *umma* and his ideas for the reformation of Muslim society.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAMIC REFORMISM IN THE 19th CENTURY

This chapter deals with the idea of Islamic reformism (*islāh* and *tajdīd*) that emerged in the 19th century. Firstly, it explains the meaning of Islamic reformism and the historical background that triggered its emergence in the 19th century and its spread to the different parts of the Muslim world. Secondly, it focuses on the features of the 19th century Islamic reformism.

WESTERN DOMINANCE AND THE MUSLIM RESPONSE

Islamic reformism is not a new phenomenon in the Muslim world. It has been deeply rooted in the Islamic heritage and was exercised for centuries by Muslim scholars.¹ What is meant by the word reformism here is more or less equal to the Arabic words *islāh* and *tajdīd*, since it contains the concept of reform (*islāh*) and renewal (*tajdīd*). These Arabic words, however, are also paralleled in their meaning by Islamic resurgence,² for reform movements frequently bring resurgences and awakenings of the community into effect.

The word *islāh* and its derivatives could be found in many places in the Qur'an. Its meaning corresponds with peace (*sulh*) and is sometimes used in the sense of "to work towards peace", "to bring about harmony", "to urge people to be reconciled with one another." Besides, it is also used to express piety such as "to

¹ Aziz Ahmad, "Islāh" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by E. van Donzel, et.al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), vol. IV, 141-5.

² John O. Voll, "Renewal and reform in Islamic history: Tajdid and islah" in *Voices of resurgent Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32.

perform a pious or virtuous act”, “to behave like a holy man,” and the word *muslih* (pl. *muslihūn*) is employed for someone who performs it. Thus, people who perform *islāh*, which the reformists consider themselves as, are those “who perform pious acts, [...] who preach peace and harmony, who are concerned with the moral perfection of their neighbours, and strive to make men better.”³ Whilst, the word *tajdīd* means “renewal” and the person who performs it is called *mujaddid*. This term could be found in a well-known tradition reported by Abū Dāwud in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) predicted that at the beginning of each century, God will send someone who will renew the religion.⁴ Both terms are usually used in describing the same phenomenon, i.e. Islamic reformism or Islamic resurgence, for, as explained by John Voll, “together they reflect a continuing tradition of revitalization of Islamic faith and practice within the historic communities of Muslims.”⁵

The Islamic reformism which emerged in the 19th century, as will be examined in the later part of this chapter, had distinct characteristics compared to what had been exercised previously by Muslim scholars. In the earlier part of Muslim history, Islamic reformism mostly occurred within its own heritage and society, while in the 19th century there were significant influences from Western civilization.⁶ Therefore, it is not wrong to agree with Lapidus’ conclusion that “just as each Islamic society was the product of the interaction of a regional society with Middle Eastern influences, modern Islamic societies are the product of the interaction of regional Islamic societies with Europe.”⁷

³ Ahmad, “Islāh,” 141.

⁴ J.J.G. Jansen, “Tajdīd” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by P.J. Bearman et.al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), vol. X, 61.

⁵ Voll, “Renewal and Reform ...,” 32.

⁶ Ahmad, “Islāh,” 142.

⁷ Ira M. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 553.

This Western domination and these influences could not be avoided by the Muslim society who lived in the 19th century and demanded urgent and appropriate responses. For several centuries before, Muslims were not really aware of what had been happening to their civilization. Their civilization had been deteriorating, while at the same time the Christian civilization had grown into a very significant power.⁸ Muslims began to awake from their long sleep when they found the Western powers had entered and colonized their regions. That was the time when the threat towards the existence of Islamic civilization was significantly realized.

In fact, European imperialism had started long before this period. The Malacca Kingdom in the Malaysian Peninsula, to mention one example, was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511.⁹ However, its threat towards Islamic civilization extensively occurred in the 19th century. In Egypt, foreign influences were increased throughout the 19th century, especially after the 1882 'Urabi Pasha Revolution.¹⁰ European powers had penetrated India and Southeast Asia since the 16th century. However, the Muslim ruling family in India was completely dispersed by the British after the *Sepoy Rebellion* in 1857,¹¹ while the Dutch intensified their colonization in the Indonesian archipelago in the 19th century. The French captured and governed Algeria in 1830, Tunisia in 1881 and Morocco in 1912. Muslim civilization was divided by the Western powers and became their prey. Its societies lacked the regional leadership that would be able to defend their territories, while the Ottoman power, the most powerful stronghold of Muslim civilization at that time, was busy with its own problems and could not provide any help.

⁸ Regarding the Ottoman's tardy awareness, see for example Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An introductory history to 1923*, (London: Longman, 1997), 285.

⁹ Richard Winstedt, *Malaya and its history*, (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1948), 41-2.

¹⁰ Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and revolution in the Middle East: Social and cultural origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 241.

¹¹ W. E. Duffett, A. R. Hicks, G. R. Parkin, *India today: The background of Indian nationalism*, (New York: John Day, 1942), 17.