

Muhammad Abduh's Influence in Southeast Asia

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Abstract: Muhammad Abduh had a remarkably profound and lasting impact in South East Asia. His works and ideas were highly influential in the region with strong repercussion in its political and social landscape. He had strongly impacted the movements of *Muhammadiyah*, *al-Irshad* and *Persatuan Islam* (Persis). His *Tafsir al-Manar* had powerfully influenced *Tafsir al-Azhar*, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Madid* (*Tafsir al-Nur*), *Tafsir al-Quran al-Hakim*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, and *Tafsir al-Furqan*. The *Majallat al-Manar* initiated by Muhammad Abduh had significantly inspired many reform oriented works such as *Journal al-Munir*, *al-Imam*, *Saudara*, *al-Ikhwani*, *al-Dhakhirah al-Islamiyah* and *Seruan Azhar*. Thus, this paper will attempt to survey Abduh's extensive influence and its impact on Islamic reform (*tajdid*) in the Malay Archipelago.

Key words: Muhammad Abduh . Southeast Asia . intellectual tradition . modern thought . islamic reform

INTRODUCTION

The struggle for reform initiated by Muhammad Abduh in Egypt had profound influence and phenomenal impact in Southeast Asia. Many great scholars and reformist branded as Kaum Muda (aligned with the young Turk) were deeply influenced by his aspiration and ideas such as Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul) (1879-1945), Haji Abdul Malik bin Abdul Karim Amrullah (1908-1981) (Padang Panjang, West Sumatera), Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923) (Yogyakarta), Abdul Halim Hassan, Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdur Rahim Haithami (North Sumatra) Syekh Ahmad Muhammad Surkati (1875-1943) (Betawi), T.M. Hasbi ash-Shiddiqi (1904-1975) (Acheh), Ahmad Hassan (1887-1958) (Bandung), K.H. Moenawar Chalil (1908-1961) (Kendal, Central Java), Quraish Shihab (1944-) (Jakarta), Zainal Abidin Ahmad (Za'ba) (1895-1973) (Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan) Syekh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin al-Falaki (1869-1956) (Minangkabau) Syed Sheikh al-Hadi (1867-1934) (Pulau Pinang), Haji Abu Bakar al-Ashaari (1904-1970) (Pulau Pinang) Dr Burhanuddin al-Helmi (1911-1969) (Taiping, Perak), Mustafa Abdul Rahman (1918-1968) (Gunung Semanggol, Perak) and other leading intellectuals in the Malay world. Abduh's major influence and significance impact in the Malay-Indonesian world reflected in substantive works produced by the reform oriented scholars in the form of tafsir, journals, press, magazines, schools, religious movement and institution that flourished in the

nineteenth and twentieth century and contribute to extend and marked his lasting and enduring legacies in the continent.

THE ADVANCE OF ABDUH'S IDEAS IN MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

The intrusion of Muhammad Abduh's ideas began to spread in nineteenth-twentieth century through scholars trained in Al-Azhar that brought social reform and advocate *tajdid* and the transmission of modern ideology into the Malay world. The strong connection established with *al-Manar*'s circle in Egypt had monumental impact in the development and penetration of Abduh's progressive views that was instrumental in forming the new bastion of reformist movement in the Malay-Indonesian world, as stated by Mohd Shuhaimi Ishak in his dissertation on the impact of Abduh's rationality on Harun Nasution's worldviews: "the birth of the modernist reformist Pan-Islamism advocated by al-Afghani and 'Abduh, attracted a vast audience among young students. Cairo, during the colonial times and particularly in the 1920s, provided a fertile ground for the Southeast Asian students." [42].

The significant network and contact established between the Middle East and Malay Archipelago was crucial in developing Abduh's major influence in the region as illustrated by Azyumardi Azra in his study of the transmission of Abduh reformism in the region: "the increasing contact between Muslims from the Middle East and the Malay Archipelago was due to many

factors, including the rapid development in navigation technologies, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the monetization of the colonial economy, which benefitted certain classes in the colony and the greater global community of populations" [11].

Many factors contributed to established the contacts between Malay world and the Middle East, mainly the learning activity in *Haramayn*, Cairo and the invention of printing machines [20]. *Haramayn* has "been the largest gathering point of Muslims from all over the world, where ulama, Sufis, rulers, philosophers, poets and historians met and exchanged information." [37]. Cairo was the cornerstone of tradition and the great foundation of cultural and religious movement, that significantly positioned as citadel of faith, as declared by Zakaria Mohieddin, former Prime Minister of Egypt: "Cairo has been and will always be a citadel of faith and a center of Islamic activity for the general welfare of the people" [49]. *Al-Manar*'s significant contact with the Malay reformist had inspired strong wave of reform, as asserted by Michael Laffan: "with the expansion of the resident community of Indonesians in Egypt, the Cairene body has now come to represent far more than the revivalist scripturalism laid out by Muhammad Abduh" [39]. It had developed significant impact and inspired dynamic connection with the Malay-Indonesian world and "through this relationship, ideas on Islamic reformation that were advocated by Egyptian reformists were absorbed and diffused amongst the Muslim society in this region" [24].

The wide circulation of "islah-oriented" journals, magazines and newspapers in early twentieth like *al-Imam* (Singapore), *al-Munir* (West Sumatera), *al-Huda*, *al-Iqbal* (Java), *al-Mir'ah al-Muhammadiyah* (Yogyakarta), *al-Tadhkira al-Islamiyah*, *Pembela Islam* (Bandung), *al-Irsyad* (Pekalongan), *Tunas Melayu*, *al-Ikhwān* and *Saudara* and other influential works in Malaya had contributed to surfaced and extended Abduh's influence in the Malay archipelago. These journals had sparked unprecedented reform movement that served as catalyst for Islamic revival in the Malay world.

The significance legacy and important of Abduh continue to attract many local scholars from various persuasion and school of thoughts. This was reflected in the request for fat was directed to *al-Manar*, "which emanates from three groups: Southeast Asian students in the Middle East, Arabs living in Southeast Asia and indigenous Southeast Asian readers of *al-Manar*," which primarily relates to themes on "Islam and modernity, religious practices and aspirations for religious reform" (Jajat Burhanuddin, 2005). The principle question come from Sambas, West

Kalimantan, in 1930 from Shaykh Muhammad Basyuni b. 'Imran (1885-1981) and addressed to Shakib Arsalan (1869-1946), to answer two important queries. He asked why the Muslims, particularly in the Malay world, decline and why the non-Muslims advance. The response by Arsalan was published in a series of articles published in *al-Manar* and later compiled in a work entitled *Li madha ta'akhkhar al-Muslimun wa limadha taqaddam ghayruhum?* (Why are the Muslims in decline while others progress?) This significant dialogue was intensely investigated by Jutta Bluhm in her article that looks into the contact between Cairo and the Malay world and signifies that "there was interaction between *al-Manar* readers in the Malay world and the editors of the periodicals. In this regard, the Malay individuals from Malaya, Kalimantan, Sumatra and other parts of the region wrote to those editors seeking advice and offering opinions on a broad range of theological questions, economic and environmental problems, technological advances, issues of current political concern such as patriotism and a range of other matters...indeed, during the period of its publication (1898-1936), *al-Manar* published 26 articles and some 135 requests for legal opinions from the Malay-speaking world" [13]).

ABDUH'S IMPACT ON TAFSIR LITERATURE

Tafsir al-Manar, dictated by Muhammad Abduh and later published by Muhammad Rashid Ridain his periodical *al-Manar*, was highly influential in the Malay Archipelago and had extensive impact in the tradition and works of tafsir produced in the twentieth century. It revealed an important methodology of Qur'anic exegesis that celebrated the power of reason, unleashed its rational and critical understanding and definitive *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). The work portrayed significance method of commentary based on systematic exposition of rational principle and scientific framework, which kept it free from the shackle and burden of classical ideology rooted in the tafsir, as commented by Muhammad Asad in his work that reverberated the principle of Abduh, *The Message of the Qur'an*: "The spirit of the Qur'an could not be correctly understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, losing sight of its original purport and meaning. In actual fact we are bent to become intellectual prisoners of others who were themselves prisoners of the past and had little to contribute to the resurgence of Islam in the modern world" [45].

The interpretation also take classical works from al-Tabari to al-Alusi as its primary sources while employing high level of *ijtihad* and sound reason to

understand the text. It was hailed as the greatest work of tafsir in the 20th century and was the primary reference of commentary that had significant impact and extensive influence in the Malay archipelago representing modern approach of exegesis in the continent, as mentioned by M Abdullah in his analysis of the key influence of Egyptian reformist in the works of tafsir manuscript in the Malay archipelago: “the trend of writing tafsir (exegesis) manuscripts in the Malay Archipelago during the first part of the 20th century was very much influenced by the Islamic reformation in Egypt initiated by Syaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), which was later expanded by his disciples such as Sayyid Muhammad Rasyid Rida (1865-1935), Syaykh Mustafa al-Maraghi (1881-1945) and other scholars with similar orientation.” [38].

Tafsir al-Azhar: *Tafsir al-Azhar* is a major work of tafsir by Shaykh Haji Abdul Malik b. Abdul Karim Amrullah (Hamka) that significantly contribute to realize the crucial aspiration for reform and renewal in Indonesia. It was compiled from his lecture on the commentary of the Qur’an delivered at Al-Azhar Mosque, Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta in the kulliyah subuh (seasonal class after dawn). The commentary was published since 1959 in an influential periodical *Gema Islam*, which profoundly reflected idealism of Muhammad Abduh, the “leading exponent of modern Islam in Egypt”, [27], as indicated in the style and approach of the tafsir. The largest part of the tafsir, from *surah al-Mu’minun* (the Believers) to *al-Baqarah* (the Heifer) was completed in cell (27 January 1964-21 January 1967) when Hamka was falsely charged and accused of plotting subversive attempt to topple the democratic government. It was dedicated to young Muslims thirst in understanding the Qur’an without having adequate knowledge of Arabic and as important materials for da’wah for leading *mubaligh* and cadre of Muhammadiyah.

The *Tafsir* was released in 1961 and clearly portrayed the impact of Abduh’s reformism in its exposition, as remarked by Milhan Yusuf in his thesis “Hamka’s Method of Interpreting the Legal Verses of the Qur’an: a Study of his *Tafsir al-Azhar*”: “having been influence by the Muslim reformist ideas championed by Muhammad ‘Abduh and his colleagues, Hamka attempted to disseminate and ameliorate the reform ideas in his country, Indonesia, through the means available to him, that is by preaching and writing” [69]. Milhan also described the principle influence of Abduh’s rational ideology and critical philosophy of jurisprudence that impacted the tafsir: “Hamka’s conception of the law portrays his challenge and struggle towards the abolishment of *taqlid*

(uncritical acceptance of the decisions made by the predecessors) and the implementation of *ijtihad* (personal opinion)” [69]. The work clearly demonstrated phenomenal influence of Muhammad Abduh as explicated in the introduction: “a very interesting and captivating commentary to be an example for the commentator is *Tafsir al-Manar*, penned by Sayyid Rashid Redha, based on the teachings outlined by his teacher Imam Muhammad Abduh. His *Tafsir*, besides interpreting science pertaining to religion, comprising hadith, jurisprudence and history and others, also synchronize the verses with the current development of politics and social, corresponding to the time the *Tafsir* was composed and crafted” [27]. Hamka had been exposed to the reform tradition brought from the Middle East since his early years, as asserted in his keynote address, on the occasion of receiving honorary doctorate from al-Azhar University: “I admit that I never learned, either in al-Azhar or at Cairo University, but my intimate relationship with Egypt had long been rooted, since I managed to read Arabic books, especially of Shaykh Muhammad Abduh and Sayyid Rashid Ridha [26].

The approach of *Tafsir al-Azhar* was primarily based on critical framework of commentary and rational interpretation outlined by Muhammad Abduh in *Tafsir al-Manar*, which defended the supremacy of reason and uphold the principle of *ijtihad* based on *maslahah* (general welfare), as argued by Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa in his article “Muhammad Asad’s Tafsir: Reverberating Abduh’s Principles”: “the third principle of Abduh is asserting a claim to “renewed interpretation” (*ijtihad*) of Islamic law based on the requirements of “social justice” (*maslahah*) of his own era. According to Abduh, where there seems to be a contradiction between “texts” (*nas*) and “social justice” (*maslahah*), then social justice must be given precedence. Abduh supports the principle based on the notion that Islamic law was revealed to serve, inter alia, human welfare. Hence, all matters which preserve the well being of the society are in-line with the objectives of the syari’ah and therefore should be pursued and legally recognized. Abduh believed that independent thinking (*ijtihad*) would enlarge the scope of knowledge because most of the aspects of human welfare (*mu’amalat*) can be further elaborated with the use of reason (‘*aql*’). *Tafsir al-Azhar* radically challenge the status quo and emphasized the need to transform the worldview and reclaimed the pure and authentic values of religion as promulgated by the salaf “Hamka, who was a reformer, also interpreted verses of the Qur’an in the context of his reform ideas in which bid’ah and superstition were the main targets.” [65]. This clearly resonate Abduh’s aspiration and his struggle to advocate Islamic

modernism, by outlining “an approach to “return” to a pure understanding of Islam by interpreting the Qur’an and the sunna through the use of independent and rational investigation (*ijtihad*) above the allegedly blind reliance (*taqlid*) upon the opinions of the medieval jurists.” [39].

The *Tafsir* also critically developed scientific methodology of exegesis which emphasized the principle role of *‘aql*, and its high place in textual exegesis as stated by Rosnani Hashim in her article “Hamka, Intellectual and Social Transformation of the Malay World”: “a visible concern in his tafsir was the issue of *‘aql* (mind), rationality and reason. This concern is definitely related to his support of the reformist movement and the neglect of Muslims over the use of reason and their dependence over *taqlid*. He argues that it is *‘aql* that enables man to distinguish between good and evil and to appreciate God’s creation around him. The use of *‘aql* is essential in examining ambiguity and the meaning of the Qur’an” [56]. The *Tafsir* also portrayed intense political and social life in Indonesia as discussed by Dr Wan Sabri in his thesis “Hamka’s Tafsir al-Azhar”: Qur’anic Exegesis as a Mirror of Social Change” that analyze the important and significance of the *tafsir* that plainly reflect the socio-political experience of Indonesia: “*Tafsir al-Azhar* was a mirror of social change: pre-independence and post independence Indonesia. All such issues were used to contextualize the meanings of verses of the Qur’an so that they were understood and related better to the Malay-Indonesian people” [65].

Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Karim: *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Karim* is a prolific and monumental work of exegesis that fundamentally derived its interpretation and commentary from *Tafsir al-Manar*. The work was essentially based on *Tafsir al-Manar* as its principle reference that profoundly summarized its principle method and ideas. It was the results of painstaking efforts of Abdul Halim Hassan (1901-1969) and his students Zainal Arifin Abbas (1912-1977) and Abdur Rahim Haitami (1910-1948) to produce a scientific and modern exegesis that profoundly extended *al-Manar*’s scientific approach and rational method of *tafsir*. It was crafted based on *manhaj al-adabi ijtimai* (cultural and social method) that reflected the socio-political setting of its time. The commentary employed hermeneutic and inter textual approach that reverberated the extensive principle of hermeneutic and rational framework developed in *al-Manar*.

Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Madjied (Tafsir al-Nur): *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Madjied* or famously known as *Tafsir al-Nur* is a comprehensive work of Qur’anic exegesis by

Teungku Mohammad Hasbi ash-Shieddiqy (1904-1975) that explicated the ideas of reform advocated by Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida in *Tafsir al-Manar*. It strongly advocates Abduh’s major aspirations for reform (*islah*) and renewal (*tajdid*) and derived its commentary from his principle works such as *Tafsir al-Manar*, *Tafsir Juz ‘Ammah*, *Risalat al-Tauhid* and *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa* (the firmest bond). Ash-Shieddiqy also published *Tafsir al-Bayan*, whose principal reference is *Tafsir al-Maraghi* and *Tafsir al-Manar*, that was instrumental in realizing social, political and religious reform in Indonesia.

Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim: *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim* by Shaykh Mustafa ‘Abd al-Rahman Mahmud (1918-1968), is a highly influential work that briefly summarizes *Tafsir al-Manar*. It illustrated the principle method of Abduh in explaining the Qur’an based on rational and scientific approach. It was a massive work that unleashes modern and nuanced style of exegesis that contextualized its meaning and objective into its current milieu. Shaykh Mustafa was greatly influenced by the scientific method advocated in *Tafsir al-Manar* that it scrupulously summarized it into Malay, as demonstrated from its title *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim*, the original name of *Tafsir al-Manar*. In her scrupulous analysis of the influence of *Tafsir al-Manar* on *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim*, Nadzirah Mohd emphasized this major impact “the exegetical work of Shaykh Mustafa is an example of this influence by *al-Manar* school of thought in the Malay world. In fact, even the title of the tafsir i.e., *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim* is the exact original title of the work by Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Ridha, which is now better known as *Tafsir al-Manar*...in his work, he relies greatly on *Tafsir al-Manar* and *Tafsir al-Maraghi*...it seems that Shaykh Mustafa has succeeded in implanting the reformist ideas of *al-Manar* into the Malay world, not only the religious and social reform but, most importantly, in presenting a new style of exegetical writing contextualized to the Malay world.” [48].

Tafsir al-Furqan: *Kitab al-Furqan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an or al-Furqan Tafsir al-Qur’an* is an acclaimed work by A. Hassan accomplished in 30 years extending from 1920-1950 and published in four consecutive editions in 1928, 1941 (*Persatuan Islam*), 1953 and 1956. It strongly advocated the ideas of reform inspired by Muhammad ‘Abduh in *Tafsir al-Manar*. A. Hassan wrote this lengthy tafsir based on literal method (*harfiyah*), i.e., word per word translation, except words that definitely cannot be translated in the *harfiyah* sense, where he resorted to *ma’nawiyah* (figurative). The work constructed scientific method and emphasis

critical and rational dimension in tafsir, reflecting the foundational framework of exegesis inspired by Abduh and Rida in *Tafsir al-Manar*.

Other influential tafsir that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that were influenced by *Tafsir al-Manar* includes *Tafsir al-Burhan* by Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Fatihah* by Sayyid Shaykh al-Hadi, *Tafsir al-Rawi* by Haji Yusuf Rawa, *Intisari Tafsir Juzuk 'Ammah* by Shaykh Abu Bakar Asha'ari, *Tafsir Pimpinan al-Rahman* by Sheikh Abdullah Basmeihand *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Dr. H. M. Quraish Shihab. *Tafsir al-Misbah* is the 30 volumes work of Prof. Dr. H. M. Quraish Shihab that was principally designed based on the framework *Tafsir al-Manar* as its fundamental reference. Shihab had critically analyzed *Tafsir al-Manar* in his works *Rasionalitas Al-Qur'an: Studi Kritis Tafsir al-Manar* (*Qur'anic Rationality: Critical Study of Tafsir al-Manar*) and *Tafsir al-Manar: Keistimewaan dan Kelemahannya* (*Tafsir al-Manar: its Excellence and Deficiency*) and explained Abduh's principle method of tafsir in his foreword to the translation of kitab tafsir *Juz 'Ammah* by Muhammad Abduh [43]. He strongly uphold the principle: "*al-Muhafazah 'ala al-Qadim al-Salih wa Akhdhu bi al-Jadid al-Aslah* (maintaining the old and good and taking the new and better) [38].

ON PRESS AND JOURNALS

The highly influential and celebrated journal, *al-Manar*, edited and published by Muhammad Rashid Rida between 1898-1935/1315-1354 had great ramification and lasting influence in South East Asia. The journal was published for almost thirty seven years in the first half of the twentieth century that marked the major beginning of unprecedented reform in the Muslim world, led by Rida, as mentioned by Albert Hourani in his celebrated work *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*: "Islamic journalism experienced its first zenith in Egypt with the publication of Rida's journal, as the early leading *salafi* scholar in the Muslim world. From the time of its foundation, *al-Manar* became Rida's life and in it he published his reflections on the spiritual life, explanation of Islamic doctrine, endless polemics, commentary on the Qur'an, *fatwas*, his thoughts on world politics, etc." [64]. In his illustrious work *al-Tafsir wa Rijaluhu* (Qur'anic exegesis and its exegetes), Shaykh Muhammad al-Fadil b. 'Ashur relates the fame of *al-Manar* and incredible reputation it accorded to Abduh: "with the beginning of *al-Manar*'s publication in the year 1315/1898, al-Ustadh al-Imam's thoughts started to gain prominence and with the expansion of *al-Manar* those thoughts started

expanding and spreading, to the extent that Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh's leadership was institutionalized in fact by the publication of *al-Manar*. In it were published his articles, reports, *fatwas* and his attitudes in defending Islam. In it he also answered his opponents and enemies. In it his name was praised and was given the title al-Ustadh al-Imam. In it, the most important consideration of all, *al-Manar Qur'anic Commentary* was published" (Muhammad al-Fadil b. 'Ashur, 1966: 196) [9].

Al-Manar examined the philosophy of religion, social affairs and civilization (*al-'umran*) and hailed as the principle reference for modern political ideal advocated by Abduh and Rida. The journal continued the work of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad Abduh in *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa*, to salvage the ummah from its current malaise and fight the political tyranny and ignited the revolution against the British colonies. It was published in Paris between March and October 1884 and gaining access to Muslim land through its advocacy of Pan Islamic ideal (*al-Ittihad al-Islam-Islamic unity*), the critical use of reason and "the reopening of philosophical inquiry to help the condition of Muslims" in their time. [52]. The chief ideals and philosophy and principle goal of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* was "the guidance of man to supremacy on earth as a deputy of God for the establishment of love and justice [9, 53] and this was perfectly illustrated by Shaykh 'Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid in his study of European colonies and modern Egypt: "A Pan-Islamic paper that aimed its message to all the Muslims of the world and urged them to unite and restore the lost glories of Islam, *al-'Urwa* was specifically aimed at freeing Egypt from the British occupation. This was to be effected by stirring up public opinion in Egypt and also in India. The ideas expounded in *al-'Urwa* may be summarized into two main themes. The first is that true Islam has become corrupted through ignorance and must therefore be reformed-otherwise the Muslims all faced extinction; the second point is that the Muslim countries had been betrayed by their rulers, who, swayed by personal motives of greed and aggrandizement, gave foreigners a free hand in their countries. The consequence was that the Europeans who coveted Muslim lands took advantage of the inner discords of Islam and sought to destroy the religious unity of the Muslim nations." [3]

The penetrating effect of *al-Manar* and its ultimate breakthrough was realized by the painstaking effort of al-Hadi, the Khalifa of Kaum Muda [58], whose unwavering resolve to reclaim the ideal of Abduh and extend his views had strongly contributed to enhance the pace of reform and renewal and was instrumental in the emerging of significant *islah*-oriented publications,

where “the birth of these “*islah*-oriented” magazines helped speed up the transmission process of Islamic reformation notions from the Middle East to the Muslim people in the Malay Archipelago region” [38].

The transmission of Abduh’s reformism had developed a new conscious in the Malay community to restore the dynamic role of ummah and reclaim the high position of its civilization and revive the rational and religious science. This was idealized with the rise of rigorous Islamic movement such as *Muhammadiyah*, *al-Irshad*, *Serikat Islam*, *Jong Islamieten Bond* (JIB or Young Muslim Union) and *Persatuan Islam* and the issuing of *islah*-oriented press and journal, such as *al-Imam*, *al-Munir* and *Seruan Azhar* that significantly attempt to promote reform and modern orientation of Islam and provoke Pan Islamic ideal that contribute to surface Abduh’s modern ideas, as clarified by Hafiz Zakariya: “*Al-Manar* also inspired the reformists to publish journals and other writings that promoted parallel reformist agenda in the Malay world” [22]. In projecting modern Islamic worldview, *al-Manar* had been at the forefront, undertake crucial role to inaugurated reform and rallying support from the masses, as explicated by Nadzirah Mohd on the significant role of *al-Manar* in developing modern and sophisticated worldview in Muslim society: “Since *al-Manar*’s existence at the end of the nineteenth century, that school of thought has made a vital contribution that in taking a different direction from the traditional exegesis in its methodology of explicating the Qur’anic verses. Being very concerned about religious, political and social reform, it has made a great impact in changing the worldview of Muslims in general.”[48]

The principle ideal advocated in *al-Manar* is *tajdid* and *islah* (renewal and reform) and its storm impact continued to reverberate throughout the continent that sparked vibrant and lasting tradition of reform in South East Asia. Its legacy continued to resonate in modern time which inspired many significance works of *islah* oriented magazines and journals, such as *Majallat al-Imam*(1906-1908),*al-Munir*(1911-1916), *Neracha* (1911), *Tunas Melayu*(1913), *Seruan Azhar*(1927), *Akhbar*, *Qalam*, *Pengasoh*, *al-Ikhwan* (1926-1931) and *Saudara*(1928-1941) that establish modern and progressive ideas and advocate balanced and rational interpretation of Islam.

Al-Imam: *Al-Imam (The Leader)* was founded in 1906 in Singapore by Syeikh Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin al-Falaki al-Azhari (1286/1869-1377/1956), Muhammad Salim al-Kalali, Muhammad ibn ‘Aqil al-Yahaya (1863-1931), Haji Abbas Muhammad Taha and Sayyid Shaykh al-Hadi (1863-1934). The released of *al-Imam* “marked the beginning of a new trend and

outlook in the contents of the Malay newspapers” [51]. Its pivotal aim was “to disseminate the reformist goals of *al-Manar* in the Malay language” [40] as professed by Sayyid Muhammad ibn ‘Aqil ibn Yahaya, the co-founder of *al-Imam* to Sayid Muhammad Rashid Rida. *Al-Imam* was released “to revitalize the teachings of Islam in the region and to reintroduce the Islamic concept of life and worship free from heretical innovation and other harmful elements alien to the nature of the religion.” [66]. Its fundamental framework was meaningfully crafted to “to remind those who are forgetful, to awaken those who are asleep and to lead those who have gone astray and to communicate news of hope to them.” [41].

Since its first publication in 23 July 1906 until it ceased to publish in 1908 *al-Imam* had released 31 issues. In the 12th issue of its publication it courageously proclaimed, that “*al-Imam* is a mortal enemy of all sorts of *bid’ah* (unwarranted innovations), superstition, imitations and alien custom that encroaches into religion” (Mohammad Redzuan Othman, 2005: 4) which highly reverberated and resonate the ideal of *al-Manar* and its principle objectives: “to promote social, religious and economic reforms; to prove the suitability of Islam as a religious system under present conditions and the practicality of the Divine Law as an instrument of government; to remove superstition and belief that do not belong to Islam and to counteract false teachings and interpretations of Muslim beliefs...; to promote general education, together with the reform of text-books and methods of education and to encourage progress in the science and arts; and to arouse the Muslim nations to competition with other nations in all matters which are essential to national progress.” [1]

Al-Imam advocated progressive and dynamic worldview and published works that strongly reflected the ideal and aspiration of *al-Manar*, as well as the modern reformist thought that flourished in Europe, as observed by Ahmad Murad Merican: “In imitating the Egyptian reformist journal *al-Manar*, *al-Imam* manifests itself as a continuation of the European reformist movement of Martin Luther on the Malay world, centered upon the Enlightenment. In many ways, *al-Imam* demonstrates the dissemination of values similar to the pamphlet journalism in early-modern Europe” [7].

It was widely circulated in Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, with working agents in Jakarta, Tjiandur, Surabaya, Semarang, Pontianak, Sambas dan Makasar. The journal played crucial role as “cultural brokers, translating the new purity, rationalism and vitality of Islam into the Malay language-the Archipelago’s *lingua franca*-and also into terms

relevant to a local, Malay-Indonesian frame of reference.” [30]

Al-Imam released substantive articles on *tajdid* and undertake rigorous task to translated Abduh’s commentary of the Qur’an and part of *Tafsir al-Manar* into Malay, as mentioned by Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin, the editor of *Al-Imam*, in vol. 3, no. 4 (1908): “as already mentioned in the previous edition of *al-Imam* we promised to provide our readers with a translation of the Qur’anic commentary in *al-Imam*, which is derived from the lectures of the late al-Ustadh al-Shaykh Muhammad Abduh at al-Azhar. In order to fulfill our promise, here in this volume we begin by presenting the introduction [of the Qur’anic commentary], which was delivered in a lecture by Muhammad Abduh at al-Azhar in the month of Muharram 1316 H and it was also published in the third volume of *al-Manar*.” [35].

The journal was published to inspire reform through printing machine, as stated by Hafiz Zakariya: “utilizing the available print technology the reformists promoted their ideas through publications, the most important of which was of *al-Imam* (1906-1908)” [21]. It was founded on the model of *al-Manar*, strongly manifested its ideology and highlighted its fundamental legacy and defending its idealism of reform as established in Egypt, as proclaimed by Prof. Ahmed Ibrahim Abu shouk in his analysis of the network between hadhrami elites and the intellectual tradition in Cairo: “the close association of these hadhrami figures with the Arabic Middle East manifested in the modeling of *al-Imam* on the same pattern of the Cairo-based-journal *al-Manar* and in the translation and reprinting of some of its articles and those published in other Cairo daily newspapers” [6]. Its significance position was confirmed by Sayyid Alwi, al-Hadi’s son, who claimed that his father founded *al-Imam* “to bring social and religious reforms into Malaya along lines promulgated by his teacher, Shaikh Mohamed Abduh...to purify Islam from malpractices and non-Islamic influences and to eradicate despondency, inertia and the feeling of inferiority which were predominant among the Muslims in Malaya” [51].

The wide spread of *al-Imam* contributed to awaken religious consciousness and was instrumental in the rise of Islamic modernism and modern ideology in Malaya. It was recognized as “one of the most important intellectual loci of reformist Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian world” [11]. The journal reprinted several revolutionary works and articles in *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* and *al-Manar* that call for social upliftment, political revival and transformation of religious worldview and robust intellectual pursuit, as remarked by William Roff in his groundbreaking analysis of the foundational

philosophy of Malay nationalism in *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*: “it (*al-Imam*) represented a radical departure in the field of Malay publications, distinguished from its predecessors both in intellectual stature and intensity of purpose and in its attempt to formulate a coherent philosophy of action for a society with the need for rapid social and economic change.” [67].

Al-Munir: *Al-Munir (Radiating)* was published by Haji Abdullah Ahmad, Haji Muhammad Thayeb and Dr Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul) in 1911 in Padang Panjang, West Sumatra. *Al-Munir* propagated modern idealism of Abduh and strive “to lead and bring Muslim umma to progress based on Islamic injunctions, to nurture peace among nations and human beings and to enlighten the Muslim umma with knowledge and wisdom.” [14] It was released fortnightly and each issues constituted about sixteen pages printed in Jawi script. *Al-Munir* was established rapidly in the whole Sumatera, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Malaya [27].

The task of *al-Munir* was to inject dynamism and mobilize reform and instigated rigorous *islah* movement. It function as the “candle” that illuminate the Muslim umma in the Dutch East Indies [11] who were severely suppressed and subjugated in their own land. In its discussion of the role of Islamic journal, *al-Munir* emphasized that it functions “like a teacher who gives to its readers guidance in the right path, reminds them of their wrongdoings in the past, consoles those in grief, helps those in suffering from misery, awakens them to virtues and sharpens their reason [11]. This position, as illustrated by Syamsuri Ali, was reminiscent of *al-Imam* and “is a further indication that *al-Munir* was eager to continue *al-Imam*’s mission.” [61]. This resonate of Charles C. Adams’s argument, who point out that “if one takes into account its intellectual genealogy, it was only natural that *al-Munir* should take over the role of *al-Imam* in spreading Kaum Muda teachings and opposing all enemies of Islam.” [1].

From its first edition, *al-Munir* proclaimed itself as “a journal of Islamic religion, knowledge and information” (*Majalah Islam, Pengetahuan dan Perhabaran*). It openly discussed issues regarded as taboo by Kaum Tua, such as the wearing of neckties and hats, taking photograph, which it defend as never been forbidden in the Qur’an and hadith. It also insisted that Friday *khutba* (sermon before Juma’ah prayer) could be delivered in a language that were understood by the congregation and Muslims should not follow blindly the classical legal schools (*madhhab*) and that the Shafi’i school of law, is not the only valid interpretation of Islamic precept and jurisprudence.

Al-Munir also accorded special consideration and high importance to Islamic organization as a means for “channeling the spirit of reform, encouraging enterprising, vigor, enhancing the nobility of knowledge (*kemuliaan ilmu*) and cultivating brotherhood of mankind and nations” [11].

The implication of its struggle for reform had received negative reactions from its rivals and dissenters and its position was challenged by conservatives *ulama* labeled as *Kaum Tua* and some unidentified trouble makers (*tukang kacau*) who launched the critics, believing that “preaching by means of a journal was a western innovation and adopting the western way was *bid'ah* (unwarranted innovation).” [11, 62]. The journal was discontinued after its printing house was burned down in 1916.

Saudara: In 1928 Sayid Shaykh al-Hadi published tri-weekly newspaper, *Saudara (Brethren)* that addressed the contemporary development, criticize traditional and conservative life-style and decadence mentality of Malay Muslim and advocated Islamization and advancement of Malay society [6]. Its principle aim was to “call for unity and cooperation based on the right path, strengthening Islamic brotherhood, helping each other as advocated by Islam and preaching the Qur'an in order to achieve worldly progress as enjoined by Islam.” [66]. In the first issue, *Saudara* proclaimed its “intention to initiate a debate”, stressing that “all arising debates would stay within the confines of the law, would not violate the rights of any individual and would be truly sincere.” [66]. This radical work was described by Za'ba as “a powerful and uncompromising critic of Malay life and a strong advocate of social and religious reformism for Muslims.” [71]

The tradition of reform continued with other substantive modernist works such as *Seruan Azhar* that play significant role in imparting the idea of reform to Malay folks and peasants. It was first published in 1927 in Jawi Malay script, by the *Jami'yyah al-Khairiyah* (The Benevolent Society) that function to reinforce modern ideas and awaken Islamic consciousness. With the arrival of reformist wave, many *islah*-oriented journals/newspapers were published to promote and spread Islamic reformist ideas in Malaya like *Neracha* (1911-1915), *Tunas Melayu* (1913) and *al-Ikhwan* (1926-1931) by al-Hadi's publishing house, Jelutong Press, in Penang [6]. *Neracha* was published in Singapore and edited by Haji Abbas b. Mohd Taha, which was released three times a month and constituted 4 pages from articles taken from Turkish, Egyptian and other foreign newspapers [66].

Al-Ikhwan was published in 16 September 1926 as an important medium through which al-Hadi conveyed

his ideas to Muslim people in Malaya. Its principle direction was to serve as a forum and “to become an arena of competition for writers enabling them to give their contribution to the public by guiding them to the right path” (*Al-Ikhwan* 1, no. 1, 1926:1) [66]. In a special column of *al-Ikhwan*, al-Hadi “published stirring articles on the need of purifying Islam, on the progress of more advanced Muslim countries, on their staggering reforms and modernization and on the elasticity of Islam for adjustment to modern conditions.” [70].

ON ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

The significant influence and pervasive impact of Muhammad Abduh had also reflected in the modern religious movements and institutions in the Malay world, such as *Muhammadiyah*, *al-Irsyad*, *Persyarikatan Ulama*, *Hizbul Muslimin*, *Pertubuhan al-Islah (al-Islah Organization)*, *Persatuan Islam*, *Sarekat Islam* and *Sumatera Thawalib*. These institutions had remarkably develop and extended Abduh's decisive effort to advocate reform and renewal and challenge the obsolete and naivety of conservative old guard and demand radical transform in Muslim society and its worldview, as portrayed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamal Hassan in his foreword to the newly published work of the educational legacy of eleven key thinkers in the Malay-Indonesian world, entitled: *Reclaiming The Conversation: Islamic Intellectual Tradition in the Malay Archipelago*: “it was truly the modernization of the Malay world in the context of the movement from myths and superstition to rational thinking...(these scholars) lay the foundation of an integrated education system. Their creative-synthesis broke new ground, although they sometimes had to face the opposition from within their own communities and were labeled as the Young Turks (*Kaum Muda*), in contrast to the Old Guards (*Kaum Tua*) who were more conservative in the sense that they were not willing to examine their own traditions and consider the possibility of new ideas and approaches from other traditions or civilizations” [56].

Muhammadiyah: *Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah* is an important religious movement and “Reformist Muslim organization” founded by Shaykh Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1923) in 18 November 1912/8 Dhu'l-Hijjah 1330 in Yogyakarta “after the example of reformist movements in Egypt and India.” [32]. It was the greatest non-political Muslim organization in Indonesia that works to reinforce and renew the idealism of Muhammad Abduh. It had constructed phenomenal contributions in

founding modern and progressive Islamic schools, institutions and mobilizing comprehensive social services and support, as described by George McTurnan Kahin: "The Muhammadiyah, an organization founded in 1912 at Yogyakarta by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, a believer in modernist Islamic ideas. Originally devoted largely to education, the organization broadened its activities to include a wide range of social services: free clinics, poor relief, orphanages, publishing of the Koran in Javanese and Malay, libraries, etc., as well as Muslim schools. It conceived itself essentially as a propagator of Muslim culture and the non-political ideas of the modernist movement" [19]. Muhammadiyah was founded to accomplish these decisive and crucial tasks: "(1) the purification of Indonesian Islam from corrupting influences and practices (2) the reformation of Muslim education (3) the reformulation of Islamic doctrine in the light of modern thought and (4) the defense of Islam against external influences and attacks [17].

Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan had instigated significant reform and geared extensive social, cultural and spiritual development and play dynamic role in the religious and political terrain of Indonesia and his legacy continued to resonate and reverberated throughout the continent, as significantly remarked by President Sukarno in his eulogizes to Kiyai: "we know Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, not only as a founder and father of Muhammadiyah, but as one of the pioneers of freedom and Islamic reformer in Indonesia." [59].

Dahlan's uncompromising and resolute principle in defending the ideal of Islam and the authorized practiced of religion, was definitely portrayed by Solichin Salam in his work on K.H. Dahlan as the great champion and reformer of Islam: "he was vehemently opposed to everything pertaining to conservatism, formalism and traditionalism in superstitious customs, as found in Islamic life in the early twentieth century" [59]. He embraced the idea of reform and strived to realize the dynamic change and tremendous reform in Islamic world, as he said: "we must not reject the existence of change in nature. This change is a change of progress. Progress aims at the well-being of the world" [60]. He had inaugurated and pioneered dynamic movement of Islamic reform that became the lasting legacy of Muhammadiyah, as he proclaimed: "I must work hard to lay the cornerstone of this tremendous undertaking ... and if I work hard to finish this project, which is almost finished, it will be easy for the people who come after me to complete the work." [60].

Muhammadiyah had inspired momentous reform and impacted significantly the modern life of Java and Dahlan was hailed by his disciples and followers as

Mujaddid al-Islam (Reformer of Islam), who uncompromisingly "restore faith and life to the Muslims in Indonesia, freeing their minds from the shackles of blind obedience and cleansing Islam in Indonesia from the mud of indigenous and Hinduistic [25] Muhammadiyah Idris, in his thesis that analyzed the life and work of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan summarized the achievement of Muhammadiyah and the fame of Dahlan: "through the Muhammadiyah, Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan successfully spread his idea to the Muslim society in Yogyakarta. It became a popular means for Islamic reformers throughout Indonesia to launch ideas of modernization into the thoughts and customs of the Muslims" [46].

Al-Irshad: *Jam'iyat al-Islah wa al-Irsyad al-'Arabiyah* (Arab Organization for Reform and Guidance) (later transform as *Jam'iyat al-Islah wal-Irsyad al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Organization for Reform and Guidance) was founded by Syaikh Ahmad Surkati al-Ansari (1876-1943) in 1913 to advocate reform and inspired new dynamic in social and religious worldview. Surkati was the leading exponent of Abduh's idealism and has been subscribing to *al-Manar's* journal from Egypt since its first released and established *al-Irshad* to underscore reform and stimulate "the propagation of the ideology of *islah* and *tajdid* in the region" [13]. *Al-Irshad* was an important social and religious reform movement and an influential organization "active among Indonesia's Hadrami community" [15] as stressed by Muhammadiyah Idris: "as one of the Arab-born pioneers of the movement, Shaykh Ahmad Soorkati spread modernist orthodoxy in Indonesia, especially among the local Arab community" [46].

In 1911, Surkati was appointed as teacher at *Jam'iyat al-Khayr* (The Benevolent Society) in Jakarta and he developed unprecedented fame as the leading reformist and pioneer of Islamic modernism. Surkati started to recruited teachers from Sudan who shared the same orientation for religious reform, like Ahmad al-'Aqib, Muhammad Nur b. Muhammad Khayr al-Ansari (Abu al-Anwar), Satti Muhammad Surkitti (Abu al-Fadl, Surkati's brother) and Hasan Hamid al-Ansari, who serve to reinforce and consolidate reform in *Jam'iyat al-Khayr*, as mentioned by Deliar Noer: "the appointees were well versed in Abduh's reformist ideas, ... who had studied at al-Azhar and regarded themselves as Abduh's devout followers and propagators of his reformist project" [14][5].

Jam'iyah Khayr was an important organization that significantly inspired momentous reform and the rise of hadrami elite as depicted by Natalie N. Mobini-Kesheh in her article "the Arab Periodicals of the

Netherlands East Indies, 1914-1942 “the *nahdah al-hadramiyyah* or ‘hadrami awakening’ can be dated from the establishment of the first Arab educational organization, *Jam‘iyyah Khayr*, in 1901. As it gained momentum in the ensuing decades, it was characterized by the proliferation of three novel social institutions: the voluntary organization (*jam‘iyyah*), the modern style school (*madrasah*) and the newspaper (*jaridah*)” [50].

In 1913, Surkati broke away from Jamiat Khair (al-Jam‘iyya al-Khayriyya) that was considered as “more conservative Arab educational association” and established *al-Irshad*’s Madrasa in Jakarta that gained wider influence among the hadrami that “taught a curriculum of religious and general subjects exclusively in Arabic, for which it employ teachers from the Arab Middle East” [15]. It advocated fundamental reform and established Abduh’s modern idealism, as clarified by Dr. Farish Noor in his book *The Madrasa in Asia* [15] “the school was oriented towards Egyptian reformism; instead of classical fiqh texts it placed emphasis on the Qur’an and hadith; *usul al-fiqh* and the works of Abduh and other modern authors...many graduates of this madrasa spread the reformist message as teachers and preachers beyond Hadrami circles in Indonesia.”

Surkati major undertaking was to advocate and explicate the fundamental ideas and works of Abduh, especially *Tafsir al-Manar* to the hadrami populaces, as clarified by Muhammadiyah Idris “this book, *al-Tafsir Muhammad Abduh*, contained precisely the teachings which Shaykh Ahmad Soorkati himself was eager to spread among the Arab community [46]. G.F. Pijper, the famous historian of Netherland, mentioned of him as “an Islamic reformer in Indonesia” and *al-Irsyad* as “reform movement that resemble the reform movement in Egypt, like the struggle mobilized by Abduh and Rida in *Jam‘iyat al-Islah wal Irsyad*” (Association of Reform and Guidance) [16].

Al-Irshad advocate significant modern idealism that had powerful influence in effecting social reform and the rise of momentous movement of hadhrami Arab, as stated by Affandi Bisri, “The importance of the Irshadi movement lies in its effecting a social system in the Arab community and making a significant contribution to the birth and development of Islamic reform in Indonesia [2]. Its major campaign was to advocate reform and promote justice and equality of Muslims umma as Affandi Bisri asserted: “the fact that the hadrami Arabs were divided into two groups, the Sayyids who enjoyed elevated position and the non-Sayyids, urged Ahmad Surkati to propagate the idea of equality among Muslims. Thus, in 1913 Surkati sponsored the foundation of an Arab organization of

Islamic reform called *al-Irshad* which has been especially influential by means of its educational system” [2].

Persatuan islam: Persatuan Islam (Islamic union) or Persis was established in Bandung in 1923 that strongly advocated Islamic reform and “by far the most puritan of Indonesia’s reform movements and it develops religious attitude close to that of Saudi Salafism” [15]. It was founded to “enlarge discussions on religious topics” [32] and was the most influential reformist movement that continued its development in the modernist direction. Its foremost advocate of religious reform is Ahmad Hassan, who joined Persatuan Islam in 1924 and “whose viewpoint gave real format and individuality to the Persatuan Islam and clearly placed it in the modernist Muslim camp” [32]. Ahmad Hassan was born in 1887 in Singapore and in early 1920 he had visited Surabaya and had discussion with an Indonesian religious scholars on the issues of difference between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua, “and this discussion in Surabaya apparently struck a responsive chord in Ahmad, so that he subsequently developed a viewpoint that was in basic conformity with the Kaum Muda...and centered his life increasingly on religion and what he considered to be the defense of Islam” [32]. A. Hassan himself was a regular subscriber *toal-Manar* and *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa* and his involvement in Persis had “brought to surfaced the competency of A.Hasan, who was regarded as one of the most influential *islah* personalities in Indonesia.” [38].

Persatuan Islam strongly advocated the principle of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) and held that “new investigation and interpretation of religious fundamentals were necessary rather than relying on the tradition and past interpreters of Islam [31]. This clearly resonate the principle and idealism of Abduh, in defending reason and renewing *ijtihad*, as clarified by Michael Laffan: “often labeled as Islamic modernism, Muhammad Abduh advocated the adoption of western technologies and systematic educational methods not in direct conflict with Islamic values. Furthermore, he outlined an approach to “return” to a pure understanding of Islam by interpreting the Qur’an and the sunna through the use of independent and rational investigation (*ijtihad*) above the allegedly blind reliance (*taqlid*) upon the opinions of the medieval jurists” [39].

Sumatera Thawalib: Sumatera Thawalib was a modern school founded by Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah in 1915 to embark on radical advance of Islamic school and education in the Malay-Indonesian world. It strived to modernize Islamic institution and introduce modern and scientific oriented religious

school in Indonesia. It was established in Padang Panjang, West Sumatra as significant based to drive and initiate educational reform. Abduh's important work, *Tafsir al-Manar* was taught in the school and became part of required syllabus and subjects undertake by students at level VI and VII [68]. The impressive framework of reform had inspired the great and exceptional scholars, Shaykh Muhammad Jamil Djambek, to contribute magnificently to realize this ideal in Sumatera Thawalib. He closely work with Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah to propagate progressive and modernist Islam, striving to modernize schools, subjects, classes, curriculum, pedagogy and establish system of learning and teaching in a modern setting.

The Hadhrami Elite: The monumental influence of Abduh also manifested in the hadhrami elite in the Malay-Indonesian world that closely connected to *al-Manar* and its modern aspiration. The strong connection and contribution of the hadhrami elite to establish Abduh's distinguish legacy in the region was clearly displayed in the publishing of *al-Imam*, by hadhrami figures, such as Sayyid Shaykh Ahmad al-Hadi (1863-1934), Shaykh Muhammad Salim al-Kalali and Sayyid Muhammad Aqil al-Yahaya (1863-1931). They had constructed major influence in advocating significant reform movements in the Malay world, as asserted by Prof. Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk on the significance ideas and movement inaugurated by al-Hadi, who represent the reformist hadhrami sayyid: "who was so inspired by the message of *al-Manar* that he tried to inculcate its teaching in the hearts of the Malay youth at large without confining his efforts to the hadhrami diaspora in the Malay peninsula" [6].

The strife between the young and old hadrami elite began to inflame since the arrival of reformist ideas which led to intense confrontation between the conservative and modernist camp of the hadrami's community in Malaya, as stated by Prof. Abushouk, "the *islah* and *tajdid* ideology had produced real challenge to the traditional status quo in the hadhrami community and brought a deep socio-political and ideological conflict between the hadrami reformists and their traditionalist counterparts [6]. The clash also relates to intense cultural and ideological difference, that incite an interrupted series of opposing ideas, practices, values and institutions, as illustrated by Giora Eliraz "it inflamed confrontation between the orthodox Islam and the syncretic religion, between the high culture and the popular culture, between the global type of Islam and the local one [and] between the shari'a and the 'adat.'" [18].

The foremost modernist among hadramis in Malaya is Syed Shaykh al-Hadi, who had received

direct instruction from Muhammad Abduh, while pursuing his study in Cairo. The spread of Abduh's worldview in the region was partly due to his unrelenting effort to advocate Abduh's modern ideals through his impressive works, such as *Hikayat Faridah Hanom* (1925), *Hikayat Setia Asyik kepada Masyuknya*, *Kitab Alam Perempuan* (*The Book of Women's World*) and *Kitab Agama Islam dan Akal* (*Islam and Reason*) as observed by Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa on the rigorous impact of Abduh's teaching on him: "Abduh's argument that religion could never enter into conflict with knowledge and that reason would necessarily accept the dogmas of religion after testing the proofs of its truth; had a profound effect on al-Hadi. He was so impressed by this argument that he wrote a book titled *Kitab Agama Islam dan Akal* (*Islam and Reason*) in which he presented Abduh's ideas in simple terms for the Malay readers." [34].

Al-Hadi had published many Malay translations of modernist works, including parts of *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* (*The Emancipation of Women*) by Qasim Amin and *Tafsir al-Manar*. He had also introduced modern religious schools and initiated unprecedented reform that gain prominence and far-reaching influence in Malaya, as remarked by Ahmad Murad Merican: "in his role as a journalist, al-Hadi's greatest success was in using his milieu and his ideology through the periodicals he founded and led. He created a public sphere and an audience during the formative years of Malay society under British rule. Through journalism, he enabled new ideas and new values to be introduced against the orthodoxy of the *ulama* and Malay society...his journalism calls for measuring and rationalizing Islam as modern and progressive-features which were embraced by the Enlightenment and later to be integral concepts of modernity" [7].

Hafiz Zakariya in his article on Syed Syaikh al-Hadi's struggle to advocate reform portrayed dramatically the enormous impact of Abduh on his socio-religious outlook and his effort to geared decisive reform in the Malay Archipelago: "the most prolific reformist who carried out this task vigorously was the multi-talented al-Hadi, who translated several of 'Abduh's and Qasim Amin's works into Malay. In 1927, al-Hadi translated 'Abduh's *Tafsir Juz 'Ammah* (Exegesis of the Last Section of the Qur'an) and in the subsequent year, he published *Tafsir al-Fatihah* (Exegesis of the Opening Chapter of the Qur'an) in Malay. Inspired by 'Abduh, al-Hadi published his own work, *Kitab Agama Islam dan Akal* (*Islam and Reason*) [20].

The role of Syed Shaykh al-Hadi in transmitting Abduh's reformism and advocate his idealism was paramount in the process of reform and renewal in the

region as emphasized by Dr. Ahmad Farouk Musa in his article *Feminism through the lens of Islamists*: “Abduh’s struggle for reform in the Muslim world reached a new milestone when his students from the far East, Malaya and Indonesia, established a link with *al-Manar*. And among the students of Abduh that stood out was a young man by the name of Syed Shaykh al-Hady. Together with other al-Azhar-educated students of Abduh, namely Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin and Abbas Taha, al-Hady founded the journal *al-Imam* (The Leader) in 1906, dedicated to reform and renewal. Throughout his life, al-Hady championed the cause of modernization and reform of his own society. True to the spirit of *al-Manar*, al-Hady not only condemned *taqlid* (blind imitation) but upheld the torch of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning)” [34].

ON RATIONAL THOUGHT

The rational interpretation of *kalam* propounded by Muhammad Abduh in *Risalat al-Tauhid* had galvanized massive and immense influenced on many liberal and rational thinkers in the Malay-Indonesian world such as Harun Nasution (1919-1998/1337-1419) and Zainal Abidin Ahmad (Za’ba) (1895-1973). Harun Nasution is the great exponent of Mu’tazilite rationalism and “firmly convinced that the revival of Mu’tazilah thought was essential for the modernization of Islam” [55].

Nasution is considered as “one of the few contemporary scholars in Indonesia who aspired to revive the spirit of modernization with his rational theology of Islam” [9]. He intensely advocated “the need for Muslims to free themselves from the rigid and fatalistic theologies of the Ash’ariyyah and Jabariyyah” and hailed as the great proponent of reason and leading exponent of Islamic modernism and religious reform ignited by Abduh in Cairo.

The ramification of Abduh’s rational theology had profoundly influence his neo-mu’tazilite views on the supremacy of reason and *kalam*, as developed in his works, *Islam Rasional: Pemikiran dan Gagasan*. According to him: “theology developed by the Mu’tazilah and ‘Abduh, is not merely an intellectual exercise or an academic enterprise, but instead has become the theological basis of the Islamic modernism” [58]. The impact of reform movement in Cairo had strongly influence his thought after he undertake studies in Al-Azhar University in 1940 for his bachelor and later, after his studies was interrupted, in American University of Cairo after the achievement of Indonesia’s independence.

In 1968 he wrote doctoral thesis at McGill University, Canada, entitled “The place of reason in ‘Abduh’s theology: its impact on his theological system

and views” that analytically investigates the significant foundation of Abduh’s theological views. The thesis examined Abduh’s rational ideology and speculative framework and thoroughly developed his rational system, summarizing his theological viewpoints that confirmed his position as Mu’tazilite, as he stated: “reason is an important focus-word in ‘Abduh’s worldview and has a great influence on his theological system and views. Because of his position of ascribing great powers to reason and limited functions to revelation, his system and views are in glaring contradiction with those of the Ash’ariyyah who have a distrust in the power of reason and great reliance on revelation. His system and views, on the other hand, greatly resemble those of the Mu’tazilah who have been well-known for their high appreciation of the power of reason and little reliance on revelation... Contrary to the prevalent opinion ‘Abduh is neither an Ash’ari, nor a Maturidi, nor an eclectic. He is rather a Mu’tazili.” [29].

Za’ba is the leading exponent of Abduh’s rationalism, as articulated in his *Falsafah Takdir* (*Philosophy of Predestination*), which demonstrated the significant framework of Abduh’s theological reasoning. The book advocated Abduh’s rational worldview and highlighted the principle of speculative reasoning propagated by him. It strongly criticized the naivety and fatality of Malays and their poor fate and outlining defining framework of *kalam* that advocated the new milestone in modern Islamic theology (*kalam*), debating the crucial concept of justice, predestination and free will.

Za’ba strongly advocated dynamic worldviews and theological systems developed by Abduh and hailed him as the defender of reason. He significantly expounded his critical work on the principle issues of *kalam* that significantly portrayed the impact of medieval Mu’tazilite on his rational persuasion. Abduh’s theological reasoning was substantively portrayed in *Risalat al-Tauhid* (*The Theology of Unity*) that impacted the rational viewpoints propounded by Za’ba in *Falsafah Takdir*, who derived significantly from Abduh’s theological construct, particularly in his exposition of free will, the concept clearly presented in *Risalat al-Tawhid*, (*The Theology of Unity*), as proclaimed by Abduh: “the Qur’an directs us, enjoining rational procedure and intellectual enquiry into the manifestations of the universe and as far as may be, into its particulars, so as to come by certainty in respect of the things to which it guides.” [44].

CONCLUSION

This paper had substantively discussed Muhammad Abduh’s influence and his contributions to Islamic

reform in South East Asia. He made significant impact and major influence in diverse and wide spectrum of modern undertaking ranging from tafsir, journals, press, newspapers, magazines, Islamic institutions, schools and movements. The fundamental aim of his reform was to reconstruct the modern worldview of Islam and adapt to modern requirement of dynamic civilization. He had manifested greatest impact in the reform and *tajdid* movement in Southeast Asia due to several factors (1) the dynamic aspiration for Islamic reform and renewal (2) inclusive approach to reconstruct religious idealism and scientific thought (3) defining method to reclaim the dynamic position of the umma (4) high aspiration to proclaim the power of reason and definitive *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) (5) rational approach and strong emphasis on *islah* (reform), *maslahah* (general welfare), *wasatiyah* (moderation) and the principle of *maqasid shari'ah* (the higher objective of Islamic law) (5) the great commentary, *al-Manar* that provide viable solution to current challenge and malaise of the ummah.

Abduh's contribution and aspiration for reform had impacted modern worldview of Islam in the Malay world, with the emergence of *tafsir bi al-'aql* or *tafsir bi al-ra'y* (commentary based on reason) that ignited new dynamic of scientific tradition in tafsir. His idealism had strong ramification in the rise of reputed journals, printing press, newspapers, reform movement and institution in the continent with decisive impact that instigated dynamic reform in South East Asia. The remarkable influences and aspiration for reform must be continued to restore the dynamic worldview of Abduh and reclaim his aspiration for *tajdid* and reinforce the scientific renewal in the modern world.

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