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THE MADRASA SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA: ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATION AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Islamic education system in Malaysia in general can be approached from two different angles: Modern and traditional. The traditional system is more on Madrasah type also known as the pondok system. However, there are differences between Madrasah or pondok system with the modern one. One of the obvious aspects is that the Madrasah still practices reading the book (kitab) from cover to cover; however, it is hard to find the same reading method in the modern system. Until now, there is no single agreement among scholars with regard to the date of the first Madrasah built in Malaysia. Thus, it is interesting to note that the Madrasah contributed in the strive for independence. This paper attempts to explore the role and contribution of Madrasah towards Islamic education in Malaysia, which specifically examines the system challenges, and the role of the teachers.

Introduction

The term madrasah can signify several meanings such as a place of learning or a system learning as according to Islamic tradition. Currently, it describes both as opposed to modern systems of education. The term madrasah was used in the first century of Islam to describe two opposite school of thoughts namely madrasah ahl al-hadith (school of tradition) and madrasah ahl al-rc (school of reasoning). It appears that the both term is taken from early manuals of Islamic law such as al-Risalah and al-Umm and it has been referred to both by Muslim and western scholars in their writings. It is no doubts that learn of Islam places the important role of learning. Many evidences can be found in the Quran and activities of the early Muslims. The emphasis of learning in Islam to understand the Quran and to emulate the model example of Prophet Muhammad. Ahmad Hassan has shown us many terms were used in early Islam to describe intellectual activities such as 'i fiqh, qurra'. Beginning for early days of Islam knowledgeable companions of the Prophet were sent to different parts of the Muslim lands to teach and preach newly convert Muslims the teach and practice of Islam as embodied in the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's tradition. This practice was continued after the demise of the Prophet under the support of the Caliph namely through establishment centre of learning in Islam's great cities such as Makkah, Madinah, Egypt, Damascus, Basra, Kufah, Baghdad, Yaman etc. In the mean time these centres of learning produced scholars and later shaped the intellectual tradition of Islamic studies and its schools or madrasa.

Throughout the history of Islam, the relation between this centre of learning and the politcal authority is not always stimulating. At times the relation was confrontational as in the example in