The Role of Egyptian Influences on the Religious Dynamics and the Idea of Progress of Malaya’s *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) before the Second World War

MOHAMMAD REDZUAN OTHMAN* and ABU HANIFAH HARIS**

**ABSTRACT** Egyptian influences related to progress spread in Malaya before the Second World War through the journals published and the religious schools established by the *Kaum Muda* (The Young Faction). The *Kaum Muda* traced its origin from the reformist thinking of Muhammad Rashid Riḍā who published the journal *al-Manār* from 1898 in Egypt. To disseminate their reformist thought, the *Kaum Muda* published *al-Imām* from 23 July 1906, a journal that was directly influenced by *al-Manār*. Apart from publishing journals, the *Kaum Muda*, particularly its staunchest exponent, Sayyid Shaykh al-Hadi, also published books and novels with reformist themes, particularly on women’s emancipation. As well as using printed media to convey their messages, the *Kaum Muda* used modern religious education known as madrasa education, which was associated with reformist thinking, to spread their ideas and bring progress to Malay society.

**Introduction**

The major source of influence on Malaya/Malaysia from the Middle East, since the beginning of the twentieth century, has been Egypt. Egyptian influence spread initially through the journals published and the religious schools established there by the reformist group known as the *Kaum Muda* (The Young Faction). At first, the thinking propagated by the *Kaum Muda* was not well received by the Malays because in general the *Kaum Muda* was rather progressive in its thinking with regard to the practice of Islam. To the conservative sections of Malay society—the *Kaum Tua* (The Old Faction)—the ideas propagated by their rivals were considered alien to their daily religious practices and were to be stopped from spreading through Malay society.

The progressive thinking propagated by the *Kaum Muda* caused conflict, which generally involved debates and arguments centred on the validity of the everyday practices of Islam. Even though there were instances where the conflict became

*Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: mredzuan@um.edu.my

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