



Islam in Malaysia: Perceptions & Facts

MOHD ASRI
ZAINUL ABIDIN



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Dr. Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin (also known to Internet users as Dr. MAZA) was born in 1971. He was raised in Bukit Mertajam, Seberang Perai, Penang. He received a BA (Hons) in Arabic and Syariah Law in the University of Jordan, and then did his Masters in Islamic Studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia before obtaining his PhD on the hadith from the International Islamic University of Malaysia. He has written several books and hundreds of articles for the media, and also presented dozens of papers at seminars. His books have been translated into Arabic in Lebanon, and he also writes poetry. He has been a Lecturer in Islamic Studies at USM since 2004. The State of Perlis 'borrowed' him from USM from 2006-2008 to serve as the state's Mufti. He is now back in USM and is very much a visible presence in the national media. His website is drmaza.com and he can be contacted at moasriza@yahoo.com



ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

U-En Ng was born in 1975 in Petaling Jaya and studied medieval languages in Trinity College at the University of Melbourne. He was a parliamentary writer for the newspapers and has so far managed to avoid being sacked by the *New Sunday Times*, where he has a theatre column. He lives in Kuala Lumpur.



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PREFACE

Originally, this book was a compilation of some of the articles I wrote when I was the Mufti of Perlis (2006 - 2008). It was my humble effort in trying to revive the thinking of our community in Malaysia. The compilation of the original articles , written in Malay, has been published and given the title *Mengemudi Bahtera Perubahan Minda*. However, considering that a significant number of my readers are English-educated, they think that the book should be translated into English. I truly appreciate this noble effort done by Matahari Books.

The Malay version of this book, Alhamdulillah, has been receiving a very encouraging response. I am hopeful that the English edition will get a much better reception. The feat to revive the ways Muslim think in Malaysia should be continued. The conservative religious groups are still trying to defend their last remaining fortress but, insya-Allah, intellectual reasoning and academic discussion will continue to move forward by leaps and bounds. In spreading His teaching, each individual must channel his intent of doing it only for Allah. We pray for the strength to revert to the Islamic teaching that is blessed by Allah.

Warm regards,
Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin
September 2010

NOTE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

This edition is a translation of Dr Mohamad Asri Zainul Abidin's *Mengemudi Bahtera Perubahan Minda* (Utusan Publications and Distributors, Kuala Lumpur, 2010), which in turn is a collection of his weekly columns that first appeared in *Mingguan Malaysia*, the Sunday edition of the daily Malay-language broadsheet *Utusan Malaysia*.

Romanised Arabic words are rendered in their original Malay transliterations, with the exception of words already familiar to English readers (such as "*shariah*") or where the Malay transliteration departs so far from Arabic as to qualify almost as a neologism (e.g. "*fekah*" for *fiqh*). Some words, such as "Quran" and "jihad" that have entered the English language are treated as English words unless they are used in a specialised sense.

Initial appearances of each Arabic word or phrase in a chapter is glossed with a shorthand in parentheses. While these shorthand notes may be generally sufficient, particular difficulties do exist (for example, "polytheism" for "*syirik*") for which interested readers are advised to make use of the glossary at the end of this book.

Dr Asri's few original footnotes are prefaced with [*Author's Note*]. All other footnotes are the editor's own additions. The latter are intended as explanatory aids for readers unfamiliar with the subject and should not be viewed as constituting any part, however small, of Dr Asri's own arguments.

Dr Asri's scholarly citations have been rendered as English translations of his Malay, and the referencing system employed herein conforms to his original scheme. Quranic citations, however, are based on the English text established by Abdullah Yusuf Ali in 1934 and subsequently modernised by the Islamic Book Trust in Kuala Lumpur for its 2007 parallel-text edition.

Use of the abbreviation *pbuh* ("peace be upon him") in the present edition conforms to the common English practice for the sake of brevity, although some scholars may find this objectionable. No offence, however, is intended, and interested readers should note that differences exist in the original Arabic applications thus:

s.a.w. (*`allā llahu `alayhi wa sallam*, "May Allah honour and grant him peace"): used exclusively for the Prophet Muhammad. Variations include s.a.a.w. and s.a.s. (rendered *pbuh* in the present edition).

a.s. (*`Alayhis salaam*, "Peace be upon him"): used for the Archangels and all Prophets other than the Prophet Muhammad. This has been omitted from this text.

U-En Ng
September 2010



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