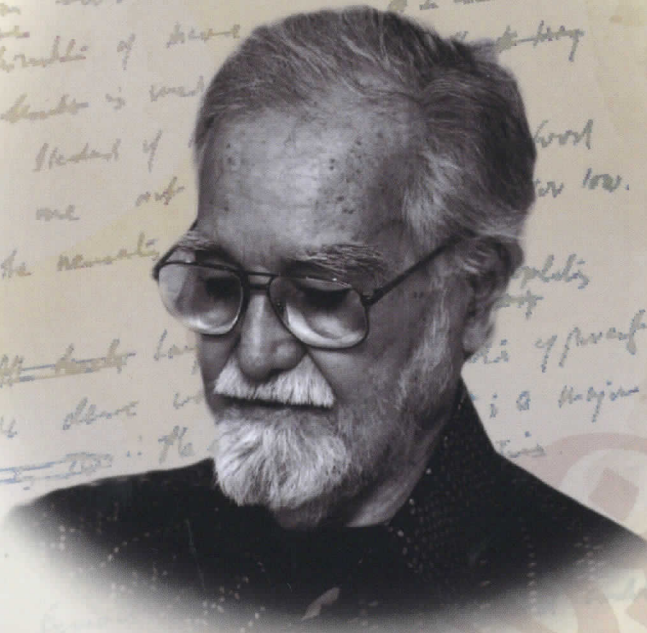




UNGKU AZIZ'S VISION OF DEVELOPMENT

A Muslim's Experience in the Modern Times



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MSB

Muhammad Syafiq bin Borhannuddin

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The logo in the shape of a blossomed hibiscus is designed in Jawi script with the following words: AL-FAHM, MEMAHAMI ISLAM (UNDERSTANDING ISLAM), MEMBINA PERADABAN (BUILDING CIVILISATION). The hibiscus is chosen as it is the national flower of Malaysia and it signifies IKIM as an Islamic institution that strives to propel Malaysia as “a land most goodly under a Sustainer much-forgiving” (*baldatun tayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur*). AL-FAHM (an Arabic term denoting “understanding”) as well as its entire semantic connections is indeed the main focus of IKIM as a research institute and a think tank, whereas UNDERSTANDING ISLAM, BUILDING CIVILISATION is the aspiration that drives IKIM in planning and action including in the publication of quality works.

27/12 2022
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Muhammad Syafiq Borhannuddin



PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Muhammad Syafiq Borhannuddin

UNGKU A. AZIZ'S VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT : A Muslim's
Experience in the Modern Times / Muhammad Syafiq Borhannuddin.
ISBN 978-983-2718-94-9

1. Ungku A. Aziz, 1922-2020.
2. Intellectuals--Malaysia.
3. Scholars--Malaysia.
4. Economists--Malaysia.
5. Government publications --Malaysia.

I. Title.
305.55209595

First Published 2023

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Font: Baskerville
Font saiz: 12

Layout and cover design:
IKIM Press

Published by:

IKIM Press

Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM)
2, Langgak Tunku, Off Jalan Tuanku Abdul Halim
50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Printed by:

AM SOLUTIONS MASTER

No. 17-2, Dataran Dwitasik 1, Bandar Sri Permaisuri,
Cheras 56000 Kuala Lumpur

Tel : 019-262 2441

Emel : amsprint@gmail.com

305.55209595

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“In the Muslim states we hope they will be able to fulfil their roles as good Muslims better if they are materially better off and the recipients of improved services. It becomes the duty of the state and the faithful to identify changes that would promote both a better material as well as a better spiritual world.”

–Ungku Aziz, “Must Patterns of Change in Developing Countries Follow the West? What Other Possible Patterns?”
(1983)



PREFACE

It was Professor Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, my initial academic supervisor at the Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilisation (CASIS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), who suggested sometime in 2011 that I study the thoughts and works of Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz (henceforth Ungku Aziz)—widely regarded as one of the most influential, celebrated, and prominent academic and thought leaders in 20th century Malaysia. The need for such a study was a matter Professor Wan has long thought about, and he had personally expressed this to the distinguished daughter of Ungku Aziz, Tan Sri Dr. Zeti Akhtar Aziz, circa 2007–2008. This study commenced in 2012 under the subsequent supervision of Professor Dr Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, and was completed in 2015. It was presented to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), and accepted as a Master of Philosophy thesis. This work is now presented as a book with further improvements for the first time, thanks to the leadership of the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM). The main purpose of this study is to investigate the expositions of Ungku Aziz on development and weave together these expositions into a coherent whole, thereby presenting for the first time what can be considered to be his vision of development, as well as how that vision was turned into reality. Although, as I indicated in subsequent chapters, there is no clear proof that Ungku Aziz’s vision of development was directly informed by Islam, it is certain that he was inspired by its teachings and achievements in the spiritual and civilisational sense especially. The present work is thus an attempt to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the realm of the history of ideas, and on development thinking in contemporary scholarship, in particular from a Malaysian Muslim perspective, which has been largely neglected in past studies.

Author



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special thanks are due to my mentor Professor Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, Founding Director of CASIS, who has, out of his kindness, accepted me as a disciple in this path of learning and scholarship and provided me with priceless educational guidance and experience. He had critically read the initial chapters, and on many occasions, made important and insightful comments which set me thinking deeper about the subject of this book.

I am deeply indebted to Professor Dr. Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, my supervisor and teacher, who is ever patient in the course of the research and writing of this work. His warmth, untiring support and encouragement amidst the most trying times in my life led me to the accomplishment of this work.

I have also immensely benefitted from the following scholars at CASIS whose insights I drew upon directly and indirectly for this work— Prof. Dr. Tatiana Denisova; Associate Prof. Dr. Adi Setia; Associate Prof. Dr. Khalif Muammar, Associate Prof. Dr. Syamsuddin Arif, Associate Prof. Dr. Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah, and Dr. Sulaiman Hussein Boayo—and the following individuals from whom I have benefitted in regard to their knowledge and experience: Prof. Dr. Alparslan Acikgenç (Uskudar University, Turkey), Datuk Dr. Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas (Former Director-General, IKIM), Dr. Mohd Zaidi Ismail (IKIM), Dr. Mohd Sani Badron (IKIM), Dr. Mohd Farid Mohd Shahrān (IKIM), Mr. Md Asham Ahmad (IKIM), Dr. Roslan Ab. Jelani, and Dato' Dr. Aziuddin Ahmad (former Rector of International Islamic College University of Selangor).

The support of the following individuals at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) enabled this book to be published under this institution: the late Tun Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid (d. 2021), Founding Chairman and, later third

Chairman of IKIM; Datuk Dr. Azizan Baharuddin, the fifth Director-General of IKIM; Dr. Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, the sixth Director-General of IKIM; and Dr. Mohd Zaidi Ismail, the Deputy Director-General of IKIM. I should also record my appreciation to the following individuals at IKIM: Dr. Muhammad Husni Mohd Amin, Nor Hartini Saari, Zainora Abd Ghani, Nori Shamsuddin and Sri Sarina Dewi Suhaimin, for their troubles in ensuring that the right standards for this book are being met.

My gratitude is also due to the administrative staff at CASIS for their dedication in easing administrative matters in the course of the research of this work with much warmth, patience, and excellence: Sharifah Fadzlina Helmy Alhusaini, Rashidah Sarip and Norehan Ismail. To my colleagues at CASIS who have been a constant source of intellectual and spiritual stimulation as well as for their unceasing support, personal insights, and meaningful friendship in particular, Dr. Muhammad Ikhwan Azlan, Dr. Mohd Hilmi Ramli, Dr. Muhammad Husni Mohd Amin, Dr. Muhammad Zakki Azani, Dr. Khalina Khalili, Syed Muhammad Muhiyuddin Al-Attas, Sharifah Hajar Almahdaly, Metra Wirman, Wan Mohd Aimran, Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal, and many others.

In recollection of much kindness, my grateful thanks are due to my mother, Saniah Ahmad Zaki and my late father, Borhannuddin Shaari (may God grant him eternal happiness), whose gentleness, perseverance, patience, courage and cheerfulness in the midst of the most challenging circumstances, have been a source of great encouragement. Finally, to my wife, Asma Wan Mohd Nor whose understanding, love, patience and courage render the challenges of life in this world more bearable. I dedicate this work to my daughters Shifa and Hafsa, who I pray will continue the torch of learning for the benefit of humanity.

INTRODUCTION

As a concept, “development” first emerged out of the experience of Western civilisation—according to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*,¹ the earliest surviving written record of the term is in 1756, where it is commonly used as an intransitive verb referring to “unfolding” in the biological sense. It was only in 1902 that it began to be referred to as a “state of economic advancement.”² However, its connotation to economics began to be one of the most highly debated discourses in the world during the second half of the 20th century or post-World War II, when nations began to reconstruct their countries from the effects of the war. Thus, development thinking in the 20th century emerged due to the experiences of two World Wars and the global context of that time.³

In the case of Malaysia, the mid-20th century was a transition period in her history as the nation began to be politically independent from British colonial rule and the Japanese invasion after World War II. One of the most noteworthy participants in the development discourse then was the first Malay economist, and the first Malay to rise as a Vice-Chancellor of a modern-day university, Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Ungku Abdul Hamid (1922-2020)⁴ better known simply as Ungku Aziz.

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1. The basic sources of this online etymological dictionary are Weekley's *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, Klein's *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, *Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition), Barnhart's *Dictionary of Etymology*, and *Holthausen's Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Englischen Sprache*.
 2. Online Etymology Dictionary, 'development (n.)', <<http://www.etymonline.com>>, (accessed on 25 August 2014).
 3. Heinz Wolfgang Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.
 4. The most extensive source for Ungku Aziz's career and works to date is a *Festschrift* dedicated to him entitled *Renaissance Man* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2010).

As an economist in a post-World War II environment, Ungku Aziz had dedicated the greater part of his life to research related to development in the social and economic domains mainly on the rural economy and causes of poverty and had contributed significantly towards planning and executing practical measures to alleviate poverty and improve the socio-economic conditions in Malaysia. His pioneering studies on poverty and the local economy were instrumental in spurring the creation of governmental rural development programmes aimed at benefiting the poor and critical reference points in aiding policy makers in various aspects of rural development in Malaysia. In short, his academic work was initially in the rural economics and rural development area. However, by 1981, he began to use the term “development” more specifically when he remarked, “We of the Third World countries have to make an extremely conscious effort to realise development because of the existence of poverty in our economic system.”⁵

Although his academic inquiry can be classified to some extent in the “development economics” category, much of his concerns, writings and ideas appears to go beyond the discipline of modern economics and reflects a broader conception of development that regards education, religion, culture and language as important considerations for development. He was responsible for the founding and transformation of many institutions that have shaped the social, economic and cultural landscape of Malaysia, among them being the world’s first notable Muslim pilgrimage institution *Tabung Haji*, the Malaysian Co-operative Union *Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia Berhad* (ANGKASA), the nation’s first language and literary agency—*Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP), and the nation’s first public university—University of Malaya, all being legacies of his. He was also the first Malaysian to have been appointed by the United Nations to serve in its agencies.

Although development discourse is a major concern for leaders and nations everywhere, it appears that very often the ideas were formulated within the Western experience and even

5. Ungku Aziz, “Prospects for Economic Growth in Asia,” *Asia and Australia*, (1961), 55–66.

imposed on others. As mentioned by the likes of H.W. Arndt,⁶ Gilbert Rist⁷ and Ozay Mehmet,⁸ “development” is often interpreted based on a certain set of assumptions from the Western experience, which may not be necessarily shared by other cultures and traditions. In John Martinussen’s insightful study, he noted:

Over the last century, Western conceptions of the world and history have been largely characterised by notions of progress, evolution and development. Originally the emphasis was on progress and evolution; however, since the Second World War, ‘development’ has become the most widely used term. Regardless of the more specific definition, there is a very widespread tendency to associate something positive, something desirable, with the word ‘development’.⁹

This unquestioning tendency on this powerful notion can result in unwanted consequences. Ungku Aziz himself appears to be conscious that he was working in a time when ideas from the Western world are particularly dominant at the expense of ideas from other parts of the world such as his, prompting him to remark in 1980:

It is high time that Third World economists receive the respect they deserve. It is too easy for social scientists from the affluent countries, who dominate

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6. See Arndt, *Economic Development*. For further discussions on the dominant ideas on development from the West, see M.P Cowen’s *Doctrines of Development*. (Routledge, 1996); Oswaldo Di Rivero’s *The Myth of Development: Non-Viable Economies and the Crisis of Civilization*, second edition, (London: Zed Books, 2010); Gerald M. Meier’s *Pioneers on Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984); David Simon, ed. *Fifty Thinkers on Development* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2006) and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, “Some Basic Issues of Development in Malaysia,” *Malaysian Development Experience: Changes and Challenges* (Kuala Lumpur: INTAN, 1994), 855–880.
 7. Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (third edition), (London: Zed Books, 2008).
 8. Ozay Mehmet, *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories* (London: Routledge, 1999).
 9. John Martinussen, *Society, State & Market: A Guide to Competing Theories of Development* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 34.

the major academic journals and who appear as stars to the major publishers, to try to disparage the ideas of their Third World counterparts by alleging that they lack a sound theoretical base or mathematical underpinning or empirical support. Or their existence is simply ignored.¹⁰

Furthermore, many things have been said about Ungku Aziz's role in the development of Malaysia but where he stands in the development discourse remains a question. For these reasons, his ideas and vision demand serious attention and research. This is all the more pressing as, to date, little has been written about his ideas and vision.

This study shall attempt to fill up this gap by addressing the following questions: (1) How does Ungku Aziz understand or interpret development and what was his overall vision of it?; (2) Is any of his ideas on development original in terms of its conception and contribution, and how was his vision situated in the broader canvas of ideas during his time?; and (3) What is the impact or implication of the vision propounded or advanced by Ungku Aziz? In addition, it is hoped that this study will pave the way for a more conclusive answer of the following questions: What are the problems that he attempted to solve?; Are they consistent with the views that he expressed on other topics?; and did he manage to achieve the goals that he set for himself? These as well as other related issues are the basic problems that form the questions leading to the objectives of the present study.

The primary objective of this study is therefore to examine and elucidate the vision of development as propounded by Ungku Aziz implicitly and explicitly in a more integrated and comprehensive fashion instead of compartmentalising into a specific discipline, that is to say, not limited to the confines of the field of "economics" or "development economics" only, as well as the practical and institutional realisation of his vision. Secondly, this study seeks to locate and contextualise Ungku Aziz's vision of development in the wider historical context and discourse on development, using all available sources, in

10. Ungku Aziz, "A Guide for the Decision Makers," *New Straits Times* (14 March 1980).

order to analyse its interpretations and significance. Thirdly, this study seeks to assess the significance, profundity, or true worth of his vision from the viewpoint of Islam, with the view of drawing lessons and insights for the contemporary Muslim world.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study shall employ a two-fold method. In the first instance, the archival research method is conducted. While the Ungku Aziz Collection housed at the Za'ba University of Malaya Library was utilised the most, collections in other libraries such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) library, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) library, INCEIF library, Bank Negara Sasana Kijang library, and the National Archive in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia were consulted too. In the pursuit to outline and contextualize Ungku Aziz's vision (including its genesis and background), this study has exhausted all newspaper cuttings published on Ungku Aziz since the 1950s available in the above-said Ungku Aziz Collection, as well as reviewed all his published and unpublished writings, and the historical background and the dominant development visions of his time. The Vice-Chancellor's office of the University Malaya, the Malaysian Economic Association at the University of Malaya, the corporate office of Tabung Haji, and the New Straits Times' Archives in Kuala Lumpur were also consulted so as to obtain relevant materials and information. Each forthcoming discussion, therefore, represents a result of a careful analysis of all accessible materials related to Ungku Aziz in the areas of development and its related subjects. This would be coupled with an analysis of the available archival data and unpublished materials.

The primary sources include both writings by Ungku Aziz as well as interviews and dialogues which were conducted with various individuals who may have been involved with Ungku Aziz at different stages of his career. Among them are Ungku Aziz's former deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Datuk Dr. Abu Bakar Abd Hamid in his office on 26 November 2013, his former colleague Prof. Dr. Azizah Hamzah in her office in October 2013, with Prof. Dr. Murat Cizakca of INCEIF at his office in December 2013 and with the former Prime Minister

of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the first Ungku Aziz Lecture Series at University of Malaya on 20 March 2014. Included too in this regard is the meeting with Ungku Aziz whom the author met during the former's public talk at the University of Malaya on 21 February 2014.

The following is a chronological list, with brief descriptions, of some of Ungku Aziz's most relevant and important works used in the present study:

1. "An Economic Study of Malay Rubber Small-holders." Singapore. B.A., academic exercise, Raffles College, 1947.
2. "Some Preliminary Observations Regarding Latex and the Malayan Small-holder" Academic exercise (B.A.) - University of Malaya, Singapore, 1951.
3. *Facts and Fallacies about the Malay Economy*. Singapore: University of Malaya. 1957.
4. *Some Aspects of the Malayan Rural Economy related to Measures for Mobilizing Rural Saving*. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti of Malaya. 1958.
5. *Subdivision of Estates in Malaya, 1951-1960*: By Ungku Aziz, with the assistance of undergraduates and staff, Department of Economics. University of Malaya, 1962.
6. *Poverty and Rural Development in Malaysia: Syarahan Perdana*. Completed in 1964, this is Ungku Aziz's most important, and highly influential work in development economics.
7. "Poverty, Proteins and Disguised Starvation First Draft." *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, 2 (1) 1965: 7-48.
8. "Agricultural Development and Economic Development in Malaysia." Paper presented at the International Conference on the Structure and Development in Asian Economies, Tokyo, Japan, September 1968.
9. *Footprints on the Sands of Time: The Malaya Poverty Concept over 50 years from Za'ba to Aziz and the second Malaysia Plan*. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Ekonomi Malaysia, 1974.
10. "Recent Thoughts on Poverty." Paper presented at the Second Malaysian Economic Convention, Kuala Lumpur, March 1975.
11. "A Guide for the Decision Makers," *New Straits Times*, 14 March 1980.

12. "Must Patterns of Change in Developing Countries Follow the West? What Other Possible Patterns?" Paper presented at the Association of Commonwealth Universities Congress, Birmingham, 16 August 1983.
13. "Human Resources Development: The Key Towards a Developed and Industrialized Society." National Seminar Towards a Developed and Industrialized Society: Understanding the Concept, Implications and Challenges of Vision 2020; Kuala Lumpur: Socio-Economic Research Unit, Prime Minister's Department, 1992.
14. *Harmony between Rigorous Empiricism and Creative Insight Leads to Excellence in Research for Development*; Kuala Lumpur: Universiti of Malaya, 1984; International Symposium, Technology, Culture and Development, (12–14 December 1983: Kuala Lumpur).
15. "Modernization and Social Stability in the ASEAN region with Special Reference to Education," Proceedings and Papers of the International Symposium organised by Takushoku University on 30 August – 1 September 1982, Takushoku University, Tokyo, 1983. A paper where Ungku Aziz explains the meaning of modernisation from his point of view.

In the second instance, the conceptual analysis is adopted. To pursue this line of investigation, it is imperative that an inquiry be conducted into the implicit matters or central characteristics of his thoughts such as his *perspective*, his *vision and conception of development*, his *methods and ideas about the nature of development processes*, together with his *hypothesis concerning the causes of underdevelopment and development*. In relation to this, his institutional contributions have also been grouped according to the *strategies* that have been derived from his ideas or vision about the nature of development processes. By doing so, it becomes possible to reconstruct the totality of Ungku Aziz's vision of development and obtain a broader understanding of it. To support this investigation, references had been made to the growing body of secondary source materials such as books,

journals, articles, theses, interviews in printed mass media or on the internet, speeches written and delivered about Ungku Aziz, and websites where his views and thoughts were discussed.

To add historical depth to the study, referred to also are: *The Myth of The Lazy Native* by Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* by William Roff, *A History of Malaya* by R.O Winstedt; *Postmortem on Malaya* by V. Thompson; *British Rule in Eastern Asia: A Study of Contemporary Government and Economic Development in British Malaya and Hong Kong* by L.A Mills; and *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* by Rupert Emerson.

For a larger overview on the topic of development, the following sources were consulted: Gilbert Rist's *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (third edition) (Zed Books, 2008); M.P Cowen's *Doctrines of Development* (Routledge, 1996); Oswaldo Di Rivero's *The Myth of Development: Non-Viable Economies and the Crisis of Civilization*, second edition (Zed Books, 2010); Gerald M. Meier's *Pioneers on Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984); and *Fifty Thinkers on Development* (Routledge, 2006) edited by David Simon.

A review of the existing literature shows several published works on Ungku Aziz. The earliest publication is a biography written in Malay, entitled *Sebutir Permata di Menara* by Aziz Zariza Ahmad published in 1982 (Petaling Jaya: International Book Service). In this 231-page book, the author provided an account of the life, views and ideas of Ungku Aziz on various topics such as the national economy, education, culture and religion, particularly during his years as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya up to 1982. In addition, the author not only included an article written by Ungku Aziz entitled "Zahir dan Batin Ekonomi Melayu" (published in *Utusan Melayu* on 22, 23, 25, and 26 February 1957) but also contributed three writings of his own: an introduction to Ungku Aziz's articles entitled "Pembangunan Ekonomi Nasional" (Development of the National Economy) which gives a conceptual outline for the development of the national economy in post-colonial Malaysia; "Pelajaran dan Pembangunan" (Education and Development), which explains the purpose and relationship of education and development; and "Kebudayaan Nasional dan

Pembangunan” (National Culture and Development), in which Ungku Aziz’s understanding of culture and its role in national development are elaborated. Being the first book on the life and works of Ungku Aziz, this work, however, does not sufficiently elaborate and evaluate the conceptual and historical impact of the concepts and ideas put forth by Ungku Aziz. Furthermore, the work neither has proper referencing of its sources nor contains a bibliography.

Then there was the first *Festschrift* of Ungku Aziz, entitled *Essays in Honour of Ungku A. Aziz—a Festschrift Volume* (Vol. 27 Nos. 1 and 2, June & December 1990) and published as a special volume by the *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies*.¹¹ This work contains the writings of leading economists and sociologists from Malaysia and abroad as well as discusses the themes that have been the subject of Ungku Aziz’s direct and indirect attention in the area of economics. Jahara Yahaya’s “Fisheries Co-Operative Development in Malaysia: Past and Present” and R.J.G Wells’ “The Role of Co-Operatives in Alleviating Poverty: A Review,” though discussing a subject that is dear to Ungku Aziz, merely list down Ungku Aziz’s articles as their references with no specific discussions on them; David Lim’s “Stabex: Stabilising or Aid Instrument,” regards Ungku Aziz’s thinking on many economic issues as often being “ahead of time” in terms of both its relevance to Malaysia and also “issues of general economic significance”¹²; Jomo Kwame Sundaram’s “Economic Ideas in Malaysia Universities” is a general survey of a subject that is of direct relation to Ungku Aziz’s concerns but goes into no further detail than giving an account on the place of Ungku Aziz’s economic perspectives in Malaysian universities in the historical context. G. Naidu’s “Self-sufficiency in Port Services: A Policy in Search of Implementation” only provides

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11. The *Persatuan Ekonomi Malaysia* (PEM), or also known as the Malaysian Economic Association (MEA), was founded in 1962 by a group of Malaysian economists including Ungku Aziz, who have since carved for themselves prominent careers in various sectors of the economy. These founders include Tun Ismail Ali, Raja Tun Mohar, Tan Sri Jamil Rais and Dato’ Siew Nim Chee. *Malaysian Economic Association*, <<http://www.pem.org.my/about1.html>>(accessed on 4 January 2013).
 12. David Lim, “STABEX: Stabilising or Aid Instrument,” *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies* 27, no. 1 (1990): 37

UNGKU AZIZ'S VISION OF DEVELOPMENT

A Muslim's Experience in the Modern Times

This book attempts to present the development vision of Ungku Abdul Aziz Ungku Abdul Hamid, or better known simply as Ungku Aziz (1922–2020), in a more comprehensive fashion. Ungku Aziz's vision reflects his commitment as a Muslim as well as a citizen of an emerging Muslim-majority yet a multicultural nation, and his great concern for the underprivileged. This book also attempts to situate Ungku Aziz's vision in its proper historical context, thus providing an insight into a post-colonial debate in Malaysia as well as the views and experience of a modern-educated Muslim in such context.

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