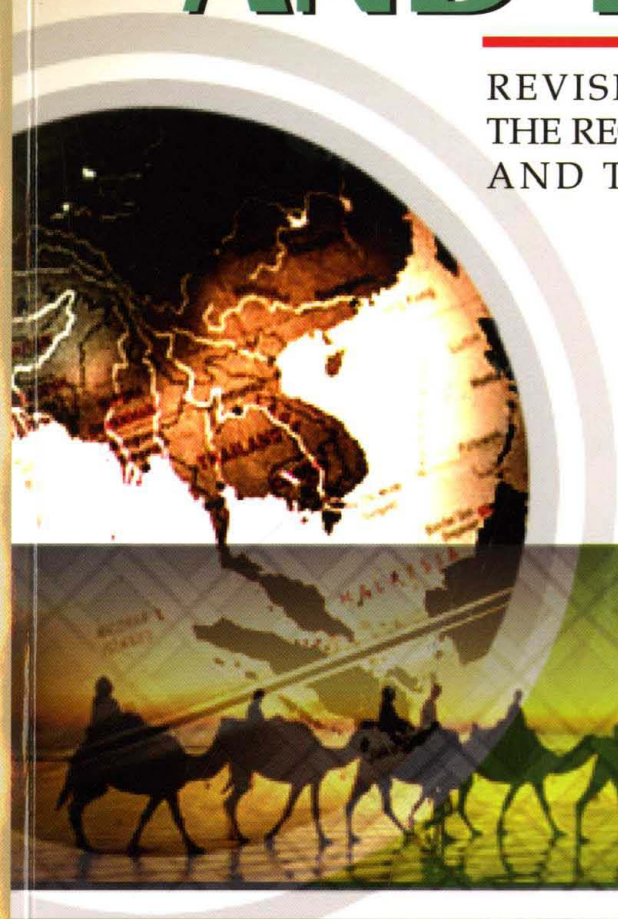


TRADITION, MODERNITY **AND ISLAM**

REVISITING HISTORY ACROSS
THE REGIONS IN THE NINETEENTH
AND TWENTIETH CENTURY

Edited by
A. RAHMAN TANG ABDULLAH



IIUM Press

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CHAPTER 5

AWAKENING THE MALAYS FROM SLUMBER: ISLAMIC REFORM IN TWENTIETH CENTURY MALAYA

*Hafiz Zakariya*¹

Introduction

The period of the late 19th to early 20th centuries saw the emergence of an intellectual trend known as the modern *salafiyya*. It was exemplified by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935). Against the background of Muslim backwardness, it attempted to revitalise the conditions of Muslims – to rid the *ummah* of intellectual stagnation; to reform the moral, social and political conditions; and to reinterpret the tradition to make it compatible with modernity. This Islamic intellectual trend exercised its influence in Malaya especially in the Straits Settlements. Before we proceed further into our discussion of the advent of the modern *salafiyya* in Malaya, it may be appropriate to provide a brief discussion of the key terminologies used in this study. It should be mentioned that a controversy often arises in attaching a specific label to a particular trend of Islamic thought. Scholars of Middle Eastern studies have used two major terms – Islamic reformism and Islamic modernism— to designate Islamic thought associated with ‘Abduh and Rida.² In the Malaysian context, three different terms—Kaum Muda, Islamic reformism and Islamic modernism—have been primarily employed to refer to the types of Islamic intellectual trend.³ Although different scholars have used divergent terms for this intellectual orientation, they, generally, agree on a number of important key points embodying