

# *Reclaiming the Conversation*

Islamic Intellectual Tradition  
in the Malay Archipelago



*Edited by*

**ROSNANI HASHIM**

*with a Foreword by*

**MOHD KAMAL HASSAN**

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Rosnani Hashim

*Foreword by*  
Mohd Kamal Hassan

**TOP**

The Other Press  
Kuala Lumpur

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*First published 2010*  
The Other Press Sdn. Bhd.  
607 Mutiara Majestic  
Jalan Othman  
46000 Petaling Jaya  
Selangor, Malaysia  
[www.ibtbooks.com](http://www.ibtbooks.com)

The Other Press is affiliated with Islamic Book Trust.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia      Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Reclaiming the conversation : Islamic intellectual tradition in the Malay archipelago / edited by Rosnani Hashim ; foreword by

Mohd Kamal Hasan

Includes index

Bibliography : p. 269

ISBN 978-983-9541-73-1

ISBN 978-983-9541-74-8 (pbk.)

1. Philosophy, Islamic.    2. Muslim philosophers.    I. Rosnani Hashim.

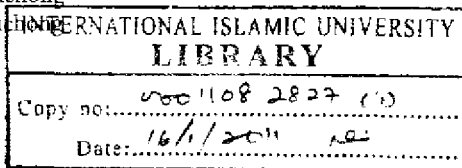
II. Mohd. Kamal Hassan.

181.19

*Cover image*

Students at an Indonesian pesantren.

*Printed by*  
Academe Art and Printing Services Sdn. Bhd.  
7, Jalan Rajawali 1A  
Bandar Baru Puchong  
Batu 8, Jalan Puchong  
47100 Selangor



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## Munshi Abdullah

An Early Critic of Malay Language,  
Culture and Society

*Rosnani Hashim*

**N**ONE HAS OBSERVED THE MALAY LANGUAGE, culture and society of the nineteenth century as avid and critical as Munshi Abdullah or Abdullah Abdul Kadir. He has been regarded as the father of modern Malay literature because of his new style of writing and its focus which departed from the old style of Malay literature. In fact, he can be also be regarded as the father of Malay ethnography and social critic for he provided a vivid description and critical analysis of the Malay culture and society of his period. He was a genuine language teacher for the whole of his life beside being a critic of his people with regard to knowledge and education.

### **Family background**

Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi or more commonly known as Munshi Abdullah was born in 1796 AD (1211 AH) in Kampung Masjid or Kampung Pali.<sup>3</sup> He was the youngest of four siblings. All his three brothers died when they were young aged one, two and three years. His great-grandfather Shaykh Abdul Kadir, was an Arab from Yemen and a teacher of religion and language. He left Yemen for the state of Nagur in Kalinga, India. His grandfather Mohammed Ibrahim came to Malacca from Kalinga and married his grandmother Peri Achi, the daughter of Shaykh