

# *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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*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.

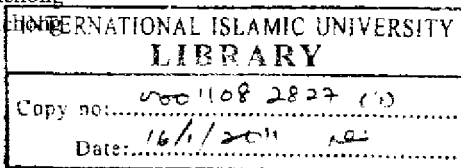
II. Mohd. Kamal Hassan.

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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## Pendeta Za'ba

### Education for the Upliftment of the Malays

*Rosnani Hashim*

Z A'BA IS A WELL KNOWN MALAYSIAN FIGURE IN language and literature. This is evident from the title of *Pendeta* (learned scholar) bestowed upon him in 1956 and the honorary degrees conferred to him by universities for his work in Malay language and literature. In fact, he began writing in 1916 to improve the Malay Language and he was a member of the committee which was set up to work on the Malay language (BM) as the National Language of Malaya and also to standardise Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia in 1959. However, it is incorrect to see Za'ba's role to be merely just that when in fact he had also given a lot of thoughts and contributions on other matters such as education, economy, religion and politics.

His struggle for the Malay language is only one aspect of his nationalistic mission "to improve his people and his country". The pen and the printed mass media became the arena where he discussed his people's problems and challenges. He wanted his people to be as progressive as their colonial master, the British. Realising the weaknesses and backwardness of his people, Za'ba wanted them to be given proper and adequate education that gives attention to both the present world and the hereafter. He emphasised religion and not just material development. He called for the establishment of "a big *madrrasah* called the university"