

UNGKU AZIZ'S PERSPECTIVE ON 'DEVELOPMENT'

M. Syafiq BORHANNUDDIN¹

Abstract

This paper explores some key insights and lessons from Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Ungku Abdul Hamid (born 1922 – present), a celebrated academician in Malaysia, on development. Drawing from Ungku Aziz's main articles, papers and books, the paper attempts to make wider connections with regards to Ungku Aziz's endeavour in development. This paper sheds new light and draw lessons on the meaning of 'development' and its implications to the Muslim community. The main finding indicated that Ungku Aziz had creatively interpreted 'development' geared towards the needs of the local community away from the Western-centric notion and ideals. It is not mere imitation of modern Western conception of 'development', nor is it a wholesale rejection of it, but it is a creative interpretation that takes into consideration the economic reality as well as the spiritual, social and cultural well being of the local community. This study also revealed that the Ungku Aziz's conception of 'development' has significant relationship with the right theological and civilizational interpretation of the religion of Islam. This paper contends that Ungku Aziz's conception of 'development' should be expanded further using the right religious and civilizational framework as part of the continuous civilizing process of the Muslim world.

Keywords: Ungku Aziz, Economic Thought, Development, Education, Well-Being, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The 20th century saw the imposition of key concepts from a dominant civilization—the West—to the rest of the world. One of these key concepts is 'development.' As a term, "development" first emerged out of the experience of Western civilisation—according to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the earliest surviving written record of the term is in 1756, where it is referred to as a certain "unfolding", referring more in the biological sense. Only in 1902 that it began to be referred as a "state of economic advancement". However, as a full-fledged concept, it began to hold sway beginning the second half of the twentieth century (after World War Two), when it became one of the most highly

¹ He is currently a Master of Philosophy student at the Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilisation (CASIS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and lecturer at the International Islamic College-University of Selangor (Malaysia), Department of Islamic Thought and Understanding. syafiqborhannuddin@gmail.com

debated discourses in the world including the Muslim world – particularly that in the area of “development economics” – with the aims of “alleviating poverty” and achieving “economic growth” (Gilbert Rist, 2008). Yet, although often employed in the economic sense and there is no consensus as to its meaning, the conception tends to be Western-centric (H.W Arndt, 1989, Ozay Mehmet, 1999).

The Malay academician Ungku Aziz’s interpretation in development should be regarded as major shift from the dominant debates in development. He, for example, argues that “change” in Muslim states should not merely follow Western patterns, rather, it is their duty to “identify changes that would promote both a better material as well as a better spiritual world” (Ungku Aziz, 1983). He reasons that when the Muslims are materially better off and are recipients of improved services, they will be able to fulfill their roles as good Muslims better. In this context he expresses concern for the spiritual well being of the community, and stands firmly by them, saying, “we are not seeking change for the sake of change but rather for material *and* spiritual betterment”. This indicates that Ungku Aziz does not subscribe to a dualistic vision of nature, where beliefs must be excluded in constructing ideas on development. This is contrary to the dominant positions held by the secularists, modernists and proponents of Islamic state. I will attempt to elaborate further on this by presenting Ungku Aziz’s conception of development in a multicultural, Muslim-majority state that is Malaysia. This paper is a preliminary work and is part of a larger on-going project on Ungku Aziz’s ideas on development.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the ideas on development of Ungku Aziz in contemporary scholarship in comparison with the major Western doctrines on development that is promoted in the contemporary world. Up to date, the researcher has exhausted all newspaper cuttings published on Ungku Aziz since his early career (circa 1950s) available at the University of Malaya library and *New Straits Times* archive, scrutinised all his published and unpublished writings, studied the historical background of his time, reviewed the dominant development ideas of his time. Drawing from Ungku Aziz’s major articles, papers and books, the present study is based upon the conceptual and historical analysis of his articles, papers and books published in the second half of the twentieth century. It also uses other primary and secondary sources to describe the context in which the ideas were made. I had the opportunity to meet with the subject, Ungku Aziz only once during a public lecture and has yet to conduct a proper interview with Ungku Aziz himself. By undertaking the conceptual and historical analysis of Ungku Aziz’s development ideas, the author believes this study will shed new light with regards to the originality and creativity of Ungku Aziz in contemporary development thinking as well as its significance to the Muslim community.

To be able to appreciate Ungku Aziz’s interpretation of development and its place in present-day scholarship, I surveyed the following sources to get larger overview on the discourse and to juxtapose Ungku Aziz’s ideas with the dominant ideas in the present

time: Rist, Gilbert. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (third edition), Zed Books, 2008; Cowen, M.P. *Doctrines of Development*. Routledge, 1996; Di Rivero, Oswaldo. *The Myth of Development: Non-Viable Economies and the Crisis of Civilization*, second edition, Zed Books, 2010; *Pioneers on Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984) by Meier, Gerald M. and *Fifty Thinkers on Development* (Routledge, 2006) edited by David Simon. To add historical depth to the study, I referred to *The Myth of The Lazy Native* by Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* by William Roff, *A History of Malaya* (Luzac and Company: London, 1935) by R.O Winstedt, *Postmortem on Malaya* (New York: Macmillan, 1943) 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* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942) by R. Emerson.

2.A Brief Biography

Ungku Abdul Aziz bin Ungku Abdul Hamid, better known simply as Ungku Aziz, was born in London, England on 28 January 1922. His father, Ungku Abdul Hamid bin Ungku Abdul Majid was a law graduate from the University of Cambridge, England—perhaps one of the earliest Malay to study at Cambridge University—and is said to have mastered the Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit languages which must have led to his appointment as the Head of the Translation Bureau of the Johor Sultanate. Ungku Aziz's mother, Hamidah Abdullah, was a woman of Turkish origins who died while Ungku Aziz was two years old leaving him in the care of his father during childhood up to teenage years.

Although his father did not influence him much, he did inculcate in the heart of the young Ungku Aziz the spirit to study hard and to grow up and live as Malay. It was a conscious decision on the part of his father to raise Ungku Aziz in Batu Pahat, Johor instead of England where Ungku Aziz was born, because he does not want Ungku Aziz to grow up with an English identity and so that Ungku Aziz can remain attached to his Malay roots. As a consequence, growing up in Batu Pahat as a child, Ungku Aziz was aware of the challenges and hardships of poverty. It was in his childhood experience growing up in Batu Pahat that he first encountered the sufferings of the rural community that must have had a profound effect on the young Ungku Aziz. At the same time, his father used to surround Ungku Aziz with many books and often took him for trips to European countries.

The general atmosphere in Johore when Ungku Aziz was brought up was conducive to his intellectual development. Despite the loss of his mother at a young age, Ungku Aziz was blessed with many learned extended family members apart from his father. Indeed, after the demise of his father, two of his uncles looked after him: there was his uncle

also named Ungku Abdul Aziz (bin Ungku Abdul Majid) who was the Chief Minister of Johore and had in his possession, excellent collection of books and manuscripts. Another erudite family member was Dato' Onn bin Jaafar (d. 1962) (by virtue of Rogaya Hanum's third marriage to Datuk Jaafar Muhammad), a highly esteemed public figure in the Malay community at that time who was instrumental in unifying and mobilising the Malays towards attaining political independence. It was to Dato Onn that Ungku Aziz first confided that he wanted to be an economist after reading some books pertaining to the subject. He came to the realization that economics is an important area of knowledge that not many people knew of. Perhaps it was due to Dato Onn's discourses pertaining to the local society, economy and poverty of the Malays during British rule that have ignited some of these realisations.

His extended family includes members from his grandmother's (Rogaya Hanum) second marriage to Syed Abdullah Muhsin Al-Attas, which gave birth to his cousins: Syed Muhamamd Naquib Al-Attas (1931 – present), who later became an eminent scholar of Islam and Syed Hussein Alatas (d. 2007), who later became a renowned social scientist—both whom are also influential in the national development discourse in post-independence Malaysia. According to an account by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Ungku Aziz was involved in an inner circle discussion group led by (Dato') Onn Jaafar that discusses issues on religion, culture and politics every Thursday night at Dato Onn's residence. Thus there is strong reason to believe that these towering personalities in his family must have had an influence in the upbringing, intellectual make-up and formative years of Ungku Aziz and a factor in his wanting to exert himself intellectually for the sake of the betterment of the nation that his family and ancestors had helped to shape.

A further important life and educational phase for Ungku Aziz was during his time in Japan as an undergraduate when he was 19 years old and later on in his life, as a PhD candidate. During the First World War in Johore, Ungku Aziz became acquainted with a learned Japanese administrative officer named Y. Tokugawa who was a descendent from a family that once ruled Japan from the early 16th century to the 19th century and had studied at Oxford University. This relationship must have been the starting point with Ungku Aziz's exposure to Japanese thought and culture. It was during the Japanese rule that Ungku Aziz had studied the Japanese language at a school in Singapore. Thus in mid-1942, through the assistance of Y. Tokugawa and with the permission of his family, he departed for Japan with 24 other Malays who also went there to study. In May 1942, Ungku Aziz began his studies in Bachelors of economics at Waseda University in the Japanese language. However this experience was cut short due to World War II, and thus he had to continue his studies at Raffles College, Singapore. This lead him to specialize in Economics, History and English in his Senior Cambridge at the Raffles College, Singapore, where he was taught by among others, Professor Thomas Silcock (born 1919) and studied alongside the likes of the third Prime

Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak (d. 1976) and the first Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew (born 1923). That was the circumstances that had influenced much of his early life.

Ungku Aziz began his career as an officer in the Johor civil service in 1952 upon his graduation from University of Malaya. By August 1952, he was then appointed as a full time lecturer in economics at University of Malaya. It was during this time that he, together with Za'ba became the prime movers to establish the 'Federation of Malay Language of University Malaya' (*Persekutuan Bahasa Melayu Universiti Malaya - PBMUM*) on 29 January 1955 – an influential group in Malaya that advocated on Malay as the national language. He and Za'ba as representatives of PBMUM prepared a paperwork at the Malay Literature and Language Congress (*Kongres Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu Malaya*) entitled "Laporan Tentang Bahasa Melayu dan Bahasa Indonesia." ('Report on the Malay Language and Indonesian Language'). His involvement in this matter led to his appointment as the first Director of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (Agency for Language and Literature) by the Ministry of Education, Federation in Malaya in July 1956 – a position he resigned one year later for unknown reasons.

His first professional involvement in the international arena was in October 1958 when the United Nations (U.N) appointed him to teach at the F.A.O's Land Settlement Training Centre in Ceylon during a 3-week course. By 1960, he was appointed as a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Economics at University of Malaya and another U.N appointment came short after, this time as a member of the permanent committee for agriculture of the I.L.O for a 3-year term. While lecturing at University of Malaya, he returned to Waseda University in 1963 (twenty years later, at the age of 40) to pursue a Doctorate in Economics, in which he submitted his research on Subdivision of Estates. He was reported to have excelled in his examinations and earned the highest award for his doctorate—the *hakase*—only the second foreigner to achieve it in the history of Waseda University. Two years after earning his Doctorate, in 1968, Ungku Aziz was appointed to be the first Malaysian Vice-Chancellor and went on to become the longest-serving Vice-Chancellor in the history of Malaysia at University of Malaya until 1988.

2.1

The problem of poverty lay at the very centre of Ungku Aziz's writings and endeavour in development. He is one of the first economists in Malaysia to pinpoint "exploitation" and "neglect" as the major causes of poverty and an obstacle to development at the individual and communal level. Prior to Ungku Aziz, Western scholars and the colonial administrators had often attributed the Malays' economic situation on their alleged

“laziness” and due to their adherence to faith in the religion of Islam, which they deemed “fatalistic”. It was Ungku Aziz who pointed out and proved that on the contrary, it was due to the systematic “neglect” by the British colonial administration, which is carried on by the intellectuals and leaders post-independence, as well as the exploitation by middlemen and moneylenders who were responsible for affecting the incomes and economic life of the rural poor. (Ungku Aziz, 1964)

As a consequence of his research on the aforementioned matter, Ungku Aziz sought to find ways to address this exploitation and neglect—the most significant one being the Muslim pilgrims savings institution later named as *Tabung Haji*. It emerged initially from Ungku Aziz’s proposal to the government in 1959 through the *Muslim Pilgrims Economic Improvement Plan* to improve the economic life of the Malay Muslims by establishing a corporation (Ungku Aziz, 1959). The basic idea of this corporation according to Ungku Aziz is to improve the economy of those saving for Hajj (i.e. the Malays) who were mainly composed of the rural poor in Malaysia. According to Ungku Aziz, the idea emerged when he carried out field research in several rural areas in the East, West and North of Malaysia. Based on this study he produced the paperwork entitled “The Mobilisation of Domestic Savings in South East Asia” which was presented in Bangkok, Thailand in 1951. He researched and analysed for almost three years on the ways of savings of the rural Malays as well as what were their main motive to save money. He found that the Malays used to save in their houses as opposed to banks for fear of incurring *riba*. In this research Ungku Aziz also found the main motive for the Malays to save money is to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. Apart from the saving money in such ways, they also used their money to buy animals such as cows. These cows were then sold when the time comes to perform the pilgrimage. This attitude worsens their economic circumstances. When they return from the pilgrimage, it was found that such individuals became poorer before embarking to Hajj. In addition, it was found that the Malays used to sell their lands for the purpose of selling them to perform the Hajj. This will cause the Malays as a community to be much poorer as a result. Thus through this research, Ungku Aziz was determined to find a way to change this culture that is destroying the economy of the Malays in the country as well as to encourage the Malays to save for the benefit of their future or children’s education.

The conceptualisation of the Muslim Pilgrims Corporation has led to the establishment *Tabung Haji*—the first of its kind in the history of economic thought and institutions of the Muslims, although similar practice had been in place in the Muslim community in a smaller scale through the “shaykh system”. It was the first time in the history of Malaysia that the pilgrimage experience is transformed from an arduous ocean voyages with extended periods of residence in the Hejaz to a leisurely one with greater comfort and safety via air-travel in a shorter period of time (Robert R. Bianci, “The Growth of the Malaysian Pilgrimage, 1947-2004”, *Guests of God: Pilgrimage and Politics in the Islamic World*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 118). This has caused an enormous growth of Malays able to perform the pilgrimage in the last sixty years from Malaysia:

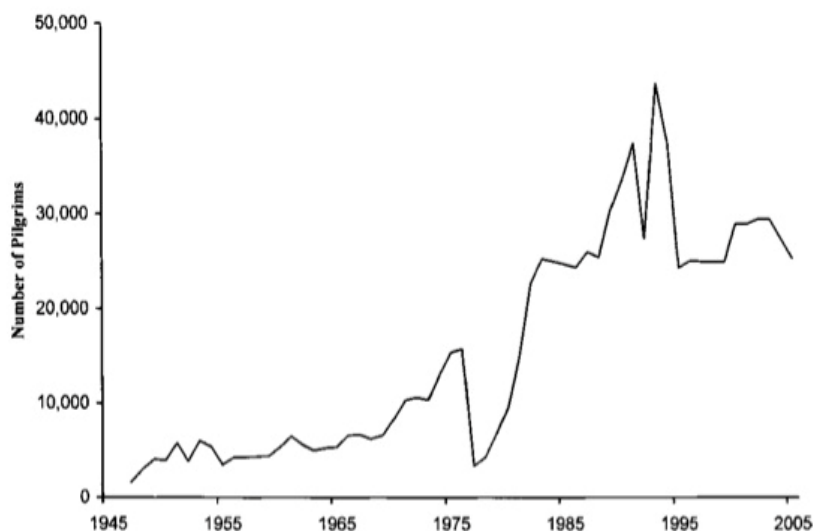


Figure 1

In addition, the introduction of an institution that inculcates a culture of saving amongst the Malays provided a great boost to the development of the country. Although it does not fulfill some of the original mandate set out by Ungku Aziz, in terms of economic worth, *Tabung Haji* is now a multi-billion Ringgit enterprise with a wide spread of investments administered according to Islamic tenets. This has earned well-deserved admiration from many other Muslim nations. *Tabung Haji* has improved not only Malaysia's standing in the Muslim world but more significantly, has greatly and positively gave a positive image for the Muslim community. It is regarded by Muslims economists as "one of the world's greatest cooperative success stories." It has also gained recognition from the international community in managing hajj pilgrims to the extent that almost annually *Tabung Haji* received application from other countries to study Malaysia's success in the pilgrimage fund management system.

However, twenty years after its establishment, Ungku Aziz felt that there is still room for improvement. Firstly, he felt that his original proposal to mobilise rural savings is yet to be fully executed. Secondly, he feels that *Tabung Haji* should encourage Muslims to save for other beneficial purposes such as education, and not end their relationship with *Tabung Haji* once they have completed their Hajj. Thirdly, Ungku Aziz suggests that the capital gains from the investments should be assigned to the depositors for the purpose of truly helping the economy of the Muslims as opposed to merely aiming for the bottom line and benefiting *Tabung Haji* only—this was his original vision for the plan to improve the economy of Muslim pilgrims. This means that for Ungku Aziz, the profits and surpluses of *Tabung Haji* should be reinvested into serving local communal well being rather than the speculative interests and bottom-lines of far-away, indifferent

absentee stockholders. Therefore, it may be argued that Ungku Aziz attempted to fulfill a major *Fard Kifaya* as an economics expert by attempting to address what he interpreted as the fundamental problem of the community, that is, the problem of poverty and towards benefiting the common good (*maslahah ammah*)—the main criteria of fulfilling a *Fard Kifaya*. This is not only in full accord with the worldview of Islam but also strategically correct under the social and economic realities of the time. This is so because by addressing the problem of poverty, it would provide ample opportunity for the Muslims to further develop themselves in all areas in life and simultaneously, ensures justice in the socio-economic domains of the nation. The fact that the Prophet Muhammad [ṣallāAllāhu‘alayhi wa salam] declared, “Poverty leads one closer to disbelief (*kufr*)” is a sufficient justification.

2.2

In the area of education, Ungku Aziz recognises the pivotal role of the university in the development process at the individual and communal level. Throughout his twenty-year tenure as Vice-Chancellor of University of Malaya, the educational mission of University Malaya was not only to produce graduates for the sake of it, rather to produce graduates who can contribute towards solving the nation’s social, economic and cultural problems. Ungku Aziz experienced first hand on the situation of the nation: the majority Malays were not doing well enough in many areas compared to other races in the modern economy. One of the key factor is lack of educational opportunities and the fact that the only university at the time—university of Malay was taught mainly in the English language—which meant that most of the Malays, who attended Malay school would have difficulties to either enter the university or to study properly. It was with this background that Ungku Aziz came with the idea of the Centre for Foundation Studies in Science. The centre was set up by to help students from poor background. According to Ungku Aziz, based on his experience in 1970s, only five Malays enrolled into the medical faculty. If lucky, only two or three would graduate as doctors, “Looking at the appalling situation, we established the matriculation centre. We chose students from kampong who are keen to pursue medicine, engineering and science. At that time, students from cities would go to London to pursue medicine. But, at the medical faculty, the lecturer speaks in English. While the chosen Malay children think in Malay. The terms are not the problem but it is the mind that thinks in Malay. Thus, we looked for teachers who can teach medicine and the related fields in Malay.” As a result, after three or four years of preparation, the Malay students could grasp their studies better, which also motivated them to improve their English. According to their website, since 1977, the centre has seen over 2000 doctors, 800 dentists and 2600 engineers progress through the programme and graduate from the University of Malaya. And according to a news report, up to present, between seven and eight thousand

students have graduated from the Centre for Foundation Studies in Science. Some of them have turned into experts and now nearing their retirement age.

In his pursuit of promoting material development for the local community, Ungku Aziz does not neglect the internal part of development—he often reflects and remarks on the question of moral values and ethics that he considers essential for there to be sustained development. According to Ungku Aziz, through the passage of time, the Malay character has been influenced by various Western and Eastern cultures to the extent that it has been displaced from its proper place or true character (Utusan Malaysia, *Cerdik pandai diseru kaji pemikiran Melayu dahulu*, 4 October 1985). This is perhaps due to his awareness on how the Western nations tends to disregard moral values and ethical due to their obsession with the material and pecuniary aspects of life to the neglect of all other dimensions—even in the name of development. The result is that human society has been reduced to the ‘economy’ and even the ‘economy’ has been diminished to the ‘market’. He is concerned for example, with the attitude of equating happiness with materialism and physical wealth in the society and the society’s over-emphasis on this narrow vision of success (Utusan Malaysia, *Erti kemerdekaan kita*, 31 August, 2003).

To make matters worse, he observed that in 21st century Malaysia, the enormous expansion in infrastructures and financial assets do not commensurate with the moral values of the society (Utusan Malaysia, 2003). He is concerned that the Malays have lost a great deal of their values and urged the government to address this matter thoroughly. Thus it is evident in Ungku Aziz’s thinking that his concern for development is not only restricted to the economic sense. In 2003, Ungku Aziz expressed in a newspaper interview that although Malaysia has become more developed in terms of economy as a whole, there are other areas that is not sufficiently developed—he felt that the Malays are not sufficiently developed in terms of attitude, which is related to the value-system of a people (Utusan Malaysia, 2003). Ungku Aziz believes that the kind of values that a society should possess is honesty (*jujur*), transparency (*tulus*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*), and the Malay-Muslims and Malaysians in general should identify what are the values that they should on hold to. This line of reasoning by Ungku Aziz is distinct compared to other modern-day Western economist and development thinkers and even many Muslims today for that matter—many of whom are devoid of all ethical and religious concerns, and instead, follow a new set of laws governing the behaviour of the *homo-economicus*. As Abbas Mirakhor has argued (*Islam and the Path to Human and Economic Development*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), ever since Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, the western economic theory has been busy trying to do just this. This is supported by the likes of Nobel-laureate Amartya Sen, who argued that “the distancing of economics from ethics has impoverished welfare economics and also weakened the basis of a good deal of descriptive and predictive economics,” and that economics “can be made more productive by paying greater and more explicit attention to ethical considerations that shaped human

behaviour and judgment.” (Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

2.3

Since the 1980s, Ungku Aziz had actively promoted the study of the Malay literary and intellectual heritage and the readings of world’s great literary heritage for the sake of cultural well being of the nation:

The study of literature and mankind’s heritage should not be forgotten even though Malaysia is gearing towards becoming a scientific and progressive society in the next century. [...] this was because man could not live by science alone as he needed cultural nourishment for his mind. We have examples of advanced nations where scientific advancement is balanced by an education system that encourages learners to appreciate the great works of the past and present and to be familiar with at least a portion of the creative works and discourses of mankind through time and across the globe. (New Straits Times, 7 Dec 1991)

He urged the learned to study the thinking of the Malay people of the past so that find the findings can be used to improve the lives of this nation (Utusan Malaysia, 1985). This implies that he is agreement with the likes of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas—an Islamic philosopher—who holds that the intellectual insights and wisdom of the Malay-Muslims of the past remains relevant in solving modern problems. Ungku Aziz is recognises that the present-day Malay society is disconnected from their cultural and intellectual past as a result of colonization (New Straits Times, Ancient Text Sheds Light on Use of Malay, 1987). Through Ungku Aziz’s personal research on the Malay *pantun* and historical records, he was able to prove that the Malays for example, were able traders and were able to compete in the international market prior colonisation (New Straits Times, Space and Time in the Malay Mind, 1992). Thus by means of rediscovering the Malay literary heritage of the past such as the *pantun*, he intends to create more awareness and restore the character of the present day Malays to its proper place after centuries of colonisation by the Western nations which has caused serious repercussions to the social and economic life of present-day Malaysian society. He remarked, “I wanted to show that Malay traders existed long before Western imperialists came here and wiped out their trading centres, and created their own trading ports. The Malay traders went into the jungle and collected stuff they could barter with traders from China, India and other countries. They sailed around these waters and even had a compass they called pedoman. So *the East was already civilised* and we had Malay entrepreneurs long before Westerners came into the picture.”

In concurrent with his emphasis on the importance of Malay literary heritage, Ungku Aziz has been a strong proponent of the use of Malay language as a mode of instruction in the Malaysian education system for the purpose of national unity. He was responsible for its implementation in University of Malaya, which he argued is essential for a multicultural nation like Malaysia to achieve genuine national unity—without neglecting the importance of English as a language of commerce in a globalized world. He stresses, “Malay is the only vehicle, which can ensure the achievement of genuine national unity. Simultaneously, English must be learnt in order to reap the full benefits of globalisation” (New Straits Times, Bilingual Approach to Learning, 2008). Therefore, he proposed a bilingual approach to learning for the Malaysian education system, which should begin in schools, as Malay is needed for the realization of National Unity while English is needed to enable Malaysians to be internationally connected to the world: “While it is indisputable that competency in English is essential for economic and commercial development, there is an equal need for wide acceptance of the one language, Malay, that can genuinely bond together all Malaysian citizens, irrespective of their rural or urban location, race or religious background.” As for lower education, he suggested that both languages “should be taught and learnt throughout the 11 years of education and, where possible, from the first tertiary year. Language, for the formation of national unity, has to be taken seriously and not given casual lip service. It should be taught for at least two periods a week.”

And connected to his appreciation to the Malay literary heritage and Malay language is Ungku Aziz’s appreciation of the religion of Islām. Although not trained formally in the Islamic sciences, his knowledge and exposure to its proper theological and historical interpretation (perhaps due to his contact with the likes of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas) had often led him to express pertinent concerns—he was for example, concerned on the understanding of religion in his society. He once remarked that a large number of Malays were not receiving the “full strength of their religion” due to the social changes in the society, and adding, “They know the tenets, but they do not have time to develop stability, to learn to apply them in daily life” (New Straits Times, Fight against Big C: test of moral strength, 1981). In an effort to increase the depth of understanding in the religion of Islam, he often promoted ideas from the Islamic civilisation. This is reflected for example, in his involvement with the Academy of Islamic Studies – Ungku Aziz was first involved in the planning of the Islamic academy since he was first contacted by the representatives of *Yayasan Pengajian Tinggi Islam Kelantan* (Islamic Higher Education of Kelantan Foundation), to merge or incorporate its institution into University of Malaya so that the students will gain university credentials. In 1975, this proposal was accepted by former Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak. Ungku Aziz prepared a conceptual working paper that was agreed upon Senate Council of the University—in it, he proposed that the graduates will be instilled with the spirit of self-

reliance and concerned on the importance of the nation's development. Towards achieving this end, he proposed a new concept for the academy whereby the campus would have a farm where students of the academy will cultivate vegetables, fruits as well as rear farm animals and fresh water fish. The agricultural production of this farm will be an importance source of food supply for the campus' residents and it will also be a place for the students to exercise physically and spiritually. This idea was inspired based on his readings of the *madrassa* system in Islamic civilisation of the past (Aziz Zariza Ahmad, 1982).

In 1985, Ungku Aziz approved and was responsible for the introduction of the Islamic civilisation course as an optional course offered to all (muslims and non-muslims) first-year undergraduate students at University of Malaya. Ungku Aziz stressed that the course it not aimed at "Islamizing" the non-Muslims, rather it is to give the opportunity for non-Muslims to have a broader understanding of the religion of Islam, that is, in the civilisational sense. This implies that Ungku Aziz is aware of how Islam has contributed in world history. He argued further that the course is necessary in the present-time as there is resurgence in the interest in Islam in the world such that it cannot be ignored. There were also many national and international-level educational programs related to Islamic civilisation that was approved by Ungku Aziz during his tenure such as the three-day *Symposium on History and Philosophy of Science in Commemoration of 1000th Anniversary of Ibn Sina*, which was attended by more than 200 scholars from 15 countries, from 29th June to 1st July, 1981. Ungku Aziz was also actively promoting Islamic art and its literary heritage, which he felt "could fill the void in Malay art and culture" and suggested for it to be introduced in schools and universities. He suggested that Islam should be presented in a beautiful way through arts and literature from the Islamic civilisation such as the Persian wherein lies beauty and attraction. He felt that as Muslims, "we should also be familiar with the art of Islamic calligraphy of Persia, Turkey and Egypt". This is because he believes that Islamic calligraphy will have a great significance and effect on our society as "many people especially Muslims were only just beginning to realise that the Islamic world was rich in art." Thus the exhibitions in University of Malaya during his time were intended to stimulate this awareness. In addition, he also felt that Malays who considered themselves intellectuals should be able to recognize Jawi alphabets in books of poems of the 18th and 19th centuries and at least, the different styles of Arabic writing, which is a common practice of among Muslim intellectuals in the past. This shows that Ungku Aziz does not neglect religion in his educational and development agenda.

3. Conclusion

Ungku Aziz's impact on the development agenda in Malaysia is evident from the frequent references to his name, ideas or works in numerous books and articles and the awards bestowed on him. Ungku Aziz's ideas have been carried forward in many ways—the University of Malaya and *Tabung Haji* are now established institutions, not to mention the Government of Malaysia's development plans, were build on the initial works of Ungku Aziz. The fact that these institutions exists today and Malaysia's

stability, over a quarter of century after Ungku Aziz's retirement, are themselves a testament to the influence and effectiveness of his ideas. Unlike other Muslim economists, his works are not only theoretical but also proven to be practically sound that have brought significant change in a Muslim-majority state. This is because Ungku Aziz's interpretation of development is geared towards the needs of the local community and does not disregard the spiritual and cultural well being of the society. Ungku Aziz, in place of the dominant obsession with economic development and growth approach, has instead been proposing and promoting various initiatives that are locally, culturally and religiously rooted and most importantly, people-oriented to direct his nation away from the uncertain path of Western modernisation and dependence of the West. The alleviation of poverty, issues on quality of life, moral values, culture and religion in development, all remain high on international and national agendas in the twenty-first century. There are many lessons to draw upon the Ungku Aziz's endeavour, insights and ideas and this is surely indicative that he was well ahead of his time. There is no doubt that in order to reach a fair and complete judgement about Ungku Aziz's insights and ideas on development, an independent study is indispensable.

REFERENCES

- Abd Hamid, Abu Bakar (Ed.), Et. al. (2010). *Royal Professor Ungku A. Aziz: The Renaissance Man*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press.
- Arndt, H.W. (1989). *Economic Development: The History of an Idea*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (1978). *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: ISTAC.
- _____ (1998). *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: ISTAC.
- Cowen, M. & Shenton, R.W. (1996). *Doctrines of Development*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Ozay Mehmet (1999). *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Rist, Gilbert (2008). *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (3rd edition). London, UK: Zed Books.
- Setia, Adi (2011). Mu'amala and the Revival of the Islamic Gift Economy. *Islam & Science*, Vol. 9(1), 67-78
- _____ (2013). Fard al-Kifaya, Mu'amala, and the Commonweal: Reconnecting Economics and the Economy to the Communities. *Islam & Science*, 11(1), 83-97
- Ungku Abdul Aziz (1957). *Facts and Fallacies on the Malay Economy*. Singapore: University of Malaya Press.
- _____ (1959). *Pilgrims Economy Improvement Programme*. A plan submitted to the government of the Federation of Malaya on December 22.
- _____ (1964). Poverty and Rural Development in Malaysia. *Kajian Ekonomi Malaysia*, 1(1), 75-105
- _____ (1983, August 16). *Must patterns of change in developing countries follow the West? What other possible patterns?* Paper presented at the Association of Commonwealth Universities Congress, Birmingham, UK.

Türkiye İslam İktisadı Dergisi, Cilt 2, Sayı 1, Şubat 2015, ss. 1-15
Turkish Journal of Islamic Economics, Vol. 2, No. 1, February 2015, pp. 1-15

Wan Daud, Wan Mohd Nor (2005). *Pembangunan Di Malaysia: Ke Arah Satu Kefahaman Baru Yang Lebih Sempurna* (Development in Malaysia: Towards a Holistic New Understanding). Kuala Lumpur; Malaysia: ISTAC.

_____ (1994). Some Basic Issues of Development in Malaysia, *Malaysian Development Experience: Changes and Challenges*. Kuala Lumpur: National Institute of Public Administration, 855-880.