

The Malay Community Facing the 21st Century: Socio-cultural Hindrances to Overall Progress

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Abstract: *Malaysia expects to become a fully developed society by the year 2020. This is a challenging task, in which the Malay/Bumiputera community, mainly consisting of Muslims, has to play a key role. While some advances have been made in preparing the Malay Muslims for leadership roles, overall progress cannot be achieved without a dynamic action-oriented and highly ethical Qur'anic worldview. At the same time it is necessary to remove the socio-cultural hinderances that block full realization of the potential of Malay Muslims. A number of such hinderances are discussed along with their symptoms and some possible causes.*

The underlying assumption of this paper is the conviction as stated in the Qur'an that, "Allah (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their selves" (13:11). Without denying that external factors such as international politics and powerful hegemonic or systemic forces do play important roles in determining the direction of small nations, one should constantly examine the internal conditions of the nation or the major community in the nation which make it possible for the forces of external domination to exploit it to their advantage and thus indirectly perpetuate the conditions of cultural subservience of the said community.

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The subject chosen for this paper truly demands extensive research of an interdisciplinary nature. It requires the collective input of economists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and theologians to adequately understand the interplay of variables in socio-cultural phenomena of the contemporary Malay community. Due to the constraints of time and paucity of interdisciplinary knowledge available to the author, this paper is but the result of the author's own perception of Malaysia's future trajectory and his understanding of what constitutes some of the sociocultural factors which impede the overall progress of his own community.

As such, the contents of the paper are offered as food for thought and internal discourse within the community. The ideas are by no means conclusive and are open to correction or alterations by more competent researchers or interdisciplinary groups of scholars.

I. THE CHALLENGES

The Vision of Comprehensive Development

The ultimate objective that we should aim for is a Malaysia that is a fully developed country by the year 2020.... We should be a developed country in our own mould...Malaysia should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally.... By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.¹

The above mission statement of Vision 2020 proclaimed by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on February 28, 1991, has aroused a nationwide interest on the government's new long-term agenda of nation-building to steer the country past the agrarian economy into a prosperous industrialized nation status by the year 2020. The thirty-year perspective augments the existing long-term planning of the Outline Perspective Plans and the medium-term five-year development plans. The human resource development strategies to propel the nation towards the "ultimate objective" and to sustain a just, prosperous, and balanced development in a post-Cold War scenario of global changes are as crucial as they are demanding. The Prime Minister identified in Vision 2020

nine central strategic challenges which have to be overcome in order to attain the objective of comprehensive development, not as an imitation of western or eastern models, but as one that possesses its own unique identity—"a developed country," as he put it "in our own mould."²

These challenges may be summarized as those of:

- (1) Establishing *national unity* and national integration;
- (2) Achieving *psychological liberation*, self-confidence, and pursuit of excellence;
- (3) Developing a *mature democratic society* that is consensual and community-oriented;
- (4) Establishing "a *fully moral and ethical society*, in which citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards;"
- (5) Establishing a mature, liberal, and *tolerant society*;
- (6) Establishing a *scientific and progressive society* which will contribute to the scientific and technological civilization;
- (7) Establishing a fully *caring society and culture* based on a strong and resilient family system;
- (8) Ensuring an *economically just society* in which there is no longer identification of race with economic function or economic backwardness; and
- (9) Establishing a *prosperous society* with a fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient economy.³

In explaining Challenge No. 8 above, Dr. Mahathir reiterated that it entailed, among other things, the necessity to "ensure the healthy development of a viable and robust Bumiputera commercial and industrial community" which will be "economically resilient and fully competitive...so as to be at par with the Non-Bumiputera community."⁴ This calls for "a mental revolution and a cultural transformation."⁵

The Rationale for the Concern About the Future

The Malaysian leaders' concern about the future of Malaysia and their desire to realize a prosperous and progressive nation can perhaps be explained with reference to the modern history of Malaysia, Malaysia's position in the political economy of Southeast Asia, and the futuristic scenarios of the world as a whole.⁶

In the 1970s and 1980s, following Japan's spectacular postwar growth, the "Little Dragons"—South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong—also prospered. The ASEAN countries, including Malaysia, seem to be poised for a brighter future as compared with other regions in the world, but they are also jostling among themselves to secure a more advantageous position in relation to the changing world economy. The strength of the Overseas Chinese economic position in Southeast Asia is bound to increase with the booming of mainland China's economy currently experimenting with "market socialism" and the return of Hong Kong, one of the "Little Dragons," to China after 1997.

The rise of the Pacific Rim as one of the megatrends predicted by John Naisbitt opens up new opportunities for ASEAN countries, but the spectre of regional trade blocs and protectionist strategies dictated by the western powers looms large on the horizon. The misgivings and misapprehensions on the part of the United States about the true nature of the Malaysian-initiated East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) is indicative of the precariousness of ASEAN-based regional cooperation.⁷

The "New World Order" proclaimed during the Gulf War and betrayed in Sarajevo, seems to promise more disorder and relentless atrocities against a new target: Muslim communities living in areas where the big powers' petroleum-related interests are not affected, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, and Kashmir.⁸ However the twentyfirst century will be, according to several well-known futurologists, the era of Peter Drucker's "New Realities," the preeminence of information technology; the globalization of world economy and cultures; the dominance of the "Knowledge Society," (as predicted by Peter Drucker and others); the emergence of what Taichi Sakaiya calls the "Knowledge-Value Revolution," which is a prophecy of a new economic and social universe; the new realities of Kenichi Ohmae's "Borderless World," as well as the phenomena of "Global Paradox" projected by John Naisbitt; and the creed of "Excellence" as has been preached by Tom Peters and others like him.⁹ The global competition of the twentyfirst century, the revolutionary new linkages between information, wealth and war, new forms of wealth acquisition and the shifting of power bases in the era of what Alvin Toffler calls "Third Wave" civilization, in addition to new waves of religious fanaticism and deviationist messianic cults across the globe, will also be potential sources of violence, conflicts, and wars.¹⁰

The Place of the Muslim Communities

A host of questions may be raised by Muslim intellectuals and thinkers

with regard to the role that Muslim countries and communities could play in the twentyfirst century with all their resources as well as internal weaknesses. Are Muslims, notwithstanding the worldwide Islamic resurgence, adequately equipped—materially, economically, technologically, intellectually, morally and spiritually—to be *khayr ummah ukhrijat lil-nās* (the best of nations brought forth for mankind); or must they continue to be led or misled by the powerful non-Muslim nations? The impotence of the Muslim world to help Muslim communities in the case of Palestine, Kashmir, Somalia, the Rohingyas, the Moros, and Bosnia-Herzegovina is as baffling as its propensity to engage in senseless internal feuds and wars. The embarrassing ineptness of Muslim countries to assume the mantle of world leadership in important aspects of human civilization needs in-depth analysis and profound investigations beyond the scope of a single international conference. Some of the sources may well lie in what Dr. ʿAbdulḤamīd AbūSulaymān calls "The Crisis of the Muslim Mind,"¹¹ in psychological and intellectual encumbrances anchored in past misadventures, or a combination of certain socio-cultural variables together with inherently defective political systems and structures.

Malay/Bumiputera Position

In the Malaysian context, the Malay community represents that part of the worldwide Muslim *ummah* which is supposed to be strong in every domain of social existence, consonant with the imperatives of Islam such as:

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies and others besides, whom you may not know, but whom Allah does know. (8:60)

Before it could play an effective and sustainable leading role in regional or global platforms, the Malay community would have to overcome several long-standing internal handicaps to acquire the new culture of comprehensive excellence in the face of keen domestic competition from the non-Bumiputeras, such as the Chinese community, particularly in the field of education as the determinant factor for the overall progress of the Muslim *ummah*.

The Bumiputera community constituting the majority Malay community, and other indigenous groups who are animists or followers of other religions, has been struggling from the period of independence

in 1957, with governmental assistance, to catch up, educationally and economically with the generally more advanced Chinese community.¹² The New Economic Policy (1970-1990) introduced after the 1969 racial riots was designed primarily to assist the Bumiputera community to be on a par economically with the non-Bumiputera through a process of affirmative action on the part of the government and a restructuring of society. Between 1970 and 1990, the Bumiputera portion of national corporate wealth rose from a mere 2.4 per cent to 20.3 per cent, which was nearly 10 per cent less than the 30 per cent slice of the economic pie targeted for Bumiputeras by 1990.¹³

Table 1. Membership of Share Capital (At Par Value) of Limited Companies, 1990 (\$ million)

<i>Ownership Group</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Bumiputera individuals and enterprises ¹	15,322.0	14.0
Trust agencies ²	6,976.5	6.3
Chinese	49,296.5	44.9
Indians	1,068.0	1.0
Others	389.5	0.3
Foreigners	27,525.5	25.1
Nominee companies	9,220.4	8.4
Total	109,798.4	100.0

Sources: Registrar of Companies (ROC), Central Information Collection Unit (CICU), PNB and Economic Planning Unit (EPU) estimates.

Notes: 1. The amount held by this group consists of \$9,000 million owned by Bumiputera as direct investors and \$6,300 million as investment in institutions channelling Bumiputera funds.
2. Shares held through traditional trust agencies such as PNB, PERNAS and SEDCs. It also includes the amount of equity owned by the Government through other agencies and companies which have been identified under the Transfer Scheme of Government Equity to Bumiputera.

Source: OPP2, p. 103.

The Second Outline Perspective Plan, 1991-2000 (OPP2) mentions that although the economic position of the Bumiputera has improved considerably since 1970, the special assistance programme will continue in the nineties "until the economic imbalances are corrected." However, "only Bumiputera with potential, commitment and good track records

will be given assistance so that the objectives of creating a viable and resilient BCIC [Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community] under the NDP [New Development Policy] are achieved."¹⁴

Table 2. Incidence of Poverty and Poor Households, 1990 and 2000

	1990			2000		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Peninsular Malaysia						
Incidence of poverty (%)	15.0	7.3	19.3	5.3	3.0	8.0
No poor households ('000)	448.9	77.5	371.4	230.0	69.8	160.2
Incidence of hardcore poverty (%)	3.6	1.4	4.8	0.5	0.3	0.8
Hardcore poor ('000)	107.3	14.9	92.4	23.0	7.0	16.0
Total households ('000)	2986.4	1062.2	1924.2	4327.3	2326.1	2001.2
Sabah						
Incidence of poverty (%)	34.3	14.7	39.1	20.0	6.5	27.3
No. poor households ('000)	99.6	8.5	91.1	84.0	9.6	74.4
Incidence of hardcore poverty (%)	8.5	1.7	10.1	3.0	0.9	4.1
Hardcore poor ('000)	24.7	1.0	23.7	12.6	1.4	11.2
Total households ('000)	290.8	57.7	233.1	419.8	147.3	272.5
Sarawak						
Incidence of poverty (%)	21.0	4.9	24.7	12.7	0.8	16.5
No. poor households ('000)	70.9	3.1	67.8	59.9	0.9	59.0
Incidence of hardcore poverty (%)	3.3	0.6	3.9	1.2	0.2	1.5
Hardcore poor ('000)	11.1	0.4	10.7	5.6	0.2	5.4
Total households ('000)	337.4	62.8	274.6	471.8	114.6	357.2
Malaysia						
Incidence of poverty (%)	17.1	7.5	21.8	7.2	3.1	11.2
No. poor households ('000)	619.4	89.1	530.3	373.9	80.3	293.6
Incidence of hardcore poverty (%)	4.0	1.4	5.2	0.8	0.3	1.2
Hardcore poor ('000)	143.1	16.3	26.8	41.2	8.6	32.6
Total households ('000)	3614.6	1182.7	2431.9	5218.9	2588.0	2630.9

Sources: Household Income Survey, 1989 and EPU estimates.

Source : OPP2, p. 109

The shortage of high-level manpower specialized in S & T and R & D is crucial for the overall development process of the nation, but the situation of the Bumiputera community is worse off. Therefore, the OPP2 says "more Malaysians, especially Bumiputera, will be encouraged to pursue relevant advanced professional and technological degrees in selected universities and institutions overseas."¹⁵ In 1970, Bumiputera enrolment in local universities was 49.7 per cent and in 1990 it stood at 72.6 per cent.¹⁶

Table 3. Employment by Sector and Ethnic Group 1990 and 2000

Sector	1990									
	Bumi-putera	(%)	Chinese	(%)	Indian	(%)	Otherrs	(%)	Total	(%)
Agriculture, forestry, livestock and fishing	1,404.6	36.7	295.1	13.5	122.8	21.8	15.1	29.8	1,837.6	27.8
(%)	76.4		16.1		6.7		0.8		100.0	
Mining and quarrying	19.1	0.5	15.2	0.7	4.2	0.7	0.6	1.1	39.1	0.6
(%)	48.8		38.9		10.8		1.5		100.0	
Manufacturing	649.4	17.0	475.6	21.8	157.3	28.0	7.9	15.6	1,290.2	19.5
(%)	50.3		36.9		12.2		0.6		100.0	
Construction	183.8	4.8	212.9	9.8	26.4	4.7	3.8	7.5	426.9	6.4
(%)	43.0			49.9		6.2		0.9	100.0	
Electricity, gas & water	32.1	0.8	5.9	0.3	7.6	1.4	0.3	0.6	45.9	0.7
(%)	69.8		12.9		16.6		0.7		100.0	
Transport, storage & Comm	154.5	4.0	92.6	4.2	36.2	6.4	2.1	4.1	285.4	4.3
(%)	54.1		32.4		12.8		0.7		100.0	
Wholesales and retail trade, hotels and restaurants	475.3	12.4	668.8	30.6	85.2	15.1	10.1	19.9	1,239.4	18.7
(%)	38.2		54.1		6.9		0.8		100.0	
Finance, insurance, real estate and business services	95.2	2.5	109.6	5.0	23.8	4.2	2.7	5.3	231.3	3.5
(%)	41.1		47.4		10.3		1.2		100.0	
Government services	560.3	14.6	214.8	9.8	69.3	12.3	5.8	11.4	850.2	12.8
(%)	65.9		25.3		8.2		0.6		100.0	
Other services	251.1	6.6	91.7	4.2	29.9	5.3	2.3	4.5	375.0	5.7
(%)	66.9		24.5		8.0		0.6		100.0	
Total	3,825.4	100.0	2,182.2	100.0	562.7	100.0	50.7	100.0	6,621.0	100.0
(%)	57.8		32.9		8.5		0.8		100.0	
Labour Force	4,093.0		2,304.3		595.9		53.3		7,046.5	
(%)	58.0		32.7		8.5		0.8		100.0	
Unemployment	267.6		122.1		33.2		2.6		425.5	
(%)	62.9		28.7		7.8		0.6		100.0	
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.5		5.3		5.6		4.9		6.0	

Sources: Labour Force Surveys, 1980-88, and EPU estimates.

Sources: OPP2, p.116

Sector	1990									
	Bumi-putera	(%)	Chinese	(%)	Indian	(%)	Others	(%)	Total	(%)
	1,364.3	26.5	304.2	10.2	120.5	15.0	10.9	17.9	799.9	20
	75.8		16.9		6.7		0.6		100.0	
	21.2	0.4	16.3	0.5	4.2	0.5	0.6	1.0	42.3	0.5
	50.1		38.5		9.9		1.5		100.0	
	1,183.4	23.0	659.1	22.1	288.1	35.9	13.3	21.8	143.9	29
	55.2		30.7		13.5		0.6		100.0	
	300.2	5.8	317.5	10.7	40.6	5.1	6.1	10.0	664.4	7.4
	45.2		47.8		6.1		0.9		100.0	
	35.1	0.7	6.4	0.2	8.6	1.1	0.1	0.2	50.2	0.6
	69.9		12.7		17.2		0.2		100.0	
	235.3	4.6	115.7	3.9	57.9	7.2	1.6	2.6	410.5	4.6
	57.3		28.2		14.1		0.4		100.0	
	868.8	16.9	1,028.8	34.6	131.3	16.3	20.9	34.2	1,049.8	28
	42.4		50.2		6.4		1.0		100.0	
	133.0	2.6	138.5	4.7	32.6	4.1	2.4	3.9	306.5	3.4
	43.4		45.2		10.6		0.8		100.0	
	575.5	11.2	235.2	7.9	80.5	10.0	3.0	4.9	894.2	10
	64.4		26.3		9.0		0.3		100.0	
	427.5	8.3	155.9	5.2	39.2	4.9	2.0	3.3	624.6	7.0
	68.4		24.9		6.4		0.3		100.0	
	5,144.3	100.0	2,977.6	100.0	803.5	100.0	60.9	100.0	8,986.3	100.0
	57.2		33.2		8.9		0.7		100.0	
	5,433.2		3,043.5		824.1		63.7		9,364.5	
	58.0		32.5		8.8		0.7		100.0	
	288.9		65.9		20.6		2.8		378.2	
	76.4		17.4		5.5		0.7		100.0	
	5.3		2.2		2.5		4.4		4.0	

Source: OPP2, p.117

The position of the Bumiputera as compared to other communities in ownership of share capital of limited companies is shown in Table 1.

On poverty eradication, "the number of poor households in the country as a whole is expected to be reduced from 619,400 in 1990 to 373,900 by the year 2020....With the implementation of special programmes, hardcore poverty, now involving 143,100 households, is expected to be practically eradicated by the year 2000."¹⁷

The OPP2 projects that of the 2.4 million jobs expected to be created, about 55.8 per cent or 1.3 million will be taken up by the Bumiputera. "In terms of job categories, about 68.4 per cent of the new additional employment in the professional and technical categories will be taken up by the Bumiputera. However, about half of these jobs will be in the teaching and nursing professions." (See tables 3, 4 and 5).¹⁸

Survival of the Malay Community by 2020

With the nation now geared towards fulfilling the objectives of Vision 2020, many Malay leaders are worried that the Malay community as a whole—despite having made some remarkable progress over the last two decades—might not be able to meet the demanding goals of the New Development Policy which calls for, among other things, the evolution of a Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community with a new breed of Malay entrepreneurs, managers, and leaders who possess the qualities of excellence, competitiveness, resiliency, self-reliance, strategic thinking, integrity, professionalism, state-of-the-art knowledge and skills and, at the same time, are imbued with high moral and religious values. As Dr. Nawawi Mat Awin, the Chairman of the Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, put it in the Third Congress on Bumiputera Economy in 1992, "The finishing line keeps changing fast and all the time....How do we compete fairly when the players play according to different rules?"¹⁹

The Third Congress on Bumiputera Economy (January, 10-12 1992), addressed all the relevant issues pertaining to the challenges of forging a more progressive and well-rounded Malay/Bumiputera community in the next three decades. The necessity of attitudinal, cultural, and institutional changes was highlighted. The sixty-three resolutions passed by the Congress also touched on the need for a process of psychological engineering, application of Islamic values and ethics, inculcation of business culture in Bumiputera families, acquisition of technology transfer, and a stronger orientation among the Bumiputera towards mathematics, science, and technology in schools and universities.²⁰

Table 4. Employment by occupation and ethnic group 1990 and 2000

Sector	1990					2000				
	Bumi-putera	(%) Chinese	(%) Indian	(%) Others	Total (%)	Bumi-putera	(%) Chinese	(%) Indian	(%) Others	Total (%)
Professional and technical (%)	350.4	9.2	178.6	8.2	44.8	8.0	7.0	13.8	580.8	8.8
	60.3	30.8	7.7	1.2	100.0					
Teachers and nurses (%)	148.7	54.9	13.7	1.2	218.5					
	68.1	25.1	6.3	0.5	100.0					
Administrative and managerial (%)	54.1	1.4	95.3	4.4	8.6	1.5	4.4	8.7	162.4	2.5
	33.3	58.7	5.3	2.7	100.0					
Clerical (%)	354.7	9.3	238.1	10.9	50.5	9.0	2.6	5.1	645.9	9.8
	54.9	36.9	7.8	0.4	100.0					
Sales (%)	274.2	7.2	429.8	19.7	49.7	8.8	7.6	15.0	761.3	11.5
	36.0	56.5	6.5	1.0	100.0					
Service (%)	473.9	12.4	207.7	9.5	81.8	14.5	6.9	13.6	770.3	11.6
	61.5	27.0	10.6	0.9	100.0					
Agricultural (%)	1,431.1	37.4	295.1	13.5	131.4	23.4	14.9	29.4	1,872.5	28.3
	76.4	15.8	7.0	0.8	100.0					
Production (%)	887.0	23.2	737.6	33.8	195.9	34.8	7.3	14.4	1,827.8	27.6
	48.5	40.4	10.7	0.4	100.0					
Total (%)	3,825.4	100.0	2,182.2	100.0	562.7	100.0	50.7	100.0	6,621.0	100.0
	57.8	32.9	8.5	0.8	100.0					

Sources: Labour Force Surveys, 1980-88, and EPU estimates.

Source: OPP2, p.118.

Source: OPP2, p.119.

The Islamic Perspective of Overall Progress

Since the Third Congress, several national-level conferences, seminars, and workshops have been discussing the implications of the New Development Policy and Vision 2020 for the Malay/Bumiputera community. As a Muslim community, the Malay/Bumiputera have also been reminded in some of these seminars of the holistic Islamic perspective on the overall progress of the *ummah*. The moral-spiritual vision of man as God's vicegerent on earth, entrusted with the mission of realizing "the good life" (*al-hayāh al-tayyibah*), seeking and utilizing all the goodly bounties (*al-khayrāt*) on God's earth; striving hard and becoming strong economically, physically, and morally with all the God-given resources on land, in the water and in the atmosphere to establish a humane, just, peaceful, and prosperous society, country, and civilization for all of humanity; and integrating in all these worldly activities and endeavours the values of *īmān* in and accountability to Allah (s.w.t.) as the one and only Master of all that exists to Whose will and pleasure man submits with all sincerity and humility, such that all those worldly activities and attainments become a form of *'ibādah* (worship) to Him, thereby becoming worthy of achieving true success and felicity (*al-falāh*) through "goodness in this world" (*fī al-dunyā ḥasanah*) and "goodness in the hereafter" (*wa fī al-ākhirah ḥasanah*).

This divinely revealed vision is not unknown to an increasing number of Malay leaders, professionals, intellectuals, and administrators.²¹ But the depth of understanding of this holistic vision and the degree of its internalization within the depths of the Malay psyche to the extent that it becomes the principal motivation for external behaviour, which consequently transforms the quality of life and culture of the Malay people as a whole, remains an open question and an issue to be further analyzed.

The notion of "overall progress" of the Muslim *ummah* used in this paper is based on the above holistic vision and refers to the positive changes and collective improvement in the life of the Muslim community as compared to the non-Muslim communities, in all fields of important human endeavour—economy, defence, education, science and technology, research and development, politics, administration and management, literature and arts, social welfare, social relations, and international affairs—all infused and integrated with the moral-spiritual values of Islam and in conformity with the principles of Islamic *'aqīdah* (creed) and *sharī'ah* (divine law).

In the Malaysian context, this perspective relates mainly to the Malay

Bumiputera's ongoing struggle to achieve a better economic and educational standing vis-à-vis their immediate competitors, while retaining and improving their Islamic identity. Therefore, when we try to identify some of the sociocultural factors which hinder the overall progress of the Malay Muslim *ummah* in Malaysian history and environment, we should not only look at the situation of the economically deprived sections of the community who may appear to be more religious or pious but also at the growing middle class and the highly fortunate upper class Malays who are generally affluent and "economically developed" but may not be aware of the holistic Islamic vision of progress or, if they are aware, may not be enthusiastic for various reasons, to infuse the moral-spiritual values in their professions or enterprises.

Table 5. Registered Professionals by Ethnic Group, 1990

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Bumi-putera</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Chinese (%)</i>	<i>Indian (%)</i>	<i>Otherrs (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>			
Architects (%)	231 23.6	2.0	728 74.4	3.2 1.2	12 0.2	8 0.8	1.1 100.0	979 2.4	
Accountants (%)	627 11.2	5.3	4,524 81.2	20.0 6.2	346 6.5	77 1.4	10.3 100.0	5,574 13.8	
Engineers (%)	7,018 34.8	59.7	11,741 58.2	51.9 5.3	1,065 19.9	342 1.7	45.6 100.0	20,166 49.8	
Dentists (%)	406 24.3	3.5	847 50.7	3.7 23.7	396 7.4	21 1.3	2.8 100.0	1,670 4.1	
Doctors (%)	1,951 27.8	16.6	2,430 34.7	10.7 34.4	2,410 44.9	216 3.1	28.8 100.0	7,007 17.3	
Vet. Surgeons (%)	242 35.9	2.1	160 23.7	0.7 37.0	250 4.7	23 3.4	3.1 100.0	675 1.7	
Lawyers (%)	705 22.4	6.0	1,575 50.0	7.0 26.5	836 15.6	37 1.2	4.9 100.0	3,153 7.8	
Surveyors (%)	573 44.7	4.9	636 49.6	2.8 3.7	48 0.9	26 2.0	3.5 100.0	1,283 3.2	
Total (%)	11,753 29.0	100	22,641 55.9	100	5,363 13.2	100	750 1.9	100	40,507 100.0

Sources: Professional associations and institutions, covering both the public and private sectors.

Soruce: OPP2, p.120.

At any rate, the present author does not share the view that economic progress and material well-being are not worthy pursuits for God-fearing Muslims, mainly because economic backwardness and material deprivation will perpetuate the community's dependency on the non-Muslim world to meet basic needs and overcome hunger, disease, and ignorance and make them easy targets of exploitation, suppression and oppression by their enemies, within the country or from overseas. At the same time, the present author regards economic progress, material well-being, and an affluent life-style which are not inspired and guided by the transcendent and holistic vision of Islam as highly undesirable because they contribute to serious social injustices, chronic social problems, moral degeneration, pursuit of selfish pleasure, and the "worship" of material glory.²²

Table 6. Ownership According to Ethnic Group in Manufacturing, Construction and Selected Service Sector

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Bumiputera/ Bumiputera Intérest</i>	<i>Trust Agency</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Indian</i>
Manufacturing	6.2	1.1	52.4	1.1
Construction	24.1	0.3	69.3	1.3
Wholesale Trading	10.3 ¹	-	84.5	2.9
Retail Trade	32.3 ¹	-	60.4	6.3
Shipping	29.71	-	20.3	0.0
Tourism & Travel	31.4 ¹	-	45.9	7.6
Hotel & Lodging	5.91 ¹	-	77.8	0.4
Real Estate	6.0 ¹	-	68.0	19.3
Advertisement	17.1 ¹	-	56.3	1.7
Professional ² Services	15.8 ¹	-	55.3	18.8

Source: Department of Statistics (1988)

¹Including Bumiputera institutions and Trust Agencies.

²Including draughtsmen, quantity surveyors, engineers, lawyers, architects, dentists, accountants and veterinary doctors.

The New Malay

The issue of the so-called *Melayu Baru* (The New Malay) which has triggered interesting debates in the last few years is therefore pertinent to this paper and merits some elucidation before we move to the subject of sociocultural hindrances to Muslim progress.

Dr. Mahathir's call on November 8, 1991, during the annual UMNO General Assembly for the evolution of "a new Malay and Bumiputera race" to meet the challenges of the next century, to be sure, received mixed reactions, but that did not discourage the Menteri Besar of Selangor Darul Ehsan, Tan Sri Muhammad Taib, to publish a book on the subject, nor Dr. Siddiq Fadil to continue writing a series of articles on "The Mind of the New Malay," which ultimately were compiled into a book. To dispel some of the misgivings about the idea of "the New Malay," Dr. Mahathir explained in 1993 that "The New Malay should be an all-rounder with a wider vision, and should be more respected. But he should have his religious belief and spiritual strength intact."²⁴ The criticism against the idea of the New Malay (or the "Global Malay" as used by Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak) seems to emanate from some Malay intellectuals and professionals who view the meteoric rise to wealth, fame, and influence of some Malay corporate players in the 1990s with apprehension and some degree of cynicism, because they appear to be turning their backs on important aspects of Malay culture, such as the promotion of the Malay language and on Islamic moral values of humility, generosity, and moderation.

The proponents of the Melayu Baru concept explain that the Melayu Baru's religious identity remains firmly rooted in Islamic culture. He has to acquire, however, new skills, knowledge, and attitudes commensurate with the new global challenges of the twentyfirst century. The idea "is a manifestation of the need to actualize a Malay race which possesses a culture that is consonant with changing times; able to face the challenges and to compete without depending on assistance; educated, knowledgeable, sincere, disciplined, efficient, and trustworthy."²⁵ According to the executive chairman of the Securities Commission, Dr. Munir Majid, the "Global Malay" has to have five critical characteristics: "technical ability, an efficient and industrious work ethic, language ability to facilitate global communication, social adaptability, and cultural and religious strength." Expounding on the last characteristic, he says: "Belief should give rise to confidence, rather than become an impediment and a reason to distance oneself from the concerns of the world."²⁶ One can add other values to be strengthened in the personality of the New Malay: integrity, discipline, diligence, excellence, creativity and innovation, competitiveness, perseverance, self-reliance, thrift, commitment to knowledge and technology acquisition, good corporate citizenship, and so on.²⁷

In the arena of public administration and management, the leaders of contemporary Malaysian civil service and bureaucracy have also

emphasized the importance of inculcating appropriate ethical values and, lately, the necessity for "paradigm-shifts."²⁸ The Chief Secretary of the government, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji b. Abdul Hamid, has elaborated twelve key values which, he said, ought to be internalized and practised by administrators in order to realize a high quality civil service.²⁹ Since most public administration officers are Malays, they represent an important wing of the New Malay community comprising both the private and public sectors, although the private sector is expected to be "the engine of growth" - to sustain the efforts of accelerated industrialization.

The New Predicaments

In spite of remarkable achievements in several aspects of the life of the Malay community, such as the reduction of the incidence of poverty, the emergence of a more educated and more affluent middle class, the rise of prominent Malay corporate leaders exercising new powers of influence, and the increase in the number of Malay professionals and Ph.D. holders over the last two decades, as well as the continued dominance of Malay political leadership in the delicately balanced Malaysian political system, the challenges and uncertainties of the twentyfirst century demand an acceleration of the process of overall progress of the community while governmental assistance is simultaneously being reduced along the way to the point that one day it would have to rely completely upon its own resources and strengths. Investment in education and skills acquisition is no doubt increasing quantitatively, but the signs on the wall seem to indicate problems of acute shortages in the requisite manpower of the Malays, quantitatively and qualitatively, as compared to their Chinese fellow-citizens.

The existing and anticipated shortages of Malay professionals, scientists, technocrats, technicians, highly skilled workers, doctors, researchers, mathematicians, information technology experts, university lecturers in the fields of science and technology, competent business managers, and entrepreneurs continue to haunt the leaders of the community, while the bitter truth remains that the majority of drug addicts, school dropouts and failures in the universities, hard-core poor, factory workers, poor fishermen and peasants on the East Coast, popular singers and artists, and lovers of cheap amusement and popular fiestas, as well as thousands who loaf around aimlessly in shopping complexes of the city, are Malays.

Much serious juvenile delinquency involves Malay children and the

divorce rate of Malay couples seems to be high. The younger generation also seems to be the best consumers of "pop" culture and they are apparently the most prone to emulate the trash elements of the western life style as depicted in Hollywood-dominated films. The belief in the efficacy and power of evil spirits and sorcerers has not vanished in some sections of the community, and the resort to the practice of vicious slander through "poison letters" to discredit business rivals or political opponents seems to be perpetrated by a few evil-minded persons but tolerated and enjoyed by many who are prone to believe the letters of *fitnah* (slander). It is also said that jealousy, rancour, and bad perception (*sū' al-zann*) of people continue to flourish in the subconscious minds of some Malays, such that if another Malay happens to attain remarkable success in business or politics, then it is not uncommon for some other Malays to start discrediting him behind his back or smearing his reputation in evil ways until he is thrown out of his fortunate position.

These above-mentioned phenomena are not new in the history of the Malay community. They represent remnants of sociocultural problems in Malay society which, despite increasing education and modernization, are not easily eradicated. It is highly probable that the Qur'anic worldview regarding man's orientation to nature, the remarkable Islamic civilizational achievements in human history, and the all-embracing ethical system of Islam have not become anchored very deeply or spread widely in Malay culture. Those aspects of indigenous culture where the impact of the dynamic action-oriented and highly ethical Qur'anic worldview has been insignificant or superficial may be responsible for perpetuating sociocultural impediments to the overall progress of the Malay community.

II. SOCIOCULTURAL HINDRANCES

In this part the paper highlights some of the sociocultural phenomena in contemporary Malay community which, in the opinion of this writer, hinder the overall progress of the Muslim *ummah* in Malaysia. They are by no means exhaustive or based on any in-depth empirical research. Each phenomenon is treated in a general way as a symptom or a manifestation in the Malaysian environment. Some probable causes are offered, albeit in a tentative manner, with the hope that other studies based on scientific methods would later verify or otherwise reveal the real underlying causes. The first five phenomena relate more to the Malay elites, while the rest involve the younger generation and the masses.

The Liberal-Secularistic Mind-set

Some symptoms: The bottomline is profit. Religious norms and values have no place in the organization or profession unless they enhance the future well-being of the organization. There is cynicism towards religiously based ethics. Business, the professions, politics, diplomacy, pleasure, and the arts are not to be mixed with religion or high ethical values. The proper place for religion or divine norms is the mosque and the five pillars of Islam are all that one should be concerned with, if at all. Multinational corporations selling liquor or cigarettes, with Muslims on the board of directors or as chairmen, use the electronic or print media to entice the younger generation by advertising nationwide concert extravaganzas without being concerned in the least about the effects of their efforts on the moral standards of the youth. The end justifies the means. Conglomerates with political connections strengthen their corporate culture without regard for national cultural values. Gambling is one way of getting rich and provides an outlet for "hot money."

Some probable causes: Influence of secular professional education. Misunderstanding the scope and nature of the Islamic religion. Impact of non-Muslims' secularistic life-style. Demands of the owners and stakeholders of the corporations. Pressure from overseas headquarters. Lack of conviction and will power to resist environmental pressures.

The Conspicuous and Ostentatious Lifestyle

Some symptoms: Craving for excessive luxury without concern for the plight of the poor and the sufferings of the underprivileged. The desire to keep up with the lifestyle of the affluent community. Striving to maintain newly acquired status symbols with the effect that the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widened. Accumulation of wealth with little awareness of the obligation to pay *zakāt* (the poor due). Spending huge amounts of public funds for birthday celebrations of prominent public figures. Widening of social cleavages.

Some probable causes: Ignorance of the egalitarian principles and social justice in Islam through formal or non-formal education. People attach social value to material affluence and status symbols. The moral-spiritual virtues of moderation, humility, and concern for the less-privileged members of society have no appeal. The idea of striving or sacrificing with one's wealth in the cause of Allah (s.w.t.) to earn His pleasure may appear to be too idealistic or utopian.

The "Money Politics" Syndrome³⁰

Some symptoms: The practice of buying votes for various positions in political party elections has been rampant over the last few years. This corrupt practice threatens to undermine the credibility of leaders and the party. UMNO leaders were alarmed by this widespread practise, and they publicly amended its constitution on June 19, 1994 to curb money politics and abuse of power in the party. Leaders who can buy potential supporters and followers can also buy potential leaders if the amount is right. Millions have been spent in the process of buying political favours. The corruption of politics by interest groups in the private sector can lead to national scandals and destroy the confidence of the people in the political leaders or system. The recent examples of political corruption in Japan are good reminders. The decay of idealism that puts service before self will lead to the triumph of unethical pragmatism and Machiavellian politics.

Some probable causes: Many people join political parties not really to serve society but to obtain influence and material gain for themselves. There is a lack of highly principled leaders as role models. The relationship between big business and politicians may be too close. Some who aspire for leadership need strong financial backing to gain support and ensure loyalty.

The Weak Moral Fibre Syndrome

Some symptoms: As managers and leaders climb the corporate ladder, opportunities for self-aggrandisement and abuse of power are opened up. Lacking the moral fibre to withstand temptations, some businessmen, professionals, civil servants, bankers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, and ministers have indulged in unethical practices such as fraud, graft, patronage, nepotism, influence peddling, insider trading, and so on. Several serious financial scandals have resulted from this phenomenon. Government leaders, realizing the extent of corrupt and unethical practices in both the public and private sector, have been calling for the implementation of codes of ethics and emphasizing the need to inculcate high moral values in business and in the civil service. Many professional groups have already tightened up their codes of ethics, but in the absence of a deeper sense of accountability and trustworthiness (*amānah*), corrupt practices may continue to grow. Many cases of white collar crimes have alarmed the public. There is the fear that more sophisticated white collar crimes or "high tech" crimes may increase in the future.

Some probable causes: Secular professionalism does not provide for the principle of trusteeship and ultimate accountability to God. There is no real deterrence to criminal acts. The concept of trustworthiness (*amānah*) in the eyes of God has not found a strong footing in private or public organizations. Inability to overcome greed and to resist temptation of power or wealth or sexual pleasure. Not many corrupt people or smart criminals have been caught and convicted. Corporate values in business seem to tolerate acts of small and petty bribery, which may encourage bigger briberies and fraud.

The Slave-Master and Patron-Client Complex

Some symptoms: In traditional Malay culture, the ruler is viewed as the absolute master who must be obeyed at all times by all the subjects. The feudal system which preceded the advent of Islam was responsible for evolving a culture of bondage by which all subjects were subservient to the lord and their life was in the hands of the monarch. Dissent tantamounted to treason and was often punished by death. Thus a culture of absolute obedience and self-debasement before the traditional ruler was nurtured. The emergence of parliamentary democracy has reduced the power surrounding the Malay ruler. However, he is still being formally accorded great honour and respect by the masses. In some instances the desire of the ruler, however unreasonable, is fulfilled without much questioning and the circle of state dignitaries and close associates ensure that no one defies the wishes of the Malay ruler. The recent constitutional amendments which removed the legal immunity of the Malay rulers and provided for a special court in which they could be brought to trial have further undermined the traditional relationship between the Malay and his ruler. The residual slave-master psychology of the people may now be transferred to civil power holders or corporate barons to reinforce the already existing patron-client relationship in which the clients strive to the best of their ability to please the highly influential patrons either in the public or private sectors. The forms of human bondage may have changed but the spirit of slavery which is debasing and humiliating lingers on. There are members of political and non-political organizations who have developed their admiration or adulation of an exceptional leader to the point of losing their objectivity and rational judgement, such that he is seen to be always right and his rival to be always wrong. Such loss of objectivity and abandonment of rational analysis among the educated and the youth would not augur well for the political progress of the Muslim *ummah*.

Some probable causes: The culture nurturing a slavish mentality begins in the home, where parents assert their overbearing authority over the children and discourage their freedom of expression. The home or social environment instills fear and awe before human authority and discourages critical thinking. The perpetuation of feudalistic traditions and symbols confers the aura of charisma and unquestionable authority to traditional Malay rulers. It pays to be an "obedient servant" of the powerful bosses.

The *Lepak* (Loafing or Loitering) Syndrome

Some symptoms: Youngsters and teenagers, mostly Malay, like to wander around at shopping complexes, loitering aimlessly at bus terminals or entertainment centres, either alone or with friends, idling away the time or chatting with no apparent purpose in mind. This is a new form of urban social problem which has caused much concern to government authorities as well as parents.³¹ A report commissioned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports on the *lepak* syndrome revealed the following startling facts: A total number of 6,110 youths aged between twelve and twentyfive spent an average of one month a year loitering in shopping complexes. Respondents interviewed comprised 83% Malays, 11% Chinese and 4% Indians. The report also revealed that about 70% of the youths smoked, some admitted taking drugs (41%), consuming liquor (25%), viewing blue films (40%), reading pornographic materials (39%), engaging in premarital sex (18%), gambling (28%), and committing theft (16%).³² The country's drug problem worsened in 1993, with the number of addicts rising to 24,023. The number of known addicts increased from 7,750 in 1992 to 9,727 in 1993, while the number of rehabilitated addicts who returned to the habit rose from 12,486 to 14,296. The number of addicts under treatment and rehabilitation in 1993 rose to 36,687 from 35,300 in 1992. Selangor registered the largest number of new addicts with 1,403, followed by the Federal Territory with 1,330 and Penang with 1,210.³³ The statistics on juvenile delinquency in schools also show a rise in underdisciplined behaviour and provide enough reason to be worried. According to the Deputy Minister of Education, Datuk Leo Michael Toyad, 138,358 or 9.82 per cent of the 1,408,672 pupils of secondary school throughout the country have been identified as being involved in criminal misdemeanour including theft, rape, fighting, extortion, threatening teachers, involvement in secret societies, and immoral behaviour.³⁴

Some probable causes: Lack of sound religious and moral education.

Low self-esteem, lack of meaning or purpose in life, and lack of parental love, guidance and counselling. Learning disabilities resulting in poor academic performance. Broken homes, uncaring families, pressures from daily life, and poor living conditions. Peer-group pressure. Influence of the electronic media which stress violence, sex and sensual pleasure. Influence of a hedonistic entertainment sub-culture glorified by, among others, some multinational cigarette companies.³⁵

The Mediocrity Syndrome

Some symptoms: Low quality productivity, without motivation to excel among low achievers, resulting in the attitude of "*tidak apa*" ("never mind") or satisfaction with average passes in examinations. Resignation to second class or third class positions while the non-Bumiputeras strive to obtain first class or second class (upper) degrees. Taking the line of least resistance or going for the less risky subjects in studies, work, business or competition. Poor work ethics on the job. Resistance to new ideas and changes. Poor finishing touches to material products. Shyness about going forward in competitive situations.

Some probable causes: Ignorance of the fact that Islam extols striving hard to attain excellence in one's work, that Muslims are required to be the "best community" to be emulated by the rest of mankind, and that the Muslim civilization contributed to the Renaissance in Europe. Family upbringing and environment do not emphasize competitiveness, and accept the status quo with resignation. School environment in the rural areas without adequate facilities and amenities.

Dependency Syndrome

Some symptoms: Since the government has committed itself to provide many kinds of assistance to the Bumiputera community for the last three decades in the form of subsidies, loans, grants and scholarships, a mentality of always wanting to depend on the government known as "subsidy mentality" has developed. This mentality, though gradually diminishing, inhibits innovativeness and creativity in thought and action. The Malay community in South Africa and Singapore, on the other hand, has learned to pull itself up by its own bootstraps and has made impressive gains economically and socially. Many Muslim organizations usually expect to get aid and donations from oil-rich countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE to launch their development projects or programmes. Some of these organizations or individuals, due to their

dire needs, go to the extent of becoming propaganda tools and servants of their wealthy or influential patrons— another manifestation of their deep-seated slave-master cultural baggage. In turning Malaysia's face towards Japan or South Korea, under the "Look East" policy of the last decade, Malaysian leaders were expecting that the Malaysian people would emulate the productive work ethics of the Japanese and that speedy transfer of technology from Japan's industries would take place. Realizing that the technology transfer from Japan is not easily forthcoming and is more expensive than expected, Malaysian leaders are now looking to Europe and America for possible partnership in the automobile industry.

Some probable causes: Lacking self-confidence to stand on one's own feet. Inferiority complex. Economically deprived family background.

Mathematics-Science Phobia

Some symptoms: Although the number of Malays going into the science stream has increased over the years, compared to the non-Bumiputeras, particularly the Chinese, the number is frighteningly small. It is necessary for the Malaysian education system to put more emphasis on mathematics and science to prepare adequate manpower for the industrialized, scientific, and high-tech society of 2020. Many Malay students, notwithstanding those who go overseas to pursue science-related courses, are generally reluctant to specialize in economics, accounting, mathematics, engineering, and science-oriented subjects, either because of fearing stiff competition from Chinese students or because they favour less quantitative courses in which the chances of passing are relatively easier. There has been a high failure rate of Malay pupils in mathematics in the schools. The number of Malay students in S & T courses has always been much less than their Chinese counterparts. The ratio of Malays to Chinese professionals is in the region of one to three. Some Malay parents, realizing the quality of Chinese schools, have sent their children to study in Chinese schools to acquire better quantitative ability and Chinese language, although that number is very insignificant. In some privately owned religious schools in the rural areas, science is not taught at all and the teaching of mathematics, if available at all, is poorly handled. This has resulted every year in several thousand Malay pupils from the rural communities being deprived of a very important thinking tool and skill.

Some probable causes: Rural and agrarian-based cultures, as compared to commercial-oriented cultures, depend less on quantitative skills and

abilities. Therefore Malay families do not generally provide the necessary ambience for creating lasting interest in mathematics or science. The environment seems to be more favourable for an arts orientation. Science is taught in the national schools from a naturalistic or non-religious perspective. The necessity of science and mathematics for understanding the laws of Allah (s.w.t.) in the universe is not very widely appreciated in the traditional and conservative religious community. The Qur'anic exhortations to scientific investigation of the universe are not widely taught or disseminated. The spread of Islam to the Malay Archipelago exposed the Muslim Malays mainly to basic *tawhīd* (knowledge of Islamic creed), basic *fiqh* (Islamic law) and *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). Science is usually not regarded as part of the knowledge of the Islamic religion in the traditional Malay religious outlook.

Short-Term Gain Propensity

Some symptoms: There is a well-known practice of "Ali-Baba" or "Ali-Samy" in which the non-Bumiputera buys Bumiputera licences, privileges, or names to do business with the public sector while the Bumiputera becomes a mere silent partner. The government has been encouraging more active partnerships of the Malay Bumiputera so that there is a real transfer of skills and technology. The Third Bumiputera Economy Congress in 1992 called for non-Bumiputera enterprises to accommodate Malay partners in the efforts to create the Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community which is to be more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant. Several government-sponsored statutory bodies and Malay-owned privatised agencies which were meant to help Malays venture into business have had to close down in the last few decades due to bankruptcies, corruption, or mismanagement at the hands of incompetent and greedy top Malay officials. Company assets or wealth are squandered due to lack of observance of *amānah*. Thousands of common people in the Malay community have been influenced to share the collective mania to invest in "get rich quick" schemes only to be cheated by the fly-by-night operators such as in the notorious Pak Man Telo case two years ago. The Kuala Lumpur Stock Market has opened up new opportunities for wealth creation and many greedy Bumiputera speculators are devising ways and means of getting rich quickly through feverish speculation and investment. Many have had their fingers burnt in the new collective frenzy.

Some probable causes: Greed and selfishness. The attitude of avoiding

the necessity of acquiring professional competence and experience the hard way. Lack of knowledge, skills, and ethics to handle business enterprises plus desire to attain status symbols of apparent economic success, such as expensive bungalows, BMWs, or a fleet of Mercedes Benzes. Business as a means of "leapfrogging" into political prominence. Desire to show off newly found wealth, power, or influence.

Low Regard for the Value of Time

Some symptoms: Spending too much time talking, smoking, or sipping tea on the job or in coffee shops, club houses, or office cafeterias. Coming in late to work but wanting to leave early. Little value or concern for punctuality as a way of life, as people are expected to come late to social functions and guests do not feel a sense of urgency about arriving early. The loitering and loafing habits of adolescents at urban shopping complexes. Addiction to TV or video viewing for long stretches of time.

Some probable causes: Lack of discipline in the home or in the school. Efficient time management is not strongly emphasized in Malay culture. Extension of rural and agrarian culture in which work and leisure are often blended together and people are encouraged to go about their work in an unhurried manner.

Excessive Other-Worldly Orientation

Some symptoms: The attitude among some religiously inclined Malays that there is no religious virtue in trying to raise one's living standards or acquire more wealth for the individual's and the community's betterment. The belief among the masses that salvation in the Hereafter depends primarily on practices of purely devotional nature such as preoccupation with verbal *dhikr* (remembering Allah) to the extent that worldly responsibilities and activities assume very little significance. In this perception *'amal* (work or action) is narrowly defined as purely spiritual devotion. Poverty and deprivation are accepted as God-given conditions. No inclination to think of finding ways and means to improve the living conditions of the community. Obsession with personal piety and mystical knowledge resulting in little concern for the quality of physical well-being, environmental degradation, and other such economic and political conditions of the *ummah*.

Some probable causes: No proper understanding of the spirit of Qur'anic equilibrium between spiritual humility, simplicity, and modesty

and the imperative for believers in God to be strong, clean, and healthy; to lead others in all fields of useful knowledge; to manage resources efficiently; to explore the bounties in nature; and to maintain human dignity and manliness. Lack of role models to emulate the balance and harmony between individual spiritual purification and collective well-being. Lack of exposure, either in the home or in the school, to the holistic Islamic perspective of *‘ibādah* (servitude to Allah), *khilāfah* (vicegerency), *tazkiyah* (purification of the self), *‘amal ṣālih* (virtuous deed), *khayrāt* (good actions), *ḥayah ṭayyibah* (good life), *‘imārat al-kaun* (development of the physical environment) and *qūwwah* (strength/power).

Superstitious Mentality

Some symptoms: The residual influence of pre-Islamic worldviews existing in the minds of some Malays (particularly in the rural areas), who think that major mishaps, tragedies, or serious diseases may be due to the power of malevolent spirits and therefore the solution lies in appeasing those spirits through sacrificial offerings, such as white buffaloes or white cocks. This worldview undermines the role of reason and the law of causality in the universe. Islamic religious awareness and puritanical *da‘wah* have managed to curb and suppress this worldview. Belief among some traditional Malay martial art exponents that one can attain super-natural powers such as invulnerability to physical harm by practising certain *mantras* or invoking the intercession of certain invisible beings. Paying homage to the tombs or cemeteries of people believed to be saints or to possess saintly powers of intercession. This practice seems to have diminished over the years and is only found in isolated or remote areas.

Some probable causes: Lack of Islamic knowledge of *tawḥid* (Islamic monotheism) and *shirk* (associating partners with God) among the illiterate or uneducated masses. Remnants of pre-Islamic polytheistic, animistic, or shamanistic beliefs lingering in the subconscious mind of those Malays who have not been adequately Islamized.

Fitnah (Slander and Defamation) Syndrome

Some symptoms: The practice of spreading poison letters, slanderous pamphlets, and defamatory books by persons or groups who, being afraid to be known for their evil intentions, wish to destroy the good name or smear the reputation of public figures. This happens particularly

in the context of political party elections, political rivalries, or organizational environments in which certain interest groups conspire to assert their influence. The practice of backbiting or rumour-mongering which is generally tolerated and enjoyed by people. The art of backstabbing has become so sophisticated that even religious scholars and educated officials tend to believe the slanderous letters and pamphlets. This practice, which is regarded in Islam as very sinful and worse than killing, undermines the Islamic culture of encouraging open discussion, of seeking the truth from the right sources, of not making judgements about people unjustly or without adequate evidence, and of respecting the right to hold different views in meetings and the right to defend oneself in the presence of the critics or the detractors. It contradicts the principle of justice (*‘adl*), good conduct (*husn al-khuluq*) and entertaining good perceptions (*husn al-zann*) of people among the believers.

Some probable causes: No knowledge or appreciation of Islamic interpersonal *ādāb* (etiquettes) and *akhlāq* (morality). A culture or tradition or environment which suppresses dissent or disagreement with high authorities. Influence of the political party culture of "I am always right and my opponents are always wrong." Fear of reprisals and other consequences for coming out openly with criticisms. Authoritarian leadership style which makes people afraid to speak the truth or voice discontentment. The government-owned mass media rarely give adequate coverage of the views of opposition parties. Sheer devilish inclinations in the hearts of men.

Deviationist Cult Syndrome

Some symptoms: Research by the Islamic Centre in Kuala Lumpur has indicated that there have been more than a dozen major deviationist religious cults among Muslims in different states of Malaysia over the last two decades. Various alarming claims were made by the leaders of these cults, including that of being the reincarnation of Abū Bakr (*radiya Allāh ‘anhu*), the non-necessity of praying five times a day, the advent of the Tamīmī youth to herald the emergence of the *Mahdī* (the rightly guided one), or the temporary occultation of supposedly saintly figures in the Malay community. Some of the early members and supporters of these deviationist elements have, fortunately, left and denounced the leaders. Leaders of these cults are believed by their followers to be endowed with certain supernatural powers and are therefore highly venerated. Followers have been psychologically programmed to be absolutely loyal to the charismatic leader of the cult. The relationship

with the family is very strained. Followers of deviationist cults are made to believe that their group enjoys God's protection because they apparently are the only group that is sincerely following the *sunnah* of the Prophet and working to spread the religion of Islam.

Some probable causes: Some men and women, disillusioned by this overly materialistic society, are looking for an effective religious panacea and a seemingly straightforward and quick way to wash away sins and enter Paradise. Many people believe that Doomsday is just around the corner. Some people need to fill their own spiritual void and attain inner peace by entering a manifestly different social group to undergo the purification process away from the madding crowd and the corrupt external world. The hope in messianic movements to bring truth, justice and peace in this corrupt and degenerated world is engendered by the widespread belief among Muslims in the emergence of the Mahdī. The masses and the elites are, however, completely ignorant of the blood-stained history of many false Mahdīs in the Muslim world who misguided innocent and gullible people for their own selfish and twisted visions. The Muslim masses or elites are therefore not in a position to discern the thin line which divides the false from the true, particularly when mysterious teachings are presented in traditional religious terms and familiar symbolism. The cult practices are, at the same time, mixed with acceptable religious forms and commendable economic initiatives and programmes. Misguided vision of spiritual leadership of the Muslim *ummah* in the light of the existing Javanese mythology of the awaited Ratu Adil (Prince of Justice) to come at the end of time to restore justice.

CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive sociocultural transformation expected of the Malay community has to involve the energies and commitment of all institutions in Malaysia: the family (as the most important institution), the school, the technological institute, the university, the communication media, the civil service, the chamber of commerce, the corporation, the small and medium industry, the NGO, the mosque, the political party, and the royalty. The Malay community of the year 2020 has to be characterized by the quality of excellence in *īmān* (religious conviction), *‘ilm* (knowledge), *‘amal* (work, action), and *akhlāq* (morality) if it is to play a leading role.

It is in dire need of excellent leaders who combine moral-spiritual

integrity and deep religious convictions with worldly wisdom, good intercultural communication skills, profound understanding of global forces, and the uncanny ability to consolidate the various human resources within the community. The tendency to be morally corrupt and to corrupt others in a materially oriented environment has to be reckoned with and those aspiring to be the leaders of the future have to make sure that they possess the inner qualities to withstand and subdue the temptations of power, wealth, and sensate pleasure.

The present-day political leaders of the Malay community, looking into the grave social problems and serious educational handicaps of their own people, have ample justification to be truly concerned about the capacity of their community, particularly the younger generation which is going to be the leaders of tomorrow, to reach the goals of overall progress within the stipulated time frame. They have therefore formulated plans and strategies to actualize the envisioned educational, spiritual, psychological, and sociological transformation.

The Malay branch of the world Muslim *ummah*, therefore, has gigantic hurdles to overcome because, on home ground, it faces stiffer competition from the encroaching non-Muslim world as well as the vigorous Chinese community, while on the international front it has to contend more and more with regional and global forces of increasing strength and capability to dominate small countries. Notwithstanding some of the noteworthy achievements of the Malays over the last two decades, the Malay community will be forced to "leapfrog," so to speak, in order to keep abreast with the achievements, productivity, creativity and innovativeness of the "big" as well as "the little dragons" of Asia.

It is not impossible for the new Malay generation to fulfil the above agenda of qualitative changes and civilizational transformation, provided it adheres to the God-given formula of integration—that of material well-being with spiritual values, action with inward reflection, human sciences with revealed knowledge, politics with divine guidance, science and technology with accountability to God, and professional skills with moral-spiritual virtues. It has to be deeply ingrained in the minds of the present and future generations that it is a divine imperative for the *mu'minūn* (believers) to attain *'izzah* (honour and dignity), overall strength (*al-qūwah*) and leadership status. *Wā-Allāh a'lam.*

Notes

1. Mahathir Mohamad, *Malaysia: The Way Forward* (Kuala Lumpur, 1991), 4-5.
2. *Ibid.*, 5-7.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 9-11.
5. *Ibid.*, 11.
6. See the papers presented in the National Seminar "Towards a Developed and Industrialized Society: Understanding the Concept, Implications and Challenges of Vision 2020" organized by the Socio-Economic Research Unit (SERU), Prime Minister's Department, 5-7 December 1991.
7. For an example of a highly prejudiced American view of the contemporary dynamic emergence of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, see Steven Schlosstein, *Asia's New Little Dragons* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1991).
8. Cf. Chandra Muzaffar, *Human Rights and the New World Order* (Penang: Just World Trust, 1993).
9. See John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000*, (Publishers, 1990); Peter Drucker, *The New Realities* (London: Mandarin Paperback, 1990) and *Managing for the Future: The 1990s and Beyond* (Oxford: B. Heinemann Ltd, 1992); Taichi Sakaiya, *The Knowledge-Value Revolution* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991); Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World* (London: Fontana, 1991); John Naisbitt, *The Global Paradox* (London: 1994); Lester Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe, and America* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1992).
10. See Alvin Toffler, *Powershift* (New York: Bantam, 1990) and *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993).
11. See °AbdulḤamīd A. AbūSulaymān, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, tr. Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo (Herndon, Virginia: IIIT, 1993).
12. The total population of Malaysia at mid-1990 was provisionally estimated to be 17,755,900 compared with 16,942,200 in mid-1988 and 13,764,352 in mid-1980. According to 1990 estimates, the Muslim Malays in peninsular Malaysia constituted 58% of the total population, the Chinese 31%, and the Indians 10%. The 1980 census put the Muslims at 53%, Buddhists at 17.3%, Confucius, Taoists, and traditional Chinese beliefs at 11.6%, Christians at 8.6%, and Hindus at 7%.
13. *The Second Outline Perspective Plan, 1991-2000* (Kuala Lumpur, 1991), 12.
14. *Ibid.*, 17.

15. Ibid., 26.
16. Rajen Devadason, 'The New Malay.' *Malaysian Business*, November 16, 1993, 17.
17. *The Second Outline Perspective Plan*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1991), 108.
18. Ibid., 114.
19. *Laporan Kongres Ekonomi Bumiputera Ketiga*, 1992, 373.
20. Ibid., 3-17.
21. Since the Congress on "Islam and Vision 2020 at the Dawn of the 21st Century" organized by the Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM) in Kuala Lumpur in July 1992, IKIM has published several books and papers which are meant to enlighten the Malaysian public, particularly the non-Muslims, on the Islamic perspectives of industrialization, progress and development.
22. In the opinion of Dr. M. Noordin Sopiee, Director General of ISIS, Malaysia cannot become a fully developed society without becoming fully moral and ethical. The present writer shares his view that morality is relevant and germane to virtually every aspect of Vision 2020. See his paper, "Inculcating Moral and Ethical Values in Business Towards Achieving the Objectives of Vision 2020" presented in the National Seminar, "Towards a Developed and Industrialized Society: Understanding the Concepts, Implications and Challenges of Vision 2020" organized by the Socio-Economic Research Unit of Prime Minister's Department, December 5-7, 1991, at Genting Highlands.
23. See also Rustam Sani, *Melayu Baru dan Bangsa Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur, 1993).
24. Devadason, "The New Malay," 15
25. Johan Jamal Yazli, "Ketika Menentukan TEAM Yang Mantap," in *Harmoni*, Bil. 1, Nov. 1993, 10.
26. Devadason, "The New Malay," 17.
27. See Sopiee, "Inculcating Moral and Ethical Values," 5-8.
28. See *Sari Adab Pentadbiran* (Kuala Lumpur: INTAN, 1992); *Nilai dan Etika dalam Perkhidmatan Awam* (Kuala Lumpur, 1991).
29. See *Tonggak Dua Belas: Penerapan Nilai, Norma dan Etika Perkhidmatan* (Kuala Lumpur: INTAN, 1992). See also M. Affandi Hassan, *The Tawhidic Approach in Management and Public Administration* (Kuala Lumpur: INTAN, 1992).
30. See the letter of Dr. Abdul Rahim Ghouse, "Moral values: Way to fight money politics" in the *New Straits Times*, July 6, 1994. He appeals for the inculcation of "moral politics" to stamp out the disease of money politics in UMNO.

31. See A. Kadir Jasim, "Worrisome causes of 'lepak' habit," *New Straits Times*, June 19, 1994; Alina Rane, "Immoral side of lepak culture," *New Straits Times*, April 27, 1994.
32. Revathi Murugappan, "Finding answers to the lepak issue," *Sunday Star*, June 19, 1994.
33. Bernama report, *The Star*, March 9, 1994.
34. Report published in *Berita Harian*, April 4, 1994. See also papers presented at the Seminar on Juvenile Delinquency, organized by the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, Dept. of Social Welfare and the Royal Police Force in Kuala Lumpur on May 11-13, 1993.
35. See the papers of the Seminar on 'Invasion of Hedonistic Entertainment Culture at the Dawn of the 21st Century' organized by PKPIM in cooperation with the Religious Affairs Division of Prime Minister's Department and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur on July 24, 1994.