



The Emergence of New *Pondok* Founded by Young *Ulama* and Its Implications for the Welfare of the Kelantanese Islamic Community and Family

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Abstract

Kelantan, renowned as the “Serambi Mekah” (Veranda of Mecca), boasts a rich tradition of Islamic scholarship. This title stems from the numerous Kelantanese *ulama* (Muslim scholars) who pursued Islamic studies in Mecca and returned to establish “*pondok*” – a traditional Islamic school. The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a golden age for such institutions, with over 100 *pondok* flourishing across the state. While the number of *pondok* declined in the mid-20th century, a resurgence occurred in the early 2000s. This revival is evident in the significant participation of 70 *pondok* at the 2022 gathering in Pondok Batu Hitam, Pasir Puteh. This surge is particularly notable due to the emergence of many young *ulama*, graduates of prestigious Islamic institutions worldwide, who are now founding their own *pondok*. This study investigates the initiatives of young *ulama* in establishing *pondok* in Kelantan. It explores the multifaceted aspects of this phenomenon, examining its impact on the religious well-being of the community and families. The study utilized a comprehensive literature review to trace the historical development of *pondok* in Kelantan, providing a contextual framework, as well as in-depth interviews with both young and elder *ulama*, offering valuable insights into their perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, data on the religious well-being of the community and families were gathered from the Royal Malaysia Police (*Polis Diraja Malaysia*) and the Kelantan Islamic Religious and Customs Council (*Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan/MAIK*). The findings reveal that the rapid establishment of *pondok* represents a commendable effort by young *ulama* to propagate Islamic teachings in Kelantan. The institution provides alternative educational pathways for the community, preparing students for further Islamic studies at renowned institutions worldwide. However, this rapid growth necessitates careful oversight from religious authorities and *pondok* associations to ensure adherence to traditional *pondok* systems and maintain high educational standards. The study received positive feedback from both MAIK and Royal Malaysia Police. They affirmed that these initiatives do not disrupt the religious well-being of the community. Instead, these new *pondok* contribute to stronger community unity and instill in students a deep understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* principles concerning *aqidah* (creed), *sharia* (Islamic law), and *akhlaq* (morals).

Keywords: New Pondok, Young Ulama, Religious Well-being, Islamic Community and Families in Kelantan, Kelantan Islamic Religious and Customs Council (*MAIK*)

Abstrak

Kelantan dikenali sebagai Serambi Mekah kerana ramai ulama dari negeri ini yang belajar di Mekah dan kembali ke tanah air menubuhkan pondok (sekolah agama tradisional). Akhir abad ke 18 dan awal abad ke 19 merupakan zaman kegemilangan bagi pusat-pusat pengajian ini, dengan lebih daripada 100 pondok beroperasi di negeri ini. Walau bagaimanapun, jumlah tersebut mula menurun pada pertengahan abad ke 20 disebabkan pelbagai faktor. Namun begitu, pada awal abad 21, Kelantan menyaksikan kemunculan banyak pondok baharu, dengan penglibatan mencapai 70 semasa perhimpunan pondok-pondok Kelantan pada tahun 2022 di Pondok Batu Hitam, Pasir Puteh. Fenomena ini menunjukkan peningkatan yang ketara dalam penubuhan pondok di Kelantan. Yang mengejutkan, ramai daripada pusat tersebut ditubuhkan oleh para ulama muda yang tamat pengajian dari pelbagai institusi pengajian Islam di seluruh dunia. Artikel ini membentangkan kajian mengenai inisiatif ulama muda dalam menubuhkan pondok di Kelantan, peran mereka dalam berbagai aspek dan hubungan mereka dengan kesejahteraan agama dalam komuniti dan keluarga Islam. Kajian ini menggunakan tinjauan literatur untuk mengumpul fakta mengenai sejarah dan perkembangan pondok di Kelantan hingga ke hari ini, serta penyelidikan lapangan peneliti mewawancara beberapa ulama muda yang terlibat untuk mendapatkan data mengenai fenomena ini, bersama ulama tua untuk mendapatkan pandangan mereka mengenai isu tersebut. Penyelidik juga berunding dengan Polis Diraja Malaysia dan Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan (MAIK) untuk mengumpul data mengenai kesejahteraan komuniti dan keluarga Islam selepas penubuhan pusat-pusat pengajian ini. Penemuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penubuhan pondok yang pesat ini adalah usaha murni oleh ulama muda untuk menyebarkan Islam di Kelantan dengan menawarkan pendidikan alternatif kepada komuniti dan keluarga Islam, serta mempersiapkan pelajar untuk melanjutkan pelajaran ke institusi pengajian Islam yang lebih tinggi di seluruh dunia. Walau bagaimanapun, pertumbuhan ini memerlukan pengawasan daripada pihak berkuasa agama dan persatuan pondok Kelantan bagi memastikan beroperasi mengikut sistem pondok tradisional. Kajian ini juga menerima maklum balas positif daripada MAIK dan Polis Diraja Malaysia, yang menunjukkan bahawa inisiatif ulama muda dalam menubuhkan pondok baru tidak mengganggu kesejahteraan agama komuniti dan keluarga Islam di Kelantan; malah menguatkan perpaduan komuniti dan menanamkan nilai-nilai murni dalam kalangan pelajar mengikut ajaran Ahlu al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah dari segi akidah, syariah, dan akhlak.

Kata Kunci: *Pondok Baharu, Ulama Muda, Kesejahteraan Beragama, Masyarakat dan Keluarga Islam Kelantan, Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan*

Introduction

Since the advent and flourishing of Islam on the Malay Peninsula, Kelantan has rightfully earned the esteemed title of “Veranda of Mecca.” This distinction underscores the state’s deep-rooted tradition of Islamic scholarship, nurtured by

numerous *ulama* (Muslim scholars) who pursued their studies in the heart of Islamic learning – Makkah al-Mukarramah, the holy city of Mecca. Upon their return, these *ulama* established “*pondok*,” a traditional Islamic school that served as the bedrock of formal Islamic education in the Malay world. Such an institution has provided a comprehensive curriculum, encompassing the pillars of faith (*aqidah*), the intricacies of Islamic law (*sharia*), and the cultivation of virtuous character (*akhlaq*).¹

Initially, informal Islamic education was primarily imparted within the confines of *surau* (a small Islamic prayer hall), mosques, or the homes of teachers. However, as the community’s thirst for deeper Islamic knowledge grew, the homes of these teachers became centers of learning. To accommodate students from further distances, small *pondok* began to emerge. These modest structures were often built adjacent to the *surau*, mosques, or teachers’ residences to provide temporary housing for students during their studies. This gradual evolution ultimately gave rise to the distinctive educational system now known as the *pondok*.² This formal Islamic education system garnered significant respect within the Malay Muslim community. Families were highly regarded if their children had the opportunity to attend these esteemed institutions. The most tangible impact of these learning centers stemmed from the comprehensive religious guidance provided by their esteemed teachers. This guidance played a pivotal role in fostering the religious well-being of the entire Muslim community and its families.³

However, the 20th century brought about significant transformations. The impact of colonialism, the influx of foreign cultures, and the rise of competing ideologies, including those outside the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah* tradition, posed significant challenges to the prominence of the *pondok* system. Traditional *pondok* gradually lost its position as the most esteemed center of learning. The rise of the modern school system, with its emphasis on secular education, increasingly became the preferred choice for families seeking to educate their children. Despite these challenges, the 21st century witnessed a remarkable resurgence of *pondok* education in Kelantan, spearheaded by a new generation of young *ulama*. This revival has had

¹Ahmad Hidayat Buang, et al., *The Madrasa System in Malaysia: Its Contribution to the nation And Challenges*. In International Conference Proceeding on New Horizons in Islamic Studies. Kuala Lumpur: Asia-Europe Institute. University of Malaya. 2010. Farid Mat Zain & Ezad Azraai Jamsari. *Perkembangan Islam di Negeri Kelantan Pada Abad ke-19*, in Farid Mat Zain (ed.). Islam Di Tanah Melayu Abad ke-19. Shah Alam: Karisma Publications. 2007. Mohamad Redzuan Othman. *Masjid al Haram Sebagai Sebuah Institusi Pengajian: Peranannya Dalam Perkembangan Awal Pendidikan dan Intelektualisme Melayu*. In Farid Mat mat Zain (ed.). Islam Di Tanah Melayu Abad Ke 19. Shah Alam: Karisma Publication. 2007.

²Masyhura Mohamad Rawi, et al., "Institusi pondok dalam sistem pendidikan Islam di Malaysia." In Proceeding The 7th International Workshop and Conference of Asean Studies on Islamic and Arabic Education and Civilization (Poltan-Ukm-Polimed) Selangor, (2015), p. 3. Abdul Rahman, H. *Peranan Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Kelantan dalam Memajukan Pendidikan Tahfiz dan Pondok*. Journal of Islamic Education, 9 (1), 2017, p. 45-60

³Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC. 1999. Kamal Hassan. *Towards Actualizing Islamic Ethical and Educational Principles in Malaysia Society: Some Critical Observations*. Petaling Jaya: ABIM. 1996.

a profound impact on the Muslim community and families, deeply rooted in the authentic teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*.⁴

This paper presents the findings of the study investigating the initiatives of young *ulama* in establishing contemporary *pondok* educational centers within the state of Kelantan. The study explores various facets of this phenomenon, examining their correlation with the religious well-being of Islamic communities and families. The primary objective is to assess the impact of these new institutions on the social and religious landscape of the Muslim community in Kelantan.

Kelantan experienced a golden age of *pondok* education during the 19th and early 20th centuries despite its relatively modest geographical area, approximately 15,040 square kilometers.⁵ Remarkably, over 100 such institutions flourished within the state during this period. Their faculty comprised *ulama* who had pursued Islamic studies in various parts of the Islamic world, particularly in Makkah al-Mukarramah, and possessed expertise in a wide range of Islamic disciplines, including Arabic language, *aqidah* (theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tasawwuf* (mysticism), *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *hadith* (prophetic traditions), and others. However, between the 1970s and 2000, a significant decline in the number of *pondok* became evident. Several factors contributed to this decline, including the demise of founding *ulama* and the subsequent discontinuation of teaching activities at their respective institutions. Furthermore, some *pondok* were repurposed as secular schools, while others were transformed into places of worship and retirement for the elderly.⁶ This situation is deeply concerning, suggesting a waning interest in traditional *pondok* institutions among the Muslim community and families of Kelantan. Furthermore, it underscores a critical shortage of new *ulama* and young religious leaders who can effectively assume the mantle of their esteemed predecessors, possessing both the charisma and the scholarly authority to inspire and guide future generations. The *pondok* that have successfully weathered this period of decline are primarily larger institutions, such as Pondok Pasir Tumbuh and Pondok Lubuk Tapah. Their continued success can be attributed to several factors, including substantial student

⁴Abdul Rashid, M. Z. *Perkembangan dan Cabaran Pendidikan Tahfiz di Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya. 2018. Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan. *The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan*. Lutfi Ibrahim (ed.). Tamadun Islam di Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia. 1980. Zaidi Hassan. *Pondok: Keberadaannya di Dalam Peradaba Melayu*, Kolokium Peradaban Melayu Kawasan Timur Laut (18-20 september 2001). Kota Bharu. Organized by DBP. 2001.

⁵Banci Penduduk dan Perumahan Malaysia 2010: Laporan Kiraan Permulaan Bagi Kawasan Bandar Dan Luar Bandar (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2010: Preliminary Count Report for Urban and Rural Areas). Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, Putrajaya: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 27. 2011.

⁶Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Khairi bin Muhamed (Former Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Former Caretaker of 3 Pondok in Pasir Tumbuh), May 16, 2023; Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022.

populations and the presence of qualified successors who have inherited the legacy of *Tok Guru*, their esteemed predecessors.⁷

However, starting from the year 2000, Kelantan experienced a remarkable resurgence in the growth of *pondok*. The number of active *pondok* institutions, which dwindled to a mere dozen in the 1980s and 1990s, surged to over 40. This remarkable growth is further evidenced by the 2022 *pondok* gathering in Pondok Batu Hitam, Pasir Puteh, which saw an impressive turnout of 70 *pondok* from across the state. This unprecedented surge in the establishment of *pondok* educational centers in Kelantan has become a significant phenomenon.⁸

The rapid establishment of these Islamic educational centers has elicited diverse reactions, particularly among online communities, due to their potential impact on the local Muslim community and families. This is largely attributed to the emergence of unconventional teaching approaches, notably those involving esoteric, mystical (*isyari*) interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith that depart from traditional scholarly understandings, an emphasis on the spiritual experiences (*tajribah*) and advice of past Muslim scholars potentially prioritizing anecdotal evidence over established religious texts, and the exploration of the supernatural and the world of saints, introducing potentially controversial or unverified beliefs. These novel approaches have, on a smaller scale, led to social unease within the community and debates among religious scholars. This has naturally raised critical questions about the long-term implications of these centers. Some argue that these young *ulama* may be inadvertently undermining established religious norms, while others believe they are fostering innovation and a deeper engagement with Islamic teachings.

This study investigates the impact of the emergence of novel *pondok* educational institutions established by young *ulama* on the Muslim community and families in Kelantan. Specifically, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive examination of the recent proliferation of *pondok* institutions founded by young *ulama* in Kelantan, to investigate the viewpoints of elder *ulama*, the Muslim community, and families regarding the initiatives of young *ulama* in establishing new *pondok* institutions, and to analyze the relationship between the initiatives of young *ulama* and the religious well-being of the Muslim community and families in Kelantan.

⁷ Hasan, Z. *Integrasi Pendidikan Tahfiz Dan Pondok Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Arus Perdana*. Journal of Educational Research, 11(2), 65-80. 2019. Hashim, R. *Pendidikan Pondok: Tradisi Dan Cabaran Di Malaysia*. International Journal of Islamic Studies, 7(2), 2015, p. 120-135. Nik Mohamed Nik Mohd Salleh. *Perkembangan Pendidikan atau Pengajian Islam di Negeri Kelantan* in Nik Mohamed Nik Mohd Salleh (ed.). Warisan Kelantan IV Kota Bharu: Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Kelantan. 1985.

⁸ Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022; Luqman Haji Abdullah and Muhammad Ikhlas Rosele, *Pendidikan Pondok Dan Tahfiz: Cabaran Dan Hala Tuju*, Islamic Std. Lib. 2018. Md Ramly Mahmood, *Peranan Pondok Dalam Pendidikan Islam Di Kelantan: Suatu Kajian Di Pasir Mas, Kelantan*. PhD Thesis, Universiti Malaya, 2005.

This study holds significant importance due to the emergence of novel *pondok* educational institutions established by young Kelantanese *ulama* and their potential impact on the religious well-being of the Muslim community and families in the state. This significance stems from several key factors:

1. **Development of Religious Education**
Young *ulama* play a crucial role in establishing and developing *pondok* educational centers. These centers not only impart religious knowledge but also mold a new generation that deeply understands and practices Islamic teachings. High-quality religious education can address issues of confusion or deviation within society.
2. **Preservation of Islamic Traditions**
Through *pondok* educational centers, young *ulama* contribute to preserving and continuing Islamic knowledge traditions that have existed since ancient times. This is essential to ensure that religious knowledge remains relevant and continuous among the community.⁹
3. **Enhanced Social Quality**
Pondok educational centers contribute to improving the social quality of life for Muslim individuals and families by teaching Islamic moral values and ethics. This aids in the development of a more ethical and harmonious Muslim society and family.
4. **Socioeconomic Development**
The establishment of *pondok* educational centers often involves the improvement of local infrastructure and economic resources. This can have a positive impact on the local economy and create job opportunities for local residents.
5. **Religious Well-being and Social Cohesion**
The presence of *pondok* educational centers enables Muslim individuals and families to better understand and practice Islamic teachings. This contributes to religious well-being by promoting correct practices and strengthening faith and good deeds among Muslims. Young *ulama* often serve as community leaders who foster unity and cooperation among community members. This is crucial for building a cohesive and supportive society.

In sum, the study on the role of young *ulama* in establishing *pondok* educational centers provides a deeper understanding of how their efforts contribute to religious and social well-being in Kelantan. In this qualitative study, the aim is to investigate the relationship between the initiatives of young Kelantanese *ulama* in establishing novel *pondok* institutions and the religious well-being of the Muslim community and families in the state. To achieve this objective, the study employed library and field research approaches. Comprehensive literature review was conducted to establish a historical context of Islamic educational centers in Kelantan

⁹ Teuku Zulkhairi, et al., "Bahtsul Masāil at a Traditional Islamic Educational Institution in Aceh: Teungku Dayah's Contribution to the Development of Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, No. 1 (2024).

and to identify relevant scholarly literature. In-depth interviews were conducted with young *ulama*, elder *ulama*, and a representative sample of the Muslim community and families in Kelantan to gather diverse perspectives and ensure the findings accurately reflect the lived experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders. The Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (*Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan/MAIK*) and the Royal Malaysian Police (*Polis Diraja Malaysia/PDRM*) were contacted to obtain feedback on the phenomenon and its relationship to religious well-being and public safety in Kelantan. Relevant questions based on specific themes were prepared in advance to be posed to all perspectives. Through this approach, this study becomes more exclusive as the data presented came from primary sources, not from any previous writings or studies.

The Establishment of New *Pondok* by Young *Ulama* in Kelantan

a) Background of Young *Ulama* Establishing *Pondok* in Kelantan

Young *ulama* in Kelantan have been actively establishing new *pondok* educational centers, contributing significantly to the revitalization of Islamic scholarship and strengthening the tradition of religious education within the state. In terms of their academic background, these young *ulama* often possess advanced degrees from esteemed Islamic institutions, including:

1. Ribat in Tarim, Hadramaut, Yemen¹⁰

The study found that a total of 18 *pondok*, each with a unique name, were established by young *ulama* who had graduated from various institutions in Tarim, Hadramaut, Yemen, particularly Dar al-Mustafa under the guidance of Habib Umar al-Hafiz al-Husayni. An additional four educational centers were established by young Yemeni *ulama* who placed a greater emphasis on memorizing the Qur'an and obligatory acts of worship (*fardhu ain*) in their curriculum. This brings the total number of Islamic educational centers established by young Yemeni graduates to 22 *pondok*.¹¹

2. *Pondok* in Southern Thailand¹²

Several *pondok* educational centers have been established by young *ulama* who graduated from *pondok* in Southern Thailand, particularly in Pattani. Notably, two of these centers were founded by young *ulama* from Southern Thailand who migrated to Kelantan due to the political unrest in the three southern provinces and other factors.

¹⁰ Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023.

¹¹ Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), in an interview with observers, August 3, 2023.

¹² Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

3. Al-Azhar University and traditional Islamic studies (*talaqqi*) in Egypt¹³
There are new *pondok* educational centers founded by young *ulama* who have completed their studies at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. These young *ulama* have also participated in open-style religious discussions (*talaqqi*) with prominent Al-Azhar *ulama* in various locations around Cairo, including Jami' al-Azhar, al-Madyafah, and Jabal al-Muqattam.
4. Graduates of *pondok* in Kelantan.¹⁴
There are also new *pondok* established by young *ulama* who are graduates of *pondok* in Kelantan, particularly Pasir Tumbuh, Lubuk Tapah, and Gelang Mas.

These Muslim scholars are highly innovative in disseminating religious knowledge, utilizing both offline and online teaching methods. Their classes have been well-received by the community, and some of them have even gained significant influence and followings both in the real world and online.

b) Motivation of Young Ulama in Establishing Pondok

Through in-depth interviews with a representative sample of young *ulama* in Kelantan, four primary motivations emerged for their establishment of new *pondok* institutions:

1. The Deep-Rooted Awareness of Young Ulama on Pondok Establishment
This awareness is driven by a sincere desire to impart knowledge to the Muslim community and families of Kelantan, positioning the *pondok* as a platform for delivering Islamic education. The objective is not only to enrich religious knowledge but also to cultivate a generation with noble character and a profound understanding of Islamic principles. Through *pondok*, students can access high-quality education rooted in the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, fostering unity within society and developing strong identities based on Islamic values.¹⁵
2. Instructions and Advice from Teachers
Instructions and advice from teachers provide motivation and encouragement for young *ulama* to continue this endeavor, ensuring the continuity of the *pondok* education tradition.
3. Providing an Alternative Educational Option for Locals
Pondok educational centers serve as an alternative to the formal education system, offering a more flexible approach that caters to the needs of

¹³Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Khairi bin Muhamed (Former Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Former Caretaker of 3 Pondok in Pasir Tumbuh), May 16, 2023; Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022.

¹⁴Interview with Abdul Muhaimin bin Ismail (Da'wah Officer, Islamic Education Institution, Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Adat Negeri Kelantan), August 3, 2023.

¹⁵Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023; Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023; Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

Kelantanese people who prioritize character, values, and knowledge. Typically, parents who send their children to *pondok* are those who emphasize both academic and moral education, which is often difficult to achieve in mainstream schools.

4. Unwilling to be Bound by Bureaucracy

By establishing and managing their own *pondok* educational centers, these young *ulama* have greater freedom to carry out their *da'wah* activities without being constrained by bureaucratic systems that could limit their ability to disseminate knowledge to the people of Kelantan and Malaysia in general. They are also unconcerned with the fixed monthly income typically earned by civil servants or private employees, demonstrating a strong belief in Allah SWT as the ultimate provider.¹⁶

The responses of the young *ulama* as mentioned above demonstrate a strong faith in Allah SWT, a close bond with their teachers, and a willingness to strive in conveying knowledge, qualities not commonly found among many teachers working in formal educational institutions. This gives these young *ulama* exceptional credibility that is difficult to match by other Muslim teachers and preachers in the country.

c) Direction of *Pondok* Development

In establishing new *pondok* institutions, young *ulama* in Kelantan prioritize addressing the contemporary needs of the Muslim community. These institutions aim to align with the evolving expectations of Islamic families and the demands of contemporary Islamic education. Key objectives often include:

1. Preserving the *Pondok* Education System

This endeavor aims to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the *pondok* education system, a tradition established by the predecessors among the *ulama*. In other words, the young *ulama* aspire to continue the *da'wah* work of the previous *ulama* by providing relevant and contemporary religious education centers. They also aim to ensure that this system continues with strong efforts to produce future generations as a legacy of hope for the future.¹⁷

2. Preparing Students for Overseas Studies

These educational centers also play a role in preparing students to continue their studies at Islamic institutions abroad by providing a high-quality curriculum and adequate training. This effort will produce students who are better prepared to face academic challenges at the international level, requiring at least a basic level of Arabic language proficiency for reading texts and communication.

¹⁶ Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023.

¹⁷ Mohamad Abu Bakar. *Dari Pusat ke Pinggiran: Institusi Pondok Di Malaysia*, in Ismail Hussein, A. Aziz Deraman & Abdul Rahman Ahmad. *Tamadun Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: DBP. vol. 3. 1995.

3. Providing an Alternative for the People

In an effort to encourage the younger generation to seriously study religion, these new *pondok* offer study programs that focus on the teachings of *aqidah*, *shariah*, and *akhlak* based on the teachings of *Ahl Sunnah wal Jama'ah*. This provides an opportunity for local and surrounding children to acquire in-depth knowledge and build a strong character to face the challenges of a complex world.

4. Providing an Alternative for Underachieving Mainstream School Graduates

In reality, not everyone has the opportunity to continue their studies after graduating from mainstream schools, or in other words, not everyone is fortunate in the academic world. When the doors of universities and other educational institutions are closed to some of our people, the doors of the *pondok* remain open. With a more inclusive and supportive approach, they can acquire useful knowledge and have the opportunity to develop without being left behind by their peers in universities or other educational institutions.¹⁸

With the clear objectives as mentioned above, the establishment of new *pondok* educational centers not only functions as an educational institution, but also serves as an agent of change in shaping students who are both knowledgeable and virtuous.¹⁹

d) Strengths of Young *Ulama* in Developing *Pondok* in Kelantan

The success of young *ulama* in establishing new *pondok* institutions in Kelantan can be attributed to several interrelated factors that contribute to their strengths. These include:

1. Serious Studies Both Domestically and Internationally

These skilled young *ulama* have undergone deep and comprehensive studies not only domestically but also at Islamic institutions abroad. Their experiences have helped empower them, allowing them to gain a broader perspective and a variety of teaching methodologies in education, making them more competent in the field of Islamic education.

2. Studies through *Talaqqi*

They have studied traditional *pondok* subjects through the method of *talaqqi*, where they receive knowledge directly from knowledgeable teachers. This approach not only strengthens their understanding of the content of

¹⁸Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023; Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023; Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

¹⁹Abdul Hamid A. Abu Sulayman, *Toward an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought*. Herndon-Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 1993. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman and Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi. *The Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*. Herndon-Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 1989.

knowledge, letter by letter, but also deepens their understanding of the religious knowledge inherited from generation to generation comprehensively, not limited to specific topics as in universities or the like.²⁰

3. Experience of Interacting (*Suhbah*) with Teachers

The experience of young *ulama* interacting directly with their teachers provides them with valuable inspiration and guidance. This relationship boosts their confidence and knowledge, as well as strengthens their determination to practice and spread knowledge more seriously. It is even more interesting when the student-teacher relationship continues and they visit each other, which strengthens the bond between them and motivates the young *ulama* to maintain a high momentum.

4. Strong Belief and Reliance (*Tawakkul*) on God

With a strong belief and reliance (*tawakkul*) on Allah SWT, these young *ulama* are brave enough to take the initiative to establish *pondok* despite facing various challenges. This attitude drives them to continue striving and not give up easily in achieving their goals. This element can be clearly seen in their attitude and actions, which gives them a special credit compared to other religious teachers who work in the government or private sectors that are not independent.

5. Support from Teachers, Peers, Family, and Community

Strong support from various parties, including teachers, peers, and family, provides additional motivation for them in their struggle. The community also plays an important role in supporting their efforts by providing encouragement, ideas, financial contributions, and most importantly, recognition for their efforts.

6. Extensive Network Among Young *Ulama*

These young *ulama* have surpassed older *ulama* in establishing strong networks among themselves, allowing them to share experiences, ideas, resources, and strategies for establishing and managing *pondok*. This network simultaneously strengthens the bonds among them and expands their influence within society.

7. Monitoring and Guidance from Elder *Ulama*

A commendable aspect of these young *ulama* is their commitment to intergenerational knowledge transfer. Rather than displacing elder *ulama*, they actively seek their guidance and mentorship. This collaborative approach ensures that the established principles and traditions of *pondok* education are upheld while allowing for necessary innovations. By fostering close relationships with elder *ulama*, young *ulama* receive invaluable guidance and support, providing a strong foundation for fulfilling their

²⁰Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023.

crucial role in educating the community in both religious knowledge and ethical values.²¹

The combination of all these strengths enables the young *ulama* in Kelantan to establish *pondok* with full confidence and commitment, making significant contributions to religious education in the state.²²

e) Curriculum Offered at the *Pondok*

The curriculum offered at new *pondok* is carefully designed to ensure a deep understanding of religious knowledge based on fundamental works that have been traditionally taught by *pondok ulama*. Among these traditional texts are:

1) Arabic Textbooks

- a. *Matan al-Ajurrumiah*: This is a foundational text in Arabic grammar that serves as a crucial basis for mastering the science of al-Nahw. It helps students to understand the structure and usage of the Arabic language effectively.
- b. *Matan al-Bina*: This text delves into the fundamental aspects of the science of al-Sarf, which is an essential foundational knowledge for a more accurate understanding of the Arabic language.
- c. *Matan Abi Shuja'*: This is the most fundamental text in the science of Shafi'i *fiqh*. It provides practical guidance on the implementation of Islamic laws in a factual manner.
- d. *Akidah al-Awwam*: This text contains clear explanations of creed based on the methodology of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* and is easy to understand, making it suitable for beginners.
- e. *Bidayah al-Hidayah*: This is a work on the science of Sufism that provides guidance on how to live as a servant of God and as a creature among other creatures, based on Islamic teachings.

b) Jawi Textbooks

- a. *Faridah al-Fara'id*: This book discusses the greatest obligation in Islamic society, a sound *aqidah* (creed).
- b. *Hidayah al-Sibyan*: This book contains basic education for children, helping them understand religious principles from a young age.
- c. *Penawar bagi Hati*: This book contains advice and guidance on improving one's character and soul, emphasizing the importance of spiritual guidance.

²¹Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023; Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023.

²² Salleh, M. J. "Cabaran Utama Dalam Pendidikan Tahfiz Dan Pondok di Malaysia," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6, No. 3 (2014), p. 200-215. Ahmad, N. H. "Penggunaan Teknologi Dalam Pendidikan Tahfiz Dan Pondok di Malaysia: Potensi Dan Cabaran," *Journal of Islamic Education Technology* 5, No. 1 (2020).

- d. *Pelita Penuntut*: This is a guide for students in seeking knowledge and outlines the etiquette and ethics of learning.

In addition, the curriculum also includes supplementary texts that add value to the learning process. Graduates of Tarim, Hadramaut, typically incorporate the works of renowned Tarim *ulama* into their teaching, which places a strong emphasis on self-purification and ethics. This serves as an introductory and preparatory curriculum for students, providing them with a solid foundation in understanding religious knowledge.²³ In contrast, young *ulama* who are graduates of southern Thailand’s *pondok* incorporate traditional texts studied in southern Thailand’s *pondok*, which typically emphasize the study of *aqidah* and *tasawwuf*. This opens up opportunities for students to gain a broader perspective in religious studies in accordance with the Malay world.²⁴

With this combined curriculum, the new *pondok* not only focuses on mastering theory, but also equips students with the practical skills needed for daily life as a Muslim. This curriculum aims to produce a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also has good morals and is committed to practicing Islamic teachings.²⁵

Perspectives of Elder *Ulama*, Islamic Community and Families in Kelantan towards New *Pondok*

a) Perspectives of elder *ulama* towards new *pondok*

To gain insights into the perspectives of elder *ulama* on the thriving establishment of new *pondok* by young *ulama*, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with a select group of esteemed *ulama* in Kelantan. The following list outlines the prominent *ulama* who participated in the study.

Table 2. List of Elder *Ulama* Interviewed

Name of <i>Ulama</i>	Occupation	Interview Date
Abuya Syeikh Haji Wazir bin Che Awang	Advisor of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Teacher of the YIK Pondok Study Center	May 16, 2023
Tuan Guru Haji Baba Wan Rosli bin Wan Ibrahim	Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Caretaker of	August 4, 2023

²³ Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023; Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023.

²⁴ Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

²⁵ Isma’il Raji Al-Faruqi, *Aslimat al- Ma’rifah*. Kuwait: Dār al-Buhūth al-‘Ilmīyah. 1984. Isma’il Raji al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective*, in *Islam: Sources and Purpose of Knowledge*. Herndon: IIIT. 1988.

	Bukit Awang Pondok, Pasir Puteh	
Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Khairi bin Muhamed	Former Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Former Caretaker of 3 Pondok in Pasir Tumbuh	May 16, 2023
Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah	Secretary of the Central Pondok Development Berhad/ Caretaker of Pasir Tumbuh Pondok	May 16, 2023
Tuan Guru Baba Abdul Razak bin Burhanuddin	Teacher at the YIK Pondok Study Center/ Curriculum Developer at MAIK Pondok	August 4, 2023

The elder *ulama* interviewed expressed both support and concern regarding the establishment of new Islamic boarding schools. The following are their views:

1. Support for the efforts of young *ulama*
The senior *ulama* opined that the efforts of young *ulama* in establishing *pondok* is a good initiative and worthy of support. They perceived this as a positive step in strengthening religious education and disseminating knowledge among the community.
2. A stronghold for the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*
The rapid establishment of *pondok* in Kelantan is seen as a strong fortress for defending the teachings of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. The senior *ulama* believe that the presence of these new *pondok* can help to curb the infiltration of Wahhabi belief, which is actively spreading among the community, especially among the youth.²⁶ These *ulama* have observed that villages in Pattani, Southern Thailand, with *pondok* have successfully prevented the spread of Wahhabi ideology. This serves as evidence that the existence of the institution and its rapid establishment throughout the country plays a crucial role in safeguarding the Islamic faith of the community from the threats of deviant practices.
3. Lack of Scholarly Qualifications among Young *Ulama*
However, some elder *ulama* also expressed their concerns about the academic qualifications of the younger *ulama*. They emphasized that many of these young *ulama* who have established *pondok* lack the necessary qualifications for this task. Deficiencies in various fields of knowledge, such as *aqidah* (Islamic creed), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tasawwuf* (Sufism), and other auxiliary sciences, have raised concerns about their ability to manage the *pondok* system in accordance with established traditions. As a result of these shortcomings, the senior *ulama* feared that there may have been confusion in

²⁶Interview with Abuya Syeikh Haji Wazir bin Che Awang (Advisor of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Teacher of the YIK Pondok Study Center), May 16, 2023.

religious understanding among students and the community, and that this could even tarnish the reputation of *pondok* and lead to controversies that erode public trust in this system of education.²⁷

In general, the perspectives of the elder *ulama* serve as a reminder to the younger *ulama* to continuously improve themselves and their knowledge while promoting authentic religious education based on sound traditions. This is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the *pondok* institutions in educating the community and preserving the pure teachings of Islam.²⁸

b) Muslim Community and Family Acceptance of New *Pondok* Institutions

Further empirical research is needed to comprehensively assess the perspectives of the local community and parents of students enrolled in these *pondok* institutions. However, based on the interviews conducted with senior *ulama* and their observations of community and parental responses, a general acceptance of the new *pondok* institutions can be discerned. This finding reflects a dynamic and evolving attitude towards Islamic education within the Kelantanese community. Key aspects of this acceptance include:

1. Positive response to public classes

Generally, the community and parents in Kelantan welcome the efforts of young *ulama* in establishing new *pondok*, especially the Public Study Classes organized at the *pondok* or outside. They see this initiative as an opportunity for them to understand religion more closely through structured studies based on readings and lectures on fundamental books of *fardhu ain*, including open question-and-answer sessions that provide ample space for them to ask any questions about religion. Many local people and parents have benefited from this initiative and have been able to deepen their religious knowledge effectively through such public study classes.²⁹

2. Trust in educating children

A small portion of parents in this country have placed their trust in this younger generation of *ulama* to educate their children. They believe that *pondok* can provide religious education that is closer to local traditions

²⁷ Interview with Tuan Guru Baba Abdul Razak bin Burhanuddin (Teacher at the YIK Pondok Study Center/ Curriculum Developer at MAIK Pondok), August 4, 2023; Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Khairi bin Muhamed (Former Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Former Caretaker of 3 Pondok in Pasir Tumbuh), May 16, 2023; Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Pondok Berhad Development Center), May 16, 2023; Interview with Tuan Guru Haji Baba Wan Rosli bin Wan Ibrahim (Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Caretaker of Bukit Awang Pondok, Pasir Puteh), August 4, 2023.

²⁸ Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022.

²⁹ Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023; Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023; Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

and culture, as well as valuable guidance in shaping their children's character and personality.³⁰ It is even more impressive that some parents have sent their children as early as the age of 7 with the aim of instilling religious education in their children from the very beginning of their studies.³¹

3. Involvement in practices and charitable giving (*infaq*)

A unique feature of these new *pondok* is that they are actively organizing activities of a devotional nature, such as *zikr* (remembrance of Allah) circles, *sunnah* (optional) prayers according to specific seasons and events like eclipses and rain-seeking prayers, as well as religious events such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*maulidurrasul*), the night of Nisfu Sya'ban, the Isra and Mi'raj, and the like, which can be closely followed by the local community. The organization of such activities and events also opens up opportunities for charitable giving (*infaq*) and becomes a healthier social medium within the community.³²

Still, there are a small number of people who are cynical about the establishment of these new *pondok*. They claim that there are cases of misconduct, noise disturbances by students, and some even consider certain practices in the *pondok* to be un-Islamic or *bid'ah* (innovation). This tendency arises from a lack of understanding of the approach and teaching methodology employed by this younger generation of *ulama*. Regarding the accusations of un-Islamic practices and *bid'ah*, Dr. Muna commented that such accusations are malicious and baseless, coming from misguided religious scholars who, if investigated further, would be found to have even more serious deviations, especially in matters of creed and the concept of God. Therefore, their criticism of the *pondok* system, which is based on the teachings of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah* and inherited from previous *ulama* through an unbroken chain of transmission, should not be taken seriously.³³

Nevertheless, public acceptance of these new *pondok* is varied and complex, based on several perspectives. Although there are some challenges and criticisms, the support received indicates that the community appreciates the efforts of young *ulama* in spreading knowledge and educating the next generation. To maintain positive perceptions of the community and parents towards these new boarding schools or to improve negative perceptions of these educational centers, it is

³⁰ Interview with Haji Mohd Normy bin Sidek (Father), October 18, 2023; Bahrun Abubakar, et al., "Parenting Education in Islamic Families within the Framework of Family Resilience in Aceh, Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 7, No. 2 (2023).

³¹ Interview with Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023. Muljono Damopolii, et al., "The Phenomenon of Punishment at Pesantren in South Sulawesi: An Islamic Law and Islamic Education Approaches," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 7, No. 3 (2023).

³² Interview with Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023.

³³ Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022; Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.

important for young *ulama* to establish good communication with the community, listen to their views, and ensure that the teachings delivered are wise.

The Role of New *Pondok* and Its Connection to Religious Development in Kelantanese Islamic Communities and Families

The role of young *ulama* in establishing new *pondok* in Kelantan is closely linked to the religious well-being of Islamic communities and families in the state. In this regard, the state's religious authorities and the Royal Malaysian Police were consulted to obtain feedback on the extent of the connection between the establishment of the new *pondok* and religious well-being in the Islamic communities and families in this state.

a. The Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (MAIK)

The Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (*Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan/MAIK*)³⁴ is the main religious authority in Kelantan and plays a crucial role in overseeing and monitoring religious well-being in the state.³⁵ The MAIK holds several crucial roles in managing Islamic affairs in the state of Kelantan:

1. Coordination and Management

MAIK is responsible for managing and coordinating all Islamic affairs in Kelantan, including religious education, mosque management, and the welfare of the Muslim community. MAIK ensures that Islamic practices in the state adhere to authentic teachings and do not contradict state regulations.

2. Supervision of Religious Institutions

MAIK oversees religious institutions such as religious schools, *pondok* (traditional Islamic boarding schools), and other Islamic educational institutions. They ensure that these institutions operate in accordance with established guidelines and regulations.

3. Legislation and Enforcement

MAIK has the authority to enforce enactments and laws related to Islam in Kelantan. This includes enforcing laws on worship, religious practices, and the management of other religious affairs.

4. Action Against Violations

MAIK can take action against individuals or groups found to be violating Islamic laws, including disciplinary actions, surveillance, and appropriate penalties.

³⁴ Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan (MAIK) was established on 17 Safar 1334, corresponding to 24 December 1915, through a proclamation by His Royal Highness Sultan Muhammad IV. Its establishment aimed to advise His Royal Highness the Sultan, as the head of religion, on matters pertaining to Islam and Malay customs in Kelantan. Visit <https://www.e-maik.my/v2/index.php/info/maik/sejarah-penubuhan>

³⁵ Interview with Abdul Muhaimin bin Ismail (Da'wah Officer, Islamic Education Institution, Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Negeri Kelantan), August 3, 2023.

5. Planning and Development

MAIK is involved in planning and development in the areas of religious education, mosque development, and welfare projects related to the well-being of the Muslim community. Additionally, MAIK implements various programs and initiatives to improve religious knowledge and the quality of life of Muslims in Kelantan. This includes *da'wah programs*, seminars, and religious courses.

6. Community Relations

MAIK serves as a liaison between the community and religious authorities. MAIK listens to complaints and issues related to religion from the community and strive to resolve them fairly.

7. Education and Awareness

MAIK strives to increase religious awareness among the community through various forms of education and information about Islamic teachings, correct practices, and religious regulations.

8. Strengthening Religious Well-being

MAIK plays a role in ensuring religious well-being by providing continuous guidance and monitoring to ensure that religious practices in Kelantan are within the framework of authentic Islamic teachings and in line with state regulations.

9. Handling Sensitive Issues

MAIK also needs to address sensitive issues that may arise in the context of religion and society, and ensure balanced solutions that maintain harmony.³⁶

MAIK, as the religious authority in Kelantan, generally plays a crucial role in ensuring religious well-being in the state. This institution manages, monitors, and enforces religious regulations to ensure that Islamic practices are carried out correctly and in accordance with true Islamic teachings. In this regard, MAIK affirms that the rapid growth of new *pondok* established by young *ulama* has significantly contributed to the religious well-being of Islamic communities and families in Kelantan. This is because they are seen as continuing a valuable heritage in the state, the heritage of previous *ulama*. The Kelantanese community, which has long been synonymous with such a system, is undoubtedly very pleased and welcomes the establishment of these *pondok*, which indirectly restores the religious well-being that had faded before the year 2000.³⁷

Another state government entity established to manage religious affairs in Kelantan is the Kelantan State Islamic Religious Affairs Department (*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Kelantan/JAHEAIK*).³⁸ The primary objective of

³⁶Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan (MAIK). Visit <https://www.e-maik.my/v2/index.php/info/maik/objektif-strategi-visi-misi-moto>

³⁷ Interview with Abdul Muhaimin bin Ismail (Da'wah Officer, Islamic Education Institution, Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Negeri Kelantan), August 3, 2023.

³⁸ Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Kelantan (JAHEAIK) was officially established on January 1, 1980, with the aim of assisting the Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council in strengthening da'wah activities and the development of Islamic affairs in the state of Kelantan. At

JAHEAIK is to restore human dignity, create a God-fearing society, and build a prosperous nation to ensure a better life for all. Its mission is to produce a progressive community based on the values of *Faqihan, Aminan, Rahiman, Ilman, and Salaman* in line with the “Membangun Bersama Islam” (Developing Together with Islam) policy. The department’s vision is to lead efficient Islamic affairs management to produce God-fearing individuals by the year 1441H. However, JAHEAIK is not directly involved in controlling and enforcing matters related to educational institutions in Kelantan.

b. Royal Malaysian Police (*Polis Diraja Malaysia/PDRM*)

In Kelantan, as in other states of Malaysia, the role of the police in maintaining religious well-being is limited and primarily focused on public safety. The police do not have direct authority in the management or regulation of Islamic affairs, which are specifically handled by state religious bodies such as the JAHEAIK and MAIK³⁹. However, the police still play an important role in the context of religious well-being in the state, including:

1. Maintaining Public Safety and Order
 - a) Handling Conflicts: The police are responsible for managing and resolving any conflicts or tensions that arise related to religious issues. If there are tensions or disputes between religious groups, the police will be involved in controlling the situation and ensuring public safety.
 - b) Preventing Violence: The police play a crucial role in preventing and addressing any form of violence or threats that may arise from religious differences. This includes ensuring that religious ceremonies and activities can be carried out peacefully.
2. Cooperation with Religious Bodies
 - a) Collaboration with JAHEAIK and MAIK: The police often work with religious bodies such as JAHEAIK and MAIK to address issues involving public safety and the implementation of religious laws. The police can help ensure that religious regulations are followed when there are security issues or conflicts related to religion.
 - b) Safeguarding Religious Events: The police may be involved in maintaining security during large-scale religious events, such as festivals, lectures, or religious ceremonies attended by many people. This ensures that the event proceeds smoothly and without any disturbances.

the time of its establishment on 1/12/1950, JAHEAIK, then known as the Religious Supervisor's Office or more popularly known as the Immorality Prevention Office, focused solely on the prevention, arrest, and prosecution of syariah crimes. This office existed under the Kelantan State Mufti's Office. In the 1960s and onwards until now, JAHEAIK has undergone rapid development in terms of its scope of duties, as well as its staffing and administrative structure, in line with the demands of changing times and circumstances. Visit <https://jaheaik.kelantan.gov.my/index.php/ms/profail/latar-belakang>

³⁹ Interview with the Head of the Kelantan Contingent Police Headquarters, Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), August 18, 2024.

3. Law Enforcement
 - a) Actions Against Illegal Activities: The police may be involved in taking action against activities that are considered illegal or in violation of the law, including activities related to religion that may violate state laws. For example, if there is an activity that violates the law or involves criminal acts, the police will investigate and take appropriate action.
 - b) Monitoring and Supervision: The police may also be involved in monitoring and supervising to ensure that activities related to religion do not violate state laws or create public safety problems.
4. Education and Awareness: The police can conduct safety campaigns involving the community, including religious communities, to raise awareness of public safety and prevent crime. This includes providing information about the safety measures that need to be taken when conducting religious activities.
5. Relationship and Communication: The police strive to build good relationships with religious communities to enhance cooperation and communication. This includes attending community meetings, discussing security issues, and resolving emerging problems in a positive manner.⁴⁰

Overall, the role of the police in overseeing religious well-being in Kelantan is more focused on ensuring public safety and addressing any issues or conflicts that arise. They work together with religious bodies to ensure that regulations and laws are followed while maintaining peace and order within society. The role of the Royal Malaysian Police in ensuring religious well-being in Malaysia, specifically Kelantan, can be summarized as follows:

1. General Enforcement

The Royal Malaysian Police is generally responsible for maintaining public peace and order. In the context of religion, the police may be involved in situations where religious issues lead to conflicts or threats to public safety, such as handling disputes or tensions related to religious issues.
2. Cooperation with Religious Bodies

The police often work with religious bodies like MAIK on issues related to public safety and order. For example, if there are reports of activities that do not comply with religious laws or violate regulations set by religious bodies, the police can assist in investigations and take necessary actions.
3. Legal Provisions

Legislation related to Islam is usually stated in state enactments or federal acts that specifically regulate religious matters. The police must comply with these legal provisions in carrying out their duties, but they do not have direct authority in regulating and interpreting these religious laws.

⁴⁰ Interview with the Head of the Kelantan Contingent Police Headquarters, Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), August 18, 2024.

4. Religious Well-being

Religious well-being in Kelantan is overseen by religious bodies that have the authority to monitor religious practices and ensure that they are in line with accepted Islamic teachings. The police can be involved in ensuring that public peace and order are maintained in the form of collaboration with each other according to their respective jurisdictions.

5. Action Against Illegal Activities

If there are activities that violate the law or threaten community harmony, the police can take action, but usually based on reports and instructions from religious bodies or local authorities.

The Royal Malaysian Police assures that the efforts of young *ulama* in establishing *pondok* education centers strengthen Islam itself and reinforce religious practices in Kelantan based on the teachings of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* in terms of *aqidah*, *sharia*, and *akhlaq*. The police are aware that Malay states were founded based on these teachings and they, in principle, provide services to ensure that all practices are in accordance with what has been enshrined in the laws of these states.⁴¹

It is crucial to recognize that practices contradicting state constitutional laws or teachings that deviate significantly from established religious norms within the state can pose a threat to religious harmony. These actions have the potential to undermine the prevailing understanding of religious principles and potentially incite social unrest. Several documented cases, monitored by the police, demonstrate how such deviations can foster dissent and potentially exacerbate social tensions within the Muslim community. These instances underscore the importance of upholding religious harmony and adhering to established norms within the framework of the state's constitutional guidelines.⁴²

Conclusion

The rapid growth of *pondok* in Kelantan is the result of the continuous hard work of young *ulama* with a clear direction. The thriving establishment of these *pondok* is also driven by several factors, including the awareness of the young *ulama*, the instructions of their teachers, and the support of the local Islamic community and families. However, the issue of the scholarly qualifications of young *ulama* has raised concerns among senior *ulama* to ensure that new *pondok* are able to operate in accordance with the traditional *pondok* model and produce quality students. Therefore, the young *ulama* have proposed solutions to address this issue, which need to be implemented immediately to overcome any existing scholarly shortcomings. Positive feedback also comes from the Kelantan State Islamic Religious Council and the Royal Malaysian Police, who have affirmed that the

⁴¹Interview with the Head of the Kelantan Contingent Police Headquarters, Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), August 18, 2024.

⁴²Interview with the Head of the Kelantan Contingent Police Headquarters, Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), August 18, 2024.

efforts of these young *ulama* do not disrupt the religious well-being of the Islamic community and families in Kelantan but rather strengthen the unity of the Muslim community as their *da'wah* and teachings follow the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* methodology in terms of creed, sharia, and morals, while at the same time contributing to curbing the development of deviant sects.

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Interviews

- Interview with Abdul Muhaimin bin Ismail (Da'wah Officer, Islamic Education Institution, Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Adat Negeri Kelantan), August 3, 2023.
- Interview with Abuya Syeikh Haji Wazir bin Che Awang (Advisor of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Teacher of the YIK Pondok Study Center), May 16, 2023.
- Interview with Baba Saiful Bahri (Young Teacher, Pondok al-Badriyyah Jal Besar, Tumpat), September 20, 2023.
- Interview with Dr. Muna bin Hamzan (Chair of the Pondok Kelantan Unity Cadre Association), October 30, 2022.
- Interview with Haji Mohd Normy bin Sidek (Father), October 18, 2023.
- Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Khairi bin Muhamed (Former Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Former Caretaker of 3 Pondok in Pasir Tumbuh), May 16, 2023.
- Interview with Tuan Guru Ahmad Shairazi bin Atiqullah (Secretary of the Central Pondok Development Berhad/ Caretaker of Pasir Tumbuh Pondok), May 16, 2023.
- Interview with Tuan Guru Baba Abdul Razak bin Burhanuddin (Teacher at the YIK Pondok Study Center/ Curriculum Developer at MAIK Pondok), August 4, 2023.
- Interview with Tuan Guru Haji Baba Wan Rosli bin Wan Ibrahim (Chairman of the Kelantan Pondok Union/ Caretaker of Bukit Awang Pondok, Pasir Puteh), August 4, 2023.

Interview with Tuan Guru Lukmanul Hakim bin Mohamed (Young Teacher and Chairman of the Kelantan Yemen Student Association), August 3, 2023.

Interview with Tuan Guru Muhaizad Muhammad (Young Teacher, Madrasah Ribat Al-Musthofa, Kampung Bagan Bawah, Pulau Condong), September 11, 2023.

Interview with the Head of the Kelantan Contingent Police Headquarters, Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), August 18, 2024