The Second International Malaysian Studies Conference was held at the University of Malaya from 2-4 August 1999. It was attended by local participants from many countries, as well as many from such countries as the UK, Germany, Denmark, Japan, and the US. The papers addressed issues relating to Malaysia, particularly regarding economics, politics, education, culture, technology, and religion, especially Islam. The conference was held at the University of Malaya from 2-4 August 1999.

**Research in Islam**

This presentation session began with Maznah Mohammad’s summary of her paper on ‘Democratization and Islamic Family Law Reform in Malaysia’. According to Maznah, the Islamization in Malaysia includes Islamic Family Law, which is debated on by two parties, modernist UMNO and the conservative PAS. In the context of women’s issues, UMNO promotes human and gender rights. PAS did so also but did not emphasize the gender rights as UMNO had done. In her opinion, women’s issues will be promoted by both parties in the coming elections, an important determinant of the design of future Islamization.

Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan presented a paper on ‘Surau and The Urban Ummat: The Case of Bandar Baru Bangi’. She began by listing factors that influenced the revival of the surau in urban areas in the 1970s. Her focus was on the activities of some suraus in Bandar Baru Bangi, notably Surau An-Nur, which was led by Dr Harun Din, Professor of Islamic Law at UKM. Surau An-Nur was involved in various activities, such as Islamic education, welfare, prayer and donations. The conclusion was that a surau can be transformed into an institution of learning and preaching, depending on its resources and management.

Patricia A. Martinez, chairwoman of this session, then presented a paper on ‘The Possibilities in Tafsir and Istiftar for Islamic Discourse in Malaysia’. She explored classical tafsir methodology, giving her opinion on its development in Malaysian society. She held that istiftar contributes to the study of tafsir in certain contexts. Therefore, Malaysian Tafsir should emphasize both. She concluded that the study of the Quran in Muslim society, especially Malaysia, should not reject the Western perspective totally since much could be learned.

Kikue Hamayotsu discussed the impact of the Islamic reformist movement on the process of nation-building in Malaysia. From her point of view, the development of Islamization in Malaysia was influenced by modernist leadership in UMNO as a ruling party. Wan Shalawuddin Hassan made a brief summary of the Bosnian issues from the perspective of Malaysian government policy in his paper entitled ‘Krisis Bosnia dan Dacar Luar Malaysia’. In his opinion, the Malaysian government involved itself in the Bosnian Crisis based on several factors, the most important being to demonstrate to the world the potential of Malaysia as a newly industrialized country. However, he did not deny that the Islamic cause was a major reason for Malaysia’s involvement in the crisis.

**Islam and Politics**

This session, chaired by Prof. Osman Bakar, began with Ahmad Faiz Abdul Hamid’s paper on ‘Political Dimension of Religious Conflict in Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement in the 1990s’. He focused on the Darul Arqam movement, which was banned by the government in 1994. He claimed that the main reason for the ban was political rather than religious, suggesting that Darul Arqam challenged the government’s brand of Islamization.

Farish Noor presented a paper on ‘Formation of Political Frontiers between the government and Islamic Opposition during the 1998-1999 Political Crisis of Malaysia’. He gave a chronology of the current situation in Malaysian politics, which he feels is related to past occurrences between the government and Islamic opposition. His main focus was on the importance of political idealism rather than realpolitik in the shaping of Malaysian politics in the years to come.