

# “REMEMBERING THE REAL BUILDER OF IIUM: PROF EMERITUS DATO DR ABDULHAMID ABUSULAYMAN”

(written by Prof M.Kamal Hassan as the former Deputy Rector  
to Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman)

It has been my privilege to work in IIUM under the leadership of Prof Emeritus Dato Dr AbdulHamid AbuSulayman who took over the rectorship of Dr. Muhammad Abdul Rauf in 1988. Before going further, let me disclose that I knew of Dr. Abdulhamid AbuSulayman way back in the early 1970s when, as a graduate student of Columbia University, I used to attend the yearly conventions of the Muslims Students Association of US and Canada (MSA). It must be in 1969 that I attended my first convention. It was in the MSA Convention that a young Saudi scholar by the name of Abdulhamid AbuSulayman presented his paper on Islamic economics. His paper on the early history of Islamic Economics was impressive because he demonstrated his ability to analyse rationally the factors --economic and political -- for some of the innovative policies of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Caliph Abu Bakr (r.a.) and particularly of Caliph Omar (r.a.). I looked at him in the convention as an up-and-coming Saudi scholar who was critical of traditional scholarship in Saudi Arabia itself. It was Dr Ahmad Totonji who was very closely associated with him in MSA, later in AMSS and finally in IIIT, who related to me the exceptional aspects of Dr. AbdulHamid’s personality.

It never occurred to me that 18 years later that I would be meeting him as my boss in the new Islamic university, IIUM, and that I would be working for the next ten years under his strong leadership. After coming to IIUM to become the second Rector, He appointed me in 1989 to be the founding dean of the new faculty ,the 3rd in IIUM, namely the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, and then he appointed me in 1990 as Deputy Rector for academic affairs.

I wish to explain at this point that before Dr AbdulHamid came to IIUM, the university was operating on the model that I presented to the Prime Minister in 1982, an Islamic university without the Faculty of Islamic Studies.

After Dr Abdulhamid became the second Rector, the first and initial model of IIUM was then modified to meet the challenges of the accelerated expansion of the academic programmes and the great influx of international students. The new Rector placed the responsibility of non-formal Islamic education, including co-curricular activities of the students, on the Student Affairs Division and transformed the Centre for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK) that I led into the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge which became one of the ten new departments under the new Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences.

It should be noted that the first five years of IIUM in the temporary campus of Petaling Jaya were the most critical and challenging years. Those years laid the foundation of the Islamic identity of the university and of the mission of "Islamisation of

human knowledge” which was promoted by the second Rector. They witnessed – despite the shortcomings and the lack of an existing model to be emulated – the emergence of the ethos and the intellectual commitment of a contemporary international Islamic university which dared to aspire for the reform and transformation of the Muslim world, in order to recapture the lost leadership role of the global Muslim *Ummah*.

I was holding the position as Deputy Rector for academic affairs for seven years until I was requested by the President of IIUM to assume the position of the first holder of the Malaysian Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at Georgetown University, Washington DC for two years. When I returned to IIUM in 1999, Dr AbdulHamid, who was in a hurry to leave Malaysia due to the political disruption between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, appointed me as an Acting Rector because he decided to leave IIUM following the imprisonment of Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister.

For me, when look back to the first two decades of IIUM, it was a great and memorable experience indeed to work with *al-Marhum* Dr. AbdulHamid as the “Innovative Builder”, “Visionary” and “Transformational Leader” of IIUM. The great learning experience for me did not stop after he left because he continued to contribute to the university he built with his participation in conferences held in IIUM, his publications in IIIT and his talks in IIUM which took place on many occasions until about 3 years ago.

After he left hurriedly in 1999, I have always dreamt that he would be able to come back one day to lead IIUM again in a different capacity. *Alhamdulillah*, after Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim was released from prison and was able to resume his political activities, I proposed to the Rector at the time Prof. Dr. Syed Arabi Idid, to confer upon Dr. AbdulHamid the title of Emeritus Professor. The Rector agreed and Dr AbdulHamid came once again to IIUM to receive the honour. He was very happy with the growth of the university in the Gombak Campus that he built. A few years later he came back for a conference. I managed to get him to come again in 2013 to attend and deliver a keynote address at the First World Conference on the Integration and Islamicisation of Human Knowledge held in the Gombak Campus. He came back a few more times. In his final visit to IIUM, he was invited by the Vice President of Indonesia to visit Indonesia for a week, because the Indonesian government wanted to get his views on the plan to build the first Indonesian International Islamic University. The IIIU of Indonesia is now a reality in Depok, West Java, as a postgraduate university. I foresee that this Indonesian Islamic university would be one of the strong competitors of IIUM in Southeast Asia.

Let me summarise his great contributions to IIUM in particular: he is The Real Builder of IIUM who laid down the ideological foundation of IIUM. He was:

- 1.The Architect and Builder of KIRKHS.
- 2.The Non-Stop and Indefatigable Worker.

3.The Generous Ummatic Leader and Rector.

4.The Transformer of Malay Culture of Shyness by introducing the Debating Activity of IIUM students which brought about fantastic cultural changes among the Malay students.

His Personality traits that I can never forget and would like the younger generation to emulate:

1. Sincerity and truthfulness, working for the pleasure of Allah SWT.
2. Commitment, Consistency and Dedication for the Mission of Civilisation Reform and Transformation.
3. Action-Oriented Intellectual and Thinker.
4. Ummatic mindset and behaviour transcending all forms of racial biases and prejudice.
5. Deeply caring, compassionate and empathetic to the poor, the underprivileged and the needy students no matter where they came from.

I consider IIUM as his “youngest and most beloved child”. He spent the best part of his life for 10 years and more to develop, nurture and promote his youngest child. Let us sustain and continue his efforts so that this 38 years old progeny of his will grow into an Ummatic Universalist Builder of a New Civilisation to replace the Collapsing Civilisation built upon the religion of Intellectual Denial and Defiance of the One True God.

**May You Shower, O Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, upon the soul of Professor Emeritus Dr. Abdulhamid AbuSulayman, Your Blessings and Infinite Mercy. *Aamiin, Yaa Rabb al-`Aalamiin.***

