There have been many studies conducted on multinationals from large developing Asian countries such as China and India. The multinationals from smaller Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore, are also active in investing outside their countries. In particular, the Malaysian multinationals are establishing large-scale oil palm plantations in Indonesia. The Malaysian palm oil-based multinationals, which are defined as POB MNCs, need to invest in Indonesia as they are facing limited suitable lands to plant oil palms domestically. They also have to rely on immigrants labour for their Malaysian oil palm plantations. As a result, the POB MNCs’ costs of palm oil production in Malaysia are higher as compared to the costs in Indonesia. The POB MNCs’ operations in Indonesia will have a major impact on their long-term business viability as their Malaysian oil palm operations would continue to incur higher production costs. The palm oil industry is important to the Malaysian economy. Thus, the POB MNCs need to be supported by the Malaysian government to develop competitive advantages to operate successfully in Malaysia and Indonesia. The competitive advantages of the POB MNCs have been their superior oil palm plantation management techniques and skilled estate managers, both of which had been accumulated over decades. This study examines the role of network relationships in the Malaysian palm oil industry, and how the network relationships contribute to firm competitive advantages of the POB MNCs. A qualitative research method was used to gather primary data on network relationships by interviewing a sample of informants. They were interviewed from July 2012 to March 2013. Secondary data was also gathered based on archives of industry conferences, annual reports of industry associations and notes made at industry workshops to provide research triangulation. The study shows that network relationships in the palm oil industry were formed as a result of long historical, economic, ownership and personal ties. The members of the network collaborate among themselves to develop solutions to address industry problems, such as access to markets, infestations of pests and diseases on oil palms, and R&D activities. The networks relationships also involve foreign R&D institutions and foreign experts. The study also shows that network relationships had helped in the accumulation of industry best-practices, which are applied in the operations of the POB MNCs in Malaysia and Indonesia. The study has shown that the POB MNCs were able to possess competitive advantages in their Indonesian operations based on the accumulated knowledge of industry best-practices. As a result, the phenomenon of the internationalization of Malaysian palm oil firms in Indonesia was explained in term of their motivation for investing in Indonesia and the possession of competitive advantages over their Indonesian competitors. The study, which is exploratory, contributes to new knowledge on the internationalization of firms from smaller developing countries. There are usual limitations of the study which are associated with the use of a qualitative research method. The results of the study cannot be generalizable to other agro-industry settings. The study has recommended areas that could be addressed in future studies.

This thesis revisited the Islamic insurance models’ operations and its various business paradigms within the Shari’ah parameters in three different countries which are Bahrain, Malaysia, and Sudan. Although, the Islamic insurance industry is experiencing a period of rapid growth in terms of its net contributions and profit, amidst tough obstacles and constraints due to the Shari’ah issues in certain aspects. Islamic insurance operations require fine-tuning in line with Islamic jurisprudence and Muslims need. There are many different operational models with various Islamic jurisdictions trying to meet the needs of Muslims in general as regard Islamic insurance in the global Islamic economy. However, each of these models has its own advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, there is no agreement amongst the Islamic scholars on which of these models can be considered the best. This means different organizations use the same Islamic contract but with different applications. These models, which are Wakalah, Mudarabah, Waqaf and the Hybrid model, have several shortcomings that need to be studied and addressed to strengthen the global Islamic insurance industry. The two challenging issues that are studied are the ownerships that are the Islamic insurance risk fund or the contribution fund and the surplus distribution accumulated from the risk fund. There are differences of opinion regarding Shari’ah compliance of certain practices. This has led to layers of regulatory differences in countries like Bahrain, Malaysia, and Sudan, resulting in initiation of separate regulatory frameworks for Islamic insurance as a medium to ensure rapid growth and encourage Islamic insurance. This study adopts MANOVA because there are multiple dependent variables as well as independent variables within the constructs of the research. The first objective illustrates a well-structured understanding of the insurance principle practiced in Islamic insurance. MANOVA was conducted to test for substantial differences in the application of insurance principles in the operation of Islamic insurance within the selected countries. Moreover, the second objective examines the association between Shari’ah rules and some items in the business operation of Islamic insurance in the selected countries that operate Islamic Insurance. Furthermore, the objective three investigates the similarities and differences in the running of Islamic insurance business in selected countries. On the other hand, objective four addresses the justification of Islamic insurers on their selected operational models and this segment concludes with the last objective that proposes an operational model that will be acceptable to all Islamic insurance companies. The main contributions of this research are the argumentive points provided by the experts of Islamic insurance, Shari’ah scholars and customers in the three countries sampled. The findings reveal changes in insurance principles; similarities in the models practiced and provide justifications in terms of features such as the operator fees and the general harmonization of the models. This study is joined together the application from the operators of Islamic insurance industry, the Ulama of the Shari’ah board and the experts of Islamic insurance industry to meet together to highlight a common model for Islamic insurance, and the best method for surplus (profit or loss) distribution, and other issues. For the Islamic insurance industry, this research can narrow the gap between the current practiced models. This indicates that the proposed Islamic insurance model which is Musharakah-wakalah will increase Islamic operation.