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Identifying Islamophobia in Malaysian Buddhist Context

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Jaffary Awang[**]
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Abstract

The apologetic attitude among Buddhists towards issues related to Islamic teachings in Malaysia gave a manifestation of the existence of an early Islamophobic symptom. Hence this paper will discuss the form and level of Islamophobia among Buddhists in Malaysia. The design is qualitative by using content analysis designs based on books, articles, magazines, reports and websites related to research topics. The study found that the form of Islamophobia among Buddhists in Malaysia was based on their objections to the issue of Islamisation and certain policies that potentially to treat the religious survival dan their followers in practicing their religion. The study also found the level of Islamophobia among Malaysian Buddhists is at fear and treat. Hence, there is a need to reconcile their understanding on Islam and Muslims, besides empower the good relation at all stages.
Keywords: Buddhist Islamophobia, Islamophobia, Muslim-Buddhist Relation, Malaysian Buddhist, Chinese Buddhism**.**

Introduction

The word Islamophobia derives from two words; *Islam*, which refers to the monotheistic religion conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), while the *phobia* is an extreme fear of something[1]. According to the *English Oxford Living Dictionary*, the term of Islamophobia refers to the dislike attitude or prejudice against Islam using political power. While Merriam-Webster defines as an irrational fears, hatred, or discrimination against Islam and the Muslim community. Similar definitions are given

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[1] Kamus Dewan. 2005. Edisi Keempat. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

by the Collins English Dictionary,[1] by including the hatred not simply refer to Muslims community, but also Muslim politics or tradition. In general, the connotation of Islamophobia can be understood as fear, hatred, prejudice attitude towards any element related to Islamic teachings and Muslim. This parallel to the stage of Islamophobia as according to a study,[2] which exists in three stages; fear, hate, and threatened. The lowest level is fear, which causes one to feel anxious, uncomfortable and nervous. It leads to action to avoid and prevent. The second stage is hated feelings. This feeling leads to dislike and uninterested in something. Whereas the highest level of Islamophobia is endangered. It can cause irrational fears including offensive behaviour and ready to attack on something. Even at this highest-level stage potentially lead to intention to harm, destroy and punish, subsequently contribute to the of violence action.

Ironically, the word Islamophobia began to be used in the West as early as at the 20th century,[3] and the issue of Islamophobia came to light in 1991. It is based on the findings of the Western public's open and closed view on Islam that has produced a report titled *Islamophobia: A Challenge for all of us.*[4] According to the Centre for Race and Gender at the University of California, the report refers to the context of the Muslim community in the UK in particular, and in Europe in general. It is formulated based on the concept of xenophobia, which is the feeling of fear or hatred towards strangers[5]. The concept of Islamophobia in Runnymede's report is divided into eight components, six of which refers to Islam religion, while the other two refers to the Muslim. All these components portray Islam and Muslims as negative in Western society in all respects[6]. According to S. Sayyid,[7] because the component of Islamophobia is related to hostility towards Islam, it has dragged on its followers. This definition of Islamophobia originated from the

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[1] Collins English Dictionary.
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/islamophobia, accessed, 18 July 2019.
[2] Azizah Hussin, Nawi Ismail, and Mohd Zamri Ali. "Level of Phobia towards Islam among Non-Muslim Students of Higher Educational Institution in Malaysia." *International Journal of Teaching and Education* II, no. 3 (2014): 85.
[3] Dinet, A. Ā . & Ibrahim, S. ben. *L'Orient vu de l'Occident*. (Paris, 1918), p. 25.
[4] The Runnymede Trust. *Islamophobia. A Challenge for Us All* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1997).
[5] Collins English Dictionary.
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/islamophobia, accessed: 18 July 2019.
[6] Allen, Chris. *Islamophobia*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 123.
[7] S. Sayyid. A Measure of Islamophobia. *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2, no.1 (2014): p. 12.

Orientalist critique on the idea of racism in Britain aimed at the discriminatory practices against low socio-historical ethnic groups, particularly the immigrants. Thus, Runnymede's report conceptualized the terms Islamophobia as a product of orientalism and racism. The concept of Islamophobia in the Runnymede report is as follows:

Table 1: Islamophobia Framework[1]
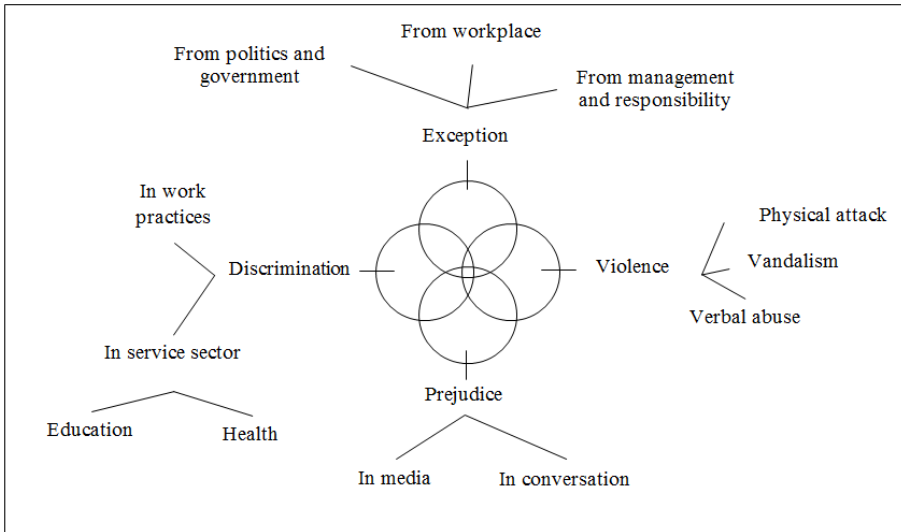
Based on above discussion, Islamophobia which rooted in the West, comes to the peak by the September 11, 2001 incident, consequently contributed to prejudice against Islam and Muslims.[2] In addition, Islamophobia also created new perceptions that categorize Muslims into groups of moderate and conservative.[3] On the other hand, the Islamophobia, which is based on a perception towards Islam, has been generalized to its followers. If Islam is considered to promote terrorism, then Muslims have the potential to be involved in terrorism.[4]

[1] The Runnymede Trust. *Islamophobia. A Challenge for Us All* (London: The Runnymede Trust, 1997).
[2] Allen, Chris. *Islamophobia*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 14. See also Osman Bakar, "Islam And The Challenge of Diversity and Pluralism: Must Islam Reform Itself?" *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 1. no 1 (2009): p. 55. See, Takim, L. From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith. *The Muslim World* 94. July 2004: p. 344.
[3] Aljunied, Khairudin. "Hijabis as Purveyors of Muslim Cosmopolitanism." In *Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam in Comparative Perspective*, 102–30. (Edinburgh: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 107.
[4] Osman, Mohamed Nawab Bin Mohamed. "Understanding Islamophobia in Asia: The Cases of Myanmar and Malaysia." *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 4. no. 1 (2017): p. 18.

This reality is not confined to the West but influence some parts of Southeast Asia as described by Imtiyaz Yusuf as the 'rise of Islamophobia phenomena in Asia' referring to clashes between Buddhists and the Muslim community.[1] However, in the Asian context, the scenario is different because there are other sentiments that contribute to the extreme attitude of the Buddhists. In Myanmar, for example, the dominant Buddhists in the community perceived the Muslim minority as a threat to them. This, in turn, is rooted in the religious sentiment that Muslims once plundered Buddhist lands,[2] referring to the date of Buddhists arrival in Southeast Asia which is early than Muslim. In addition, there is a perception that the Muslim community can threaten the survival of religion, culture, economy, nation and even threaten the Buddhist kingdom,[3] even though they are minorities. The clash of Muslim-Buddhist which rooted by historical sentiment according to Imtiyaz Yusuf[4] is not true, as the adherents of both religions have a long history of harmonious relations. But it was propagated and highlighted so that Buddhists were prejudiced against the Muslim community.

Similarly, in the case study of Sri Lanka as an empirical study[5] found that the majority of Buddhist elite and intellectual groups in Sri Lanka had negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims. There is no doubt that some of them are taking a stand against expressing opposition or supporting the Muslim minority, but there are Buddhist groups who

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[1] Yusuf, Imtiyaz. "Tree Faces of the Rohingya Crisis: Religious Nationalism, Asian Islamophobia, and Delegitimizing Citizenship." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 25. no. 3 (2018): p. 505.

[2] Ibid., p. 505.

[3] Crouch, M. Myanmar's Muslim Mosaic and the Politics of Belonging. In. Crouch (Ed.). *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim- Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging*. Vol. 6, 45–66. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 34.
Gravers, M. Anti-Muslim Buddhist nationalism in Burma and Sri Lanka: Religious violence and globalized imaginaries of endangered identities. *Contemporary Buddhism* 16. no.1 (2015): p. 2.
Stewart, James John. "Muslim–Buddhist Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka." *South Asia Research* 34. no. 3 (2014): p. 241.

[4] Yusuf, Imtiyaz. "Tree Faces of the Rohingya Crisis: Religious Nationalism, Asian Islamophobia, and Delegitimizing Citizenship." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 25. no. 3 (2018): p. 505.

[5] Haris, Hameed Lebbe Mohamed. "*Buddhists' Perceptions of Islam And Muslims in Sri Lanka: An Empirical Study in the Context of Da'wah.*" (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010).

support anti-Muslim campaigns.[1] This expression of resistance is a manifestation of the highest level of Islamophobia, which is a threatened condition.[2] Because of the threat, Buddhists are willing to do anything to save the lives of their followers from the 'threat' of Muslims.

These beliefs and attitudes contradict Buddhist teachings of Eight-Fold Path nor the Middle Way that capable to remove the suffering through the practice of compassion, equality, and the right of freedom. Furthermore, the Buddhist teaching emphasizes the importance of tolerance[3] and inclusive approach[4] in responding to religious diversity. Thus, in measuring Islamophobia, for S. Sayyid,[5] Islamophobia is not limited to hatred or fear of Islam and Muslims alone. Because the symptoms that indicates the Islamophobia, response to the problem of Muslim identity. Thus, when there is a conflict between Muslims and Buddhists, religious motivation is not the main factor, rather than nationalism and racism among the religious. It is emphasized by Imtiyaz Yusuf[6], that the Muslim-Buddhist crisis is not merely a clash on the basis of religious differences, nor is it just a Buddhist oppression against Muslims as alleged by the opponents. Instead, the issue is Buddhist nationalists who are racist. Thus, in the context of Malaysian Buddhists, either as minority or majority in Malaysia, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has the potential to exist among Buddhists based on the strong inter-ethnic and religious ties. Moreover, this can happen due the internal factors and the external factor, particularly if there is a lack of understanding of Islam and no interaction between the religious followers. However, the current level of Islamophobia is in medium and is still under control, since not led to violent actions under the religious motivation.

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[1] Razick, Ahamed Sarjoon. "Socio-Cultural Issues and the Relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka." (Oluvil, 2017): p. 241.

[2] Azizah Hussin, Nawi Ismail, and Mohd Zamri Ali. "Level of Phobia towards Islam among Non-Muslim Students of Higher Educational Institution in Malaysia." *International Journal of Teaching and Education* II, no. 3 (2014): p. 80.

[3] Freiberger, O. How the Buddha dealt with non-Buddhists. *Religion and Identity in South Asia and Beyond*: Essays in Honor of Patrick Olivelle (2011): p. 187. doi:10.7135/UPO9780857288110.010.
Jayatilleke, K. N. *The Buddhist attitude to other religions*. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2006), p. 2. Retrieved from http://what-buddha-said.net/library/Wheels/wh_216.pdf

[4] Kiblinger, K. B. *Buddhist Inclusivism Attitudes Towards Religious Others*. (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007)

[5] S. Sayyid. A Measure of Islamophobia. *Islamophobia studies journal* 2. no.1 (2014): p. 14.

[6] Yusuf, Imtiyaz. "Tree Faces of the Rohingya Crisis: Religious Nationalism, Asian Islamophobia, and Delegitimizing Citizenship." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 25. no. 3 (2018): p. 505.

Buddhist attitude on Islam and Muslim

Generally, Buddhists have a positive attitude towards Muslims and Islam as proven by several studies.[1] The positive attitude can be justified based on the landscape where Buddhist minorities live among Muslim community. Thus, it helps to build on the basic understanding of Islamic teachings and understand the true attitude of Muslims.[2] According to Kiblinger,[3] the positive attitude of Buddhist is rooted in the doctrine of inclusiveness of Buddhism. The doctrine exists in both traditions, Theravada and Mahayana. Among the Theravada traditions, the doctrine of inclusiveness was formulated from four major books, namely, the Dīgha Nikāya, the Majjhima Nikaya, the Anguttara Nikaya, and the Dhammapada.[4] In the Dīgha Nikāya on the part of the Mahāparinibbānasutta, shows the inclusiveness indicator. For example, the Buddha stated the possibility of his teaching exist in the form and tradition of other religions. Therefore, it is recognized if it does not corrupt Buddhist original teaching[5]. The doctrine of inclusiveness was also justified by Buddhist attitudes, before he reached Parinibbāna, he admonished his followers to pay attention to any religious teachings that supported the teachings of the Eightfold Path, as an indicator of the true doctrine.[6]

In addition to the Buddhist figure, the doctrine of inclusiveness was also emphasized by King Asoka who promotes the peaceful life of the religious people, and believed that religious traditions shared their traditional values[7]. While in the Mahayana tradition, the doctrine of

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[1] Muthaliff, M. M. A., Rosmizi, M., Rahman, A., Khairi, M., Mahyuddin, B., Bin, A. N. & Ahmad, Y. Bin. Non-Muslims' Perception of Islam and Muslims in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan Malaysia: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship* (GBSE) 3. No. 5 (2017).

[2] Dunthara, R. *The Perception of Buddhists on Islam and Muslims in Rusamilan, Pattani Province, South of Thailand: A Case Study*. (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010)

[3] Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 81. https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140194.

[4] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012), p. 34.

[5] Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 83. https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140194.

[6] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012), p. 35.

[7] Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 84.

inclusiveness is based on the texts of Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra and Saddharmapundarıkasutra (Lotus Sutra) which offers the doctrine of triyāna (Three Vehicles).[1] The theory of the Three Vehicles in Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra recognized on each Buddhist school towards their destination, while at the same time prioritize on the Mahayana school.[2] In general, the doctrine of inclusiveness is at the core of Buddhism in its relationship to other religion and its followers, including towards the Muslims. Through this doctrine allows Buddhists to recognize Muslims' beliefs and teachings besides try to understand them well through the medium of dialogue. Hence, we can understand that, for Buddhists, the teachings of Islam are also part of the truth of their religion, but what is best is Buddhist teaching itself. Such relationships need to be well maintained and avoided from things that may cause unhappiness, including aspects of religious conversion that may invite religious bias.[3]

However, the positive attitude of the inclusive approach does not guarantee practices and understood by all Buddhists communities. In some cases, Buddhist attitudes subject to change, regardless in the context of the majority or minority. This is evident from the study of Rosmizi et al.[4] that exist among Buddhists have negative views of Islam and Muslims either as majority or minority. This finding is in line with Azhar's study et al.[5] although focusing on Malaysian Chinese context;

https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140194.

[1] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012): p. 35.

[2] Ibid,. p. 56.

Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 87.

[3] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012): p. 35.

Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 83.

https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140194

Promta, Somparn. 2010. "The View of Buddhism on Other Religions: With Special Reference to Islam." Muslim World 100. no. 2–3 (2010): p. 303.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2010.01318.x.

[4] Muthaliff, M. M. A., Rosmizi, M., Rahman, A., Khairi, M., Mahyuddin, B., Bin, A. N. & Ahmad, Y. Bin. Non-Muslims' Perception of Islam and Muslims in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan Malaysia: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Global Business and Social Entrepreneurship* (GBSE) 3. No. 5 (2017).

[5] Azhar, M., Hamid, A., Yusuff, R., Othman, M. F. & Balwi, M. K. Perspektif Orang Cina Terhadap Agama Islam di Malaysia: Satu Tinjauan. Jurnal Teknologi 60. (2013)

and Crouch[1] that Buddhists have stereotypical views of the Muslim community. In the context of the majority, the attitude of the Buddhists is seen as more negative towards Islam and Muslims. It is demonstrated through a study entitled Buddhists' Perceptions of Islam and Muslims in Sri Lanka,[2] that most Buddhists, especially among elites, have negative views towards Islam and Muslims. This is due to the un-Islamic attitude of the Muslims, besides the lack of exposure to the true teachings of Islam in the media has led to misunderstandings of the religion. While Razick's[3] study on socio-cultural issues and the relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka found two Buddhist attitudes, *first*, supporting anti-Muslim campaigns, *second*, moderate in opposing or supporting any objection to Muslims. Based on these scenarios, we can conclude that the inconsistent approach of Buddhist towards Muslim, where the inclusiveness sometimes produces positive attitude, nor the negative. Indeed, in the main teaching of Buddha like Eightfold path didn't accept any negative attitude due to the contradict with the 'right' principles particularly the right view (*samyak-dṛṣṭi / sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*samyak-saṃkalpa / sammā saṅkappa*) and right speech (*samyag-vāc / sammā-vācā*).

Early responds of non-Muslim on Islamisation
The discussion of Islamophobia in the context of the Buddhist community in Malaysia is incomplete without understanding the turning point of non-Muslim response to Islam and Muslim, especially after the implementation of Islamisation policy in the country. The term of Islamisation refers to the Islamic transition by integrating the fundamental principles found in Islamic teachings. This process of Islamisation seeks to create human resources that will produce an excellent society in all respects, both material and spiritual, the standard of its content.[4] Thus, the Islamisation to provide Muslims with deeper

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[1] Crouch, M. Myanmar's Muslim Mosaic and the Politics of Belonging. In. Crouch (Ed.). *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim- Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging*. Vol. 6, 45–66. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 34.
[2] Haris, Hameed Lebbe Mohamed. "Buddhists' Perceptions of Islam And Muslims in Sri Lanka: An Empirical Study in the Context of Da'wah." (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010).
[3] Razick, Ahamed Sarjoon. "Socio-Cultural Issues and the Relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in Sri Lanka." (Oluvil, 2017)
[4] Abdul Rahman Mahmood, Kamaruddin Hj Salleh, Ahmad Sunawari long, and Faudzinaim Badaruddin. "Penerimaan Bukan Islam Terhadap Proses Islamisasi di Malaysia." *Jurnal Hadhari* 2 (2009): p. 35.

Islamic understanding and a stronger Islamic identity, and to put Islamic practice under closer government control and protection, not to convert non-Muslims into Islam.[1] This, however, it built an oppressive climate for the non-Muslim 40 percent of the population. It was not a coincidence that the overwhelming majority of Muslims were also Malays and could be expected to completely identify with the newly emerging national identity just as they were able with the old.[2] The wave of Islamisation in the country, which began in early 1980s, coincided with changes in the political and social context of the country in particular with the rise of Islamic movements especially in the Middle East.[3] The continuing phenomena of the Arab-Israeli war (1967), the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan (1979), and the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979)[4] appear to initiates the Islamic movement such as the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), Jamaat Tabligh and the Arqam Organization[5] to make Islam as a fundamental for the development of

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[1] Barr, Michael D., and Anantha Raman Govindasamy. "The Islamisation of Malaysia: Religious Nationalism in the Service of Ethnonationalism." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64. no. 3 (2010): p. 297.
https://doi.org/10.1080/10357711003736469.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Hamid, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul. "Shariaization of Malay-Muslim Identity in Contemporary Malaysia." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 91. no. 2 (2018): p. 50. https://doi.org/10.1353/RAS.2018.0017.

[4] Norsharil Saat. "The Ulama, Thought-Style, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21. no.1 (2014): p. 53. https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i1.878.

Lee, Julian C.H. Islamization and Activism in Malaysia. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), p. 15.

Mehmet, Ozay. *Islamic Identity and Development Studies of the Islamic Periphery*. (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 110.

[5] Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli. Dialog Antara Agama: Kefahaman dan Amalan Ahli ABIM Negeri Johor dan IPSI. (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2015)

Badlihisham Mohd Nasir. *Da'wah and the Malaysian Islamic Movement*. (Semenyih: Synergymate Sdn. Bhd, 2003)

Hamid, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul. "Shariaization of Malay-Muslim Identity in Contemporary Malaysia." *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 91. no. 2 (2018): p. 32. https://doi.org/10.1353/RAS.2018.0017.

Norsharil Saat. "The Ulama, Thought-Style, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21. no.1 (2014): p. 53. https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i1.878.

Islamic state[1]. The initiative was made by promoting Islamic values among Malaysian society especially in the context of Islamizing all aspects of economic, educational, medical, political and cultural[2,3] in line with the concept of *al-Dīn* (a way of life). Thus, the call for recognition and implementation of Islamic values in life has created a new paradigm among the Muslim community in Malaysia. This phenomenon, which won the hearts of the Muslim community, indirectly invoked a lawsuit against the government which was then standing in support of the Muslim majority, which is dominated by the Malay community, represented by United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Recognizing the overwhelming response of the Muslim community to the practice of Islam, the government also made as an agenda through the implementation of Islamic values in the government administration sector[4,5,6] further strengthened UMNO's government in the National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) government and become dominant until the 14th General Election in 2008.

In responding to the Non-Muslim concerns on Islamisation, Yousif[7] Yousif[7] indicates, at the very beginning of the Islamic movement wave, the impact was less significant among the non-Muslim community as its

[1] Yousif, Ahmad F. "Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic Response to Non-Muslim Concerns." The American *Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (2004): p. 30. https://doi.org/00001648-200601000-00023 [pii].

[2] Norsharil Saat. "The Ulama, Thought-Style, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21. no.1 (2014): p. 53. https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i1.878.

[3] Hamid, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul.. "Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia during the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence." *Southeast Asian Studies* 44. no. 4 (2007): p. 457.

[4] Barr, Michael D. "Religious Nationalism and Nation-Building in Asia: An Introduction." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64. no. 3(2010): p. 297. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357711003736428.
Norsharil Saat. "The Ulama, Thought-Style, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia." Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies 21 (1): pp. 47–72. 2014. https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i1.878

[5] Liow, Joseph Chinyong. "Islamist Ambitions, Political Change, and the Price of Power: Recent Success and Challenges for the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 22. no. 3 (2011): p. 381. https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etr030.

[6] Norsharil Saat. "The Ulama, Thought-Style, and the Islamic State Debate in Contemporary Malaysia." *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21. no.1 (2014): p. 53. https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v21i1.878.

[7] Yousif, Ahmad F. "Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic Response to Non-Muslim Concerns." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. (2004): p. 31. https://doi.org/00001648-200601000-00023 [pii].

target was for the majority community - among Malay Muslims. However, at one point, the target was expanding by engaging non-Muslim communities, for example at the social level; the government organized a Qur'an recitation competition which was broadcast in the prime media. In addition, the growth of the Islamic preaching activity by Muslim organizations, not just emphasizes on Muslim understanding but also include the non-Muslims.[1] In addition, religious activities have become routine and trendy in Islamic practice, where Islamic became a centric to the national level and religious issues becoming main concerns for the politicians and authorities. In addition, the government continues to subsidize the mosques construction, besides provide the Islamic education subjects to Muslim students, from school to higher education. Similarly, in the context of implementing Islamic banking and insurance systems. In the context of consumption, halal certification is introduced and required for all restaurant owners and products whose users are Muslim even though the owner is non-Muslim. Meanwhile, in global level, Malaysia plays significant part in organizing conferences, seminars, meetings, symposiums and various religious activities attended by Muslims leaders from all over the world to discuss the Muslim affairs of the global community.[2] Moreover, Malaysia had been an active member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) since independence, under Mahathir involvement with other Islamic countries was strengthened. Here, Malaysia organized and hosted a number of meetings expressing supports and solidarities on oppressed Muslims around the globe, particularly Palestine, Bosnia, Afghanistan, etc.[3]

This wave of Islamisation further raises positive and negative implications in the context of the relation of non-Muslim community. In a positive context, there are three aspects: *First*, religion turns to ethnic-oriented. For example, when Islam began to be promoted by the Malay community, it was seen as exclusive to the ethnic group. At the same time, raising awareness on the religious practice and teaching among the

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] Yousif, Ahmad F. "Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic Response to Non-Muslim Concerns." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. (2004): p. 32. https://doi.org/00001648-200601000-00023 [pii].

[3] Camroux, David. "State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-Option, and Confrontation." *Asian Survey* 36. no. 9 (1996): p. 866.

non-Muslims.[1] Thus, any non-Muslim religious celebrations and festivals (Wesak, Deepavali, Christmas) which used to be attended by official's Muslim government, then no longer attended due to the Muslims awareness on Islamic jurisprudence increased. This does not imply that segregation exists in the context relations of Muslim with the non-Muslim, but rather emphasizes the limitation in the sharing practice of religious doctrine based, especially in food consumption, marriage, and religious festivals, with recognizing and respecting the nature of diversity. While for the non-religious doctrine-based practice, like open house, sports, business, etc, the relation keep continuing through the development of multi-religious society.

Secondly, Islamisation has enabled the Malaysian government to recognize the freedom of religion to non-Muslims in the constitution under Article 11. Even the non-Muslim community is perceived have more freedom to choose any ideology and religious practice compared to the Malay Muslim which is limited and to remain in Islamic religion from birth and being subject to Shariah law. Third, politics is used for religion concern. This refers to the attitude of the government's Muslim leaders who use their political position to influence public support to their religion although invite criticism of the non-Muslim community. For example, in the late 1970s, Datuk Tun Mustapha bin Harun as Sabah Chief Minister, used his position for Islamic preaching activities and restricted the spread of other religions, subsequently contribute to the incensement of Muslim population in Sabah. The involvement of Muslims in the preaching activities without understanding the context of the reality of the community's traditions and their sensitivities is considered by the non-Muslim community as a 'coercion' in accepting Islam, moreover with the material aid. Consequently, this controversy led to his failure on the 1976 elections due to the low support from the non-Muslims.[2]

Instead of the positive impact of Islamisation, Yousif[3] also outlined eight forms of non-Muslim response to the negative impact of Islamisation. First, there is a narrative that promotes the perception of the Islamic revival as a threat to the non-Muslim community. This refers to the non-Muslim

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[1] Yousif, Ahmad F. "Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic Response to Non-Muslim Concerns." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. (2004): p. 34. https://doi.org/00001648-200601000-00023 [pii].

[2] Yousif, Ahmad F. "Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: An Islamic Response to Non-Muslim Concerns." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. (2004): p. 38. https://doi.org/00001648-200601000-00023 [pii].

[3] Ibid., p. 39.

community's concern for religious freedom that is not guaranteed excluded from exposing to Islamic elements and preaching activities. Because it's not against the law, compare to the Muslims which restricted from exposing to any non-Muslim missionary activities. Hence Muslims are free to organize any programs and association to invite non-Muslim to embrace their religion. Also, some of non-Muslims worried that the democratic system will change to theocratic system, which fully lead by the Religious authorities. Second, non-Muslim community views Islamisation as nothing more than a brand used for the sake and domination of Malay politics in the country. Thus, any attempt to establish an Islamic state was considered an attempt to strengthen Malay political power.

Third, the existence of certain laws restricting the construction of houses of worship after 1983, was considered by the non-Muslim community as a form of discrimination against them, since several land allocation amendments being rejected by the authorities. Forth, the restriction on 42 Arabic-Malay words to the non-Muslim, for example: *Allah*, *solat* (prayer), Baitullah (house of Allah), and *Kaabah*. Some of non-Muslim being confuse of this restriction, since the governments always stress on using Malay language, at the same time they were restricted from using several Malay words in religious ritual or in daily usage. Fifth, the ignorance of religious subject (except Islam) in school education system. This according to the current school education system which not provide other religious subject like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism compare to the Islamic subject which is exclusive for the Muslim students. As an alternative, the non-Muslims were provided the Moral Education subject which focus on general knowledge on moral and religion.

Sixth, the amendment of law crime act towards any religious group potentially harm to the public regardless to their religious background. Seventh, restriction of non-Muslim propagation towards the Muslims community. This restriction responded particularly by the Christians evangelist as opposite to the religious freedom. And the last one is the calling for the non-Muslim society to establish the department of non-Muslim affairs namely the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (MCCBCHS). This council in general stress on promoting understanding, respect, and cooperation among religious community in Malaysia.

Based on the issues, the Islamophobia among non-Muslim is rooted by their negative perception on Islamisation. This contrasts with Islamophobia in the West which is more closed to religious narratives, such as linking elements of jihad with terrorist activities. For the non-

Muslim community, they see a different version of Muslim in practicing their religion, which is more moderate compare compared to the Muslim in the Middle East. The moderate form shows by the government, on their commitment against religious extremist.[1] On the other hand, we can understand that the non-Muslim Islamophobia more on certain perceptions, against the implementation Islamic policies that threat to the survival of religious community. On justifying this argument, Choong[2] argues the existence of many government policies that focus on Muslim affairs, indirectly impacting the non-Muslims especially on issues of conversion, courts, land applications for burial and so on. Concerns over Islamisation were justified by Brother Augustine Julian, Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Council of Malaysia that the Islamisation concerns by the non-Muslims. The process of Islamisation has not only challenged the Constitution of the country which provides freedom of religion to the people, but the future of the cultural practices and life of non-Muslims in the country where has been eroded due to their alleged political actions. This phenomenon of Islamisation leaves Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and other religions feeling threatened and does not know the future of their religion and culture.[3]

The Buddhist Response on Islamisation
On the context of Malaysian Buddhists, previous study[4] found that Buddhists at first were generally less interested in meddling in other political and religious matters because Islamisation was not considered a form of challenge to them, as long as it doesn't interfere with their business activities.[5] Furthermore, the Buddhist concerns more on the development of religious, social, economic and educational aspects in

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[1] Ibid., p. 48.

[2] Choong, Chong Eu. "The Christian Response to State-Led Islamization in Malaysia." In *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict*. (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014), p. 302.

[3] Abdul Rahman Mahmood, Kamaruddin Hj Salleh, Ahmad Sunawari long, and Faudzinaim Badaruddin. 2009. "Penerimaan Bukan Islam Terhadap Proses Islamisasi Di Malaysia." *Jurnal Hadhari* 2 (2009): p. 38.

[4] Ooi, Tan Lee. "The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Malaysia." In *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict*, edited by B. Platzdasch and J. Saravanamuttu, 321–40. (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014), p. 326.

[5] Abdullah, Amini Amir. "Islamic Revivalism, Religious Freedom and the Non-Muslims in Malaysia: A Preliminary Discussion." *PERTANIKA Journal Social Science & Humanities* 11. no. 2 (2003): p. 126.

their own community. This is in line with the doctrine of Buddhist inclusiveness[1] in the context of Muslim relations, which recognizes their beliefs and teachings and tries to understand them well through dialogue[2] and tolerance attitudes.[3] For the inclusive Buddhists, should produce a view that, the teachings of Islam are also part of the truth of their religion, but what is best is Buddhist teaching. This relation needs to be protected through the limitations that sometime produce a bias in religious view.[4] However, not all among the Buddhist remain with the dialogue nor the tolerance approached in responding to the Islamisation. This can be justified through the critical attitude towards Muslim Malay domination in the country, particularly to the agenda to Islamize political and administrative aspects of the country.[5] Thus, for several groups of Malaysian Buddhist, they criticise on the idea of Islamic state, Islamic Law, Article 11 on freedom of religion[6] and the Islamic centric in interfaith dialogue[7] which tend to convert other people.[8] Their

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[1] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012): p. 35.

[2] Abe, M. *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*. (S. Heine, Ed.). (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995). doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

[3] Bender, C. & Cadge, W. Interreligious Constructing Buddhism (s): Dialogue and Religious Hybridity. *Sociology of Religion* 67. no. 3 (2006).

[4] Dat, Lam Son. "An Analytical Study of Inter-Religious Understanding: A Buddhist Perspective." (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2012): p. 35.
Kiblinger, Kristin Beise. "Identifying Inclusivism in Buddhist Contexts." *Contemporary Buddhism* 4. No.1 (2003): p. 83.
https://doi.org/10.1080/1463994032000140194.
Promta, Somparn. "The View of Buddhism on Other Religions: With Special Reference to Islam." Muslim World 100. no. 2–3 (2010): p. 303.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2010.01318.x.

[5] Ooi, Tan Lee. "The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Malaysia." In *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and Conflict*, edited by B. Platzdasch and J. Saravanamuttu, pp. 321–40. (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014)

[6] Berita YBAM. Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). Malaysia is Not a Religious State, All Citizens Enjoy Freedom in Religious Belief (2013). http://www.ybam.org.my/v2/en/news/currentaffairs/item/189-malaysia-is-not-a-religious-state-all-citizens-enjoy-freedom-in-religious-belief.html, accessed: April 25, 2018.

[7] Berita YBAM. Religious Dialogue Should Propagate Right Teachings of Each Religion. (2015).
http://www.ybam.org.my/v2/en/news/currentaffairs/item/689religiousdialogueshouldpropagaterightteachingsofeachreligion.html, accessed April 25, 2018.

[8] Ooi, Tan Lee. "The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Malaysia." In *Religious Diversity in Muslim-Majority States in Southeast Asia: Areas of Toleration and*

disagreement on the idea of Malaysia neither as Islamic State nor to recognize Malaysia was an Islamic State because the constitution only states the Islam as a religion for Federalism. Any efforts to implement Islamic element in the administration of the country challenged the Constitution and threatened the survival of the non-Muslim.[1] Hence, there was a pressure among Malaysian Buddhists against Muslims to stop them from govern the country based on Islamic teachings.[2]

Among the aspects that contribute to the concept of Islamic state are the implementations of Islamic law or so-called *Hudud*. Therefore, efforts to implement and enforce Islamic law were not accepted by Buddhists. This attitude is reflected in the 2017 statement by Sek Chin Yong, President of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM), that Buddhists do not accept the fact that Islamic law only applies to Muslims, as guarantee by the Kelantan deputy prime minister Datuk Mohd Nik Amar Nik Abdullah[3]. On justifying this, they believe the implementation would have an impact on the non-Muslim rights. For example, in the case of a court case involving both believers, it is difficult to determine the final decision of either the Syariah or Civil Courts. Moreover, previously, several cases involving non-Muslims were tried in Syariah court, including the exchange status of deceased heirs and the religious status of the children who automatically adopted their parents' religion to convert to Islam. For example, in the case of the childbirth of a child by a father who was a former Buddhist. As a result,

Conflict, edited by B. Platzdasch and J. Saravanamuttu, pp. 321–40. (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014), p. 327.

Wah, Soo Khin. "*A Study of the Yiguan Dao (Unity Sect) and Its Development in Peninsular Malaysia*." (The University of British Columbia, 1997): p. 244.

[1] Abdul Rahman Mahmood, Kamaruddin Hj Salleh, Ahmad Sunawari long, and Faudzinaim Badaruddin. "Penerimaan Bukan Islam Terhadap Proses Islamisasi di Malaysia." *Jurnal Hadhari 2* (2009).

[2] Berita YBAM. Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). YBAM and MCYA: According to Constitution, Malaysia is a secular nation; it is against the constitution to rule the country using Islamic teachings (2007). http://www.ybam.org.my/v2/en/news/currentaffairs/item/189-malaysia-is-not-a-religious-state-all-citizens-enjoy-freedom-in-religious-belief.html, accessed: April 25, 2018.

[3] Free Malaysia Today. Hudud hanya untuk orang Islam sahaja. (2014) https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2014/04/24/hudud-untuk-orang-islam-sahaja-kata-tmb/, accessed 4 February 2019. (Free Malaysia Today April 24, 2014)

her mother filed the issue in court to keep her son's religion consistent with constitutional guarantees.[1]

In other words, Buddhists do not see any absolute assurance that their religious position cannot be compromised by the issue of Islam. The existence of such cases raises doubts about the absolute extent of religious freedom guaranteed in the constitution of Article 11. Especially if it is being tried in a Syariah court which is in favour of the Muslim community. Thus, even these isolated cases are justified as a possibility that Islamic law if fully implemented can affect them. Therefore, based on disagreement, Buddhists issued a statement criticizing the non-Muslim community to jointly oppose any amendment to the Syariah Court bill[2] because its enforcement and implementation would benefit the Muslims. More worryingly, it threatens Malaysia's position as a secular country and even violates the democratic system and human rights according to its own Islamic teachings.[3] This disagreement against the Islamic law is seen collectively, for example, on April 30, 2014, the Buddhists represented by the Malaysian Buddhist Consultative Council (MBCC) issued a public statement against the agenda of implementing Islamic law, although the implementation is applicable only to Muslims, and they also express their disapproval of Islamic law as stated in the exclusive lecture of Ven. Wei Wu, advisor to the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) entitled *Say No to Hudud Law!*[4]

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[1] BERNAMA. Appeals by FT Registrar of Muallaf and Muslim-convert mother rescheduled to Oct 29 (2018). http://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=1738964, accessed: June 26, 2019.

[2] Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). YBAM Urges the People and Political Parties to Unite and Prevent the Implementation of Hudud Law. (2016). http://www.ybam.org.my/v2/en/news/currentaffairs/item/558-ybam-urges-the-people-and-political-parties-to-unite-and-prevent-the-implementation-of-hudud-law.html. Accessed: April 25, 2018.

[3] Berita YBAM. Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). Dharma Walk Launching Ceremony – Speech by President of Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, Goh Qing Song. (2014). http://www.ybam.org.my/v2/en/news/notice/item/560-2014-dharma-walk-launching-ceremony-%E2%80%93-speech-by-president-of-young-buddhist-association-of-malaysia-goh-qing-song.html, accessed: April 25, 2018.

[4] YouTube May. 向伊斯兰教刑事法说 "不！" SAY 'NO' TO HUDUD LAW!. (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSnxZIrdKLg&t=1655s, accessed April 25, 2018 (YouTube May 11 2014)

The perception that Islamic law is a threat for the Buddhist is in line with a study[1] on students at the Malaysian Higher Education Institution. In his study entitled L*evel of phobia towards Islam among non-Muslim Students of Higher Educational Institution in Malaysia,* most of the respondents among Buddhists found that the level of Islamophobia in Islamic law is high. At this level, the implications are limited to prejudice and under control, not led to violent. Thus, in voicing their objections to the issue of Islam, Buddhists still prefer diplomatic approach through the NGOs and religious institutions.

Result and Discussion

The symptom of Islamophobia among Malaysian Buddhists is a continues response to Islamisation policies in the country's political and social sectors beginning in the late 1980s. Interestingly, Islamophobia in Malaysia is not due to the fact that Buddhists are afraid, hateful or threatened by the existence of the Muslim community or theological narrative, as is the case in other majority Buddhist countries.[2] The context can be understood through several factors. First, from lens of racism, due to ethnic-religious oriented in pluralistic society. The prevailing racism, as suggested by Osman,[3] refers to the perception that there is discrimination in the Muslim majority community towards non-Muslims especially in the political and socio-economic sectors.

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[1] Azizah Hussin, Nawi Ismail, and Mohd Zamri Ali. "Level of Phobia towards Islam among Non-Muslim Students of Higher Educational Institution in Malaysia." *International Journal of Teaching and Education* II, no. 3 (2014): p. 93.

[2] Ebbighausen, Rodion. "What Drives Buddhist Anti-Muslim Feeling?" Qantara.De. (2018). https://en.qantara.de/node/30768, accessed: 4 February 2019.

Stewart, James John. "Muslim–Buddhist Conflict in Contemporary Sri Lanka." *South Asia Research* 34. no. 3 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728014549134.

Haris, Hameed Lebbe Mohamed. "*Buddhists' Perceptions of Islam And Muslims in Sri Lanka: An Empirical Study in the Context of Da'wah*." (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010)

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Herath, Dhammika, and Harshana Rambukwella. Self, Religion, *Indentity and Politics: Buddhist and Muslim Encounters in Contemporary Sri Lanka*. (Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2015).

[3] Osman, Mohamed Nawab. "The Confluence of Race and Religion in Understanding Islamophobia in Malaysia." In *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies*, edited by Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez. (Oxon: Routledge, 2019) https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429464850.

Muslims, who dominance in politics and administration, seek to implement Islamic elements, however perceived as a threat the survival of religious freedom among Buddhists. Compare to the implementation of Islamic elements in administrative and political sectors, Malaysian Buddhist have positive attitude the implementation is in economic aspect, although for example the Islamic Banking which is more inclusive to the all.

Secondly, misunderstanding. Although Buddhist lives among Muslim communities, they don't have good information about the real teaching of Islam since not many Muslim ready to approach them.[1] So, any information about Islam and Muslim, mostly by secondary sources, like internet, verbal dan life experience. Indeed, there's no one can ensure what they know about the Islam is authentic or not. Consequently, it creates unauthentic narrative on Muslim influenced by the historical and theological aspect. For example, their refutation on the concept of Islamic State proposed by the Muslim. As suggested by Ebbighausen,[2] among Buddhists viewed their religion in jeopardy as the Muslim community wants to rule their country. This narrative record that they were the earliest inhabitants and that their religion was dominant in the country. This landscape can change with the emergence and growth of the Muslim population. The narrative was then supplemented by specific incidents that appeared to have a significant relationship between terrorism and Islamic teachings and its followers. Thus, the development of the Muslim community in the country is considered to be potentially violent act.[3] It is based on a theology narrative that justifies Islam and Muslims as a form of threat. Because Islamisation is related to the Muslim agenda, it is justified why the Islamisation opposed by Buddhists.[4]

In sum, the form of Islamophobia among Buddhists in Malaysia trigged in their response to the Islamisation agenda in the country based on the fear and threatened. Among the Buddhists fear the Islamisation

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[1] Osman Abdullah. *Preaching to the non-Muslim Chinese in Malaysia*. (Kuala Lumpur: Research Center IIUM, 2005), p. 84

[2] Ebbighausen, Rodion. "What Drives Buddhist Anti-Muslim Feeling?" Qantara.De. (2018). https://en.qantara.de/node/30768, accessed: 4 February 2019.

[3] Herath, Dhammika, and Harshana Rambukwella. Self, Religion, *Indentity and Politics: Buddhist and Muslim Encounters in Contemporary Sri Lanka*. (Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2015).

[4] Frydenlund, Iselin. "Buddhist Islamophobia Actors Tropes Contexts." In *Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion*, edited by Asbjørn Dyrendal, David G. Robertson, and Egil Asprem. (Leiden: Brillm, 2018).

agenda-oriented implementation to dominate the Malay-Muslims and discriminates against them in politics and administration. They also feel threatened by the survival of religious freedom if the implementation of Islam in all sectors of government. While the aspect of hatred is less significant due to the existence of rational considerations among them, apart from the presence of a plural society. Although fearful and threatened, its implications are not limited to violent behaviour, but its opposition is made diplomatically and internally. Indirectly, this finding shows that the policy of Islamisation implemented has weaknesses that create misunderstandings among Buddhists and contributes to the seeds of Islamophobia. Here it is necessary to strengthen the preaching and enlightenment of information through dialogue and program together.

Conclusion
The implementation of the Islamisation policy has been a turning point in Buddhist responses to Islamic and Muslim affairs. This is due to several issues that perceived potentially interfere with their religious life especially in terms of Muslim dominance in the political and administrative sectors. Among Malaysian Buddhists express their critical response when looking at the agenda of the Muslim community with the view that it threatens the survival of their religious community, especially in terms of religious freedom based on several cases. Thus, Malaysian Buddhists express critical responds towards the Islamisation agenda and voiced their objection to any agenda that supported it.

This Islamophobic phenomenon, which also motivated by race orientation, however, still under control. At the same time, there are Malaysian Buddhists who emphasize tolerance and openness towards the Islamisation agenda. They do not openly express their criticism, instead initiative to engage with Muslims community in various forms, subsequently build a better understanding and good relationship. Without denying the internal and external factor which contribute to the Islamophobia, there's a need for the majority Muslim to understand the way of Malaysian Buddhist, especially to counter the misunderstanding of thought and perception on Islam and Muslim, nor the Malaysian Buddhist need to understand the Muslims through the original teaching of Islam.

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