

Semantic Analysis of the Malay Islamic Concept of Man and the Universe

Hussain Othman *

Abstract

The conception of Man and the Universe by Malay classical texts has led Malay Muslims to conceive Man and the Universe in interesting ways. More often than not the Hindu concept of *devaraja* or *kingship* and the concept of mount Mahameru are seen as the most appropriate Malay conception of Man and the Universe. Unfortunately, these two concepts represent only a minor part of the Malay classical tradition. The dominant part of the Malay intellectual legacy, i.e. the Malay Islamic tradition, is frequently neglected. Obviously, it is not so easy to describe the concept of Man and Universe in the Malay Islamic tradition due to the limitation of sources and lack of proper method of understanding. Studies show that a proper understanding of the worldviews of the past is possible by looking through the eyes of the people of that time. Based on this notion, this study has selected the semantic approach to unveil a proper Malay Islamic concept of Man and the Universe. This approach is well known through the writings of a Japanese scholar, Toshihiko Izutsu. Semantics, according to Izutsu, is an analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view of arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *weltanschauung* or world-view of the people. Through this approach, this study has arrived at the conclusion that the Malay Islamic concept of Man is not the concept of *devaraja* or “*kingship*,” rather, it is strongly based on the concept of duties and responsibilities inspired by the religious consciousness of the people. Similarly, the Malay Islamic concept of the Universe is not the concept of Mount Mahameru. It is rather the concept of *al-dunyā wa al-ākhirah*. The purpose of this paper is to further discuss some discoveries of the Malay Islamic concept of Man and the Universe embedded in three great books of Malay history, namely *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai*, and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*.

.**Key Words:** Izutsu, semantic, Malay, history, concept, Man, Universe.

Abstrak

Teks-teks Melayu klasik yang meletakkan konsep manusia dan alam semesta telah menjadikan cara penganut Islam Melayu melihat manusia dan alam semesta dalam konsep yang menarik. Seringkali konsep Hindu tentang *devaraja* dan konsep gunung Mahameru dilihat sebagai konsep Melayu yang paling sesuai tentang manusia dan alam. Malangnya, kedua-dua konsep ini hanyalah sebahagian sahaja dari tradisi Melayu Klasik. Perkara lain yang bersabit dengan tradisi keintelektualan Melayu contohnya, Tradisi Islam Melayu nampak diabaikan. Adalah jelas, tidak mudah untuk memerikan konsep manusia dan alam dalam tradisi Islam Melayu disebabkan kekurangan sumber rujukan dan metode pemahaman. Beberapa kajian menyarankan bahawa memahami pandangan sarwa umat terdahulu adalah

* Associate Professor at Department of Humanities, Faculty of Science, Arts and Heritage, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Johor. He is also the Deputy Dean (Research and Development) at the faculty.

mungkin sekiranya kita memilih untuk melihatnya dari kaca mata mereka sendiri. Dalam rangka ini, kajian ini memilih pendekatan semantik untuk menyingkap konsep manusia dan alam dari pandangan Melayu Islam. Pendekatan ini amat dikenali melalui penulisan Toshihiko Izutsu. Mengikuti beliau, semantik ialah satu kajian analitikal tentang beberapa kata kunci sesuatu bahasa itu untuk tujuan memahami konsep pandangan sarwa penutur-penuturnya. Melalui pendekatan ini, kajian ini mendapati bahawa konsep manusia dan alam dalam tradisi Melayu Islam bukanlah konsep devaraja Hindu yang masih kekal bibit-bibitnya, namun ia adalah sesuatu yang berdasarkan kepada konsep tugas dan tanggungjawab yang terhasil dari wujudnya kesedaran agama para penganutnya. Begitu juga konsep Mahameru tadi, ia juga bukanlah konsep yang masih di dapati lagi dalam tradisi Melayu Islam kerana telah digantikan dengan konsep dunia dan akhirat. Tujuan kertas ini adalah untuk meninjau dengan lebih lanjut beberapa penemuan tentang konsep Melayu Islam tentang manusia dan alam yang terdapat di dalam tiga buku sejarah besar Melayu iaitu Sejarah Melayu, Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai dan Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa.

Kata kunci: Izutsu, semantik, Melayu, sejarah, konsep, manusia, alam.

Introduction

For many years, researchers studying the Malay classical texts have encountered a number of difficulties in understanding some of the essential concepts embedded in these texts. One of the major factors contributing to these difficulties is the establishment by the colonial scholars of a modern Western perspective in the study of Malay historical texts. From the early 15th century onwards, a great number of colonial scholars actively participated in the study of Malay literature. Their commentaries have become among the most authoritative references in the field. Unfortunately, these commentaries are often biased as they were presented from a Western colonial perspective and were obviously pessimistic towards the Malay Muslims and their literature.¹ As a result, many misconceptions are found throughout their writings. One such misconception is their view of the Malay Islamic concept of Man and the Universe. This paper intends to discuss these misconceptions from a semantic point of view as an initiative to reconstruct a Malay Muslim conception of Man and the Universe free from colonial bias.

The Need for a Semantic Analysis of Malay Historical Texts

There are a number of misconceptions in regard to the exclusive treatment of the kings, royal families, dignitaries and kingdoms in classical Malay historical texts. Firstly, there is a tendency to draw the simple conclusion that the Malay kings were very eager to record their history in a glorious manner so that they would be commemorated as great men in history

¹Ismail Hamid, *Peradaban Melayu dan Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1985), p. 90.

by their descendants and the people to come. Secondly, there is an inclination to see the stories of the kings in classical Malay historical texts as purely based on the concept of the kingship or *rajaship*. Thirdly, the Hindu concept of Mount Mahameru is seen as the dominant and superior Malay concept of the universe.

Accepting the first argument that each Malay king was so eager to record his own history in a glorious manner by such a book authored during their own reign should have been discovered by now. However, this is not the case. In actual fact, their history was recorded posthumously. Their history was compiled under the instruction of their descendants, often some hundred years after their reign. Even then, the description of their greatness and the kingdom itself was not explicitly and constantly exposed. Additionally, history has ignored many of the early Malay Muslim kings. For the Malays, they are “the great souls” but were forgotten by the history. Massignon wrote: “It is true that some religions allude to ‘great souls.’ Hindus call them mahatmas, Arabians *abdal*, and Christians saints, but they are usually ignored during their lifetime.”²

In the context of historical writing, it is not very difficult to deny and explain the first misconception which argues that each Malay king is so eager to record their history in a glorious manner. What is more challenging is to explain the second and third misconceptions in which historical facts and figures are not very helpful. We need explanations founded not only on the historical facts but also on the conceptual understanding of the historical events and writings.

The explanation of the conceptual understanding could not be possible by solely using the Western historical method and other modern approaches including the philological, referential and literary. There must be an appropriate approach that can be utilized and it should be one established by the Malay Muslims during the period in which texts were written, which is long before the coming of Europeans into this region. This is very crucial since the only proper approach is the approach developed by the authors of the texts themselves. West said: “It would now be generally accepted that the first step in historical understanding of a particular period is to look at the world as the men of the time saw it.”³

²Louis Massignon, “The Notion of Real Elite in Sociology and in History,” in Mircea Eliade (ed.). *The History of Religions; Essays in Methodology*, pp. 108-114 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 109..

³F.J. West, “The Study of Colonial History” in *Journal of Southeast Asian History* (No.1, 1960, pp. 70–82), p. 81.

The Malay historical texts should be viewed from the perspective of the Malay Islamic worldview and not from the modern Western perspective. The study should be focused on the conceptual meaning of the texts or words in which each word is understood within its proper context. It is crucial for the words to be understood within their context or it may jeopardize their meaning and significance. Toshihiko Izutsu,⁴ a Japanese scholar said: "...words, when they are taken out of their traditionally fixed combinations and put into entirely different and new context, tend to be profoundly affected by that very transposition."⁵ The approach of unveiling the proper meaning of the words is called semantics and it is an approach that should be taken into consideration by researchers in the field of Malay studies as it would help them understand the worldview of the Malay Muslims.

The semantic study of the words contained in Malay historical texts would bring us to see the world as the authors themselves saw it. This is comparable to the works⁶ of Izutsu who developed an approach to understand

⁴Toshihiko Izutsu (4 May 1914 – 1993) was a well-known Japanese scholar of Islam and Oriental Philosophy. He has taught at the Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies at Keio University in Tokyo (1954-1968) and McGill University in Montreal, Canada (1967-75). He was later appointed as a Professor of the Iranian Imperial Academy of Philosophy in Tehran (1975-79). He was born in a family of a wealthy business owner in Japan. From early age, he was familiar with Zen meditation and koan, since his father was also a calligrapher and a practising lay Zen Buddhist. He entered the faculty of economics, Keio University, but transferred to the Department of English Literature, wishing to be instructed by Professor Junzaburo Nishiwaki. He became a research assistant in 1937, following his graduation with B.A. Following advice of Shumei Okawa, he studied Islam at The East Asiatic Economic Investigation Bureau. In 1958, he completed the first direct translation of the Quran from Arabic to Japanese. His translation is still renowned for its linguistic accuracy and widely used for scholarly works. He was extremely talented in learning foreign languages, and finished reading the Qur'an in a month after beginning to learn Arabic. His most important works include *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran* (1966 republished 2002), *Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* (1980), *God and Man in the Koran* (1980), *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (1984), *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy* (1994), *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* (2001) and *Language and Magic. Studies in the Magical Function of Speech* (1956) Keio Institute of Philological Studies. See further foreword by Kojiro Nakamura ins. Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'an*, (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2004), pp. vii-ix and Wikipedia, entry word "Toshihiko Izutsu," retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toshihiko_Izutsu, 9 November 2008.

⁵Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2000), p. 5.

⁶Among the most important works of Izutsu concerning the semantic approach are *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*.

the Qur'ān from the perspective of the Muslim society living during the period of the Qurānic revelation. Semantics, according to Izutsu,

... is an analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view of arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *weltanschauung* or world-view of the people who use that language as a tool not only of speaking and thinking, but, more important still, of conceptualizing and interpreting the world that surrounds them. Semantics, thus understood, is a kind of *weltanschauungslehre*, a study of the nature and structure of the world-view of a nation at this or that significant period of its history, conducted by means of a methodological analysis of the major cultural concepts the nation has produced for itself and crystallized into the key-words of its language.⁷

Based on the semantic analysis approach developed by Izutsu, this paper will investigate and discuss two important concepts of the Malay Islamic tradition, i.e. the concept of Man and the Universe as embodied in three essential texts of Malay history, *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*. By employing semantics as the major approach, the study would not solely depend upon the yardstick established by Izutsu. Rather, views from other scholars, particularly those considered as the traditional scholars, will also be taken into consideration and in some cases they have been referred to extensively.

The Semantic Approach and the Malay Islamic Concept of Man

Most of the historical contents of the classical Malay Islamic texts are stories and events related to the kings and their royal families. As such, most researchers when talking about the concept of Man are inclined to focus on the concept of kingship or rajaship.⁸ Very few researchers focus on the concept of Man in a direct sense. This could be the result of a tendency to overrate the Indian influence on Malay Islamic thought.

The Indian or Hindu perspective of Man as a king is different from the Islamic perspective. The distinction can be seen from the relationship between the king or man and his God. Hinduism explains the relationship between the man and God in a vague manner. There is no concept of submission to God in the Hindu perspective, especially with regard to the concept of the absolute unity of God. In most of the instances, God seems to be seen in a passive manner and man is the ultimate force that decides

⁷Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an*, p. 5.

⁸A.C. Milner, "Islam and Malay kingship" In Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique & Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia* (pp. 25–35) (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 25.

everything. Coomaraswamy said: “the king, in other words, is directly responsible for the fertility of the land; the fall of rain in due season depends upon his righteousness or default.”⁹ Thus,

We can understand better now the traditional and world-view doctrine that the very life and fertility of the realm depend upon the King, to whom accordingly it is said: ‘For our bread (ūrjé) art thou, for rain unto us art thou, for our paternity of offspring (prajānām... adhipatyāya; pati here as in ‘Prajapati’), ... for all this have we aspersed (abhyāsicāmahī) thee.’¹⁰

In Malay pre-Islamic society, this concept of Man from a Hindu perspective was rather dominant. **Diagram 1** shows the structure of Malay pre-Islamic society as understood from pre-Islamic stories contained in *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*. Based on this structure, the king and his family were superior to all others and were sole holders of the position of demi-god. This Hindu concept of the king as a demi-god who is all pervading and is a sole power in this universe is comparable to the homocentric worldview of the Arab *Jāhiliyyah* in which, according to Izutsu, “Man was the sole conceptual pole to which no other basic pole stood in fundamental opposition.”¹¹

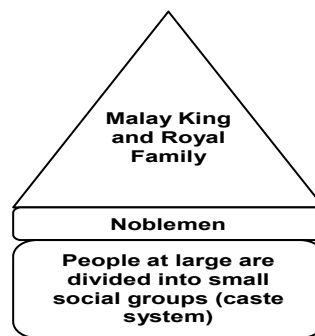


Diagram 1: The Structure of Pre-Islamic Malay Society

⁹Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1942), p. 65.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 68.

¹¹Izutsu, *God and man in the Qur'an*, p. 77.

From the Islamic perspective, the Malay king is not granted Divine powers to do such things as making sure the rain falls or commanding other natural phenomena. In this, the Qur'ānic concept of Man, which explains the principle of the opposition between Man and God should be observed carefully.

The two principals (Islamic and Malay pre-Islamic) are opposing each other, one from above, the other from below. According to Islamic principle, the Malay kings are equal to the other Malay people; their subjects and they are basically *al-insān* or *al-nās* who stand below and opposite to God. According to Izutsu,¹² there are at least four distinguishing characteristics of the Islamic concept of the Man and his relation to God. Firstly, the ontological relation between God--as the ultimate source of human existence--and man--as the representative of the world of being--, which owes its very existence to God. In more theological terms, there is the Creator-creature relation between God and Man. Secondly, the communicative relation, according to which, God and Man are brought into close relation with each other – God, of course, takes the initiative for mutual communication. From Gods' side, in the form of revelation or *wahy* and the signs (*āyāt*), while from the human side, the *du'a* or prayer and other ritual and worship activities. Thirdly, the Lord-servant relation, according to which, God is the Lord (*Rabb*) who has majesty, sovereignty and absolute power; and Man is His servant (*'abd*), of whom He demands humbleness, modesty, absolute obedience, and other such properties. Fourthly, the ethical relation, according to which, on one hand, there are God's infinite goodness, mercy, forgiveness and benevolence; and on the other hand, there are His wrath and severe, strict and unrelenting justice. On the human side, there is the basic contrast between thankfulness (*shukr*) on one hand, and the God-fearing attitude (*taqwā*), on the other.

Hikayat Raja Pasai clearly demonstrates these four characteristics of the concept of Man as explained by Izutsu. The last injunction of Sultan Malikul Salleh to his grandchildren and his ministers, for instance, contains these four types of relations. The ontological relation is clearly seen in his words when he says: "My grandchildren, be it known to you both that I am stricken with sickness so that I feel the time fast approaching when Allah the Exalted shall summon me to leave this mortal world for the world everlasting."¹³ The communicative relation of God and Man is described in

¹² Ibid., p. 77-78.

¹³ Russell Jones (ed.), *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan and Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1999), p. 25.

these words, “Above all, do one another no wrong, so that Allah the Exalted may establish and confirm you both as rulers of your lands and may grant all that you pray for concerning your wealth.”¹⁴ Furthermore, these words of the sultan show the Lord-servant relation, “Do not disobey any of the commandments of Allah.”¹⁵ Finally, the ethical relation of the concept of Man embedded in *Hikayat Raja Pasai* is demonstrated in the injunction of Sultan Malikul Salleh to Sayid Semayamuddin and Sayid Ali Ghiatuddin. The Sultan said:

Above all, do not behave unjustly towards any of the servants of Allah, nor do anything which is contrary to the commandments of Allah. For in the Qur’ān is written the decree of Allah the Exalted which says: ‘If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.’ (Surat al-Ma’idah, 5: 44).

Based on the above explanation of Izutsu’s concept of the God-Man relation, we can further conclude that this concept is closely related to the concept of Man as the *khalīfah* or vicegerent of Allah in this world (*khalīfat-Allāh fī al-‘ālamīn*). According to Islam, Man is predestined to be the vicegerent of Allah on the Earth. The Holy Qur’ān says: “Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth.’ [al-Baqarah: 30]. As vicegerent, it is Man’s duty to obey the commands of Allah and to fulfil his responsibilities in this universe.¹⁶

It is a fact that each of the Malay Islamic kings was a man and therefore from the Islamic perspective, they were *khalīfah* of Allah. As a *khalīfah*, each of the Malay Islamic king carried on his shoulders the duties and responsibilities according to Islam. The concept of man, therefore, should be viewed from the perspective of his duties and responsibilities as *khalīfah*. As *khalīfah* and in relation to his duty and responsibility to Allah, the Malay Islamic king could be seen in many forms. One Malay Islamic king carried the title *zillu’llāhi fīl ‘ālam*, another king carried the title *al-mutawakkil ‘alā Allāhi fī’l-‘ālam*, and most of the kings used the title “*sultan*,” rather than “*raja*.” *Hikayat RajaPasai* narrates the story of how Merah Silau converted to Islam and later carried the title of *zillu’llāhi fī’l-‘ālam*, the shadow of Allah in this universe.¹⁷ In another instance, Bendahara Paduka Raja, upon his deathbed, advised his children and family members to obey the righteous

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *Spiritual Aspects of Islam* (Venice: Istituto Per La Collaborazione Culturale, 1962), p. 20-21.

¹⁷ Russell Jones (ed.), *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, p. 13.

king. According to him, the righteous king and the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) were just like two jewels bonded together in a diamond ring, “*raja-raja yang adil itu dengan Nabi Allah umpama dua permata pada sa-bentok chinchin.*” He also added that the righteous king was the representative of Allah in this world, “*lagi pun yang raja itu umpama ganti Allah.*”¹⁸ *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* also narrates the story of Raja Phra Ong Mahawangsa who was, after his conversion to Islam, conferred the title “Sultan Muzalfal Shah” by Syaikh ‘Abdullah, a Muslim scholar who first introduced Islam to the king. The name Muzalfal, however, most probably has been corrupted during the process of compilation or copying. The correct spelling should be “Muzaffar Shah,” a combination of Arabic and Persian word meaning “The Victorious King.” This name is not the main concern here, but rather it is the change of the title from “Raja” to “Sultan” that is significant. This aspect of changing the title from “Raja” to “Sultan” did not happen accidentally. The account of how this happened is specifically narrated in the text of *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*:

‘By what name is our king referred to?’ Asked Sheikh ‘Abdullah the Fourth Minister. ‘With the name of Raja Phra Ong Mahawangsa,’ replied the Fourth Minister. ‘If that is the case, let us now change it into Islamic language, so that it will be easy for us to put into the mosque’s weekly sermon during the Friday ... say his name is Sultan Muzalfal Shah... anyhow in the Qur’ān, the name of ‘Sultan’ is sacred and the highest name from any other names in the world,’ said Sheikh ‘Abdullah.’¹⁹

Based on the above three points, with the titles of *zillu’llāhi fi’l-‘ālam*, *al-mutawakkil ‘alā Allāhi fi’l-‘ālam* and the basic title of “*sultan*,” we are well justified to draw the conclusion that the concept of Man from the Islamic perspective bears the characteristics of the God-Man relation as mentioned by Izutsu.

When a Malay Muslim king was conferred the title of shadow of Allah or *zillu’llāhi*, his position was not made superior to the position of Allah Almighty. Rather, it meant he was almost nothing to Allah, his contribution would not make Allah’s Great Possession (*milk Allāh*) increase, not even by as tiny an amount as an atom, and his withdrawal would never be able to ruin Allah’s Great Possession. He was subject to the Will and the Authority of Allah. The shadow follows his master’s form, but he himself has no form

¹⁸R. O. Winstedt, (ed.), “The Malay Annals or *Sejarah Melayu*,” in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 16 (3), 1938, pp. 1–225), p. 144.

¹⁹Siti Hawa Salleh (ed.), *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan and Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1998), p. 102-103.

except the form that his master confers him.. The title of *zillu'llāhi*, therefore, is comparable to the reality of the existence of man and nature, in which Hamzah Fansuri (as quoted by Al-Attas) said:

Sungguhpun pada zahirnya ada ia berwujud, tetapi wahmi juga, bukan wujud haqiqi; seperti bayang-bayang dalam cermin, rupanya ada hakikatnya tiada. (Although outwardly it exists, it is nothing but Appearance and not reality; like the image (reflected) in the mirror, though possessing form, does not possess real being).²⁰

How then could a king, who did not possess his own real being, be able to own other things? Thus, one important aspect of the concept of Man in the Malay Islamic perspective is that we own nothing. Nothing in this universe belongs to us including ourselves. Allah is the One Who owns this universe and all mankind. Therefore, we are subjected to His Will and Authority in every stage of life.

In accordance with his position as the vicegerent of Allah in this universe (*khalīfatul-Allāhi fī al-'ālamīn*) and the representative of Allah in this world, Man was created on the best stature (*aḥsan taqwīm*) as declared by Allah in the Qur'ān, (al-Tin, verse 4). The term *aḥsan taqwīm*, according to the 9th/15th century Sufi commentator Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Kāshifī, means (as quoted by Naṣr), “God created man as the most complete and perfect theophany, the most universal and all embracing theatre of Divine hierophany, so that he may become the bearer of the Divine trust (*amānah*) and the source of unlimited effusion.”²¹ Thus, as the vicegerent of Allah in this universe, he should not be proud of his position, rather he should carry the weighty burden of trust (*amānah*) – the trust and responsibility to rule according to the Will of God and His pleasure.²² To carry out this *amānah*, he must live a righteous life and follow not his own lusts and desires, as Allah commanded the prophet David:

O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth, so judge thou between men in truth (and justice), nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead

²⁰Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 1970), p. 242.

²¹Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (New York: State University of New York, 1991), p. 26.

²²Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1990), p. 4; see also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 149-150; Annemarie Schimmel, *Spiritual aspects of Islam*, p. 20-21.

thee from the Path of Allah. For those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account. [Şād: 26].

The Malay kings were among the select persons granted the *amānah* by Allah to fulfil their responsibilities, duties, and obligations to rule their kingdom. Again the word “*Sulṭān*” which refers particularly to the concept of the authority granted by Allah to the selected person was purposely given in order to assist His servants conducting their jobs as *khalīfat-Allāhi fī al-‘ālamīn*. As such, Allah gave the authority to Prophet Moses and Aaron (pbut) so that they could perform their duties to Allah. He said:

We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother, and invest you both with authority (*sulṭān*), so they shall not be able to touch you. With Our Sign shall ye triumph, you two as well as those who follow you.” [al-Qaşaş, 35].

The Malay kings who were granted the title of “*Sulṭān*” had to realize their duties and responsibilities or *amānah* in this world. The aspect of “*waṣiyyah*” of the kings, especially the “deathbed injunction” is an important aspect of the Malay classical texts that could possibly prove this point. At the time when Sultan Malikul Saleh was about to depart this world, he left the *waṣiyyah* to his grandchildren, Malikul Mahmud and Malikul Mansur. The phrase in his *waṣiyyah* which mentioned, “Adapun peninggalku ini baik-baik kamu kedua memelihara pekerjaan *al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa’l-nahy ‘an-ilmunkār*. (When I have departed, both of you must take care of the duty to call for the goodness and to prohibit from the evil),”²³ can be clearly seen as the conscience of the Malay kings regarding their duties, responsibilities and obligations or *amānah*. In this light, the title of “*Sulṭān*” should be taken as the authority granted by Allah to perform righteous deeds and prohibit evil and wrong doings.²⁴ A “*Sulṭān*” then should call for assistance from Allah to ensure the *amānah* is carried out completely. “Say: ‘O my Lord! let my entry be by the Gate of Truth and Honour, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honour; and grant me from Thy Presence an authority (Sultan) to aid (me).” [Al-Isra’: 80]. This concept of *Sulṭān* as a man of duties,

²³Russell Jones (ed.), *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, p. 25.

²⁴In this concept of man according to the classical Malay historical texts, the burden of *amanah* is more important than the title of “*Sulṭān*.” Hamzah Fansuri said, “adapun rupamu itu rupa bayang-bayang jua dan namamu itu gelar-gelaran jua. Daripada ghaflatmu kau sangka engkau bernama dan berupa.” Translation: “Your form is but the form of shadow, and your name is but an appellation. Because of your unawareness you imagine that you possess name and form.” Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrāru-l-‘Arifīn*, in Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, 282.

responsibilities and obligation holds true to all Malay Muslims, be they rulers or peasants.

Every Muslim is a caretaker or “*rā’in*” of his own kingdom. They are individually burdened with the *amānah* or trust. According to Al-Attas, the trust implies responsibility to rule with justice, and the ‘rule’ means not simply ruling in the socio-political sense, nor in the scientific sense by controlling nature, but more fundamentally by encompassing the meaning of nature (*al-ṭabī‘ah*), it means the ruling, governing, controlling and maintaining of man by his self or his rational soul.²⁵ There is a sound *ḥadīth* that mentions this aspect of the individual as a “*rā’in*” in a comprehensive manner. This *ḥadīth* has broadened our understanding regarding the concept of Man, which is:

Ibn ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with them, reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: every one of you is a caretaker, and is responsible for his consignment. The ruler is a caretaker of people, and is responsible for his subjects. A man is a caretaker of his family, and is responsible for them. A woman is a caretaker of her husband’s house and children, and is responsible for them. A slave is a caretaker of his master’s property, and is responsible for it. All of you are caretakers, and all of you are responsible for your consignment.²⁶

This broader concept is also embedded in classical Malay historical texts as mentioned in *Sejarah Melayu*. Lying a weak on his deathbed, Sultan Alauddin Ri’ayat Syah advised his son Sultan Mahmud Syah, and reciting the above *ḥadīth* he said, “Segala raja-raja akan ditanyai Allah daripada segala kebelaannya daripada segala rakyatnya; sebab demikianlah harus engkau berbuat adil dan saksama. (All kings will be asked by Allah about all of their subjects; therefore, you must be fair and just).”²⁷ The advice of Bendahara Paduka Raja to Seri Nara Diraja Seri Maharaja Tun Mutahir is also worthy of consideration as recorded in *Sejarah Melayu*:

Sa-telah itu, maka Bendahara memandang pula pada Seri Nara Diraja: Maka kata Bendahara pada Seri Nara Diraja, Seri Maharaja Tun Mutahir, ‘Mutahir! Engkaulah kelak menjadi orang besar, daripada aku pun lebih kebesaranmu, tetapi jangan pada bicharamu engkau bapa saudara Raja, Jikalau melintas pada hatimu engkau bapa

²⁵ Al-Attas, *The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul*, p. 4.

²⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhari in the Book of *Al-Jumū‘ah*, *ḥadīth* no. 844; by Muslim in *al-‘Imārah*, *ḥadīth* no. 3408; by Tirmizi in *al-Jihād*, *ḥadīth* no. 1627; by Abu Dawud in *al-Kharrāj wa al-‘Imārah wa al-Fai*, *ḥadīth* no. 2539; and by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*, vol. 2, pp.5, 15, 54, 108, 111 and 121.

²⁷ Winstedt (ed.), *The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu*, p. 150.

saudara Raja, engkaulah dibunuh orang.’ (Soon afterward, looking at Seri Nara Diraja, the Bendahara said to Seri Nara Diraja Seri Maharaja Tun Mutahir, ‘Mutahir! You will be a great man, to my greatness you are greater, but don’t think that you are the uncle of the Raja. Even if it crosses your mind that you are the uncle of the Raja, you will be murdered by the people.’)²⁸

This advice was essential not only from the emotional perspective and nor because it contained a prediction that soon became true, but more importantly because it showed the conceptual understanding of Bendahara of the concept of Man. The greatness of a man, according to him, is not because of his position, rank, status or relationship to great people. Instead, it is because of his righteous deeds and responsibilities accomplished by him, and his sole submission to Allah. Hence, the man of duty or trust in the Islamic perspective, as seen from these classical Malay historical texts, is the righteous man who submits his self only to Allah and to no one else.

Man, as an Islamic concept, carries a potential for deficiencies, a potential that is exhibited in his very own name “*insān*”, meaning forgetfulness as mentioned by Al-Attas:

But man is also composed of forgetfulness (*nisyān*) – and he is called *insān* precisely because, having testified to himself the truth of the covenant he sealed with God, which entails obedience of His commands and prohibitions, he forgot (*nasiya*) to fulfil his duty and his purpose.²⁹

As a human being, a *Sulṭān* was also subject to this deficiency and at times he erred. Classical Malay historical texts sufficiently describe aspects of the deficiencies of the *Sulṭāns*. The descriptions, however, not only take into account their misdeeds but also their repentance. *Hikayat Raja Pasai* narrates the story of Sultan Malikul Mahmud, who breached the *waṣiyyah* of his grandfather by harming his brother Sultan Malikul Mansur and his Chief Minister. Realizing his error, he repented, and said:

Wah terlalu sekali ahmak budiku! Karna perempuan seorang, saudaraku kuturunkan dari atas kerajaannya dan menterinya pun kubunuh. Maka baginda pun menyesallah, lalu ia menangis. (Alas, what a fool I have been, all because of a woman I drove my brother from his kingdom, and his chief minister I put to death. Being stricken by conscience, he burst into tears).³⁰

²⁸Ibid., p. 144.

²⁹Al-Attas, *The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul*, p. 2-3.

³⁰Russell Jones (ed.), *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, p. 32.

Sejarah Melayu records the misdeeds of Sultan Mahmud Syah who wrongfully put the Bendahara Seri Maharaja and his family members to death. Soon he realized his fault and said:

Maka dilihat oleh Sultan Mahmud Shah seperti berita orang itu tiada sungguh; maka baginda pun terlalu mashghul dan menyesal oleh membunuh Bendahara Seri Maharaja tiada dengan pereksa. (He prostrated with grief and repented bitterly that he had put Bendahara Sri Maharaja to death without due inquiry).³¹

His grief and repentance were not only momentary but were proved through his actions when he abdicated himself from the throne and took up his abode at Kayu Ara.³²

Man, in his very nature, is composed of the quality of forgetfulness and because of this he is prone to committing sins and misdeeds. On the other hand, man is also composed of the quality of repentance and therefore, once he realizes his sins, he sooner or later repents and asks forgiveness from God. This idea of forgetfulness, sinfulness and repentance is prevalent in classical Malay historical texts, as seen from the stories of Sultan Malikul Mahmud of Pasai and Sultan Mahmud of Malacca. However, the question arising is what is the conceptual understanding of man embedded in the stories of these two famous kings? What is the significance of the acts of repentance by both kings? These are among the most important aspects that must be discussed thoroughly in order to form a proper understanding of the Malay Islamic concept of man. Understanding the Islamic viewpoint on the origin of man, the purpose of his worldly life and his final destination is the most important point that will guide us to understand the Malay Islamic concept of man. In this respect, it is essential to understand the concept of *fiṭrah* or the spiritual nature of human beings. Yasien Mohamed wrote:

Within his spiritual nature lies the deep, universal moral intuition that human beings are creatures of God to be respected. A return to his soul or his spiritual nature will require of him to return to its sources of nourishment. He will then rediscover the origin of his moral intuitions, which is his innate spiritual nature or *fiṭrah*. By so doing he will come to know his Creator, for “he who knows himself, knows his Lord.”³³

The concept of *fiṭrah* is related to the origin of man as a spiritual person who came from Allah and who will return to Him. Syaikh ‘Abd al-

³¹ Winstedt, (ed.), *The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu*, p. 187.

³² *Ibid.*, 189.

³³ Yasien Mohamed, *Human nature in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1998), p. 6.

Qadīr al-Jilānī said: “Then there is the spiritual being of man, or the spiritual man, who is called the pure man. His goal is total closeness to Allah. The only way to this end is the knowledge of truth (*ḥaqīqah*).”³⁴ One important aspect of the spiritual man is called the soul or self (*nafs*) which governs his bodily form.³⁵ It is through the improvement of the *nafs* that the self of a man could be transformed into “the Self”. Corbin explains the term “self,”

...as we shall employ it here, implies neither the one nor the other acceptance. It refers neither to the impersonal Self, to the pure act of existing attainable through efforts comparable to the techniques of yoga, nor to the Self of the psychologists. The word will be employed here solely in the sense given it by Ibn ‘Arabi and numerous other Sufi theosophists when they repeated the famous sentence: ‘He who knows himself knows his Lord.’ Knowing one’s self, to know one’s God; knowing one’s Lord, to know one’s self.³⁶

In order to transform one’s self into “the Self,” the *nafs* must go through certain stages of spiritual journey. The *nafs* of a forgetful man is called *al-nafs al-ammārah* (the soul which inspires evil). One who controls and improves his self through certain spiritual exercises will be able to transform his *al-nafs al-ammārah* into *al-nafs al-lawwāmah* (the blaming soul) and gain greater awareness of his own nature (*fiṭrah*). Further on he could improve his *al-nafs* into *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah* (the soul at peace) and finally into the highest transmutation of *al-nafs* called *al-nafs al-rāḍiyah* (the satisfied soul).³⁷ The spiritual exercises to be practised involve the purification of the heart or *al-Qalb*, the place where intuitive illumination is received in order to guide soul or *nafs* upward from *al-nafs al-ammārah* to *al-nafs al-rāḍiyah*.³⁸ The most important practice of purification is *tawbah* or repentance, as Syaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī said:

³⁴ Abd al-Qādir Al-Jilānī, *The Secret of Secrets*, translation by Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti (Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majeed, 1993), p. 14.

³⁵ There are, however various terms for the spiritual substance of man. When it is involved in intellection and apprehension it is called “intellect or ‘*aqī*’; when it is engaged in receiving intuitive illumination it is called “heart or *qalb*”, when it reverts to its own world of abstract entities it is called “spirit or *ruh*” and finally when it governs the body it is called “soul or self or *al-nafs*”. See further Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993), 4.

³⁶ Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, translation by Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 95.

³⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for A Sacred Science* (New York: State University of New York, 1993), p. 18-19.

³⁸ Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975), p. 45-62.

Certain levels and stages in man's spiritual evolution have been mentioned: let it be known that each of these levels is obtained primarily through repentance... True and total repentance is the first step.³⁹

Finally, we come to the conclusion regarding the concept of Man in Malay history as understood from the aspect of the forgetful, the sinful and the repentant man. Sultan Malikul Salih of Pasai, Sultan Mahmud of Malacca and Raja Phra Ong Mahawangsa or Sultan Muzalfal Syah of Kedah are among the Malay men who experienced this cycle of life from *fiṭrah* to the world of form and then back to the *fiṭrah*, from the Self to self and then to the Self again. Rather than physical and bodily men, they were in fact spiritual men. Thus, the Malay Islamic concept of Man as understood from the classical texts goes beyond any other concept of Man in modern history. Whereas the modern concept of man views from the bodily perspective only, neglecting the spiritual perspective, the Malay Islamic concept of man views man more from the spiritual perspective.

The Semantic Approach and the Malay Islamic Concept of the Universe

A thorough observation of the concept of the Universe or cosmos embodied in these classical texts of Malay history reveals that the authors attempted to expose two distinctive concepts. First is the pre-Islamic concept based mainly on the Indian (Hinduism-Buddhism) perspective and second is the Islamic concept based on the teachings of Islam. The distinction between pre-Islamic and Islamic concepts can clearly be seen through two notions. One is the idea of the symbolism of the center, connected to the concept of the sacred place in which each sacred place is associated with a sacred person and event and is also considered as the center of the world. The idea that each kingdom is the center of the universe, as portrayed by the selected texts of this study, is frequently referred to as the symbolism of the center.⁴⁰ Such an idea was prevalent from the Hindu-Buddhist point of view. From the Hindu-

³⁹ Al-Jilānī, *The Secret of Secrets*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ The architectonic symbolism of the Center may be formulated as follows: first, the Sacred Mountain – where heaven and earth meet – is situated at the center of the world. Second, every temple or palace – and by extension, every sacred city or royal residence – is Sacred Mountain, thus becoming a Center. Third, being an *axis mundi*, the sacred city or temple is regarded as the meeting point of heaven, earth, and hell. See further Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, translation by Willard R. Trask (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 12.

Buddhist perspective, the idea of the center of universe is associated with the existence of Mount Meru. “According to Indian beliefs, Mount Meru rises at the center of the world.”⁴¹ Interestingly, this mountain was also described in *Sejarah Melayu* and it represents the legacy of the ancient Indian perspective within Malay society.⁴²

Another notion is seen from the semantic perspective, in which the concept of the cosmos, both seen and unseen was understood. The coming of Islam to the Malay world and the mass conversion of the Malays brought the authors of the classical Malay historical texts to see the world from a clearer perspective, since Islamic conversion is not a simple phenomenon. It is a great historical event. An American psychologist, William James remarks on the event of conversion, “Conversion is not the putting in a patch of holiness; but with the true convert holiness is woven into all his powers, principles, and practice.”⁴³ Converting to Islam, therefore, brought the Malays to perceive and understand clearly the concept of *‘Ālam al-Ghayb* and *‘Ālam al-Shahādah*, the unseen and the visible world according to the true Islamic perspective. Further discussion on the concept of the universe and its relation to God, the Supreme Being as frequently discussed in metaphysical and ontological disciplines would certainly broaden our perspective regarding the Malay Islamic concept of the universe.⁴⁴

This Islamic concept of the Universe follows the very concept of Man and his relation to Allah. In the Islamic perspective, the concept of the

⁴¹Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, p. 12-13 Nasr further explains, “The Hindus saw the earth as being comprised of four continents, Uttarakuru in the north, Pūrvavideha in the east, Jāmbudvīpa in the south and Aparagoyāna in the west, all surrounding the central Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain where Heaven and Earth meet.” See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, p. 109.

⁴²Many of the Indian ancient beliefs spread out to the Malay Archipelago when Hinduism and Buddhism penetrated into the court of ancient Malay kingdoms. This idea of “Mount Meru or Mahameru” most likely prevailed among the royal families and noblemen since they were the ruling group who exclusively practiced these Indian religions. Al-Attas remarked, “Hinduism as the people of the Archipelago practised it, was a superstructure maintained by the ruling group above an indifferent community. The community’s participation in Hinduism was a necessary influence from above; the religion was imposed on the community by the authority of the ruling group.” See Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on A General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*(Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969), p. 2.

⁴³William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience; A Study in Human Nature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1936), p. 224.

⁴⁴See further Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*(Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995), pp. 217-225; and Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi*, pp. 207-227.

Universe or world is based on the Qur'ānic point of view. The Qur'ān divides the present world in which man lives into two halves: "the Domain of the Unseen" (*'Ālam al-Ghayb*) and "the Domain of the Visible" (*'Ālam Shahādah*).⁴⁵ Next to this understanding of the present world or *al-dunyā*, the Qur'ān also maintains that there is another world to come, the world of hereafter or *al-ākhirah*. In *al-ākhirah*, there are two atmospheres, *al-jannah* (heaven) and *al-jahannam* (hellfire). *Al-jannah* (heaven) and *al-jahannam* (hellfire) are the final destinations of Man. After his death, Man will be brought to *'Ālam al-Baqā'* or the immortal realm, the realm which begins with the Day of Judgement (*yaum al-ḥisāb*), and the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-ba'th*) and the similar ones. This realm was expressed through the concept of eschatology. The link between *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirah* describes the concept of the Universe or *'ālam* according to the Islamic perspective. In the concept of the Universe, and the concept of man, his life and destiny-gathered together they form a comprehensive concept of the relationship between Man and God. These aspects of the concept of the Universe are exhibited by the authors of the classical Malay historical texts in their writings.

The descriptions of the death of a sultan in *Sejarah Melayu* are a clear indication of the author's Islamic concept of the Universe. Describing the death of the first Malaccan king who converted to Islam, the text mentions:

Setelah genap-lah limapuluh tujuh tahun umur baginda di-atas kerajaan, datanglah peredaran dunia, maka Sultan Muhammad Shah pun berpindah-lah dari negeri yang *fanā'* ka-negeri yang *baqā'*: *qālū innā lil-lāhi wa innā ilayhi raji 'ūn*.⁴⁶ (Lit.; ...and after that, when Sultan Muhammad Shah had reigned for fifty-seven years, then in the process of time he left this perishable world to go to one that abideth: as it is written 'To God we belong and to Him we return').⁴⁷

This expression clearly represents the Islamic concept of the universe as understood by the author.⁴⁸ The description of the deaths of other Muslim

⁴⁵Izutsu, *God and man in the Qur'an*, p. 83.

⁴⁶Winstedt (ed.), *The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu*, p. 90.

⁴⁷C. C. Brown, "Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals: A Translation of Raffles MS 18", in *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 25 [2 & 3], 1952, pp. 1-276), p. 61.

⁴⁸In the Islamic perspective, this worldly life will absolutely perish or annihilate (*fanā'*) and man who departed from it will at last inhabit the realm of subsistence (*baqā'*) in God. See further Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, pp. 49-50; *The Need for a Sacred Science*, p. 19. For further elaboration on the concept of *fanā'* and *baqā'* from the perspective of Islamic Sufism see Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, pp. 202-203;

kings, including the earlier figures who converted to Islam, such as Raja Kida Hindi and his grandchild Raja Aristun Shah, also indicate a clear Islamic concept of the Universe held by the author.

The death of Sultan Abu Shahid as mentioned in *Sejarah Melayu*, “Maka baginda pun mati shahidlah...”⁴⁹ was classified as martyrdom (*mati shahīd*), an Islamic concept of death connected to some aspects of *Shari’ah* or Islamic Law and theology in which a person is granted a direct path to the Heaven. The idea of “*mati shahīd*” can also be understood from the perspective of Islamic Sufism in which it meant “the perishing of the physical world or ‘*Ālam al-Shahādah*.’” In this context, it means that the physical world of Sultan Abu Shahid perished and he then migrated to the imperishable world or ‘*Ālam al-Ghayb*.’⁵⁰ In reality, he was not considered as dead, instead spiritually alive. The Qur’ān describes the destiny of a *shahīd* or a martyr: “Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord.” [*Āl ‘Imrān*: 16]. From this it can be seen that the author of *Sejarah Melayu* had a clear understanding of the concept of ‘*Ālam al-Ghayb* and ‘*Ālam al-Shahādah*. More obvious is the narration of the deathbed injunction of the Bendahara Paduka Raja to his children and grandchildren:

Think not, my children, to truck your religion for (the attractions of) this world, for this world will not endure, and for those that live there is but one end and that is death... . These are my last injunctions. Forget them not, that you may obtain the glory of this world and the world to come.⁵¹

Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?*, pp. 87-88, his another book *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), p. 122; and Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1964), pp. 114-116. Often times, the sufi’s doctrine of *fanā’* is alleged to be comparable to the doctrine of *nirvāna* in Buddhism. This allegation however is inaccurate since there are fundamental differences between *fanā’* and *nirvāna* as Saeed Sheikh remarks, “The Buddhist moralises himself; the Sufi becomes moral only through knowing and loving God. Further, it would be wrong to identify *fanā’* with *nirvāna*, both terms imply the passing away of individuality, but while *nirvāna* is purely negative, *fanā’* is to be accomplished by *baqā’*, i.e. everlasting life with God.” See M. Saeed Sheikh, *Islamic Philosophy* (London: The Octagon Press, 1982), pp. 25-26.

⁴⁹Winstedt(ed.), *The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu*, p. 46 and 92.

⁵⁰The idea of “*shahādah*” as connected to the concept of universe was discussed brilliantly by Frithjof Schuon in his *Understanding Islam*. For instance he says, “Realizing the first *shahādah* means first of all becoming fully conscious that the Principle alone is real and that the world, though on its own level it “exists,” “is not”, in one sense it therefore means realizing the universal void.” See further Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, 5-6.

⁵¹Winstedt(ed.), *The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu*, p.144.

The death of Islamic figures in *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, such as Sultan Malikul Tahir and Malikul Mansur, was expressed in the phrase “*kembali ke rahmatullāh*” (Lit.: “Return to the Grace of Allah). Another phrase “*pulang dari negeri yang fanā’ ke negeri yang baqā’*,” or (Lit.: “Return from the perishable world to the imperishable world”) was used for the death of Sultan Malikul Saleh and Sultan Malikul Mahmud.⁵² These two phrases were also used in *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* to express the death of Sultan Muzalfal Shah, the first Kedah ruler to embrace Islam,

...maka Sultan Muzalfal Shah itu pun datanglah sakitnya, langsung sampai hukum Allah taala, kembali ke rahmatullah taala dari negeri yang fanā’ ke negeri yang baqā’, *qālu innāil-lāhi wa innāilayhi rāji ‘ūn.*” (Lit.: “...and Sultan Muzalfal Shah felt sick, and the Allah’s Will had come, he returned to the Grace of Allah, left this perishable world to go to one that abideth, as it is written ‘To Allah we belong and to Him we return.’⁵³

These expressions of the death of Muslim figures show a clear concept of the Universe understood by the authors of Hikayat Raja Pasai, Sejarah Melayu and Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa. Since these expressions are distinguished from the expressions at the death of pre-Islamic figures, the distinction between Islamic and pre-Islamic concepts of the Universe held by the authors of the classical Malay historical texts has been sufficiently demonstrated.

Concluding Comments

Based on the above discussion, we have reached the conclusion that a Malay man is a religious man whose personal and social life is represented by close relationship between him and God and the duties to all humankind and the Universe. The Malays began to develop their own perspective on the concept of Man and Universe based on a religious understanding since the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism to the Malay world. The understanding about the reality of Man and Universe was then transformed accordingly. The influence of Hinduism and Buddhism, however, has its limitations. The exclusiveness of Indian religious thought has brought some people to see the nature of Man and the Universe from the perspective of certain people in the pre-Islamic era of Malaysia.⁵⁴ Islamization, however, has perfected and

⁵²Ibid., pp. 23-33.

⁵³Siti Hawa Salleh (ed.), *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*, p. 114.

⁵⁴See further Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on A General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, p. 16; and Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1985), p. 198).

broadened the framework of the concepts of Man and the Universe in Malay history. The concept of man for instance, is no longer based on the concept of the Malay kingship; rather, it is based on the concept of duties and responsibilities. Based on this concept, all men are equally responsible for the betterment of this worldly life and his fate in the next life. In another instance, the concept of the Universe, which was developed from an Indian religious perspective transformed into a comprehensive Islamic concept. It would be difficult to come to the above conclusions without the use of semantic analysis to provide proper illustrations of the concept of Man and the Universe, as proposed by Izutsu in his books particularly in *God and Man in the Qur'ān*. These illustrations have ultimately served as the main part of the discussion in this paper and provided not only the solution for a better understanding of the concept of Man and the Universe in the Malay Islamic tradition but also a clearer picture from which further investigations can be conducted in the future.