

Reflection on Compassion in Islam and Malay Sufi Identity¹

Refleksi Terhadap Konsep Rahman dan Identiti Melayu-Sufi

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ABSTRACT

Malays constitute around 300 million people in the Southeast Asian region. Historically many Malay Muslim scholar had practiced Sufism or tasawwuf in the past resulting in a rich heritage of writings on aspects of Sufism where many are still in Manuscript form. The lutfiyya (grace) of God or God's breath (nafas al-rahman) is a constant feature in the worldview of the Sufis. God is seen to be an active principle in the world and human beings journey in this terrestrial world is in constant contact with God. Early formulation of Malay identity is forged with this in mind i.e. the everyday contact with God with the aim of reaching close to him. With the onslaught of colonialism such an identity is deviated from its original path. Instead various new needs are imposed upon that identity including the needs of the nation state. This has led to various results and growth of that identity. For better or for worse this paper argues that a return and an evolution to that early Sufi/inner-based identity with emphasis on compassion (al-rahman) is required for positive growth and development in the region.

Keywords: Malay world; compassion; Sufism, nation-state; identity

ABSTRAK

Melayu berjumlah sebanyak lebih kurang 300 juta di Asia Tenggara. Menurut sejarah kebanyakan ulamak Melayu dahulu mengamalkan Tasawwuf atau Sufisme yang telah menghasilkan khazanah penulisan yang kaya dengan aspek Sufisme yang kebanyakannya masih di dalam bentuk manuskrip. Konsep luf Tuhan atau nafas al-Rahman adalah suatu yang terbiasa didalam pandangan alam jagat Sufi. Tuhan itu dilihat sebagai aktif di alam dan perjalanan spiritual manusia di alam ini adalah sentiasa dibawah naunganNya. Pembentukan identity Melayu awal, adalah dilakukan dengan berpandangan sedemikian iaitu dengan tujuan untuk mendekati diri kepadaNya. Cabaran kolonisasi telah mempengaruhi identity ini dan mengakibatkan ia bertukar arah. Sebaliknya pelbagai kehendak baharu telah diletakkan padanya termasuklah kehendak sesebuah negara-bangsa. Ini telah mengakibatkan pelbagai hasil dan pengembangan identity yang baharu tersebut. Baik atau buruk, makalah ini berhujah kea rah pengembalian dan pengembangan identiti Sufi(aspek spiritual) yang awal dengan penekanan ke atas konsep al-rahman di dalamnya adalah diperlukan untuk pembangunan dan perkembangan yang positif bagi rantau ini.

Kata kunci: Alam Melayu; Rahman; tasawwuf; negara-bangsa; identiti

“My mercy takes precedence over My wrath”
Written on the throne of God².

“In the name of God the Most Compassionate (al-rahman) and the Most Merciful (al-rahim)” (The opening prayer in the Qur’an)

COMPASSION AND MERCY THE TWO BROTHERS

Compassion in English means “sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others”. Naturally it ties with mercy.

In Islam the conception of mercy is always connected to compassion. It is constantly mentioned and uttered by the Muslims before they do anything. The statement of *bismallah* as it is known connects the two thus reminding Muslims the mercy of God and His compassionate nature envelops us always. *Al-Rahman* as it appears in the Qur’an relates to the all encompassing mercy that is bestowed upon the believers and the unbelievers alike.

Compassion is mentioned in daily prayers of the Muslim at least 17 times per day; in the Qur’an the word compassion appears four times; there is a surah in the Qur’an which is called surah *al-Rahman* within it God recounts his compassion towards human beings via the creation of the world and all of its contents.

To be compassionate it seems is part of Muslim life, we don't even have to talk about spirituality. Just observant Muslims who understand what they do in prayers will want to be compassion.

So why is there oppression, racism, racial intolerance?

ON MUSLIM IDENTITY

First of all identity according to sociologist is defined as, "the way people think and behave, and the history of behavior and thought to which they belong"³.

Religion furthermore is a "symbolic structure that generates meanings for people, a worldview capable of providing answers to human problems and an ethos telling people how they should act"⁴.

Manuel Castells a sociologist who have studied identity also defined identity as, "people's source of meaning and experience"⁵

Muslim identity is therefore made out of culture, history and of course religion. Culture is the tradition of the people, history is the accepted way the people view themselves in time and of course religion in this case Islam is how Islam is interpreted.

To deal with each aspect of the identity would require a much longer paper and a several papers, so what I have decided to do in this paper is to analyse the element Islam. Our aim is of course to try and find why and how this element is interpreted and is implemented in and made into an identity. We shall then evaluate why a more open approach is needed in making this identity and what that would mean for a better dialogue/co-operation between the different religions.

ON HISTORY AND HOW IT IMPACTS UPON MUSLIM IDENTITY

The need to look back in order to move forward is taken as accepted wisdom by many to justify the study of history. The other common adage would be, to study history so as to not make the same mistakes that had been done in the past. This critical reading of history is justified as many in the historiographical field would testify.

However reading is hardly an objective activity with the subject hardly neutral in its assumptions and of course epistemology. As Gadamer says, "No statement whose truth we are trying to grasp can be

comprehended merely on the basis of the content it presents. Every statement has presuppositions that never get expressed."⁶ These factors vary greatly in the reading of a text. They are the mitigating factors in defining the type of history that is then formulated the expert readers and later on propagated and push forward by the superior party upon the inferior or weak party i.e. the masses.

PROBLEM

The rise of sectarianism in Muslim societies, racism, hate against other religions all give the impression that Muslims are intolerant and exclusive in their mentality. Ali Allawi learned scholar and commentator on Muslim affairs had called this predicament of the Muslims to be part of a wider crisis within the Muslim intelligentsia⁷. To him this is the crisis of Islamic civilization. He mentioned in his book of the identity crisis within the Muslim ummah and how Muslims are in constantly being challenged in their views by the forces of secular-liberal culture and economic forces. He also highlights and summarises the various Muslim responses to such issues. To him this crisis had arisen due to the onslaught of the western nation-state structure upon traditional Muslim societies.

This view is similar to the view on identity crisis as discussed by sociologist. Hamid Mawlana (1998) says, "The discourse on the nation-state in the Western industrialised world deals almost exclusively with the evolution of a particular kind of state that had its origin and development in Western Europe over the past 200 years, in predominantly Christian and capitalist countries"⁸.

The rise of the nation state with all its institutions and centers of power create a crisis of legitimacy in the minds of many Muslims thus leading to that identity crisis. Instead of forging or articulating a new Muslim identity based upon reason and revelation, what has emerged is that of a new Muslim identity which is based upon the state-authoritarian power. Muslim identity is formed by the state religious institutions which see it part of their job to provide guidance in explaining what is acceptable conduct and what is not becoming of a Muslim.

It gives the idea that there is no space in the Muslim world for dialogue let alone a public sphere or space for people to express themselves. Is it always like that?

When we dwell into Islamic history will indicate that what we see today is opposite to that sacred

history so many Muslims hold dear to. Just take one example, the development and history of Islamic law after the death of the Holy Prophet there existed many groups/scholars/schools of interpretation of the primary sources of Islam for the sake of deriving/deducing/extrapolating law. According to the writer of *Tarikh Mazahib Islamiyyah* (The history of Islamic schools of theology and law) there were many schools of law. Now if law is interpretation then that period saw many diverse interpretation within Islam on the primary sources of Islam. This led towards a proliferation of Islamic law schools. Ultimately the 2nd caliph of the Abbasids, al-Mansur actually saw the need to unite people onto one interpretation of Islamic Law and he chose Malik ibn Anas.

However Malik disagreed and answered in saying he does not believe that his own formulation is the most perfect and the most correct.

This example informs us that limiting interpretation in Islam is not a result of religion but a result of politics.

I would argue that such limitation of interpretation actually leads to extremism and sectarianism for what is sectarianism apart from the extreme belief that your opinions are the most perfect opinion and the others are wrong.

Now before we can actually discuss this we need to understand a few things, first what is the nature of interpretation? Does interpretation mean something other than relativism I mean does it lead necessarily to an absolute view?

Secondly what is interpreted? Is it a text or is it an opinion of the text?

When is interpretation an opinion and when is it an absolute interpretation which requires obeisance? In a religious discourse unlike in a secular⁹ there are what you would call an absolute discourse and that would incorporate the belief in the surety of the religion that it is 'the' path that will lead towards the main aim i.e. salvation in the next world or in Buddhism, nirvana.

Now the problem that many face these days in religious discourse is basically this inability to divorce the absolute part from the relative and thus making what is relative as absolute and making the absolute as relative.

Now issue connected to understanding of the primary sources of Islam is relative for there are diverse interpretations, but issue of whether the scripture is divine is absolute meaning undisputable (from a Muslim's understanding)¹⁰.

There is a tendency to believe that the understanding of scripture, the commentary, and the exegesis of the scripture is absolute and thus should not be questioned at all. Furthermore this belief is thought to be fundamental to religion that questioning it is considered blasphemous and downright critical towards Islam. When it comes to the realm of the state, authorities or the ruling apparatus of the nation state will enforce this in the name of unity, peace and harmony of the people.

This is the confusion in the minds and in Muslim thought today. This in crude form is the problem that we face.

The inability to understand that there are things which are relative and there are things which are absolute. In fact relativism is such a dirty word that a mere mention that a certain view is relative is considered to be outside of the Muslim mind and religious discourse altogether¹¹.

Why is this the case? In my own observation it is due to the lack of understanding of history of the development of each of the fields in Islam. How many courses today teach the history and development of Islamic law, for example. How many even discuss it critically. Understanding is the key.

Secondly it is due to lack of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to put things in their proper order. To be able to arrange the absolute and the relative, to know the difference between the two and to also know the essence of each. This cannot be done if there is no idea on the conception of 'adl' or justice. Justice here does not mean social justice although that is connected for, you cannot know social justice without first understanding what justice is.

If Muslims are to discuss liberalism, they would probably write a paper (if they are a student) taking and using arguments against liberalism without first of all looking at what liberalism is and what are the arguments given by liberalism. When asked as to the reason why arguments from the angle of liberalism are not given or even considered for criticism, the likely response is that such an action is not beneficial because "we as Muslims are against liberalism so why would we even consider their arguments?" If they were asked, why do you think Muslims are against liberalism? They would respond by criticizing liberals and liberalism. This is the attitude of already making up your mind even before careful consideration and analysis. The other side or the object is not even considered let alone allowed to be on the same level with the subject.

This is clearly unfair and definitely unjust. To be just you need to allow the other side to argue their case as you argue yours then look at each other's arguments and evaluate them one by one.

Concept of fairness which stems from justice is nonexistent in the minds of some. I think it is a human tendency to read your individual understanding to the things outside of it. But to practice fairness we should always read with an open mind for we could be wrong. This idea is prevalent in the academia and we actually tell our students when writing for academic purposes is to cover all the bases i.e. to look at both sides of the argument. Then come with your own hypothesis.

Now I would like to shift to discuss the conception of justice and how that should be an essential element for a Muslim identity.

A certain reading of identity which warrants an exclusive reading of Islam is not useful for a multicultural and multi religious society. A more open reading or a more inclusive approach is needed. It seems however that many people believe the Malays were open before because they had little knowledge of Islam and now with development and high knowledge of Islam they have to become more exclusive and more steadfast in their faith. This means to become more insulated and separated from other religion or racial communities.

None of them actually stop to think that such a reading might be antithesis to Islam itself. Because the Prophet who is the highest exemplar of Islam had mixed with his non-Muslim neighbours and had various dialogues with the Christians and the Jews. Thus this indicates the openness of Islam towards other faith much different from how it is being seen or interpreted today.

I would argue that such an exclusive reading of Islam is actually a fulfillment of the nationalist project or the natural result of ideology upon the minds of religious scholars which make up the orthodoxy. Before the Muslims take issue with my usage of the term "orthodox" let me clarify. Yes there is no such thing as orthodoxy in Islam for in Islam unlike in Christianity there is no priesthood. For priesthood means the understanding of religion and the truth for that matter is to be issued by the priesthood as we find in Catholicism.

In Islam we do not have this for Islam as a faith is very personal, the practice of prayer is very personal for Muslims are communicating with God in a personal way. Just look at the words we utter in prayer it is very personal. The various *munajat*,

prayers and supplications after prayer are all meant to connect with God. For God is the Ultimate and the Absolute, everything else is relative.

God Himself said it in Qur'an, *Kullu yawmin huwa fi sha'an [ar-Rahman:29]* meaning that God is constantly in predispositions or *shu'un*. This verse tells us that "Allah is upon a new task or state or affair and these ever-changing tasks/affairs/state" indicates God's active creating or in other words He is constantly renewing "creation in each instant"¹². Thus indicating that God is the ever constant and the rest of creation are constantly in creation (*tahawwull*¹³). The relative-ness and many-ness (*kathrah*) of things are dependent upon the Divine Names of God (*asma' al-husna*)¹⁴.

So if God is absolute and all other is relative in the sense of constantly being renewed then why is it that Muslims have a problem dealing with the relative? There are two answers for this, One is from a cosmological perspective and that is because Muslims have not connected the meaning of that verse with their worldview of life and reality. In Sufi metaphysics it is much more clearer because God is always in those predispositions then God is always self-disclosing to us in various ways or predispositions.

God's mercy embraces all things:

God says, "My mercy embraces all things." It is either a gratuitous gift or obligatory. There are servants whom it embraces as a property of obligation, and there are others whom it embraces as a property of a gratuitous gift. But the root is the divine bounty (*al-fadl*) and the bestowal of blessings (*al-in'am*) since at first there was no engendered existence to deserve it. Hence, the very manifestation of engendered existence derives from gratuitous gift."¹⁵

Thus via the gift, or via God's breath (*nafas al-rahman*) all things come into existence. This all-inclusive mercy which becomes manifest through the breath of *al-rahman*, "God's mercy precedes His wrath"¹⁶.

Ibn al-'Arabi further explains,

"God attributed a breath to Himself, ascribing it to the name "All-merciful (*al-rahman*)", only to tell us-once our entities have become manifest and the messengers of this affair have come to us-that mercy comprises and includes all things and that all people and creatures end up with mercy. Nothing becomes manifest from the All-merciful but objects of mercy."¹⁷

So everything is composed of His mercy that even in the end there is mercy. In fact everything is manifested in this great mercy of God. A mind that is modeled upon such an idea, would necessarily show mercy to others let alone be humble and mesmerized

in front of this everyday reality which is based upon that All-merciful.

Furthermore God is believed in Islam to have various names and those names can be divided to two main groups i.e. the *Jalal* (names of Majesty) and *Jamal* (names of beauty). *Jalal* names include the name which denotes majestic qualities i.e. the ability to judge, to punish, to delineate to distinguish between good and bad etc.

Jamal names include compassion, mercy, forgiving, etc.

These names provide a connection and also an explanation of why is it that we witness and experience life in the various different facets that exist. This should be the worldview that Muslims use to view the various ideas and opinions and interpretation within Islam which is true to the main sources of Islam i.e. the Qur'an and the Prophetic practices. Failure to connect and to see God in this sense leads Muslims to have problems with dealing with the relative.

The second answer to why Muslims have a problem dealing with the relative, is that the fact that the issue of interpretation in Islam is always supported by an authority that aims for control. This always leads towards institutionalizing religion which I call orthodoxy in Islam.

There is an interesting book which is written by Colin Turner called *Islam without Allah* where the author studies the issue of authority in Islam as it was practiced during the Safavid era in Iran. I have to say that such a study on authority is not a common enough area of study where it should have been. In the said book the author had studied the issue of institutionalization of religion i.e. Islam.

TOWARDS A NEW MUSLIM IDENTITY

“Wama arsalnaka illa rahmatan lil a'lamin”
“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a blessing for the worlds” [al-Anbiya':107]

As Islam is a religion that caters to everyone, thus orthodoxy do arise as a logical consequence of this. For to cater from everyone on the street to the intellectual of highest order, a vibrant interpretation of Islam is required. It has to be inclusive for all diverse understanding of the religion.

However in the quest for making Islam a way of life for all, certain understanding of that worldview have to be made easy and acceptable to the masses. In controlling the masses religion needs to be regulated

and a certain view needs to be accepted as the most acceptable one for all. This is the challenge and that challenge was seen to be important for the second Abbasid caliph after the events of the Abbaside revolution divided the people and created a situation of chaos within Islam society¹⁸. This was the view of al-Mansur who strive to unite the Muslims under one single interpretation if we want we can even say that what he wanted to do was institutionalizing religion for the sake of unity within the Muslim ummah etc.

Yes a noble aim but what he did was eventually lead the Muslims to the idea that there is one single interpretation that is correct and all else is false.

This unfortunately also led many to make Islam into a mere external religion that in order for a person to be considered Islamic¹⁹ was if he/she practiced what is acceptable to the boundaries of acceptable religious practice which is defined and determined by the body politic. Whereas in Islam the external form merely corresponds to the first level of religiosity as explained in the famous narration (hadith) from the Holy Prophet. The further two levels i.e. of faith (*iman*) and spiritual beauty (*ihsan*²⁰) are much higher and should be the aim of every Muslims in order to become “Islamic”.

The reaction to this was the rise of spirituality or Sufism in Islam which is an interpretation of Islam which is connected with issues of inner journey. The aim of spirituality is to reach that highest level of spiritual beauty or perfection.

What I have said thus far is a modest attempt for an analysis as to the reason why in Islam a particular interpretation is preferred and how Sufi metaphysics can help in opening up this view. However this is still in the ambit of Islamic civilization and I have not even said in regards other religion.

I would like to suggest three main components for this neo-Muslim identity and it begins with the conception of justice; openness and critical towards our collective history.

“O you who believe, let not your hatred for a (particular) group caused you to become unjust..” [al-Maidah:8]

“Be just for being just is closer to piety (taqwa)” [al-Maidah:8]²¹

These and many other verses in the Qur'an of similar theme, mention being just, justice to be the main element for a Muslim individual. Within justice there is fairness i.e. to listen to all sides in a conflict before making a judgment. Within it also there exist the element of being not unkind to those who are different from us.

There is nice saying from ‘Ali the 4th caliph of the Muslims, “Human beings are either your brother in faith or your brother in humanity”

Which basically mean there can be no discrimination against people of different religion or even race in Islam.

There is a famous saying from the Holy Prophet, who said:

“Surely wisdom is a lost treasure of the *mu'min*, take it from wherever/whichever (source) you can find it”²²

It is with this spirit that the Muslims have taken knowledge and broadened their horizons in the various sciences of the past. This spirit of openness is what has allowed the Muslims to move east and west in search of knowledge and later on to expand and grow into a strong world civilization in the past²³. So the seeking of wisdom is seeking experiences, studying past history, knowledges and philosophy all for the sake of understanding things as they are for the fulfillment of the other Prophetic exhortation of seeking knowledge.

This spirit of openness would also make Muslims constantly on the look out for new ideas for the betterment of society and religion.

Being critical of history especially that history which had been shaped by nationalism of the past. Recent studies of colonized societies have shown us that many of the society had inherited a colonized past which is not neutral.

That colonized past is built upon what sociologist called colonized history which contains much of colonial understanding of the colonial subject²⁴. What is important to note is that the colonial understanding of the subject is always for the sake of domination and control thus by inheriting such views uncritically we are necessarily using the same tools to control the population.

Furthermore such an understanding also imposes upon a reading of the history of the country a colonial perspective which if not analyzed fully might lead us to deny certain alternative readings to be true because we have been influenced by the colonial reading.²⁵

Such understanding of history might be used later in the construction of orthodox belief and ideology thus shaping Muslim minds upon a wrong understanding which might have a negative repercussion on inter-religious relations.

What is clear is that orthodoxy or institutionalized Islam is determined by the body politic ruling the state, it is wholly determined by the state in regards to what is considered important by this group. This

is of course determined by many external factors where colonial knowledge is but one as I have briefly indicated above²⁶.

CONCLUSION

Islam is adequate and open towards diverse interpretation and thus leading to several identities which are allowable. It is the nation-state and its emphasis on a unified identity that has caused all other actors to be narrowed down. This has led towards erosion of personal freedom and openness towards other than what the state had decided. A more inclusive theology, identity is required to bring this back. Before that a proper study of the identity, ideas of thought in Islam (development and history); political culture; conception of the self, development, unity and of course the ideas of justice (from a holistic perspective is required). The paper can study only one aspect and that is the last, the rest is work in progress.

What I have tried to describe and argue are a few points of varied nature. For to reclaim compassionate nature and to evade going into the extremes of racism, injustices etc. we need to understand some of the issues that I have raised here. I have barely even touched the surface but I hoped to have at least chiseled out a piece here and there for further discussion.

The state of the world that we live in i.e. the nation state structure have imposed a few things and changed some part of our lives regardless of whether we like it or not. Our identity be it Islam or even Buddhism are affected as a result of this. Our ability to compromise so as to ensure a peaceful co-existence with people of different identity will enable our future generations to converse and learn from each other for the sake of peace, prosperity and equality.

NOTES

- ¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Compassion : The Bridge Between Buddhism and Islam held at Mahidol University, Salaya Campus, Thailand where I was invited speaker. It was organized by Organized by CRS International Center for Buddhist-Muslim Understanding, College of Religious Studies of the said university on the 3rd to 4th October 2013.
- ² Hadith narrated in Sahih Muslim, hadith no. 2751.
- ³ *Muslim identity in the 21st century*, Introduction, pg. 3.
- ⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Religion as a cultural system: The interpretation of cultures*, New York, 1973, pg. 90, quoted in Ibid.

⁵ *Muslim identity in the 21st century*, pg.4.

⁶ Quoted in Grondin, Jean (1994). *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. pg.38.

⁷ Ali Allawi, *The Crisis in Islamic Civilization*, Yale University Press, 2010.

⁸ Hamid Mawlana, "Covering Islam: Media and its impact on Muslim identity", *Muslim identity in the 21st Century, challenges of modernity*; pg. 239.

⁹ By secular discourse I mean a discourse that is devoid of religion, sacred history and sacred text.

¹⁰ There have been attempts to discredit this from contemporary scholars in the academia. However there are various unanswered questions which do make their project seemed dubious. I have discussed this in my *Inherited Prejudices: Modern Orientalists and their delusions regarding the Qur'an* (Batu Caves:Pustaka Islamiyah, 2011).

¹¹ It is not that we would want to appraise but the Moroccan thinker Arkoun (d.2010) calls it "the unthought in Islamic thought". See his *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London:Saqi Books, 2002).

¹² See Amatullah Armstrong, *Sufi Terminology (al-Qamus al-Sufi)*, *The mystical Language of Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S.Noordeen (1995), pg.213.

¹³ Ibid. pg.229.

¹⁴ See below.

¹⁵ *Futuh al-Makkiyah* as quoted in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pg. 130.

¹⁶ A famous narration conveyed by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. used to describe how God's merciful nature (and His compassion) overcomes His wrath. The famous celebrated poet Maulana Rumi had mentioned several times in his *Mathnawi* this merciful nature of God. For a good succinct analysis see Zailan Moris's "Rumi's view of evil" available at <http://www.seekeraftertruth.com/rumis-view-of-evil/> accessed 12th November 2014.

¹⁷ *Futuh al-Makkiyah*, vol. III,pg.420 as quoted in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pg. 130.

¹⁸ There are various studies on the Abbasid period but for the sake of our discussion here I would refer the readers to Muhammad Qasim Zaman's *Religion and Politics under the early Abbasids* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

¹⁹ The term "Islamic" has many meanings as Shahab Ahmed had shown in his recently published study *What is Islam: The importance of being Islamic* (Princeton, 2015). I have not however included the debates contained therein in this paper.

²⁰ "Tasawwuf is the practice of shari'ah at the station of ihsan" (*The Positive Aspects of Tasawwuf: Preliminary thoughts on An Islamic Philosophy of Science*, Islamic Academy of Science, Kuala Lumpur, 1981, pg.1.

²¹ Prof. Naquib al-Attas (2015) uses the verse 58 from surah an-Nisa as his basis for discussion on Justice. I believe that this verse here should also be brought together so as to not discriminate against others when administering Justice.

²² This hadith is narrated by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah. It is considered to be a marfu' hadith however scholars regard it (from the latter) to be true in meaning even if the attribution of the hadith to the Holy Prophet is problematic. See the discussion

in Arabic at <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=162395> accessed 12th November 2014.

²³ It is unfortunate that today we find a group of Muslims in the name of religion going against the study of 'western books' in Nigeria. This group which calls themselves "boko haram" which literally means forbidden books are not Islamic and are against the Prophetic hadith quoted here. This group has caused untold problems and committed murders in Nigeria due to their shallow understanding of Islam.

²⁴ Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "Colonial knowledge and the construction of Malay and Malayness: Exploring the literary component", *Jurnal Sari* 17 (1999) pp.3-17.

²⁵ As Shamsul A.B. so eloquently says, "What I have tried to demonstrate above is basically the formation of an identity, in this case Malay and Malayness, as defined and popularly understood in contemporary Malaysia. This identity originated from a British construction informed by colonial knowledge amassed through the application of the various investigative modalities, which in turn became the basis of the Malaysian federalism of post-colonial Malaysia." See Identity contestation in Malaysia: A comparative commentary on 'Malayness' and 'Chineseness'", *Akademika* 55 (Julai) 1999, pg.27.

²⁶ The role of ideology in determining the viewpoint of the people is not a new field of study in fact it has been studied by many scholars of sociology and political scientists, see in particular Karl Manheim's study (1936) of the concept.

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