

The Perception of Malaysian Buddhist towards Islam in Malaysia

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Abstract

The existence of Muslim-Buddhist conflicts in the Southeast Asian region such as in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand is based on the perception that Islam is a threat to Buddhism. While in Malaysia, although the relationship between the Muslims and Buddhists remains in harmony, there is a certain perception among Buddhists towards Islam. Hence, this article will discuss the forms of Buddhism's perception of Islam in Malaysia. The study was qualitative using document analysis. The study found that particular group of Buddhists in Malaysia had a negative perception of Islam, particularly on the implementation of Islamization policy by the government and the Islamic resurgence movement in Malaysia. This perception is based on misunderstanding of Islam which is seen as a threat to the survival of Buddhists in practicing their teachings. The study recommends the empowerment of understanding between the religious adherents through Islamic-Buddhist dialogue at various levels of government and NGOs.

Keywords: Buddhist; Malaysian Buddhist; Buddhist perception; Muslim-Buddhist relation.

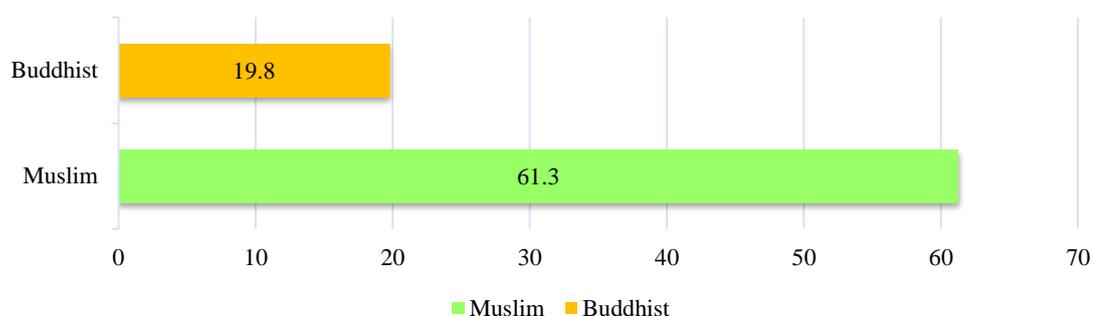


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1. Introduction

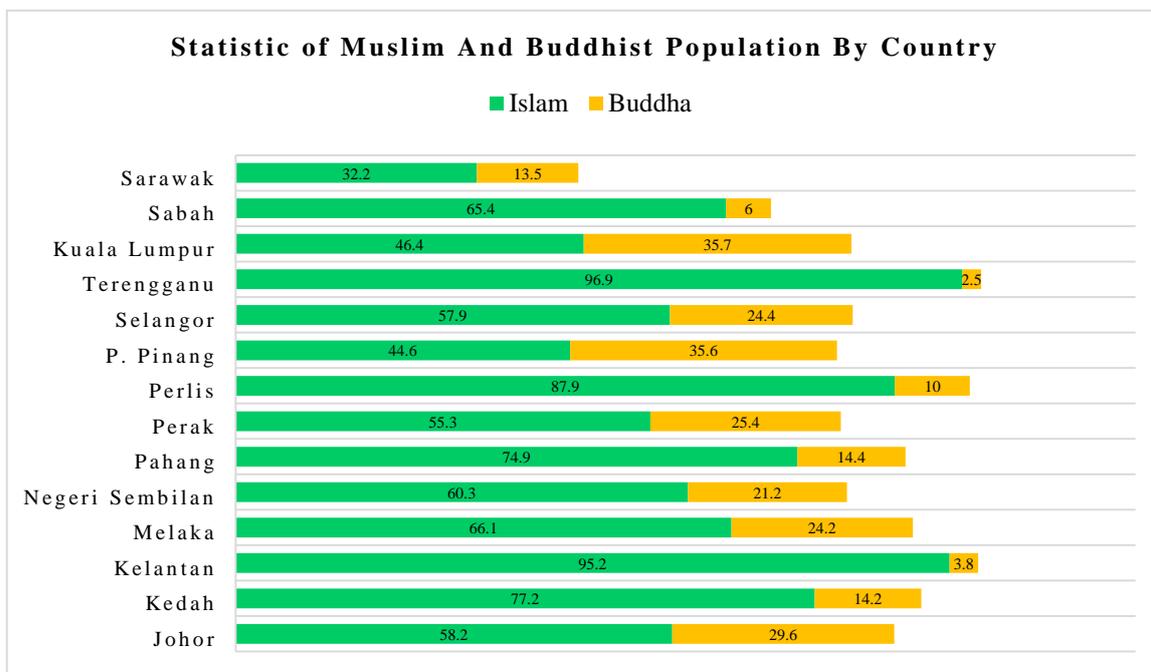
The coexistence of society from multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious makes Malaysia a unique country. Although under the Malaysia constitution Article 3, Islam is the religion of federation, the and Article 11 stated other religion are free to be practicing, thus we can see each religious celebration day are granted public holiday. In the 2017 survey, the population of Malaysia in 2017 amounted to 32 million people, of which 28.7 million citizens were ethnic Bumiputera (68.8%), Chinese (23.2%), India (7.0%) and Others 1.0%). While in the context of religion in Malaysia, ethnic identity is usually associated with religion (ethno-religious), especially Malay with Islam, Chinese with Buddhism, and India with Hinduism. Although the assimilation and polarization that prevails in non-Muslim societies reveal a religion is not an absolute example of a nation, the reality of society shows its truth. For example, the majority of Malays are Muslims and Chinese Buddhists (83.6%). This made Islam the most dominant religion at 61.3 percent, followed by Buddhism (19.8 percent), Christians (9.2 percent) and Hindus (6.3 percent). The remaining 3.4 percent are minority groups from traditional religions (1.3%), other religions (0.4%), non-religious (0.7%) and unknown (1.0%). The findings show the number of Muslims and Buddhists being the most widely held religion in Malaysia.

Populations of Muslim and Buddhist in Malaysia



Source: Malaysia Statistic Department 2010

Although the population of the Buddhist didn't reach half of the Muslims population, the percentage if sorted by country is quite significant, foremost in Kuala Lumpur (Muslim = 46.4%, Buddhist 35.7%), Pulau Pinang (Muslim = 44.6%, Buddhist 35.6%), Selangor (Muslim = 57.9%, Buddhist 24.4%), Perak (Muslim = 55.3%, Buddhist 25.4%) and Johor (Muslim = 58.2%, Buddhist 29.6%), as in the following chart:



Source: Malaysia Statistic Department 2010

The chart shows the population of Buddhist in Malaysia is significant as a part of the community, which able to shape the social landscape. On the other words, a peaceful or a crisis society are depending on how the Buddhist cooperate with the Muslims, vice versa, to build the harmony environment. Inside the history of Malaysia, the cooperate of Muslim-Buddhist occurred in many ways especially in daily activities, attending Open House during religious celebration, selling and buying goods at grocery owned by different ethnic, at workplace and so on. These kind of corporations are motivated to fulfil life necessity and mutual interest. However, when it comes to the religious issues, Malaysian Buddhist have different perceptions especially after the Islamization. The perception towards Islam, which mostly are negative have been derived from many factors, foremost in religion, politics and economy. Hence, this article tries to examine the perception of the Buddhist, what are the factors change the perception. This invites several questions: what is the negative perception is due to the lack of understanding of the religion, or the superiority of Islam as the federal religion perceived as a treat to the Buddhist? These questions need to be answered, since most of the Muslims-Buddhist conflict in the Southeast Asian are motivated by the misunderstanding of Islam, instead perceived as a treat to Buddhist survival. Although this article is not to generalize the situation, but the main factors can be considered as a first stage to destroy the Muslim-Buddhist relation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The development of Muslim-Buddhist Relation

Before the arrival of Islam around seventh century BCE, Malay world was predominant by Buddhism, under the reign of Srivijaya. Most of the early kingdom in Malay Archipelago which is Funan, Angkor and other maritime Malay kingdoms such as Lembah Bujang (Kedah) (7 BC), Langkasuka (Patani), Srivijaya (Palembang) (670-1025 AD), Kuala Selinsing (Perak) and Majapahit (1292 AD) (The Encyclopedia of Modern Asia 2002: xi) have been dominated by Hindu and Buddhist influences, after the animism (Abdul Rani, 1940; Ackerman *et al.*, 1988; Hamka, 2017). The development of Buddhism in Malaysia begins at the arrival of two monks from Buddhist council in the third century BCE. The earliest record of the Buddha's teachings to the Malay world in the 4th and 5th centuries was well received by the Malay community, and given a high position in the palace in that period. The influence of Buddhism on the Malay world is evidenced by the discovery of the Sanskrit monuments from Theravada Buddha and Mahayana Buddha dated 4th and 5th in Kedah and Perak (Kasimin, 1983). The early kingdom, Langkasuka as a Hindu-Buddhism kingdom, played significant role as a trade center that reached its economic apex during the seventh century before it was slowly eclipsed by the Srivijaya kingdom. The development of Buddhism in the Malay world is consistent in the seventh and eighth with the discovery of Hindu-Buddhist temples in the Bujang Valley in Kedah (Hooker, 2003). The archeological evidence of Buddhism in Malay also based on the findings of Sanskrit monument which belong to the Mahayana and Theravada schools in Kedah and Perak. The earliest Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya on Sumatra, beginning as early seventh century, further impacted the history of Buddhism in Malaysia (Kasimin, 1983). With links to the Buddhist Pala Empire, Srivijaya was renowned as a center of Buddhist learning where more than a thousand other monks practicing the orthodox Buddhist rule exactly as in India (Coedes, 2017); (Ackerman *et al.*, 1988; I-Tsing, 1989; Kasimin, 1983). A strong connection between Srivijaya and Buddhist's origin country – China and India, contributed to the development of Buddhism in seventh century until twelfth century, and slowly disappeared, especially after the arrival of Islam in seventh and tenth century. However, the ties remain continuing between the Malay Sultanate and Liang dynasty (502-557) for trades activities, and subsequently created first small Chinese communities on the peninsula date to the mid-fourteen to fifteen centuries. For example, a number of successful diplomatic initiated undertaken by the Yongle emperor of the Ming dynasty

(1360-1424), including six to Melaka. The trade activity, in turn, led to several communities of Chinese settling there. Besides, as a result of the marriage between sultan Mansur and a Chinese princess during fifth century, there grew a Chinese community which referred as Kampung Cina (Chinese Village).

From the eighth to the thirteenth century, almost all areas in the Malay world were under the influence of the Srivijaya kingdom which dominated Central Java. Thus the government built many Buddhist monuments including the famous Borobudur temple in Central Java. At the arrival of a Buddhist historian I-Tsing in Srivijaya in 671 AD, he found the environment of Buddhism studies exactly like in India. Bukit Seguntang which located in Palembang, Sumatera Indonesia was the capital of the kingdom of Srivijaya and a centre for Buddhist teaching that gathered thousands of Buddhist monks (Ackerman *et al.*, 1988)(Kasimin, 1983). The good relationship between the kingdom of Srivijaya and the dynasty of China and India as the center of Buddhist teaching contributed to develop the religion from the 7th century until twelfth century. Thus, the early Malay nation was under the influence of religion and culture from Hindu and Buddhist for hundreds years (Abdul Rani, 1940; Liow and C., 2005). There are more than 10 islands in Southeast Asia under the influence of Buddhism, among them the Malay Archipelago. In the records of I-Tsing (1896: xl-xli), the Malay Archipelago referred to as the state of Mo-lo-yu or the state of Shih-li-fo-shih (Sribhoga).

The naming of the 'Malay' states as the term Sribhoga or Bhoga shows a significant relationship with the Buddha's influence based on five indicators: first, Bhoga which refers to the name of the king who controls the shipping boats between India and Bhoga; second, the name of the government in the neighboring states which adheres to the teachings of the Buddha; third, the name of the Buddhist religious center on the South Sea island which settled over a thousand monks; fourth, Hinayana Buddhist teachings representing the flow of Mulasarvastivada school. There are two new genres introduced, besides Sammitiya, while a handful of Mahayana are among the Malays; the fifth, the string of many gold existence, I-Tsing named it Sribhoga, or Chin-chou which means the gold island. The community then dedicates for Buddha to build a gold lotus leaf, golden jar and face of Buddha with gold. During his travels to India, I-Tsing transit to Chien-Ch'a (Kedah) and Lang-Chia-Shu (Langkasuka) for a few days. Based on this records, the earliest Buddhist teachings in Southeast Asia were from the Hinayana (Theravada) school, later replaced by the Mahayana Buddhist during the reign of Srivijaya. The story of the arrival of Hindu-Buddhist influence into the Nusantara nature can be highlighted in the writing of Tun Sri Lanang - Sulalatus Salatin, Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa, Hikayat Hang Tuah, Acts of the Kings of Pasai and so on.

In sum, this phase provides the early Buddhist contact with the society, starting at the first century, then becoming the religion of the people. The contact occurred in many aspects particularly in economic, society, and diplomatic. When Islam arrived in Malay Archipelago in seventh century, the Buddhism started to lose the influence, and Islam was preferred as an official religion for the kingdom. Eventually, Buddhism become a religion for mainly the Chinese people, followed by the next generation.

Second, prior to independence, Peninsula Malaysia was called Federated Malay States and was under British rule for more than two centuries. As to exploit and expand the natural resources of Malaya, particularly tin-mining, the British allowed the Chinese from China to come to Malaya (Mohd S. I., 2010). The immigrants, which among the Buddhist, was originated from Han nation (Koon, 1996), also practices the tradition religion like Taoism, Confucianism, and worshipping ancestor, while some of them embraced Christianity. The Buddhists, some of them are from China Mahayana schools (Ooi, 2013), while the Theravada schools are originated from Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and the Vajrayana schools from the Tibet. The main flood of Chinese migration began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and the mass migration continued until 1930 when they began to settle and to become stable (Mohd S. I., 2010).

On justifying the Chinese immigrant with the Buddhism, Ooi (2013) in his PhD thesis entitled *The Making of Modern Buddhism: Chinese Buddhist Revitalization in Malaysia*, stated, the mass migration which brought by the British, contributed to the development of many Buddhist traditions in Malaysia, particularly by inviting the monk from China to fulfil the need of the Buddhist community. Instead from China, the immigrant communities also included among the Thais, Burmese, and Sinhalese brought different Buddhist traditions, doctrines, and practices to Malaysia, and the current organizations that have evolved since the early years reflect this diversity of the Buddhist community (Ooi, 2014). Since the Buddhists community are developing under their circle, there are demand to manage religious ritual such as birth and funeral ceremony. Subsequently, it led into the establishment of Buddhist temple and associations, funded by the Chinese society, not just from local but also foreign. For instance, in Penang, the first Mahayana Buddhist temple built in Penang, Kong Hock Keong, was a collective endeavor of about 450 Chinese families from Guangdong and Fujian who wished to worship Guanyin. Known alternatively as the Guanyin Temple or the Pitt Street Temple, the temple traces its origins to 1800. The two groups "took turns to elect their respective headmen to take charge of the temple, with responsibilities such as recruiting monks, tendering rights to sell incense and oil, and undertaking building restoration.

Following the overwhelming response, Buddhist temples and religious establishments were built with Chinese funds to facilitate the process of religious ritual management. The existence of the temples and Buddhist organizations of the Mahayana as well from other school flows is a turning point in the development of Buddhist teachings in Malaysia. There have been numerous attempts to draw disparate groups of Buddhists together. These attempts usually find their expression in the creation of Buddhist organization, which categorized into two type, sectarian, and non-sectarian organization. The sectarian organization was led by Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA). Established in 1957 at Kek Lok Si with the purpose of uniting "all Chinese speaking Mahayana temples, organizations, members of the Sangha and laymen under one national umbrella body". As a primarily Chinese-speaking organization, the focus of the Association has centered on Mahayana Buddhism, and has provided Chinese-

speaking Buddhists a platform from which to initiate various reforms (such as reforming the education of monks and lay Buddhists) and to lobby the government (at both the national and state level) for changes and support (particularly with regard to the creation of new temples and Buddhist societies). While the other sectarian oriented like Vajrayana Buddhist Council of Malaysia and Theravada Buddhist Council of Malaysia established in twentieth century. The non-sectarian Buddhist organization, not concern about any schools' background (Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana) is the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM), established in 1970. As an umbrella organization, with over 260 member organizations situated throughout Malaysia, YBAM "coordinates the varsities' Buddhist societies (including teacher training colleges), secondary schools' Buddhist societies and Buddhist Youth Fellowship through the various Standing Committees." In the hope of enhancing the "involvement of Buddhists in nation building, YBAM regularly expresses its opinion on the current affairs and Buddhist rights through the media. The Association, was conceived in the spirit that Buddhist youths throughout Malaysia have a major and significant role to play in the unity and integration of the community, thereby creating a national identity for themselves.

Within this period, no significant issues that's concerns Buddhist community towards Islam in Malaysia, since the constitutions itself secured the freedom of religion. For the Buddhist, as long they able to practice their religion and organize their associations, other issues are out of their interest. Moreover, in the country, the symbol of Islam not much prominent in the socio-cultural, economic and political life. The government, in the first decades after independence in 1957 generally maintained secular policies and emphasized the need to reinforce Malay rights rather than promoting an Islamic agenda. This lack awareness of practicing Islam among Malay society can be expressed through the 1950s and 1960s P. Ramlee films where the male and female character have Western hairstyle (such as beehives), and wearing Western clothing (such as sleeveless tops and skirts with hem lines above the knee) (Abbott and Gregorios-Pippas, 2010).

While in the third phase, new avenue of Muslim-Buddhist relation as a respond to the Islamization in Malaysia, instead several issues arising among non-Muslim, particularly religious conversion, Article 11, the usage of 'Allah' term, which generally appealed to the non-Muslim community, Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST), expresses anxieties about the issue of religious freedom (Eu, 2010; Marzuki, 2008; Nathan, 2017; Ooi, 2014). However, not all issues arising among non-Muslims triggered the response of Buddhists. For example, in the issue of the word Allah, the Buddhist doctrine is close to non-theistic, and the religious conversion also is not seen as a threat to Buddhists. This is true if it refers to the attitude of Buddhism's openness to the missionary activities. The Buddha's teachings did not criticize or condemn any other religious approaches to guide society to the truth according to that religion. Likewise, with the issue of Article 11, although Islam is a federal religion, freedom of religion is still guaranteed by the constitution. This reality can be seen from the rough estimates of the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA), there are 496 temples and 382 Buddhist establishments, among them in Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Maha Vihara, Dharma Realm Guan Monastery, Thean Hou Temple; Melaka: Cheng Hoon Teng; Penang: Kek Lok Si Temple, Dhammikarama Burmese Temple, Wat Chaiya Mangkalam, Khoo Kongsi, Kuan Yin Temple, Snake Temple; Silver: Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary. There is even giant Buddha statue at the temple of Chin Swee Cave Temple, Pahang and The Sleeping Buddha in Wat Machimmaram, Kelantan, which is crowned as Asia's second largest Buddha statue after Myanmar.

Although at some part, the trend of Islamization including the introduction of new restrictions by state governments and local authorities on the building of churches, temples, and the allocation of burial grounds, as well as the demolition place of worship that were built without permits, are proving to be particularly worrisome to the non-Muslims, the existence of Buddhist temples and association shown the tolerance of the government. In fact, the restriction also can be interpreted out of the implication Islamization, but subject to the law. Thus, at the early phase of Islamization, it received minimum response for the Buddhists. Despite anxieties in the early stages of the policy of Islamization, after being assured of religious freedom, some Buddhists are confident of their survival in meeting the challenges. Hence, Buddhists focus more on religious rituals and welfare aspects to strengthen their community and identity. While others are concerned about the influence of Islamization among their followers who erode the identity of their religion and nation. Hence, initiatives are taken by empowering religious organizations and improving the quality of service to their communities.

3. Methodology/Materials

The research design is qualitative using library research emphasizing on the text analysis from the reading materials on the topic.

4. Results and Findings

The Islamic movements resurgence in Malaysia that sparked the phenomenon of Islamization became a turning point to the Buddhist perception on Islam where the Buddhist felt threatened (Govindasamy and DaVanzo, 1992; Koon, 1996; Landé, 1999; Nagata, 1980; Scott, 1995). In general, the phenomenon of Islamization targeting on Malay Muslim society on creating awareness to maximize the practice of Islam in daily life. Among the pioneers is Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM) which emphasized on the propagation (dakwah) and education (tarbiyyah), besides Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) which also emphasized on the politic (siasah) agenda. These agendas are manifested in various mediums including education, social, economic and politics with the objective of making Malaysia an Islamic state and Islamic environment. Among them, as outlined by Mohd A. A. and al. (2013) is the Islamic University, the Islamic financial and banking system, Islamic based insurance - Takaful. In addition,

several government agencies were established such as the Islamic Economic Foundation, PERKIM, Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia (YADIM) and the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM).

The identification of Islam with Malay as stated in the Article 160 (2) of Federal Constitutions was then a strong core in the Malay community, subsequently inviting the government to respond to Islamic values through various mediums to gain political support. As stated by Nagata (1997), Islam became a political core in Malaysia, both to the government nor the opposition. Anyone who is seen promoting Islamic teachings in society, then they become dominant in society. Consequently, the application of Islamic values is made in government departments and sectors to build gaps between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Non-Muslim employers need to provide a place for Muslims employees to perform their prayer, and appropriate time in lunch breaks especially on Friday prayers. From the aspect of food preparation, only halal status is allowed to be sold and served at public premises openly. Although early in the non-Muslim community is uncomfortable with the approach taken, the non-Muslim community learns to adapt with tolerance (Govindasamy and DaVanzo, 1992). This situation also raised the awareness of the Theravada Buddhists to improve their knowledge in religion by attending religious teaching in Burma and Thailand (Nagata, 1980). Although Buddhism among Chinese Buddhists is unpopular with Malay dominance in Malaysia's politics and economy, they remain tolerant in dealing with the situation (Koon, 1996) as demonstrated through the approach of the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) (Ooi, 2014).

However, the identical Islam with Malay creates negative perceptions among Buddhists. As stated in Article 14 of Federal Constitution, the 'Malay' defines as a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to Malay custom...". Moreover, the Malaysia's constitutional guarantee on the status quo of the Malay community and privilege to the Islamic religion compared to the non-Malay and other religion creates the negative perceptions. This scenario reinforced by the legal barriers to marriages between Islam and non-Muslims, also regarded as a form of discrimination to the Chinese community. Hence, the Chinese Buddhists view negatively against those who convert to Islam, compared to other religions. Therefore, those who embrace Islam seen as has change his or her ethnic identity for becoming a Malay, since the religion of Islam was regarded as religion of Malay people.

According to Shahrudin *et al.* (2016), the practice of Malay custom among Chinese people who embraced Islam was seen as a form of coercion and 'masuk Melayu'. This is considered a form of betrayal to their nation. Even though they embraced Islam and learned Malay, their position was still unequal to the Malay-Muslim community (Landé, 1999). Hence, this Malay-Islamic dominance creates anxiety among non-Muslims for their survival in the future (Nagata, 1997). Additionally, the negative image of the Muslim community as poor, involved with corruption and negative elements contributed to the misunderstanding of Buddhists as well as spanning the true teachings of Islam (Abdullah, 2005; Mohd A. A. and al., 2013; Shahrudin *et al.*, 2016). Hence, whether positive or negative the behaviour of the Malays, it is generalized with the teachings of Islam. The same attitude is highlighted amongst the Chinese Buddhist community who refused to reject Islam as a way of life and not in line with the development of times. This is a justification for the level of knowledge of the Chinese Buddhist community to Islam at a very low level (Abdullah, 2005), despite the existence of various governmental and private institutes that play a role in disseminating information about Islam.

The negative perception of Chinese Buddhists against Islam is reinforced through the study of Ooi (2014) titled *The Politics of Buddhist organizations in Malaysia* based on two major Buddhist organizations in Malaysia, the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) and the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). Although the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) is seen using a simple approach to fight for the rights of Buddhists in Malaysia, the participation of the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) in Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) justified their attitude in opposing the idea of Islamization in society in Malaysia. The same was expressed by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM), shortly after seeing the survival of Buddhists suffocating with the influence of Islam in the country's administrative system. As resolved at the 11th YBAM National Biennial Conference in December 1992:

"to urge all the political parties to act with responsibility and uphold the interest of the people, especially by refraining from politicizing religious issues that bring about misunderstanding and fear among the followers of various religions; and to oppose any attempt by any one religion to impose its religion ideals on the followers of other religions..." (Ooi, 2014).

The views of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) on Islam is consistent with the onset of Islamization in the late 90s, Islamic state issues, *Hudud Law* in Kelantan and up to 2004 on the right of religious freedom (Ooi, 2014). In addition, the issue of concern among Buddhists is the conversion of religion (to Islam) which affects their rights to non-Muslim family members. The finding on the negative perception are essential to represent part of Malaysian Buddhist community. As according to Ooi (2013), the member of Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA) among the monks and local nun, instead of early generation of Malaysian Buddhist. While the member of Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) among the youngsters and local graduate.

Although in the twentieth one century, the negative perception of Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) on 'Islam' are continuously consistence as stated in their recent press statement besides a speech by the President. The topics which perceived as a negative perception on Islam listed in their websites as in the table:

No	Date	Topic
1.	23/10/2012	Malaysia is not a religious state, all citizens enjoy freedom in religious belief
2.	22/3/2013	Abolish Federal Constitution 121(1A) clause, Syariah Court to handle Islamic-related cases only
3.	25/7/2013	YBAM and MCYA: According to Constitution, Malaysia is a secular nation; it is against the constitution to rule the country using Islamic teachings
4.	09/2/2013	Unreasonable Ban of "Allah" among non-Muslims
5.	29/4/2014	YBAM Urges The People And Political Parties To Unite And Prevent The Implementation of Hudud Law
6.	30/4/2014	Joint Statement: Objects to Hudud Laws, PAS Should Respect Diversity
7.	05/5/2014	2014 Dharma Walk Launching Ceremony – Speech by President of Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, Goh Qing Song
8.	27/8/2016	YBAM Urges Buddhist Community to support Anti-Hudud Campaign by Federation of Hokkien Associations Malaysia
9.	29/8/2016	Changes of Religion to be handled by Civil Court, YBAM agrees the amendment of Law
10.	05/1/2017	2017 New Year Speech by YBAM President Bro. Sek Chin Yong
11.	09/3/2017	YBAM opposes the Private Member's Bill to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, 1965

Source: Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM)

Recently, the issues have been rise up by the YBAM representing the Malaysian Buddhist community against the *Hudud Law*, RUU355, Freedom of Religion, religious conversion, the implementation of TITAS subject, interfaith dialogue – which most of the pattern to show the supremacy of Islam above other religion. Therefore, the association keep rejecting the claimed of Malaysia as an Islamic state and preferred secular state. Although some of an issues have nothing to do with the non-Muslim like RUU355, YBAM argue any amendment to improve Islamic law are potentially treat to them. This perception is based on several cases which involve non-Muslim like amendment for the status of *muallaf* corpse by their family, the right of bring up child for the divorced couples, etc.

The perceptions are motivated from three factor. *First*, the response of other non-Muslims against Islamization particularly after the formation of Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism & Taoism (MCCBCHST) in 1983. According to Mohd F. O. e. a. (2006): 9, the issues that rise up by the council include the ban of "Allah" term usage among non-Muslims, interpretation of Bible in Malay, restriction in building place of worship, Islamic education for the non-Muslim, and introduction of Islam as a part in Moral studies to all non-Muslims. Another issues as stated by is Malaysia as an Islamic country, freedom of religion, universal value, Malay supremacy politics, the role of Syariah court, and polarization of non-Muslim society (Abdull, 2009) and the implementation of Islamic value on non-Muslim (Arfah Ab and Majid, 2013).

Second, a lack of understanding on Islamic teaching. For instance, the Malaysian Buddhist at the early Islamization phase against the Hudud Law although it only proposed to be implemented among the Muslims society, while the non-Muslims doesn't involve. Thus, when the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) initiate to upgrade the power of Syariah Court, the Malaysia Buddhist keep against it. The initiation to implement the Islamic Law for the Buddhist will affected to the non-Muslims.

Although a negative perception expressed by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM), in a survey conducted by Amini (2003) show contrarily. In his survey on other Buddhist group, about 52% agree to accept Islam as the religion of Malaysia while 6.8% doesn't agree. In terms of the right to profess and practice religion in Malaysia, about 46% agree the while only 4% disagree. On the other words, Malaysian Buddhist accept the position of Islam as a federal religion, and other religion are free to be practiced by the non-Muslims. Similar findings are shown by Ushama and Moten (2006) that Buddhist hold both positive and negative views about Islam and Muslims in Malaysia. On the other words, the finding shows the differences of perception between the mainstream Malaysian Buddhist group and the ordinary Malaysian Buddhist. For the ordinary Malaysian Buddhist, they didn't concern about the impact from Islamization rather than to survive in their life in terms of social, economy, education and so on. As long as the Islamization didn't interfere their business, it not perceived as a treat. Furthermore, the awareness of practicing Buddhism teaching are lower especially among the youngster. Religious practicing as only to fulfil small part in their life as for the death ceremonies, marriage, and festivals. Moreover, the Buddha's teachings accepted all truths according to their respective religions. In fact, the Buddha's teachings emphasizing on the 'middle way' simplicity through inferiority and balance. This makes the Buddhist perceived the Islam as other religion that promote the good value (Ushama and Moten, 2006). But for the Buddhist association, the Islamization seen as a treat against other religions, include Buddhism. This perception rooted by a stereotype that Islam is an exclusive religion for the Malay people. By converting to Islam, a Buddhist will lose his or her ethnic identity and family relation because of becoming a Malay.

5. Conclusion

The perceptions of Malaysian Buddhist on Islam is motivated due to eternal and external factors. For eternal factor was motivated by the lack of understanding on Islam among the Malaysian Buddhist since they are no significant effort among both sides to engage with each other. Therefore, Islam was regarded as an exclusive religion for the Malay, due to the constitutions definition. Thus by becoming a Muslim, a person will change his or her ethnic identity into Malay. In terms of the religion itself, the Islamization process perceived as a treat to the Buddhist

community, although even the implementation of Islamic Law doesn't affect their affairs. While for the external factors, there are particular Malay Muslim who didn't show a good role model to the Buddhist, since they are dominant in the society. Therefore, the religious institution need to involve with the interfaith dialogue activity instead engaging with the Muslim community to get a better understanding.

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