THE DEVELOPMENT OF *IKHTILĀF* AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN CONTEMPORARY MALAYSIA*

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ABSTRACT

Disagreement (ikhtilāf) on religious issues has been a common phenomenon in Muslim ummah nowadays as a result of their different judgements and perceptions on various matters. In Malaysia, this phenomenon has begun more than a century ago by the advent of Islamic reform movement who strongly denounced most traditional beliefs and practices of Malay Muslims. As a result, there has been a deep conflict between two factions, namely the reformists and the traditionalists, and it remains until present days. This paper aims at analyzing the development of ikhtilāf between these groups since the beginning of 20th until now, as well as its effects on Muslim community in Malaysia. In order to acquire datas regarding this issue, library research and observation are carried out. Among the major findings of this research is that even though ikhtilāf between the reformists and the traditionalists is somewhat crucial, it mainly revolves around furū` issues, and resembles the ikhtilāf of previous ulamas. Even though the conflict mostly resulted in various negative effects, it also, on the other perspective, left some positive consequences on Muslim community in Malaysia.

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* The original version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Ijtihad and Ifta' in the 21st Century, organized by International Islamic University of Malaysia on 12-14 August 2008.

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INTRODUCTION

It is known that *ijtihād* would frequently result in different rules (*ḥukm*) on a certain case, as the mujtahids may use different methods and judgements to determine the rule. The nature of *ijtihād* is, when it comes with different judgements, nobody knows which one is true and which one is wrong, but both *mujtahids* are rewarded for their striving of performing *ijtihād*. Different results of *ijtihād* will consequently produce disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) between mujtahids themselves as well as among ordinary Muslims. On one side, we may see the positive effects of disagreement on Muslim society, especially in term of intellectual nourishment and development of *fiqh*, and when they are dealt with by proper ethics. However, the disagreement turns to be bad when it is not properly understood and dealt with no ethics. This would of course lead to the division of Muslim solidarity as can be seen throughout the history of ummah.

In Malaysia, the growth of disagreement over religious issues can be traced back by the emergence of *iṣlāḥ* or reform movement about a century ago when they started to argue on certain beliefs and practices of Malay society, and criticized the traditional ulamas who were from their viewpoint had failed in redressing the decline of Malay Muslim community.[1] From that point, the conflict between the reformists and the traditionalists began and it never ended until nowadays. The conflict covers almost every aspect of Muslim life, starting from the domains of `aqīdah and `ibādah, to the social and political dimensions. This is because both parties strongly hold to their own *ijtihāds* which happen to be mostly different.

BACKGROUND OF CONFLICT

The spirit of Islamic reform which spread prevalently in the Middle East extended its influence to all over the Muslim world, from Indonesia in the East, to Senegal in the West. As a Muslim country, Malaysia without exception

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[1]   This claim was prevalent in the reformists' early writings in *Al-Imam*. See for example, *Al-Imam*, vol.2, no. 2 (August 1906), pp. 56-63; vol. 2, no. 1 (July 1907), vol. 2, no. 8, (February 1908); pp. 225-260; pp. 25-31; vol. 2, no. 10 (April 1908), p. 327.

has also been much influenced by the prevalent spirit of Islamic reform. The growth of Islamic reform in Malaysia had commenced since the early twentieth century, pioneered by some leading figures such as Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi, Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin and Abbas Muhammad Taha.[2] The advent of Islamic reform in Malaysia has resulted in various effects in the history of the Malay Muslim community. One of its greatest impacts has been the conflict of thought between the advocates of Islamic reformism, i.e. the reformists, and their adversaries, i.e. the traditionalists, as both parties hold firmly to their opposing views with regard to many issues in practicing the religion. The conflict of thought between the two parties occurred in various domains of the religion, including faith as well as politics. Among them, the conflicting thought regarding the matters of `aqīdah` and `ibādah` might be regarded as the most important ones and a microcosm of the general conflict between both parties.

The Emergence Of Islamic Reform

As stated earlier, Islamic reform in Malaya originated from the rise of Islamic reformism in the Middle East. The Malays' contact with the Middle East reformists during their academic sojourn and pilgrimage was the starting point of the spread of Islamic reformism in Malaysia.[3] In the early stages, Islamic reformism in Malaya was propagated in the Malay masses through *Al-Imam* periodical.[4] Serving as the reformists' official medium, the contents

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[2] On these reformist figures, see for example, W.R. Roff (1994) *The Origins of Malay Nationalism.* 2nd edition. Kuala Lumpur: OUP, pp. 59-65; Ibrahim Abu Bakar (1994), *Islamic Modernism in Malaya: The Life And Thought Of Sayyid Syeikh Al-Hadi 1867-1934.* Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

[3] William R. Roff (1994)*, op.cit.*, p. 254; Mohammad Redzuan Othman (1994), "The Middle Eastern Influence on the Development of Religious and Political Thought in Malay Society", Unpublished PhD thesis of the University of Edinburgh, chapters 3 and 5; Mohammad Aboulkhir Zaki (1965), "Modern Muslim Thought in Egypt and its Impact on Islam in Malaya", Unpublished PhD thesis of University of London, p. 372; Hussin Mutalib (1993), *Islam in Malaysia From Revivalism to Islamic State.* Singapore: Singapore University Press, p. 22.

[4] On this periodical, see, Abu Bakar Hamzah (1991), *Al-Imam: Its Role in Malay Society 1906 – 1908.* Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara; Abdul Aziz bin Mat Ton (2000), *Politik Al-Imam.* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka; Abdullah Jaafar (1985), "Al-Imam," in Khoo Kay Kim. (ed) *Sejarah Masyarakat Melayu Moden.* Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya; W.R. Roff (1994), *op.cit.*

of *Al-Imam* were filled with the ideologies of reform and renewal. When the publication of *Al-Imam* was terminated, the ideas of reform continued to be disseminated by the reformists through other periodicals such as *Neracha*, *Al-Ikhwan* and *Saudara*.[5] The establishment of *madrasah* institutions by the reformists also assisted the spread of Islamic reformism, though most of the *madrasahs* were later closed due to a shortage of funds.[6]

The emergence of Islamic reformism in Malaysia resulted in a sharp conflict with its adversary, Islamic traditionalism. The conflict between the exponents of traditionalism, i.e the traditionalists, and the advocates of reformism, the reformists, which were better known as the *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda* conflict, was the main characteristic of Malayan Islam until the 1930's.[7] The conflict was mainly expressed in doctrinal and ritual controversies of varying substance. The root of the conflict revolved mainly around the authority and the use of reason. The reformists emphasized the urgent need for *ijtihād*, whilst the traditionalists upheld *taqlīd*.[8] The conflict between the two groups was not only through the columns of newspapers and journals, but also prevailed at the village level, which then divided the village into two rival factions.[9] The criticism, denouncement, and condemnation of each other led to the serious division of the Malay Muslim community, and had always went beyond the ethics of disagreement laid down by the *Sharī`ah*.

The growth of Islamic reformism in Malaysia began to stagnate after the 1930's as it was checked by various factors. Islamic reformism was seen as having failed to mobilize public support from the Malay community, and thus it failed in its struggle against the Islamic traditionalism which had dominated the community for centuries. Though Islamic reformism declined at the time, it left some positive impact on the history of the Malay Muslim community.

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[5] William R. Roff (1994), *op.cit*., p. 83

[6] See, Linda Tan (1999), "Syed Shaykh: His Life and Times," in Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh Al-Hadi.* Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, p. 114; Rahim b. Osman (1980), "Madrasah al-Masyhur al-Islamiyah," in Khoo Kay Kim, et.al., *Islam di Malaysia.* Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, pp. 75-85.

[7] W. R. Roff (1994), *op.cit*., p. 87; Mohd Sarim Mustajab (1979), "Gerakan Islah Islamiyah," in Kongres Sejarah Malaysia, *Malaysia: Sejarah dan Proses Pembangunan,* Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, pp. 124-125.

[8] W. R. Roff (1994), *op.cit.*, p. 77; See also, *Al-Imam,* vol. 3, no. 1 (July 1908), p. 28; Howard M. Federspiel (1970), *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia.* Ithaca: Cornell University, p. 48.

[9] W. R. Roff (1994), *op.cit*., p. 87.

It resulted in the emergence of modern religious elite who actively attempted to rectify the backwardness of the Malay Muslim community. It was also an important force in awakening Malay political consciousness. It had successfully germinated the seeds of nationalism among the Malays through the idea of pan-Islam, though Malay nationalism itself eventually held back the growth of Islamic reformism in Malaya. The spirit of Islamic reformism, nonetheless, remained in the bodies and minds of certain figures, and flowed occasionally in the Malays' political struggles.[10]

In the era after independence, Islamic reformism re-emerged in a scattered fashion in the Malay Peninsula states, but conveyed by separate local groups. In the early 1970's Islamic reformism appeared in the shape of the *dakwah* (*da`wah*) movement, the movement that engendered the spread of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. In general, Islamic resurgence in Malaysia was a cultural response to the rapid social and economic change which characterizes Malaysia's contemporary development, in which the political dimension has become crucial to Malay Muslims. The *dakwah* movement, put into motion by groups such as ABIM, PAS and JIM, were mainly influenced by the reform thought and ideas spread by the Ikhwan Muslimun and the Jama`at-i-Islami. At this time, the Islamic reformism conveyed by the *dakwah* movement successfully mobilized support from the Malay Muslim masses. It has greatly contributed to a heightening of Islamic consciousness among Malays and has been a mainstream of religious thought within the community.[11]

The strong demand from the *dakwah* movement for the establishment of more Islamic institutions in the country and the greater Islamic identity of the Malay community has created pressure on the Malaysian government to adopt policies and strategies which are supportive of Islam. Under its Islamization policy, the government has implemented various Islamic programmes,

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[10] Abu Bakar Hamzah (1991), *op.cit.*, p. 144; Radin Soenarno (1960), "Malay Nationalism 1900-1945", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 1(1), pp. 7-11, 32-33; Mohd Sarim Mustajab (1979), *op.cit.,* pp. 122,134-135; W. R. Roff (1994), *op.cit.*, p. 90.

[11] On *dakwah* movement in this context, see, for example, Chandra Muzaffar (1987), *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysi.* Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti; Judith Nagata (1984), *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and their Roots.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press; Hussin Mutalib (1990), *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*. Singapore: OUP; Zainah Anwar (1987), *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among Students.* Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publication; Mohamad Abu Bakar (1987), *Penghayatan Sebuah Ideal: Suatu Tafsiran Tentang Islam Semasa.* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

from the inculcation of Islamic values in the government administration to the establishment of Islamic banking and financial system.[12] Though the government has provided no official blueprint for its Islamization policy, except the recent concept of Islam Hadhari, it seems to be committed to the policy. Despite frequent criticisms, the government has proved that its Islamization policy has brought about a positive benefit to the Malay Muslim *ummah*. Furthermore, the government itself is seen as having contributed much to the development of Islamic resurgence as well as to the growth of Islamic reformism in Malaysia.

Reasons For Conflict

The sources of the conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists are varied, but mostly result from the different principles held by the respective groups with regard to several issues relating to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), particularly the issues of *ijtihād* and its antithesis, *taqlīd*. Though the conflict is mainly manifested in a juristic form which does not involve any of the fundamental principles of the religion, it frequently leads to a serious division of the Malay Muslim community. In such a case, the question of attitude is apparently relevant.

Basically, the conflicting perception between the traditionalists and the reformists is a juristic one. This conflict resembles the disagreements between the previous jurists in the established four *Sunnī madhhab*s, namely, the Ḥanafī, the Mālikī, the Shāfi`ī and the Ḥanbalī. Disagreements between the jurists of the *madhhab*s were the results of their differences in methods of inferring the rulings (*qawā`id al-istinbāṭ*) from the primary textual evidences, i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as their differences in the methods of *ijtihād*. However, the disputes between the traditionalists and the reformists do not revolve around the question of different methodologies very much, but rather the question of authority.

The traditionalists strongly hold to the authority of the past and thus adopt the principle of *taqlīd* in practicing the religion and refuse to perform *ijtihād*.[13] The reformists, while recognizing the authority of the past, denounce *taqlīd*,

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[12] Hussin Mutalib (1990), *op.cit.*, pp. 133-139. See also, Hussin Mutalib (1993), *Islam in Malaysia From Revivalism to Islamic State,* Singapore: Singapore University Press, pp. 32-33.

[13] Howard M. Federspiel (1970), *op.cit.*, p. 46; Rahimin Affandi Abd. Rahman (1995), "Budaya Taqlid di dalam Masyarakat Melayu: Satu Tinjauan Ringkas," *Jurnal Syariah*, 3 (3), Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Islam, pp. 55-56.

and instead, hold to the principle of *ittibā`* and emphasize the authority of *ijtihād*.[14] The reformists, though they strongly place great importance on the need for *ijtihād* in resolving modern day problems, do not propound a new methodology (*manhaj*) of *ijtihād*, but adopt the existing methodologies recognized by the Sunnī *madhhab*s. Furthermore, the conflict between the two rivals occurs when the traditionalists in adopting the principle of *taqlīd* hold to one specific *madhhab*, i.e. the Shāfi`ī *madhhab*,[15] while the reformists do not restrict themselves to any specific *madhhab*, but choose from the strongest and the best standpoint of these *madhhab*s, or perform new *ijtihād*.[16]

ESSENCE OF CONFLICT

The conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists revolves around almost the whole aspects of Muslim life, from the domain of `*aqīdah* to the domain of politics and economics; from religious rituals to the worldly affairs. Interestingly, disagreement in the social, economics, education and politics, as far as the conflict between the traditionalists and reformists are concern, have not been as frequent and hot as the disputes in matters of creeds (`*aqīdah*) and rituals (`*ibādah*). Disagreement regarding matters other than these two facets, i.e. `*aqīdah* and `*ibādah*, could be easily absorbed and compromised without creating any havoc in the community. This is because creeds and rituals are very fundamental with regard to Muslim life and they concern the most significant aspects of Islam, i.e. faith (*īmān*) and daily practice (`*amal*). Nevertheless, as it can be clearly observed, the conflict doesn't involve the foundation issues in `*aqīdah* and '*ibādah*, but it is about the branches (*furū`*). Some examples of disputed issues regarding `*aqīdah* and `*ibādah* can be summarized in the following paragraphs.

Disagreement with regard to matters of `*aqīdah* starts right from the first pillar of *Īmān*, i.e. belief in Allah SWT, especially in the issue of the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of Allah SWT. The conflict of thought appears when it comes to the issue of the attributes, mentioned in the *naṣṣ*, which meaning are not well

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[14] Abu Bakar al-Asha`ari (1954), *Kemerdekaan Berfikir Dalam Islam atau Pembasmi Taqlid.* Penang: Persama Press, pp. 54-57.

[15] Abdul Halim El-Muhammady (1981). *Pengaruh Madhhab Shafi`i dan Masalah Kaum Muda di Malaysia.* Bangi: Persatuan Bekas Pelajar Timur Tengah, p. 44.

[16] Abu Bakar al-Asha`ari (1954), *op.cit*., pp. 59-60; Abu Urwah (1987), *Risalah Usrah.* vol. 3, no. 3, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Salam, p. 95.

established (*mutasyābihāt*), i.e. those which sound resembling the attributes of man. In such case, the traditionalists' stand is similar to the standpoint of *khalaf* in which they tend to interpret its hidden meaning (*ta`wīl*) i.e. by giving the meaning that suits to the greatness Allah SWT. On the contrary, the reformists adopt the *salaf* standpoint who surrender (*tafwīḍ*) the real meaning to Allah SWT and at the same time purify Him from having similar attributes with mankind.[17]

The other example of conflict in matter of *`aqīdah* is the issue related to the approaches of *tawḥīd* where the traditionalists emphasize on the doctrine of the Twenty Attributes of God (*Sifat Dua Puluh*) as originally taught by al-Sanūsī in his *Umm al-Barāhīn*. While criticizing the traditionalists' method as leading to confusion, the reformists lay emphasis on the teaching of *tawḥīds* of *rubūbiyyah, ulūhiyyah, `ubūdiyyah* and *tawḥīd* of *asmā' wa ṣifāt* as appears in the writings of the scholars of *salafiyyah*.[18]

In matters of *`ibādah,* the conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists is much seen in the prayer and matters relating to it. For instance, in the matter of *wuḍū'* (ablution), their disputes occur mainly on the question of its nullity by touching the skin of a person of the opposite sex, the question of touching the Qur'an without being in *wuḍū',* and some invocations recited while doing *wuḍū'.* In the matter of *adhān*, the dispute is on the question whether the chanting of certain supplications before calling the *adhān* is permissible or not. In performing the prayer, the disagreement between the two parties revolves mainly on the issues of the utterance of the intention of prayer (*talaffuẓ bi al-niyyah*), pronouncing the *basmalah* before reciting the *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* audibly or inaudibly, and recitation of *qunūt* supplication in the Fajr prayer. The issue of reciting certain *dhikr*s and supplications after the prayer finishes is also a subject of disagreement between them, in which the traditionalists prefer to do it by chanting them en-masse and loudly, whilst the reformists prefer otherwise, i.e. inaudibly and individually. In the Friday prayer, they are in dispute on matters regarding calling the *adhān*

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[17] The subject is also known as *Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt* which has been one of notable teaching attributed to the *Salafiyyah*. See the conflict on this subject in, for example, Zamihan Mat Zin Al-Ghari (2001), *Salafiyyah Wahhabiyyah Suatu Penilaian.* Selangor: Terajaya Enterprise, and Hafiz Firdaus Abdullah (2003), *Pembongkaran Jenayah Ilmiah Buku Salafiyah Wahabiyah: 73 Penilaian Semula ke atas Penilaian Zamihan Mat Zin al-Ghari.* Johor: Penerbitan Jahabersa.

[18] See, Saadan Man (2004), "Islamic Reform: The Conflict Between The Traditionalists and Reformists in Matters of Ibādah in Contemporary Malaysia," unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh, pp. 141-144.

twice, performing the *sunnah qabliyyah* prayer after the first *adhān,* reciting the *tarqiyah* by the *muadhdhin*, and chanting the blessing upon the Prophet between two *khuṭbah*s. The traditionalists, in each case, base their viewpoint on the judgment determined by the jurists of the Shāfi`ī *madhhab*, whereas the reformists emphasize a strict adherence to the rules which are indicated by the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, the Companions and the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* .[19]

In the matters regarding fasting during Ramadan, the conflict occurs on the issue of using *ru'yah* and *ḥisāb* methods in confirming the beginning of Ramadan. In this case, the traditionalists hold to using *ru'yah* as a fixed rule and disapprove of using astronomical calculation in determining the beginning of Ramadan. The reformists, however, maintain that if *ru'yah* fails, astronomical calculations can be used to determine it. Though both insist on their own standpoints and arguments, the traditionalists in recent developments have tended to agree with the reformists' stance, since astronomical calculation is generally acceptable for its accuracy, and is therefore widely used in determining prayer times and in other matters. The *tarāwīḥ* prayer has also been a subject of dispute between them. The dispute occurs when the traditionalists specify certain verses to be recited in the prayer, whilst the reformists denounce such a designation as *bid`ah*. The chanting of certain *dhikr*s and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad in between the *tarāwīḥ* prayers which has been an accustomed practice of the traditionalists is also denounced by the reformists as it was neither practiced at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the Companions and the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ,* nor it was acknowledged by any *imām*s of the four *madhhab*.[20]

Concerning *zakāh*, the major dispute between the traditionalists and the reformists has been on its resources, which revolves around the question of whether the *zakāh* resources should be expanded or not. The traditionalists' standpoint is that the *zakāh* resources should be limited to the six types of property which are specified in the Shāfi`ī *madhhab*, namely, farm animals; crops, i.e. grains and fruits that can be stroed as food; cash; buried treasure; gold and silver; and business commodities. The reformists view that the *zakāh*

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[19] On their respective arguments regarding the disputed subjects, see,for example, K. H. Sirajuddin Abbas (1978), *40 Masalah Agama.* Kelantan: Pustaka Aman Press; Hashim Ghani (1987), *Gelanggang Soal Jawab.* 2nd ed, Kuala Pilah: KTF Institut; Abu Bakar Ashaari (1957), `*Ibādat Rasūl Allāh*. Singapore: Pustaka al-Qalam; A. Hassan (1968), *Soal Jawab Tentang Berbagai Masalah Agama.* Bandung: Penerbit Diponegoro.

[20] *Ibid*.

resources should not be restricted to those specific traditional resources, but should be expanded to include other kinds of wealth, taking into account contemporary developments and changes. This would include contemporary resources of wealth such as various plantation products, fisheries, a variety of industries, shares, wages, salaries or income of professional groups. Their standpoint, which mainly resembles the viewpoints of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, is based on several *Sharī`ah* principles, including the principles of *maṣlaḥah* and *`adālah*. Some of the reformist standpoints regarding this issue seem to be acceptable, as some states have introduced the imposement of *zakāh* on the monthly salary and professional income on Muslims.[21]

In matters to do with performing the pilgrimage, the traditionalists and the reformists are in conflict with regard to the issues of making the intention for *ḥajj* on the appointed location (*mīqāt*) and the *ṭawāf al-ifāḍah* for the *qarīn*. In the first issue, the traditionalists perceive that making the intention can be done at Dhū al-Ḥulayfah, an appointed location for those who come from Madinah, as they come to Madinah first before going to Makkah. The reformists denounce this practice saying that making the intention must be done at Qarn al-Manāzil, an appointed location for those who come from the east. For them, those who go to Madinah first and make the intention for *ḥajj* at Dhū al-Ḥulayfah are liable for *dam*. In the second issue, some reformists hold that it is sufficient for the *qarīn* to perform only one obligatory *ṭawāf* which is done upon their arrival in Makkah, whilst the traditionalists maintain that it should be done after the *wuqūf*, i.e. on the day of sacrifice (10th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah). These issues were raised when a group of reformists who travelled for *ḥajj* in 1987 performed the *ṭawāf* upon their arrival in Makkah and did not perform the *ṭawāf al-ifāḍah* on the day of sacrifice. This practice was severely condemned by the traditionalists, and a *fatwā* was issued saying that those pilgrims had not completed their *ḥajj* unless they performed the *ṭawāf al-ifāḍah* again after the *wuqūf*, and if they did not perform before they died, their *ḥajj* would be void. The reformists challenged the *fatwā* and propounded various textual proofs and jurists' views supporting their standpoint, but failed to convince the traditionalists, and thus the *fatwā* has not been retracted.[22]

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[21] *Ibid*.

[22] See, Majlis Agama Islam Perlis (1988), "Keputusan Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Shar`iyyah Negeri Perlis, Perkara Tawaf Ifadah Sebelum Waktu Wuquf `Arafah"(official *fatwā*, published in leaflet); Hashim Ghani (1989), *Haji Qiran*. Kuala Pilah: KTF Institut, pp. 28-29, 109.

The conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists also arises over some questions relating to the deceased, particularly regarding the issues of performing the *talqīn* after the burial, and the question of whether contributing the reward to the deceased in various way such as *tahlīl* ceremony and *kenduri arwah* (feast of the deceased) will benefit him or not. On most of these questions, the traditionalists' standpoint, though based on several arguments, seems to be in contrast to the definite standpoint of the Shāfi`ī *madhhab*, to which they belong. Compared to the traditionalists' viewpoint, the reformists stance, which denounces the traditionalists' practice of *talqīn, tahlīl, kenduri arwah* and contributing to the reward of the deceased, seems to be in favour of the standpoint of the Shāfi`ī *madhhab,* although they do not belong to it. In that case, the traditionalists' attitude, in the eye of the reformists, is questionable as they claim that they are loyal adherents of al-Shāfi`ī but they neglect his clear standpoint in these issues, and instead, hold to the very weak opinion in the *madhhab.*[23]

Other than the above mentioned examples, there are a lot more subjects of disagreement between the traditionalists and the reformists, which may fill a list of more than one hundred issues. Though the conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists over matters of `aqīdah` and `ibādah` seems, on the one hand, to resemble that of the typical juristic differences, on the other, it is a result of disputation concerning some principles which form the ideology of Islamic reformism. In analyzing the conflict, several reasons have been identified as the major cause of the conflict.

One of the major reasons for the conflict is their different judgments concerning the question of *bid`ah*. It is known that Islamic reformism in its calls for a return to the pristine Islam has denounced *bid`ah* as the main cause of the community's deviation from the straight path. According to the reformists' view and arguments, something innovated in the religion after it had been completely taught by the Prophet is regarded as blameworthy *bid`ah*. This refers to the fundamentals of the religion which have been fixed in detail (*thawābit*), namely matters regarding faith (`aqīdah`) and ritual form of `ibādah`. Newly innovated things that concern mundane affairs, i.e. nonfundamental aspects of the religion such as matters of *mu`āmalat* and `ādat`, are not considered *bid`ah* as they are changeable matters (*mutaghayyirāt*) which depend greatly on changes of public interest (*maṣlaḥah*). To them, all *bid`ah*s are erroneous (*ḍalālah*) and have a bad connotation in the religion. For them,

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[23] Discussion on this particular subject can be found in Saadan Man (2004), *op.cit.*, pp. 224-247.

most of the traditionalists' practice on the disputed issues involves *bid`ah*, i.e. something which deviates from the true practice of Islam taught by the Prophet Muhammad.  The traditionalists however perceive that all *bid`ah* is not necessarily bad, and there is good *bid`ah* which they term *bid`ah ḥasanah*. For them, erroneous *bid`ah* is something that contradicts the principles of religion. The traditionalists maintain that their practices which have been accused by the reformists as *bid`ah*, as a matter of fact, fall into the category of *bid`ah ḥasanah*. Some of the traditionalists' idea of *bid`ah ḥasanah* also overlaps with the reformists' idea of *maṣlaḥah*. As both parties insist on their own perceptions, the conflict remains unresolved.[24]

The issue regarding the concept of *taqlīd* of a *madhhab* has also been an important cause of the conflict. The *taqlīd* phenomenon is rooted deeply in Malay society since it was strongly preserved by the traditionalists through the *pondok* educational system, which, especially in the teaching of *fiqh*, emphasized on strict imitation and exclusive adherence to the Shāfi`ī *madhhab*. The traditionalists perceive *taqlīd* as permissible, even obligatory for those who are incapable of practicing *ijtihād*. For them, textual evidence denotes that less well-informed Muslims should have recourse to qualified experts, i.e. to practice *taqlīd*. Given the depth of scholarship that is needed to understand the revealed texts accurately, and the extreme warnings given against distorting the revelation, it is obvious to the traditionalists that ordinary Muslims are duty bound to follow expert opinion rather than rely on their own limited reasoning and knowledge.[25]

On the contrary, the reformists strongly denounce *taqlīd* as, for them, it is a passive way of practicing the religion, and likely to be a cause of error which leads to fanaticism and division within the Muslim *ummah*. In their eyes, *taqlīd* would confine Muslims to relying on the classical and medieval interpretations of Islam which are not applicable to the modern problems of Muslims. Such interpretations themselves are susceptible to error because of human limitations or because new evidence might arise. They instead encourage the exercise of *ijtihād* in order to produce fresh interpretations of Islam to demonstrate its relevancy and validity in modern Muslim life. Those who are not capable of exercising *ijtihād* should to practise *ittibā`*.[26] *Ittibā`*

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[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 249-265.

[25] See, *ibid.*, pp. 265-273.

[26] *Ittibā`* is regularly defined as "following a person's saying on the basis of clear evidence of its validity," See, Ibn Abd al-Bārr (1920), *Jāmī` Bayān al-`Ilm wa Faḍlih.* Cairo: Idārāt al-Ṭibā`at al-Munīriyyah, p. 117.

is considered by them as a positive way in following of the *madhhab* and an attempt to reach authenticity, while *taqlīd* is merely a blind imitation, which will finally lead to perpetrating the *bid`ah,* as seen in various traditionalists' religious practices.[27]

The traditionalists' hold to the Shāfi`ī *madhhab* solely, and their attitude of being reluctant to adapt the laws of other *madhhabs* has also resulted in the conflict. Though some traditionalists approve the practice of *talfīq,* the great majority of them reject it and strongly defend their loyalty solely to the Shāfi`ī *madhhab.* This attitude is not surprising as they live in a milieu where the teachings of the Shāfi`ī *madhhab* are deeply entrenched whilst the teachings of other *madhhab*s are extremely alien. The traditionalists believe that holding to the Shāfi`ī *madhhab* is a sacrosanct tradition which preserves the unity and stability of the Malay Muslim community, whereas adopting the teachings of other *madhhabs* will lead to confusion and affect the solidarity of the community.[28]

Contrary to the traditionalists' belief, the reformists perceive that binding oneself to a specific *madhhab* leads to disunity of the community as it causes fanaticism among its followers. History has witnessed, according to the reformists, a chronic problem of fanaticism of *madhhab* among the Muslim community for a long time, which has finally resulted in disputes and rampant discord among their followers. Since they believe that the truth exists in all the *madhhab*s, the reformists do not confine themselves to any specific *madhhab.* They propagate the idea of borderless *fiqh*, an eclectic approach that resembles *talfīq*, i.e. by analyzing the views of all the *madhhabs* on specific questions, and choosing the best ones through the method of *tarjīḥ*.[29]

IMPACT OF CONFLICT

The conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists concerning religious matters of has had a tremendous impact upon the Malay Muslim community. On the one hand, one might say that the conflict has generated a negative impact upon the society, but, on the other, it has engendered several positive

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[27] Abu Bakar Asha`ari (1954), *Kemerdekaan Berfikir dalam Islam atau Pembasmi Taqlid*. Penang: Persama Press, passim; Ahmad Yusuf Amin (n.d), *Taqlīd dan Kesan-kesannya Terhadap Perkembangan Fikiran dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*. Kuala Pilah: KTF Institut, pp. 58-69.

[28] See the discussion in this subject in, Saadan Man (2004), *op.cit*., pp. 280-286.

[29] *Ibid*.

effects. It has been an important objective of this study to examine the major effects of the conflict on the Malay Muslim community.

Disputes and disagreements concerning the branches (*furū`*) of the religion, particularly in juristic matters are considered a normal phenomenon among Muslims. Without exception, the Malay traditionalists and reformists are involved in this typical phenomenon, disputing over abstruse points of *fiqh* and other matters which are not part of the fundamental principles of Islam. Unfortunately, because of the lack of tolerance, their disputes frequently exceed the limits, resulting in long lasting conflict between the two factions. In defending their respective standpoints, both parties not only insist that their viewpoint is the only true one and criticize the others' as wrong, but also demonstrate a non-compromising attitude and ignore the vitality of Islamic brotherhood and the unity of the Muslim *ummah*. The claims to exclusivity and superiority, in which their own opinions are regarded as a priority better than others, easily slip into fanaticism. Academic debates on disputed matters often turn to futile polemics, quarrels, dissensions and condemnations of each other, and thus cause hard feelings and even hostility among them. These obviously contradict the spirit of Islam and create a negative impact on the *ummah*.

To some extent, disagreements and disputes are allowed in Islam, as part of acknowledging the natural differences between human beings, such as in their mental capabilities, perceptions, thought, races, languages and cultures.[30] All this naturally gives rise to a multiplicity and variety of viewpoints and judgments. Differences and disagreement are thus regarded as part of the nature of life, as hinted at in the Qur'an:

> *"And if your Lord had so willed, He would have made mankind one ummah, but they will not to cease to differ, except those on whom your Lord has bestowed His mercy, and for this did He create them."*
>
> (Sūrah Hūd, 11: 118-119)

Provided that differences do not exceed the limits and remain within the standard norms of ethics and proper behaviour, this phenomenon is acceptable and could even be beneficial for the *ummah*. Nevertheless, disagreements that lead to hostility and schism, splitting up the *ummah,* are not permitted in Islam, as stated frequently in the Qur'an, such as in sūrah Āli `Imrān and in sūrah al-Anfāl;

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[30] Ṭahā Jābir al-`Alwānī (1986), *The Ethics of Disagreement*. Herndon: IIIT, pp. 17-18.

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of God and be not divided among yourselves."

<div align="right">(Sūrah Āli `Imrān, 3: 103)</div>

"And do not dispute with one another lest you fail and your strength desert you."

<div align="right">(Sūrah al-Anfāl, 8: 46)</div>

The disagreements of earlier scholars over juristic matters, for example, are acceptable, as their disagreements were about subsidiary issues, and were managed in a healthy framework and with proper ethics.[31] Their disagreements were treated as differences of opinion and not reasons for estrangement and schism. Juristic disagreements between them were not allowed to go beyond the academic domain or to cause hatred and enmity, and never led them to lose sight of the major issues and the higher purposes of the *Sharī`ah*. Besides, the jurists have demonstrated a great tolerance in managing disagreements among them. Differences of opinion among early jurists were in fact, to begin with, a source of blessing which helped to develop Islamic jurisprudence, establish the relevance of Islam to changing circumstances, and safeguard public walfare.[32]

However, later, differences of opinion became one of the most critical and dangerous factors contributing to disunity and internecine strife among Muslims. In this context, dispute between the traditionalists and the reformists, without denying its positive effects, is considered as one that has had a bad impact on the *ummah*. Their disputes, which mostly resemble previous juristic differences, are not apparently dealt with in the proper way, which thus, results in conflicts and schisms, and become elements of destruction in the *ummah*. The traditionalists and the reformists, both of them seem to have a serious lack of tolerance in experiencing opposing positions to each other. Some examples will illustrate this situation.

The antagonism between the traditionalists and the reformists over disputed matters usually exceeds its limits and goes so far as to label the opposite party as heretics, misguided, *fāsiq*s and even disbelievers. This chronic phenomenon regularly happens among the ordinary people of the both parties who lack knowledge, but occassionally involves also their scholars. For example, the former Mufti of Johore (from 1934 until 1961), Sayyid `Alwi b. Tahir al-Haddad, who was a great opponent of reformism, had in his *fatwā* equated

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[31] *Ibid*., p. 18.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 104.

the *Kaum Muda* reformists with the Khawārij and heretics (*ahl al-bid`ah*), and claimed that many of them became apostates and disbelievers resembling the Qādiyānī.[33] Among the reasons for his claim were that the *Kaum Muda,* who were according to him, a group who lacked knowledge of Islam, tried to follow the teachings of other religions such as those of Christianity and the Majusis; and they also paid too much attention to the controversial matters and exaggerated them, and treated those who opposed their opinions in these matters as enemies. He also made the claim that the *Kaum Muda* had blamed and treated with contempt the leaders of the four *madhhab*s and other scholars, and pretended themselves to be the followers of the true Islam. They had caused serious damage to the teachings of Islam from within and disunited the solidarity of the Malay Muslim *ummah*.[34] Regardless of the truth of this allegation, claiming that the *Kaum Muda* resembled groups who had deviated from Islam seemed to be somewhat excessive as his opposing standpoints towards the *Kaum Muda* only involved the branches of Islam and points of *fiqh*, as referred to in his *fatwā*.[35] However, as there is no tolerance, differences of opinion in such matters has been a cause of making heavy accusations to the opposing party.

The traditionalists' attitude nowadays seems to be not much different from the past. This attitude, however, is possibly their offensive reactions towards the reformists' aggressive campaigns which are believed to have harmed their established norms and status quo. Some of the reformists, no different in the past or present days, frequently take harsh and confronting approaches in their call to Malay Muslims to return to the original Islam. This might be due to

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[33] See Jabatan Agama Islam Johor (1990), *Fatwa-fatwa Mufti Kerajaan Johor yang difatwakan oleh Dato' Saiyid Alwī b. Ṭāhir al-Haddād 1936-1961.* vol. 3, Johor Baharu: Jabatan Agama Islam Johor, pp. 61-62, 165. The term Qādiyānī, as suggested by W. R. Roff, was used by those who were hostile to the forces of modernism and reformism as a vituperative term implying heresy. See W. R. Roff (1994), *op.cit*, fn 80, p. 80.

[34] Jabatan Agama Islam Johor (1990), *op.cit*., p. 163.

[35] In his *fatwā*, Saiyid Alwi referred to several issues of *fiqh* which are disputed among the jurists, such as the uncleanliness of pigs, *rujū`* without the consent of a wife, touching the Qur'an without ablution, touching a woman's skin etc. Nonetheless, he made an accusation to the *Kaum Muda* who differred with him in such issues, as if he was unaware of the jurists' differences of opinion in these matters, or as if no differences of opinion are allowed in such matters. See his detailed *fatwā* in Jabatan Agama Islam Johor (1990), *op.cit*., pp. 162-165.

their reluctancy to acknowledge many issues, particularly those which they consider to relate to matters of *bid`ah*, as being disputed matters (*masā'il khilāfiyyah*). In this regard, the reformists seem to confine disputed matters to a limited definition. To them, disputed matters are those which have a basis in the primary textual evidence but about which jurists have differed in their interpretations to infer rulings from the evidence. Matters that have no basis in the primary textual evidence, such as uttering the intention of prayer or other acts of `*ibādah*, chanting certain *dhikr*s and blessing upon the Prophet between the *tarāwīḥ*; prayers, reciting the Qur'an on the grave etc, as intensively practised by the traditionalists, according to the reformists, are not disputed matters, but matters of *bid`ah*. Disputed matters for them are tolerable, but matters of *bid`ah* are intolerable in Islam and must be eradicated by all means.[36]

As eradicating *bid`ah* is held as a part of the reformists' important mission to all Malay Muslims, confrontation with the traditionalists who they believe to practise *bid`ah*, is unavoidable. The reformists believe that *bid`ah* is intolerable in the religion and thus, those who involve themselves in such matters should be given hard warnings.[37] From this standpoint, hard words and bad terms are necessarily used by some reformists in opposing and attacking the traditionalists' practices, which, according to them, are against the teachings of Islam. Some reformist writers, such as Hashim Ghani,[38] tend to use a somewhat extreme language in propagating their ideas as if to force others to accept their viewpoint. By this approach, the reformists might want to show their firmness and steadfastness in efforts to purify the society from elements that against Islamic teachings. For them, the truth must be said even if it is risky. However, they forget to take the sensitivities of society into account, as a harsh attitude in promulgating their ideas of reform is unacceptable to many people. Moreover, this attitude is also denounced by Islam itself as hinted at in the Qur'an:

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[36] Ahmad Yusuf Amin (n.d), *Masalah Khilafiyah*. Perlis: Persatuan al-Islah Perlis, pp. 4-5, 10-15, 25-27.

[37] *Ibid*, p. 112.

[38] In case of Hashim Ghani, a leader of the the group Ittibā` al-Sunnah i.e a reformist group in Negeri Sembilan, his book regarding *taqlīd* and *madhhab* entitled *Gayung Bersambut Ke-2 As-Sunnah Membela Diri*, has been severely criticized by the traditionalists for its "harsh" language, and finally banned by the Pusat Islam (now JAKIM) who classified it as a deviated teaching.

"And by the mercy of God you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you."

(Sūrah Āli `Imrān, 3: 159)

The traditionalists, in defending themselves, have no choice but to counter-attack the reformists and sometimes, worse than that, they also accuse some previous great scholars emulated by the reformists, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Muḥammad b. `Abd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad `Abdūh as having deviated from original Islamic teachings.[39]

In a community where the traditionalists and the reformists are intolerant to each other, arguing, quarrelling, bickering over the matters of *khilāfiyyah* are apparently common, and this frequently leads to fragmentation of their unity. Arguments over the juristic matters usually end in hard feelings and hatred which then split up Islamic brotherhood and even family relationships. As a result, in some areas, for example, especially at the village level, both parties avoid praying together congregation but pray in seclusion in their own respective mosques or *surau*s. For many reformists, praying behind the traditionalists makes them feel dissatisfied, as if their prayers are incomplete, for they are praying behind someone who they believe is committing *bid`ah* in prayer, by pronouncing the intention of prayer, reciting the *basmalah* audibly etc. The traditionalists also have similar feelings if they pray behind a reformist, but with a different reason, i.e. that they are praying behind someone whose prayer, according to their view, is incompletely performed, because some "important parts" of it are left out, such as *qunūt* in the Fajr prayer and and chanting *dhikr*s and supplications audibly altogether after the prayer. Some reformists, if they inadvertently pray behind a traditionalist, would prefer to separate themselves from the *imām* (*mufāraqah*), or sometimes, if they keep

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[39] For example, Ibn Taymiyyah is severely accused by K. H. Sirajuddin Abbas as one who was from the deviated groups of Mujassimah and Mushabbihah, and he was not from the group of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā`ah. See K. H. Sirajuddin Abbas (1978), *I`tiqād Ahlussunnah Wal-Jamā`ah*. 4th edition, Kelantan: Pustaka Aman Press, pp. 262-269. In this book (pp 399-302), he also places Muḥammad b. `Abd al-Wahhāb and Wahhabism in deviated groups. Mustaffa Suhaimi in his *Salah Faham Terhadap Bidaah dan Syirik* (Selangor: Progresive Publishing House Sdn. Bhd, 1994) also shows strong criticism on Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. `Abd al-Wahhāb and their followers, and suggests that they were ignorant (*jāhil*) scholars (pp. 218-219).

following the *imām* dissatisfiedly, would repeat their prayer.[40]

The conflict between the two factions in religious practices also extends to social relationships. Because of intolerance over disputed matters, most traditionalists and reformists, especially in rural society, appear to be in an antagonistic relationship towards each other. Boycotting the opposite party, for example in feasts, has become a common phenomenon in many areas. To most reformists, the traditionalists' feasts, particularly the feast of the deceased, which they consider as pure *bid`ah*, or `*aqīqah* and wedding feasts which are mixed up with the elements of *bid`ah*, such as chanting *marḥaban* and *berzanji*, should be boycotted in order to avoid their involvement in *bid`ah*, and as a sign of their objection to widespread *bid`ah* in the society. Moreover, some reformists, probably the extreme ones, regard the traditionalists as the heretics (*ahl al-bid`ah*) who should be treated as who they are, without considering the degree of the *bid`ah* they practise. For them, heretics should not be befriended or associated with. Their slaughtered meat should not be eaten, and they should not even be greeted. They should be boycotted all the way as a punishment and lesson for them to learn from. In return, the traditionalists also take similar action, boycotting the reformists as they are considered as a menace to the established norms of life, stirring up the stability of society, and splitting up the unity of the Malay Muslim community.

At a higher level, a party who has power and determination frequently uses its authority to obstruct its adversary's influence in the society. In this sense, the traditionalists, who are dominant in local religious authorities in almost every state in Malaysia have made numerous attempts to eliminate the reform movement. Groups associated to *Kaum Muda* or identified as having links with the Wahhabis, have been frequently investigated because of their "deviant" teachings.[41] Several reformist preachers have also been banned

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[40] Some reformists, sometimes, would daringly take impolite action such as scolding and shouting to the *imām* after the prayer. In one case of the researcher's experience at the State Mosque of Perlis in past few years, a reformist follower, who prayed behind a young *imām* who was identifed as a traditionalist, stood up immediately after the prayer amidst hundreds of other *ma'mūm*s shouting angrily to the *imām* for his "improper" prayer, as he uttered the intention of prayer and recited *basmalah* audibly. He and many other reformists were seen to have done *mufāraqah* (retracted himself from following the *imām*) as the *imām* started the prayer.

[41] Groups such as Persatuan Islah of Perlis and Ittiba' As-Sunnah of Negeri Sembilan, which are very active in promoting their reform ideas have been frequently investigated by the respective State Department of Religious Affairs for the alleged deviations in their teachings. The permits given to organize *dakwah* programmes have also been retracted numerous times. In addition, various books published

from teaching, delivering lectures or handling *da`wah* activities.[42] People are strongly reminded to refrain themselves from the allegedly deviant teachings of the reformists. However, their attempts to annihilate the reform movements have apparently failed as they face strong resistance from these groups and because it is difficult to prove the latter's "deviations."

Both parties realize that their disputes have affected the unity of the Malay Muslim *ummah*, but each of them puts the blame on the opposite party. Academic discussions over disputed matters, whether appearing in their writings or series of forums, dialogues and debates, frequently reach deadlock as they insist on their respective standpoints and refuse to compromise. For instance, in a closed dialogue between the former Mufti of Perlis and the *imām*s of all mosques in the state which was held in 1995 to discuss the utterance of the *basmalah* before reciting the *Fātiḥah* in prayer, the Mufti came to the decision to allow them to recite the *basmalah* in the prayer either audibly or inaudibly.[43] However, some *imām*s from the reformist party, perhaps the extreme ones, argued and regarded the Mufti's decision as wrong, since according to their standpoint, the *basmalah* should be recited inaudibly. For another example, in December 1997, an open forum between scholars from the traditionalists and reformists of Perlis was held to discuss and reach reconciliation over some disputed topics, but it ended up without any solution, and, as there was no tolerance between the two parties, it has added more confusion, disagreement and chaos among thousands of audiences.[44] Their sincerity of intention to reach a point of understanding had been sunk by their respective egoism, sternness and uncontrolled emotions. Both parties seem to have shown prejudice and a harsh attitude against each other and it seems difficult to reach reconciliation. Lack of tolerance in disputed matters has worsened their conflict.

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by KTF Institut owned by Ittibā' As-Sunnah of Negeri Sembilan are banned by JAKIM.

[42] The states of Johore and Selangor, for instance, have banned some reformists preachers such as Hussein Yee, Abdullah Yasin, Rasul Dahri and Hashim Ghani from holding any teaching activities or giving any lectures in the respective states. They also retracted permit (*tauliah*) of *da`wah* from local religious teachers who were believed to involve in the reformists' group. See for example, report in *Berita Harian,* 20 November 1998.

[43] See *Utusan Malaysia*, 11 October 1995.

[44] This forum was held on 23 December 1997 at the Kompleks Warisan Negeri Perlis, on general title "Forum Al-Sunnah." Other forum entitled "Bid`ah Ḥasanah" held in Ipoh on 10 September 2005 showed the same result.

The disputes between the traditionalists and the reformists, though mainly concerning juristic matters which are part of the branches of the religion, have frequently exceeded the limits as they show a non-compromising attitude against each other. Both parties seem to have a serious lack of tolerance in experiencing opposing standpoints to each other. The antagonism between them has gone so far as to label their opponents as heretics, misguided and even disbelievers. Both parties might be aware that they are only disputing over non-fundamental issues of the religion, but astonishingly, they tend to show their enmity towards each other which thus splits up Islamic brotherhood among them. This has resulted in serious division of the Malay Muslim community. Though efforts of reconciliation have been made, they have frequently ended without any solution. As both parties seem to have a thick prejudice and harsh attitude against each other, the conflict becomes worse and leaves the Malay community in schism.

In spite of its direct negative effects, the conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists on issues of `ibādah has engendered some positive impact for the Malay Muslim community. In the long run, the conflict has gradually transformed the traditional perception of `ibādah among the Malay Muslim community. As a result, some practices of `ibādah which used to be practised in their traditional ways, have been purified and practised in their original form as taught by the Prophet. The perceptual change has also developed the teaching of *fiqh* in the Malaysian education system. The teaching of *fiqh* in Malaysia, especially at the higher learning level, is no longer based on the Shāfi`ī *madhhab* solely as it was before, but now adopts the reformist' concept of borderless *fiqh*, i.e. by referring to all leading *madhhab*s and choosing the best ones. This has broken the domination of Shāfi`ism in the Malaysian teaching of *fiqh* and transformed the traditional outlook of the Shāfi`ī-based *fiqh* to an eclectic *fiqh*.[45]

The change has also been an indicator of the beginning of the decline of Islamic traditionalism. The traditionalists are seen, to some extent, as having approved and adopted some ideas of reform, especially with regard to the issues of *ijtihād*, *talfīq* and *maṣlaḥah*. The decline of Islamic traditionalism and its

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[45] For example, in Syariah studies for both undergraduates and postgraduates levels at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, *fiqh* references are made to all renowned Sunni *madhhabs* in Islam. See, *Buku Panduan Program Ijazah Dasar* and *Buku Panduan Program Ijazah Tinggi* published annually by Academy of Islamic Studies. This is a common feature of modern Syariah studies at tertiary level in all Muslim countries.

changing attitude has led to the emergence of a new group of Muslims, namely the neotraditionalists.The reformists have also experienced some changes of attitude. They were known before as having a harsh attitude towards their antagonists, but now they are seen to be more courteous and compromising in promoting their reform ideas. They actively attempt to adopt the moderate approaches as outlined by the Ikhwān Muslimūn, who are regarded as the most successful reform group for their moderate attitudes in propagating the ideas of Islamic reform. These changes have brought new hope for reducing the conflict between the two parties, in the long run, to a minimum level, but in the very near future this might be impossible.

Throughout its existence in Malaysia for over a century, Islamic reformism has passed through various experiences. Though it was strongly challenged by Islamic traditionalism from the early days of its emergence, it has eventually been accepted by the Malay masses. Though the previous reformists did not leave any detailed blueprint for Islamic reform, they have left a strong foundation for the later generation to resume their reform efforts, and this has been realized by the birth of various reform-oriented *dakwah* groups who intensively promote Islamic reformism in more organized frameworks. The ideas of Islamic reform have thus spread, and been accepted and advocated by most Malays, especially the youth and the intelligentsia. As regards the Islamic traditionalism, even if it is said to be declining, has secured its influence among its traditional stronghold of the religious establishment, Ṣūfī groups and peasant society. Islamic reformism may be seen as an important force which is responsible for shaping the future course of Malaysian Islam, but traditionalism will presumably continue its challenge to the former. Thus, it is predicted that the conflict between them is unlikely to be resolved.

CONCLUSION

As the conflict between the traditionalists and the reformists is predicted to persist in the future, it is suggested that they should manage it wisely to avoid schism and disunity among the Malay Muslim community. Disagreement is part of life, but it will turn into serious problem if it is unwisely managed. The conflict over issues of religion, which is mainly juristic, should have not been a reason for the division of Malay Muslims. It is suggested that the traditionalists and the reformists to learn and practise the ethics of disagreement as demonstrated by the Companions of the Prophet and the great jurists among the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*; who showed great tolerance to each other in managing their disagreements. Though completely eliminating the

conflict between them seems impossible, it should be managed by holding to the ethics of disagreement in order to preserve the solidarity of the *ummah*. The Ikhwān's principle of "to co-operate on where there is agreement and to excuse each other where there is disagreement," might be used as a first step or basic formula of reconciliation between the traditionalists and the reformists.

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