

NON-MUSLIM CHINESE FEAR OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstrak

Bangsa Cina adalah masyarakat kedua terbesar di Malaysia. Mereka yang umumnya menganuti Confucianisme, Taoisme ataupun Buddhisme merupakan sasaran utama sebaran agama Islam dan Kristian di Malaysia. Dalam konteks agama Islam, masyarakat Cina merupakan golongan paling ramai di kalangan bukan Islam yang memeluk Islam. Walau bagaimanapun, masih terdapat berbagai tanggapan negatif dan halangan dalam masyarakat Cina terhadap Islam yang mengakibatkan mereka menjauhkan diri dari cuba memahami atau menghampiri Islam. Tulisan ini cuba menganalisis konflik sebenar yang wujud antara masyarakat Cina dan Islam serta sebab di sebalik penolakan masyarakat Cina terhadap agama Islam.

The Chinese are one of the main ethnic groups in Malaysia. They are the second largest ethnic group, second only to the Malays. Even in the town areas such as Kuala Lumpur, Johore Baru, Seremban and others, most of the residents are Chinese. Their number in Malaysia is 5,691,908 or 26% of the total population, whereas the Malays number about 11,680,421 or 50.1%. The total population of Malaysia is 23,274,690. All Malays are Muslims and nearly all Chinese are non-Muslims.¹ The other ethnic groups in Malaysia are Indians and the native people of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia. The population of Malaysia is characterized by its highly variegated ethnic mix and this is a good example of a multi-racial society in the world. The recent population census indicates the percentage birth rate of Malay Muslims is increasing but the rate for Chinese and Indians is decreasing.

Malaysia lies in a strategic position on the sea route between two ancient civilizations, namely China and India. All the world's major religions have a substantial representation in Malaysia. Islam is the official religion in the constitution.² The constitution also gives assurances that all people are free to practise their religions.

¹ *Malaysian Census in 2000*. Provided by inquiry to Chinese Research Centre in Malaysia.

² Islam is the only religion confirmed as the official religion in the Malaysia Constitution, Part 1. 1.3(1).

The Chinese are followers of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and they are also the target of preaching by Muslims and Christians. Both these religions are active missionary religions. That is, they both would like to spread their religions to the non-believers. Many writers have written about da'wah.³ Little research, however, has been done on the rejection of the Chinese towards Islam in Malaysia.

The Chinese represent the largest number of non-Muslims who have converted to Islam in Malaysia. They are about 43% of the total of those who converted to Islam. The Indian converts consist of 21% and the combination of the rest of the converts makes up of 34.98%.⁴ Although Chinese Muslim converts have the biggest number of conversions, the number is very small and not more than 10,000 from 1990-2000.⁵ Even it is the biggest in numbers in terms of conversion in this period, the number is still very small compared with its population of 5,691,908. In Malaysia too, there is a Malaysian Chinese Muslims Association⁶ with branches throughout the various states in Malaysia, but prejudice against Islam, especially Chinese, converts, still exists.

In a survey conducted in 1996 about the attitude of the Chinese towards Muslim converts, it was found that most of the Chinese reject and oppose Islam.⁷ There were also Muslim converts of minority age (under 19 old) sued by their parents, whereas some were forced to revert to their previous religion by coercion or other means. There are also some converts disowned by their families.⁸ In Malaysia, the Chinese Muslim converts' relationship with their original race or the Chinese non-Muslims is influenced by the background of the existing majority ethnic group of Malays. Because of the presence of Malays, the Chinese Muslim converts are frequently accused of betraying their ancestors, gods, religions and cultural and social ways.

³ Yusuf Qardhawi, "*Kritik dan Saran Untuk Para Da'i*" tr. Nabhan Husein, IIFSO, 1985; Fathi Yakan, *Problems faced by the Da'wah and The Da'iyah*, WAMY, n.d; Sidi Gazalba & Zainab Ismail *et.al.*, *Da'wah Islamiah Malaysia - Masa Kini*, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. 1993, Ghazali Darusalam, *Dinamika Ilmu Dakwah Islamiyyah*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1996 and others .

⁴ Sources: Combined with the registration files of the various state religious departments from 1990-2000.

⁵ Compiled by the various states religious departments.

⁶ The writer was one of the founders of this organization.

⁷ The writer conducted the study when doing his Ph.D studies in University Malaya from 1994-1999 and the survey was done in 1996.

⁸ Osman Chuah, "Interaction and Intergration of Chinese Muslims with their Malay Counterparts in Selangor," unpublished Ph.D thesis, Sociology Department, University Malaya, 1999.

According to Wagley and Harris,⁹ “a person who seeks to escape identification as a member of a minority by changing his name, adopting a new religion and acquiring new behavioral traits may be criticized and denounced by the minority group for denying his ancestry and heritage of his people.”

This statement aptly describes the situation of Chinese Muslim converts with the non-Muslim Chinese in Malaysia. The court case and a policeman's divorce described below also give a clear picture of the negative response to the call of Islam from the non-Muslim Chinese.

In the case of a non-Muslim Chinese married couple, when one of the partners has embraced Islam, this could give rise to divorce. On Friday, May 21, 1999, Nor Aishah Teh Abdullah @ Tey Siew Choo sued Teng Eng Hua for divorce after having embraced Islam. The judge in the high court ruled that a civil marriage with her non-Muslim husband be dissolved according to section 54(1d) of the law reform of Marriage and Divorce Act of 1976.¹⁰

There was also a case study of a converted Chinese Muslim with his non-Muslim wife. A policeman after having embraced Islam in Malaysia had to face the demands of his non-Muslim wife for divorce for more than a year, and finally he had to sign the divorce deed.¹¹

Many non-Muslim Chinese also suspect the intentions of converting to Islam as to whether they do so for marriage with a Malay or due to economic reasons or desiring to become Malays so that they could gain special privileges accorded to the Malays in the constitution. They condemn the converts for having given up of their birth rights of racial identity and filial piety of ancestor worship. The converts can be also accused of abandoning the ancestors' food and worship, as pork is a traditional food of the Chinese but it is taboo to Muslims.¹² Even in the choice marriage partner, the priority of the converts were the Malays.

In other words, they are the unforgiven betrayals of Chinese heritage, civilization, religion, culture, ancestor worship and tradition.¹³ This is similar to the Chinese Mus-

⁹ Wagley, Charles and Harris, Marvin, *Minorities in the New World*, New York: Columbia University, 1964. p. 8.

¹⁰ *News Straits Times*, Friday, May 21, 1999. p. 8.

¹¹ This is one of the case studies of Chinese Muslims in the writer's Ph.D study.

¹² Osman Abdullah, *op.cit.*, pp. 146-164.

¹³ Osman Abdullah, *ibid.*, pp. 149-158.

lim converts in Indonesia. They were ostracized by their own non-Muslim Chinese families and race.¹⁴

CONFLICTS BETWEEN CHINESE AND ISLAM AND CAUSES OF THE REJECTIONS OF ISLAM BY THE NON-MUSLIMS CHINESE

As early as between 206 B.C. and 220 B.C., the Han dynasty and 19th century, China was known as Zhong-guo or the Middle Kingdom. People who lived outside the kingdom were known as "barbarians". The Han Chinese perceived that they were superior to the "barbarians" in terms of culture, intelligence, morality and behavior. The relationship between the Han Chinese and the "barbarians" could be likened to that of chieftain and vassals in the feudal system. The latter has to accept acculturation and admit the superiority of the former. In return, the vassals received presents, seals and official titles and this confirmed the lower status of the vassals. This diplomatic symbolism indicates the "Barbarians" were subjugated to the former. This lasted 2000 years.¹⁵

In view of this history, it is natural that the Chinese have the ethnocentric feeling that they are better than others. In fact, the Great Wall of China, one of the wonders of the world, was built to prevent the "barbarians" from intruding into China from the North. Meanwhile, in the South, the Chinese Muslims were known as Hui. They were regarded as no more than a "barbarian race". In order to make the tribe more civilized, they had to take the civil examination in the imperial court in China. If they passed the examination like any other Chinese, then they would become officials. As the examination syllabus always consisted of the four classic books of the Chinese as well as other non-Islamic syllabus, those who sat for the examination would be assimilated into the Confucian way.¹⁶ This is because they had to study many years and quoted the original words of Confucion from the classical text in the imperial examination.

As for Islam, it is a comprehensive way of life. After Prophet Muḥammad had migrated to Madinah, it spread very fast to the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. It transformed the whole Arabian Peninsula from uncivilized living to an enlightened society, a polytheistic to a monotheistic faith, from disorderly society with rampant

¹⁴ Ma'ruf Siregar, "Kesulitan Orang-orang Tionghua di Dalam Memahami dan Mengamalkan Hukum Islam di Jogjakarta dan Jawa Tengah," unpublished M.A.Thesis, Institute Agama Islam Negeri, Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. 1972.

¹⁵ Yuan-Lin Tsai, "Confucian Orthodoxy vs Muslim Resistance," unprinted Ph.D Thesis, Temple University, 1997. pp. 33-40.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

alcohol drinking, gambling, fortune telling to Islamic ways based on a good life in this world and the next world.¹⁷ The firm believers of Islam certainly have great faith that Islam is the way of life and a solutions to the world problems.

After the Arabic world, Islam spread so far to the Middle East, Africa, Asia and other continents. The success and rapid spread of Islam far exceeded all the other religions. It is natural that the believers are very convinced that Islam is the only salvation of the world. The believers are also very much touched by the social changes brought about by Prophet Muhammad such as the total eradication of burying the female babies. Besides, tribal quarrels and war were transformed into the Islamic *ummah* based on a brotherhood of love and strong ties. Islam had totally reformed society. The changes not only involved individuals but also at the community level.¹⁸

However, the Chinese do not know anything about Islam. Similarly, the Muslims also know very few of the heritages of Chinese culture and civilization. There is a dichotomy between the Chinese and Muslims each with their own ways. The Muslims are keen to communicate the message of Islam to the Chinese as Islam is a missionary religion. Whereas the Chinese are indifferent towards Islam. The Chinese way of living is not a religion and it is not interested in spreading the way to others. In this environment, there are many reasons why the Chinese cannot accept Islam.

The Chinese have failed to understand the universality of the message of Islam from al-Quran and al-Sunnah. They regard Islam as a way not related to their race but to the Arabs and the Malays. Islam is merely a political force. It is an alien culture and civilization and just like Western civilization, Islam is coming to compete with and control them. If they embrace Islam, it means they give up their supremacy.

When China was colonized by the West, they fought to be free from it. There is no reason now that they should submit to the way of Islam, another alien way.

Even though Islam, as had been advocated by al-Quran is a universal way, it is for all people. Al-Quran is in Arabic and nearly all non-Muslim Chinese in Malaysia cannot understand Arabic language. All Malays are Muslims in Malaysia. Islamic virtues are only for Muslims such as five times daily prayer and Friday congregational prayer. Thus, it is natural for the non-Muslim Chinese to feel that Islam is not for them.

The Chinese also perceive that they have 5,000 years of civilization and culture and so their way of life is always better than other ways. The ethnocentric feeling of

¹⁷ Akram Diya al-Umari, *Madinan Society at the Time of Prophet*, Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

judging others makes them deviate from the truth. If there are any lessons to learn, they could reflect into their ancient history and civilization to derive lessons. Since China has its long history and its civilization and heritage, they can learn from the past instead of obtaining lessons from others.

They, too, perceive that they have great teachers like Lao-tze, Confucius and others. As such, they do not need to know Prophet Muḥammad. It is not necessary for them to listen to any other teachers as the records of teachers from their own race are preferred. It is impractical too for them to obtain any lesson from al-Quran as they cannot read and write Arabic unless they get the help from translators. As for the teachings of Confucius and other great teachers from China, they can obtain their teachings and sayings from their own language and hear from their own ethnic group.

The Chinese too are ignorant of the concept of *tawḥīd*, *wahyu*, *yawmu al-qiāmah* and prophethood compared with the Christians. The Christian understands almighty God, the Creator of all things, heaven and hell, rising up from death; rewards and punishment by God after death, although they are different from Muslims and accuse Prophet Muḥammad of being an imposter. For the Chinese, however, there are no concepts of al-Mighty God, Prophethood and rising up from death in their literature and in their beliefs. Their afterlife beliefs are totally different from Islam. They believe in incarnation and chains of life of sufferings. They believe that if they are good, they will be reborn as good and successful people. Thus, their literature is full of perceptions and thoughts of these kinds. There are hardly any books explaining the concepts of *tawḥīd* and the Islamic way of life in Malaysia in Chinese.

The Chinese are also blindly following their ancestors' way in their worshipping, culture and customs. They refuse to adopt a new way especially from an Arab (Prophet Muḥammad) whom they perceive had nothing to do with them. To them, Prophet Muḥammad is an alien. They do not understand his language and teachings. Sometimes, they misunderstand Prophet Muḥammad and perceive that he is the founder of Islam, a religion like any other religion.

In the Malaysian situation, the Chinese are always proud of their success as their achievements, whether commercially or academically, are gained without the special rights of the governmental help of the Malays. If there is any success, it is due to the individual efforts of hard work. If there is any success by the Malay, the Chinese will link it with the special rights of the government as provided in the constitution.

In addition to this, the amount of business activities conducted by the Chinese banned according to the Islamic Shariah is very big and amounts to billions of ringgit. For example, the swine business has an annual export value of more than a billion ringgit. In 1999, it was 1.4 billion ringgit providing job and profit for 300,000 fami-

lies.¹⁹ A family rearing swine for their living had even founded developing companies and developed a housing estate and was listed in the stock exchange of Kuala Lumpur.²⁰ Besides, many alcohol shops belong to the Chinese in the town areas. Each may cost with their stock of goods more than a million dollars as a bottle of wine or expensive brands of Brandy may cost from a few hundreds to a few thousands. Besides, there are many night clubs in Malaysia owned by Chinese. There are also gaming business listed in the Stock Exchange of Kuala Lumpur namely Magnum Corporation and Sport Toto. There are also retailers selling idols and other things related to the way of worshipping. To the Chinese, wealth means life and the poor can have no say in anything. In reality, wealth is the aim of life.

Pork is taboo to the Muslims but to the Chinese, it is a traditional food. The Chinese not only take it as part of their diet but also use it for customary celebration such as 40 days of the newly born babies. It is used also as a medicine while cooking it with herbs. It is unthinkable to ask them to abandon this and embrace Islam.

The Chinese also perceive Islam as a restricted way of life with many compulsory virtues such as prayers, fasting, *zakat* and many others. They have also failed to understand that a woman wears the veil to protect her dignity. They do not understand and have great fear of women wearing the veil especially those covering everything except the eyes. Woman wearing veils covering the whole face is something beyond the understanding of the Chinese. Even among the Muslims, some cannot understand why Muslim women wear veils. For the Chinese, it is natural that they perceive that it is against the freedom of their clothing. To the Chinese, it is a pride for them, to wear beautiful in their social interaction.

Since Malaysia was colonized by the British, there has been a stereotype that Malays are lazy. Although this has been refuted by Syed Hussein Alatas.²¹ In social science, as long as you believe in something, whether it is true or not, it would have an impact in the society. In South East Asia in general and Malaysia, the stereotype of the Malay or native people is still rampant. As Islam is very closely associated with Malays, the Chinese also regard the followers of Islam as lazy people.

Since colonization, the British imposed "divide and rule" in Malaysia. This created mutual mistrust, mutual prejudice and mutual discrimination among the people. After independence, there has been an increasing rate of social interaction among the various ethnic groups especially the young children in schools, workers in

¹⁹ This was reported in the Chinese Press, *Nanyang San Pau*, 13th September 2000.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. London: Frank Cass. 1977.

the factories, sportsmen in the fields and nurses and patients in hospitals. But there still exists a certain degree of mistrust among the Malays and Chinese. Now, Malaysia is unlikely to have a racial riot as happened on May 13, 1969. However, fueled by competition for political and economic interests between the Malays and Chinese, the psychological hindrance of embracing Islam is still there due to the Chinese being a separate ethnic group.

Islam, too, is a very misunderstood religion nowadays. It has been projected as a backward religion, discriminating against women and promoting terrorism, this was especially the case after the attack on the world twin-towers of USA on September 11, 2001. Although this adverse propaganda against Islam is not true, some people still believe in it. This adds to the fear of the Chinese for Islam in Malaysia.

The racial riots between the non-Muslim Chinese and the native Muslim people and conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia all have an impact on the fear of the Chinese towards Islam. What the Chinese want is a peaceful situation for stable trade. To the Chinese, Indonesian natives are Muslims and the Malays are Muslims. To them, the two ethnic groups from different countries are the same groups of people. Even demonstrations in Indonesia remind them of an unstable country for their trade.

Last but not least is the fear of the Chinese of being assimilated into the ways of the Malays. The Chinese, like any minority ethnic group would like to preserve their identities as an ethnic group. They would like to have their ethnic schools and universities. The fear of being assimilated into the Malay is also a hindrance to the spread of Islam amongst the Chinese.

CONCLUSION

The negative responses towards Islam from Malaysian Chinese compared with Pagan Quraish in Makkah in Prophet Muhammad's era.²² Prophet Muhammad faced the objections to Islam by the Quraish in Makkah about 1400 years ago. However, 23 years after his mission, the whole population of Arabian peninsula had been transformed into a Muslim society. The Chinese in Malaysia and their resistance to Islam is a present day reality. In the research, it was found out that there are similarities and also contrasts between the two situations of the refusal to follow Islam. However, it is unlikely that all the non-Muslim Chinese would enter into Islam as happened during the time of Prophet Muhammad at the opening of Makkah.

²² See the causes of objection by Pagan Quraish in Ahmad Shallaby, *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam*, tr. Muchtar Ahmad, Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Singapore, 1975. pp. 121-122.

An example of the similarities is that, the Pagan Quraish could not realize the universality of the message of Islam and Prophethood, they felt that if they accept the message of Islam, they would submit to the tribe of Bani Hashim, the tribe of Prophet Muḥammad. Similarly, the Chinese never regard that Islam is for all the people or it has anything to do with their race. Islam is not for the Chinese. It is the way of the Arabs or Malays. The Chinese never take Islam or Prophethood as something universal or for the whole of mankind.

The Pagan Quraish preferred to follow their ancestors' ways of worship Lat, Uzza, Manat and many other idols. The Chinese too stick to their ancestors' way of worshipping the various gods. They prefer to worship the various hand-made idols. The pagan Quraish made their idols and sold them to the people on the pilgrimage. The Chinese also sell their idols and other equipment for worshipping such as candles, incense and heavenly money (paper money burned for the dead in the next world).

While the Quraish were fearful of the day of rising up from death and being accountable to Allah, the Chinese in Malaysia except the Christians may not hear anything at all about the days of hereafter, prophethood and being accountable to God, after death. There are absolutely no books concerning these concepts in Chinese in Malaysia thus the non-Muslim Chinese are totally ignorant of the concept of Al-Mighty God, Prophethood and rising up from death.

Both the Pagan Quraish and the Chinese have superstitious beliefs in their life such as fortune telling or prediction which is forbidden in Islam. All these are part of the similarities of the two situations.

However, there also exist circumstances in which both the Pagan Quraish and the Chinese differ. For example, Prophet Muḥammad had come especially for The Arabs. He spoke Arabic just as the pagan Quraish did. Although there was rivalry among the various tribes, there was no language and cultural gap. For the Chinese, Islam is an alien religion to them. They know nothing about Arabic language nor could they understand al-Quran. The Chinese also perceive that they have great teachers like Lao-tze, Confucius and others from their own ethnic group and they are enough for them for their guidance. It is not necessary for them to follow Muḥammad.

In the Jahiliyyah period before Prophet Muḥammad, the difference between Islam and Jahiliyyah is very obvious. It is extremely clear between the truth and the deviated such as the burying of the female babies. Besides, the role of leadership of Prophet Muḥammad was very clear and definite. Muslims in Makkah were not split into two or more groups. In Malaysia, the Muslims are divided into two main political groups fighting for political control, the United National Malay Organisation and Parti Islam Se Malaysia. There are also other insignificant parties, thus, to the non-Muslim

Chinese, Islam is more a political force rather than a way of life.

The Chinese perceive Islam also as a civilization conflicting with their own civilization. They never learn about Islam and know nothing of the similarity of the universal values between Islam and Chinese thoughts such as respecting the elders. To the Chinese, every thing from Islam conflicts with them such as the fact that monotheism from Islam is against the polytheism of Chinese belief. They do not perceive that Islam teaches men to respect their parents, not to cheat and to lie. Many of the Islamic teachings are similar to the ethics of Confucius.

There are also deep rooted misunderstanding towards Islam such as Islam is a retrogressive religion as the non-Muslims in Malaysia are more affluent compared with the Muslim Malays. Newspapers in the non-Muslim languages will only project Islam in a negative manner such as Islam is against women, material progress and for terrorism.²³ This is especially after the September 11 attack against the twin-towers in the USA. These sorts of misunderstanding did not exist at all in the time of Prophet Muhammad.

In Malaysia, ethnic relationships among the various races were full of prejudice, mistrust and misunderstanding, especially during the colonial period. This was because of the past colonial policy of 'divide and rule'. When Malaysia was under colonization, the Muslim Malays, non-Muslim Chinese and Indians lived in the same country but were ruled separately. The various ethnic groups seldom socialized or mixed together. This caused mistrust and misunderstanding.

In the colonial period, the various races lacked a common social will. The Muslim Malays were the poorest and lived in villages with their non-commercial farming. The Indians were mostly in the estates and the Chinese in the mining and town areas. The seeds of mistrust, prejudice and discrimination were sown in this period. Besides, there were widespread stereotypes of Muslim Malays that they were lazy, whereas there was also other stereotypes against the Chinese as being rich and others. As Malays are closely associated with Islam and have been the poorest among all the races, people used to associate the poverty of Muslim Malays with Islam. Thus, Islam was taken as a retrogressive religion.

In addition, there is the fact that none of the non-Muslim Chinese were qualified in Islamic studies in Malaysia. In the West, though they was wide spread misunderstanding against Islam, many Westerners are qualified academicians in Islam studies. Although some of these non-Muslim scholars do not have accurate understanding of Islam in the West. However, there are also some non-Muslim scholars who do have a deep understanding of Islam. In Malaysia, non-Muslim Chinese are never graduates of

²³ See *Nanyang San Pau*, 4-1-2002. p. 17.

Islamic studies. Thus, they are ignorant of Islam. Newspapers in Chinese too usually do not publish anything positive about Islam even though Islam is the official religion of their country.

In Malaysia, there are also more Muslims convicted for crimes than non-Muslims.²⁴ Besides, there are also Muslims who are directors of listed corporations of which the main business activities are gambling. A survey of the night clubs, bars and discos will find the same number of Muslims patronizing the sinful establishments banned by Islam. In the time of Muḥammad, the companions of Prophet Muḥammad were well known for their piety, obedience to Allah and love for Muḥammad. This is not perceived by Malaysian Chinese.

Although there are good and pious Muslims among the Malays, it is not easy for the non-Muslims to perceive Islam as a way of life according to al-Quran and Prophet Muḥammad. The non-Muslim Chinese perceive Islam according to the deeds and behavior of the Muslims. Many good and keen Muslim preachers hope to spread Islam to the non-Muslims. There are many Islamic preaching organisations in Malaysia. More need to be established if we hope the non-believers will follow the way of Islam.

During the era of Prophet Muḥammad, the piety of the companions of the Prophet led to the opening of Makkah where all the Pagan Quraish became Muslims and the whole Jahiliyyah society was transformed into an enlightened and civilized community. In Malaysia, it is hard to hope for the Chinese society to be transformed in a similar way as many "Muslims" do not behave in an Islamic way. Besides, many Chinese are very hard working and they also have good conduct and behavior. The only thing lacking in them is the absence of the faith of *tawḥīd*. Muslims in Malaysia also compete in politics and they prefer to show that they are the true "Muslims", whereas the others are not as they are fighting for support from non-Muslims politically. Thus, few explain *tawḥīd* or the unity of God to the non-Muslims in Malaysia as Prophet Muḥammad did in Makkah. Some Muslims do not know how to convey the concept of *tawḥīd* to non-Muslims.

Most of the non-Muslim Chinese would prefer Malaysia as a peaceful country where they can have their ethnic schools, from pre-school to primary, secondary until university, practise their languages, festivals and customs, and worship their gods and have the choices and rights for their trades. To them, it is useless to follow Islam. To them, religion is not their goal in life. Even among the Malay Muslims, there are quite a substantial number perceive doing business and making money as being important in life. Although their views and perceptions are different from the Chinese, they are

²⁴ The information was gathered in 1992 while the writer was doing his master's degree in International Islamic University Malaysia.

competing with the Chinese. In the competition for political and economic interests between Malays and Chinese, it is unlikely for the Chinese to realize the way of Islam as a universal way.