

THE CONVERSION PROCEDURES OF MUALLAF IN NEGERI SEMBILAN: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Norlina Ismail¹
Azman Ab. Rahman²
Zulkifli Hasan³

Abstract

Conversion to Islam among non-Muslim in Malaysia have a positive growth that should be given proper attention particularly on muallaf welfare, social support and Islamic education. The conversion procedure is one of the vital parts that should be understood before embracing Islam. The objective of this article is to identify the procedure of conversion to Islam as being practiced in Negeri Sembilan and to explore the current issues and challenges encountered by muallaf during the conversion to Islam. This article has revealed that the conversion procedure in Negeri Sembilan is governed by the Administration of the Religion of Islam (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 2003. Besides, there are issues involving muallaf during conversion phase includes the pronouncement of syahadah and the witnesses. The implication of the article will provide sufficient information for further development of conversion procedures' guideline. Further study should be conducted to enhance the effectiveness of conversion procedure among muallaf.

Keywords: Conversion procedure, Muallaf, Negeri Sembilan.

2016 GBSE Journal

Introduction

Islam is a religion which based on justice and free from all elements of discrimination, and its adherents in the same level regardless of gender, ethnicity, social status, position titles and so on. Similarly, those who are not Muslims are free to convert to Islam without any coercion.

Religious converts or conversion is a changing one's faith from one religion or belief to another. It is a process of religious change which transforms the way of the individual perceives the rest of society and his place in it, thus altering one's view of the world. The

¹ Postgraduate Student, Faculty of Syariah and Law, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. Tel: +6019-5508750 E-mail: linainmail29@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Main Supervisor, Faculty of Syariah and Law, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. Tel: +6012-2165852 E-mail: azman@usim.edu.my

³ Associate Professor, Co-Supervisor, Faculty of Syariah and Law, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. Tel: +6016-3379776 E-mail: zulkifli@usim.edu.my

understanding of faith is the most important thing of all Muslims in general and Muslim converts who converted to Islam in particular to its faith in Islam becomes stronger. This understanding will also be able to avoid converts from reverting to their previous religion (apostasy) because most of those who converted to Islam are made up of different backgrounds and different education.

In Malaysia, the number of muallaf convert to Islam is increased rapidly every year. In fact, the statistic released by the Syarie Lawyer Association of Malaysia indicates that an increase rate of the Muslim conversion up to 76, 663 people between 2002 until the year 2010. Thus, it is providing a good acceptance of Islam from non-Muslim in Malaysia.

Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM, 2010) stated that the non-Muslims are beginning to recognise, understand and study about the beauty of Islam. It is proven by the *du'at* (preacher), Mohd Fadli Yusof managed to record a total of 300 people converted to Islam in Sabah (Shamran, 2014).

Missionary in Malaysia was also driven by the movement of non-governmental associations and organisations (NGOs) such as the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organisation; *Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia* (PERKIM), Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association; *Persatuan Cina Muslim Malaysia* (MACMA), the Malaysian Indian Muslim Congress; *Kongres India Muslim Malaysia* (KIMMA) and Islamic Propagation Society International (IPSI). These associations play important roles in providing guidance and protection of converts' welfare (Jasni, A., Interviews, April 3, 2014).

Therefore, this article was conducted to analyse the conversion procedure to Islam in Negeri Sembilan and the issues encountered. The article is divided into three main parts, namely the definition of muallaf, the conversion procedure provided by the *Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan* (JHEAINS) and the issues and challenges encountered by muallaf during embracing Islam.

Result and Discussion

This study found that the definition of muallaf extends to wide meaning based on the definition given by Muslim scholars, state enactment and so forth. In order to embrace Islam, one should complete the requirement and condition imposed and some of the muallaf had to encountered several issues and challenges during conversion process.

Definition of Muallaf

The definition of muallaf extend to numerous meaning based on the scholars view and dimension. The meaning of muallaf is defined according to the view of the tradition scholars as well as the contemporary scholars and the state enactment.

Literal definition

The term '*muallafah qulubuhum*' in the above verse refers to a convert. Based on literal definition, the word '*mu'alafah*' comes from the word '*allafa*' which consists of various

meanings. Which makes it a number one thousand, collect things with each other and wrote a book (Ibn Manzur, 1996).

Meanwhile, the word '*qulubuhum*' is a combination of two words, namely '*qulub*' and '*hum*'. Qulub is a compound word meaning lumps of qalb heart that has an extension veins. (Ibn Manzur, 1996).

According to al-Marbawi, the meaning muallaf is comes from the word *alifa, ya'lifu, ilfan*. *Alifahu* means love or like him or her. *Allafa baynahum* means cherish between them (Al-Marbawi, t.th).

According to the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* Dictionary of the Fourth Edition (2010), muallaf means the new converts or those who are newly converted to Islam.

Definition of Muallaf According to Muslim Scholars and State Enactment

Most jurists of the Hanafi School does not explain clearly the definition of muallaf. In the book al-Kasani, stated (translation) "muallafah qulubuhum (tamed him) said: Verily, they are the leaders of Quraysh and hero Arabic as Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Safwan bin Umayyih, al-Aqra 'bn Out,' Uyaynah bin Hisn al -Fazari, al-Nahr bin Mirdas al-Salmi, Malik bin 'Awf al-Nadri, Hakim bin Hizam and they have the power, strength and a large following (Al-Kasani, t.th).

According to Maliki, there are two definitions of muallaf, namely; the disbelievers given zakat to convert to Islam and people who are new to Islam and gave alms to the strong grip of his religion (Al-Dusuqi, t.th).

Muallaf from the Shafii views are defined as a person who tamed or softened his heart that has converted to Islam (al-Shafi'i, t.th). This definition shows muallaf from the Shafi'i perspective is limited to Muslims only.

Meanwhile, the definition of muallaf according to the Hanbali school as follows:

- a) The leader of the infidel who leads a people or group that are expected to convert to Islam or be expected to stop crime
- b) The Muslims who hoped to strengthen his faith by giving zakat
- c) The Muslim leader;
 - Expected to be his followers will embrace Islam
 - What could encourage people to jihad and defend Islam
 - Expected to stop crime
 - Expected to generate power to collect alms from those who refused to pay zakat (Al-Bahuti, 1982)

According Wahbah Zuhayliyy, muallaf are those who are still weak and his intention in Islam is divided into two groups, namely Muslims and infidels. Meanwhile, Yusuf al-Qaradhawiyy in his book *Fiqh al-Zakah* expands the meaning of muallaf or the new converts to Islam into evil people, Muslims and infidels, whether good or evil (Rawi, N., et. al, 2010).

Muallaf definition based on Administration of Islamic Law Enactment in Malaysia is the recent convert (Rawi et al, 2010). The article found that the definition of muallaf have broad

context. However, in Malaysia is limited to the definition of muallaf who converted to Islam and given alms to him to strengthen his faith. This definition coincides with the opinion of the Shafi'i school.

Conversion Procedures of Muallaf in Negeri Sembilan

Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) acts as the coordinator of muallaf in Malaysia. JAKIM has issued guidelines on the management of conversion to Islam as a reference for each state authority, muallaf and their family members or any other parties concerned (JAKIM, 2010).

According to Rule 8 of *Garis Panduan Pengurusan Saudara Baru (Muallaf)*, someone who wants to convert to Islam must declare the *syahadah* before the Registrar or any officer, or any person managing the muallaf conversion to Islam and it must be witnessed by a male witness.

Meanwhile, by virtue of Rule 11 of *Garis Panduan Pengurusan Saudara Baru (Muallaf)*, the guidelines stated that the ceremonies of conversion to Islam can be conducted in the three areas;

- i. Islamisation in Islamic Religious Office
- ii. Islamisation other than Islamic Religious Office
- iii. Abroad Islamisation

The conversion to Islam conducted in Islamic Religious Office can be officially registered in accordance to the law. For those who are converted other than the Islamic Religious Office, the person in charge should directly bring them to the Islamic Religious Office for registration. While for those who converted to Islam in abroad, they should register in Malaysia immediately.

The conversion procedures of muallaf in Negeri Sembilan are provided in the Administration of the Religion of Islam (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 2003, Part IX-Conversion to the Religion of Islam. According to Section 107 of the enactment, the conversion to the Religion of Islam requires the following conditions to be complied:

(a) The person must utter in reasonably intelligible Arabic the two clauses of the Affirmation of Faith (syahadah);

(b) at the time of uttering the two clauses of the Affirmation of Faith (syahadah) the person must be aware that they mean "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. is the Messenger of Allah"; and

(c) The utterance must be made of the person's own free will.

(2) A person who is incapable of speech may, for the purpose of fulfilling the requirement of paragraph (1)(a), utter the two clauses of the Affirmation of Faith by means of signs that convey the meaning specified in paragraph (1)(b).

In Negeri Sembilan, *Pusat Dakwah Islamiyah, Paroi* (Da'wah Center) is a unit under the Department of Religious Affairs, Negeri Sembilan (JHEAINS) that responsible for managing the registration of muallaf. Pronunciation *syahadah* as in Section 107 can be carried out directly on the Da'wah Center or any *Pejabat Agama Islam Daerah* (PAID) and *Pejabat Agama Islam Wilayah* (PAIW) throughout the state of Negeri Sembilan. They are bodies that have an authority in matters of conversion to Islam (Jasni, A., Interviews, April 3, 2014).

Issues and Challenges Faced By Muallaf during Conversion to Islam

Muallaf have gone through a lot of challenging process beginning from pre conversion process, during conversion process and the post conversion process. There were number of possible issues and challenges that affected muallaf in the conversion phases to Islam. This article presented an overview of the different process that muallaf has to undergone during the conversion phase for the purpose of embracing Islam.

Based on the interviews, most of the respondents satisfied with the procedural imposed as being practice to confirm the conversion of an individual. However, based on the focus group and interviews conducted, there were several respondent indicated that some of the conversion process was quite complicated due too many conditions imposed before the pronouncement of the *syahadah*. Some of the respondents had to come to the relevant religious office in numerous times because they did not comply with the conditions imposed. Conditions discussed include the witnessing and the pronouncement of the *Kalimah Syahadah*.

Furthermore, the respondents believed that PERKIM and Religious Councils were channelled through which they can embrace Islam accordingly. A number of respondents had done their own research before approaching the Religious Councils. This would have made it easier for them to convert to Islam. One of the fourth (4) respondents, a 44-year-old declared:

“... I came into Islam in 1996. It’s already been 18 years now. When I first embraced Islam, I was curious of its advantages and enquired about it through my friends. Later on, when I became wholeheartedly open to Islam, I went straight to PERKIM in Selangor. But as I reached the PERKIM office in Jalan Ipoh with a witness, I was asked to go back. I was instructed to memorise certain verses. Then I went back after a week and they gave a second condition to become a Muslim. They said I’ve embraced Islam, but I needed to go back again and memorise Surah Al-Fatihah. I had difficulties with it then, since it was not easy for us to even pronounce the word ALLAH, which was why we were called mualaf. As my pronunciation was deemed inaccurate, I was again asked to return to get it right. I took almost 3 month to accomplish this. Only once I’ve managed to recite Al-Fatihah with exactly the precise pronunciations, I was given the card. At some point I became so irritated and angry with how the whole thing went. Why did they make it so difficult? When the officer gave me the card, his explanations were boastful, arrogant and patronising and we were treated like a nuisance. I went through a lot of trouble.”

This means that respondents were aware of what questions would be asked to them when they want to convert to Islam. The *syahadah* proclamation would be followed by courses related to the learning of Islamic knowledge. However, there were some conflicts whereby the explanation given is not in proper manner.

In addition, most respondents said they were willing to go to PERKIM or Religious Councils to convert to Islam. Most respondents said the main factor is that must be emphasised before embracing Islam are the witnessing, the *syahadah* proclamation, *al-Fatihah* recitation and the pronouncement of the word Allah.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the procedure of conversion to Islam in Negeri Sembilan is complied with the Administration of the Religion of Islam (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 2003. The procedure provided is flexible and competent to be applied for non-Muslim. However, there are some issues need to be solved, including the monitoring process before the pronouncement of *syahadah* in order to ensure that the muallaf would not need to repeat the same process twice. The condition imposed and the procedure of conversion also has to be clarified clearly. Apart from that, Muslim societies should be exposed with the conversion procedures and it could be explained to non-Muslim on how to convert to Islam. Issues and challenges encountered by muallaf should be highlighted to overcome the upcoming issues arise.

References

- Administration of the Religion of Islam (Negeri Sembilan) Enactment 2003. <http://www2.esyariah.gov.my>. Access on: 3rd March 2016.
- al-Bahutiyy, Mansur bin Yunus bin Idris. (1982). *Kashshaf al-Qina'an Matn al-Iqna'*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- al-Bukhariyy, Mahmood Ibn Mazah. (2004). *Al-Muhit al-Burhani fi Fiqh al-Numani*. Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-Alamiah.
- al-Ghazaliyy, Muhammad Ibn Muhammad. (t.th). *al-Wasit fi al-Mazhab*. Kaherah: Dar al-Salam.
- al-Khin, Mustafa; Al-Bugha, Mustafa; Al-Syarbaji, Ali. (2005). *Fiqh Al-Manhajiyy: Manhaj Fiqh Al-Shafi'iyy*. Jilid II. Kuala Lumpur: Prospecta Printers Sdn. Bhd.
- al-Qaradhawiyy, Yusuf Abdullah. (2000). *Fiqh al-Zakah: Dirasah Muqaranah li Ahkamiha wa Falsafatiha fi Daw' al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah.
- al-Shafi'i. t.th. *Mawsu'ah al-Imam al-Shafii, Al-Kitab: Al-Umm*. T.tp: Dar Qutaybah.
- al-Zuhayliyy, Wahbah (1997), *Fiqh Islami wa Adillatuh*. c.4. j. 3. Damsyik: Dar al-Fikr.
- Azman Ab. Rahman & Hasanah Abd Khafidz. (2015). *Ensiklopedia Asnaf dan Skim Agihan Zakat di Malaysia*. Cetakan pertama. Negeri Sembilan : Penerbit USIM.
- Hasanah Abd Khafidz. (2006). *Asnaf Lapan : Kesan Nilai Semasa dan Setempat dalam Menentukan Pentafsirannya di Malaysia*.
- Ibn Manzur, Muhammad bin Makran Ibn Manzur al-Afriqiyy al-Misriyy. (t.th). *Lisan al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dar al-Bayrut.
- Ibn Qudamah, Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Maqdisiyy. (1992). *al-Mughni 'ala mukhtasar al-Kharqi*. Sunt. 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad 'Ali Syahin. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah.
- Ibn Rusyd, Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Qurtubi. (1996). *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid*. j.2, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah.

- Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM). (2010) *Garis Panduan Pengurusan Saudara Baru*. Selangor: Shah Alam.
- Jasmi, K. A. (2012). *Metodologi Pengumpulan Data dalam Penyelidikan Kualitatif*. Kursus Penyelidikan Kualitatif Siri 1 2012. Puteri Resort Melaka. 28-29 Mac 2012. Anjuran Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Temenggong Ibrahim, Jalan Datin Halimah, 80350 Johor Bahru, Negeri Johor Darul Ta'zim.
- Kamus Dewan (Edisi Keempat). (2010). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Kassim, S. B. M., Abdullah, M. S. Y., & Baba, Z. (2013). A Survey of Problems Faced By Converts to Islam in Malaysia. *E-Bangi*, 8(1), 85–97.
- Qal'ajiy, Muhammad Rawas. (2010). *Mu'jam Lughah al-Fuqaha*. Beirut: Dar an-Nafaes.
- Rawi, N., Abdullah, S., Hassan, B., Noormala, R., Abd, G. B. (2010, December). Peluasan konsep asnaf mualaf zakat di Malaysia. Kertas kerja di The 4th ISDEV International Islamic Development Management Conference. Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Pulau Pinang.
- Shamran, S. (2014). *Berkat Kesabaran*. METRO Ahad. 23 Februari.
- Temu bual kumpulan fokus. Program Bicara Faqih Siri 7: Fiqh Mualaf dan Isu Perbandingan Agama. 28 Januari 2015.
- Zulhelmi Mohamed Nor & Azman Ab Rahman. 2015. Pendekatan al-Quran dan al-Sunnah Dalam Menyantuni Muallaf. *Jurnal Pengurusan dan Penyelidikan Fatwa*. Vol. 6 (Edisi Khas). ISSN: 2232-1047. Negeri Sembilan: Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia.