THE HISTORICAL INFLUENCE OF PERSIA ON ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE NEED FOR MUSLIM UNITY TODAY

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Abstract

This article will firstly discuss the history of Persian influence in Southeast Asia in relation to Muslim co-existence as well as touch upon the threats to Sunni-Shia unity in Southeast Asia and end with a conclusion. In the section two, this article will discuss the contemporary Sunni-Shia relations of tensions and attempts at reproaching (taqrib) Sunni-Shia reconciliation.

Keywords: *Historical Influence, Persia, Southeast Asia, Muslim Unity*

Abstrak

Artikel ini akan membahas sejarah pengaruh Persia di Asia Tenggara dalam kaitannya dengan ko-eksistensi Muslim serta sentuhan pada ancaman terhadap kesatuan Sunni-Syiah di Asia Tenggara dan diakhiri dengan kesimpulan. Pada bagian kedua dari artikel ini akan dikupas pasang-surut hubungan kontemporer antara Sunni-Shia serta upaya untuk merekatkan kembali (taqrib) rekonsiliasi Sunni-Shia.

Kata Kunci: Pengaruh Sejarah, Persia, Asia Tenggara, Persatuan Muslim

Introduction

Southeast Asia is to referred in Sanskrit as *Suvarnabhumi*, as *Nanyang* in Chinese, as *SerambiMekah* – verandah of Mecca in Malay, and as *Zirbadat* – lands below the winds by the Arabs and Persians.

Today, there are about 240 million Muslims in Southeast Asia making up about 42% of the total Southeast Asia population and 25 % of the total world Muslim population of 1.6 billion. The majority of them belong to the Sunni sect who follow the Shafii school of Muslim jurisprudence. There also Shia communities in every Southeast Asian county.

With the formation of ASEAN community, Muslims will make up 42% and Buddhists 40% respectively of ASEAN region.

Three Southeast Asian countries viz., Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei have Muslim majority populations while Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam have Muslim minority populations. Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and Brunei and is one of the officially recognized religions of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Southeast Asian Muslims consist many ethnic groups speaking different languages such as Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, Javanese, Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Thai, Chinese, Burmese, etc.

Islam came to Southeast Asia in the 12th century CE. It was brought by Muslim traders and preachers from Gujarat in India, China, Persia and Hadhramawt in Yemen as they navigated the waters of the Indian Ocean, the Straits of Malacca, the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea. The 13th century CE saw the establishment of the first Islamic kingdom in Pasai in Sumatera. The Islam brought by Sufi mystics lays stress on Islam's humanistic orientation with emphasis on love and compassion. It was a meeting between the monotheistic pantheistic tradition of Islamic mysticism and Hindu-Buddhist monism in the form of worshiping Siva and Buddha; this resulted in the emergence of syncretic Islam – a combination of the teachings of Islam mixed with Hindu, Buddhist and animist beliefs and ritual practices. As a top down movement the Javanese elites saw themselves as Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists at the same time. The Muslims who first brought Islam to Indonesia and then to Malaysia and southern Thailand between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries were largely Sufi mystics. The Islam that was introduced in this region had a conspicuously mystical orientation that had been largely shaped by the Persian and Indian traditions of Sufism. In religious terms, it was a meeting between the Hindu view of *Moksha* (liberation) through the Hindu notion of monism, the Buddhist notion of *dhamma*– teaching which means the Law and life that is lived in accordance with the law. *Dhamma* is "the path of righteousness," or the way of 'correct', 'appropriate', 'decent', or 'proper' behavior, *nirvana* (enlightenment) through the realization of *sunyata* (emptiness), and the Islamic concept of *fana'*(the passing away of one's identity by its merging into the UniversalBeing as expounded in the monotheistic pantheism of the Sufis. Gradually there emerged a hybrid syncretic culture, particularly in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia, giving rise to a version of Islam that was mystical, fluid, and soft, one that nurtured a spiritualism peculiar to the region. In terms of interreligious dialogue, the interchange between worldviews of Islam and Buddhism involves cross-cultural exchange between what is referred to as دين (deen) in Arabic, *agama* in Bahasa Indonesian-Malay and, शासना (sāsana) in Sanskrit and Pali. All of these terms refer to religion as a way of life, and all of them had local shades of meaning. Thus the interchange between Islam and Buddhism is not a simple two-way interaction between reified views of these two religions, but also involves their regional diversities.

Unfortunately, today this historical coexistence between different types of Islamic cultures, sects, and other religions in Southeast is being destroyed by the promotion of intra and inter religious hatred between Muslims and also between religions from religions not Muslims only. Such danger is spreading not necessarily rooted in religions themselves but exploitation and manipulation of religions and sects for political, economic and other reasons.

In relations to Persia/Iran today, Southeast Asian Muslim countries have strong economic ties with that country but unfortunately Shiism has been declared to be a deviant sect in Malaysia and nearly so by the Indonesian minister of religious affairs.. While the fact is that both Sunni and Shia Muslims believe in same God, same Prophet and same Quran.

In this paper, the following section 1, will first discuss the history of Persian influence in Southeast Asia in relation to Muslim co-existence; in section 2, I touch upon the threats to Sunni-Shia unity in Southeast Asia and end with a conclusion.

Section 1

Persian Influences in Southeast Asia in the Areas of Literature;

trade including Commercial Competition Between the Persians and the Portuguese During the Safavid Era;

the presence of Shiite Influences;

Sufism;

Impact of Persia and Persian on Thailand;

Impact on Political Institution: From Bodhisattva to Insan al-Kamil;

the Office of Chularajmontri/ Shaikh al-Islam in Thailand until 1945.

1.1 Literature

"The advice- or naṣiḥat genre of classical Persian literature, too, is well represented in classical Malay literature. An example is the Tāj al-Salāṭin by Boḵāri al-Jawhari (of Johore in southern Malaya?) from the 17th century, rendered into Malay from an unknown Persian source for the rulers of the Acheh sultanate of Sumatera. Other works such as, Bustān al-Salāṭin by Nur-al-Din Rāniri, Fanṣuri's fierce legalistic adversary written in Aceh is based on Persian literature model.

Persian influence is also found in the strong role played by Sufi mysticism in the spread of Islam in the archipelago. At any rate, Persian influences in Acheh, which had close maritime and trade links with India and the Persian Gulf region, are more apparent in 17th-century Islamic thought and mysticism. ḤamzaFanṣuri (fl. 2nd half of the 16th century), the enigmatic Malay mystical poet, was the main exponent and disseminator of wujudiya – unity of being thought, the pantheistic teachings of Ibn al-'Arabi. Fanṣuri was born in the Siamese capital Ayutthaya. Besides Malay, he knew Arabic and Persian. In some of his works, he quotes from the masters of classical Persian mysticism such as Šabestari, either in Persian, or in Malay translation .

The conflict between Rāniri and Fanṣuri exemplifies the issue of "orthodox" or "sober" Sufism, as promoted about the same time in India by Sirhindi (d. 1624), and "heterodox," "pantheistic" Sufism, and broadened the conflict from India to Southeast Asia represents the arrival of the the debate between Ibn al-Arabi, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Ghazzali's sharia bound Sufism in Southeast Asia."[1]

1.2 Trade

Persian cultural influences are also discernible with regard to the Malay principality and trade emporium of Malacca, a state which lasted from the early 15th century to 1511 when it was conquered by the Portuguese (Andaya, "Malacca"; Muhammad YusoffHashim, tr. D. J. Muzaffar Tate, The Malay Sultanate of Malacca). Although Malacca was at least nominally a vassal of Siam, which also claimed the suzerainty over the entire Malay Peninsula (Wyatt, "The Thai 'Palatine Law' and Malacca"), it was able to establish itself as the foremost power in the Archipelago, giving the propagation of Islam in the region a vigorous new impetus (for convenient introductions see Gordon, ed., and Al-Attas, "Indonesia. iv-History: (a) Islamic period").

At that time, Persian was the lingua franca in the Indian Ocean trading world and a Persian-speaking merchant community was present in Malacca. The office with the Persian title of Šāhbandar ("harbor master"), known in many of the Indian Ocean trade ports as well as in several parts of the Ottoman Empire, was also established in Malacca. It has attracted the attention of several Western scholars (see Andaya, "The Indian 'Saudagar Raja' (The King's Merchants) in Traditional Malay Courts"; Moreland, "The Shahbandar in the Eastern Seas": Raymond, "Shāhbandar: In the Arab world"; Hooker, "Shāhbandar: In South-East Asia"; Yule and Burnell, Hobson-Jobson, pp. 816-17, s.v. "Shabunder," with detailed references, and ibid, p. 914, s.v. "Tenasserim"). The office appears to have been known in the Indian Ocean region as early as about

1350 (Yule and Burnell, Hobson-Jobson, pp. 816, s.v. "Shabunder," referring to EbnBaṭṭuṭa's visit to the Malabar coast in southern India).

The introduction of steamships to the Indian Ocean region by the British and Dutch colonial powers in the first half of the 19th century facilitated the contacts of Southeast Asian Muslims with the Arab lands of the Middle East, in particular with the sacred places on the Arabian peninsula and the study centers in Egypt. Returning pilgrims and religious students began to spread puritanical ideas, particularly Wahhabism, in the Archipelago.

Philosophical Sufism in the tradition of Fanṣuri and his followers again became increasingly associated with heresy and deviant thought, such as Shiʿism "from Persia." This constricting development is currently continuing and it affects negatively the general climate of stability and scholarship.²

Commercial Competition Between the Persians and the Portuguese During the Safavid Era

The Safavid period (1502 – 1736) witnessed increased trade with Southeast Asia, with Persian traders in competition with the Portuguese.

"Among Muslim merchants those from Shiraz appear to have been particularly prominent in the Persian Gulf trade and trade with the East Indies companies (Floor, 1366 Š./1987a, passim; idem, 1988b, chap. 1). Trade with India was particularly concentrated in the hands of Indians, though Jewish merchants also were active (Du Mans, pp. 193-94; Fryer, II, pp. 247-48). Local trade was probably mainly handled by Persian Muslims. By the end of the 18th century it is clear that foreign trade was also largely in Persian hands. (Francklin, p. 60; Kinneir, p. 198)³

Iran's cultural and trade relations with Southeast Asia date back far into the pre-Islamic period. With regard to the Sasanid and the early Islamic periods, the studies by Colless and Tibbetts (see bibliography) are essential. However, official diplomatic relations between the two regions, exemplified by the exchange of non-permanent missions rather than by permanent extraterritorial embassies, become traceable only during the Safavid period (1501-1722).

Contacts between Persians (whether via the Indian subcontinent or from Iran proper) and the Thai people became possible only after the latter's gradual settlement and domination of the central plains of present-day Thailand. This process of migration culminated in the foundation of Ayutthaya in 1351 by King U Thong (r. 1351-69, under the throne name Ramathibodi) as the capital of a Thai kingdom which became known as Siam. Ayutthaya is situated about 80 km to the north of modern Bangkok. It is strategically located on the navigable Chao Phraya river system which leads to the Gulf of Thailand and was destined to become one of the region's most important trade emporia, situated equidistant from East Asia, China and India.⁴

1.3 Shiite Religious Influences in Southeast Asia

Islam in Southeast Asia has a strong Sufi dimension from Persia, India, China and Yemen which was blended with local Hindu monism and Buddhist non-theism. ⁵

The rise to favor with the succeeding Achenese rulers of the staunch Shafiʿite Sunni Nur-al-Din al-Rāniri (d. 1656), who was born in India (see Al-Attas, A Commentary on the 'Ḥujjat al-Siddiq' of Nur al-Din al-Rāniri, intro.), however, initiated a period of legalism, resulting in the persecution and repression of the heterodox, non-conformist Sufism associated with Fanṣuri and his followers.

In the past, this conflict between "heterodoxy" and "orthodoxy" in 17th-century Acheh, personified by Fanṣuri and Rāniri, has usually been studied within the context of mysticism alone(Al-Attas, Rāniri and the Wujudiyyah of 17th Century Acheh).

 However, the prevalence of Shiʿite thought among "heterodox" Sufis in Acheh should also be taken into consideration. Fanṣuri himself referred to the first imām of the Shiʿites in several of his poems. Besides his

native Malay, Fanṣuri was also fluent in Arabic and Persian. Apparently, he also went to Iraq during his travels to the Middle East."[6]

1.4 ImamaJaʿfar al-Sādeq And Sufism

All the Sufi orders (with a single exception, that of the Naqšbandiya) claiminitiatic descent from the Prophet exclusively through ʿAli b. AbiṬāleb, the first imam of the Ahl al-Bayt, and many speak also of a selselat al-ḏahab (golden chain), linking them with all of the first eight of the Twelve Imams.

Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq, the sixth imam, occupies, however, a position of particular significance in Sufi tradition. A number of Sufis are said to have associated with him; he is lauded for his knowledge of the Path in several foundational works of Sufi literature; and numerous utterances and writings on the topic of spiritual progress have been attributed to him. What has been asserted concerning him in these respects is in some cases clearly apocryphal and has been the subject of dispute, especially on the part of Shiʿite authors ill-disposed to Sufism, even in its Shiʿitemanifestations.

It is with ʿAlawi's great-grandson, Moḥammad b. ʿAli b. Moḥammad b. ʿAli b. ʿAlawi (d. 653/1255), known as al-Ostaḏ al-Aʿẓam (the great master), that this line of descent from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq acquires a Sufi dimension; from his time onward, it is possible to speak of an ʿAlawiṭariqa, characterized by hereditary transmission of the leadership. Descended genealogically from the ʿAlawiya but counting more importantly as an offshoot of the Kobrawiya is the ʿAydarusiya, the order established by Abu Bakr b. ʿAbd-Allāh ʿAydarus (d. 914/1508), who has been described as the "patron saint" of Aden (Löfgren, "ʿAydarūs," p. 781). Several shaikhs of the ʿAydarusiya bore the complete name of their distant ancestor, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq, indicating thereby a claim to spiritual as well as genealogical descent from the sixth imam of the Shiʿites (Zabidi, fols. 80b-81a). Although the Haẓramawt preserved its centrality for both the ʿAlawis and the ʿAydarusis, many members of both lineages either visited or settled in various parts of Southeast Asia, primarily Java, Sumatera, and the Malay peninsula. Although they participated there in the propagation of Islam, their spiritual influence on the indigenous population, particularly in the case of the ʿAlawiya, was limited by the consistent exclusion of non-sayyeds from membership (Attas, p. 32). Some of them, nonetheless, enjoyed great prestige in a number of Muslim principalities in Pontianak, Sulawesi, and the Sulu Archipelago, often intermarrying with the ruling families (Atjeh, 1977, pp. 35-37).

With respect to these far-flung Sufi descendants of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādeq, it may finally be noted that, impressed by the triumph of the 1978-79 Islamic Revolution in Iran, some have abandoned their affiliation to the Shafiʿite school and indeed, to Sunnism as a whole, and embraced TwelverShiʿism, with which their ancestor is, after all, definingly associated (Alatas, pp. 337-39).[7]

1.5   Impact of Persia and Persian on Thailand

Persia had long time relations with Southeast Asia. Much before the arrival of Shiite Persians, Persian Sufism had arrived in the region. It played an important role in the propagation and emergence of syncretic Islam in the archipelago. Early Shiism was present among the Chams of Vietnam and also in eastern Indonesian Maluku and Aceh.15 Shiite Persians settled in Siamese kingdom of Ayutthaya at the court of King PhraNarai (r. 1656 to 1688). His reign was the most prosperous and it witnessed great commercial and diplomatic activities with foreign nations including the Persians and the West. Several Persians served as Prime Ministers and ambassadors at the court of King PhraNarai.

The Persians referred to Ayutthaya as *Shahr-iNav* – City of Boats and Canals.16 A city in which the day of *Ashura* or 10th Muharram commemorating the death of Imam Hussein was commemoratedevery year. The *Ashura* ceremonies were sponsored by King PhraNarai, a Buddhist king. Today, apart from the Shia, the *Ashura* continues to be commemorated even among the Sunni

communities of Southeast Asia. There was close diplomatic communication between Safavid Iran and Ayutthaya between 1660s and the 1680s. There was an exchange of embassies between Safavid Shah Sulaiman and King PhraNarai of Siam. The account of such relations and the state of the Persian community in Ayutthaya is contained in Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim's SafinaiSulaimani or Ship of Sulaiman. Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim was the secretary of the Persian diplomatic mission to Ayutthaya who recorded the details of the mission. It contains information about King PhraNarai, his court, palace, activities and the life style, religion and culture of the Siamese people. The account of about Buddhism shows Muslim religious bias lacking knowledge of history of religion, the author views Buddhism as idolatry. The book also provides information about the Persian settlements in Ayutthaya and their religious, political and culture life. 17 The Thai language has borrowed several Persian words such as *gulab* – rose -*kulaap*, *anggur* – grape - *angun*, *farang* - European/foreigner - *farang* ,*gol-e kalam* – cauliflower - *kalam dork* and *bazaar* – market - b*azaar*.

Persian influence is also seen in form of *hikayat* literary genre of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

1.6 Institution Shaikh al Islam/Chularajmontri in Thailand

The institution of *shaikh al-Islam* was established during the medieval period of Islam. Its purpose was to streamline the Islamic religious hierarchy, or ulama, within the state by appointing one expert in Islamic religious sciences as the religious head of the community. The *shaikh al-Islam* functioned as the chief *mufti*—the head jurisconsult, an expert on Islamic law and an advisor on religious matters, both public and private, of import to the state. His advice carried moral authority, but was not legally binding upon the political authorities. The intention was to give a bureaucratic status to the religious leadership within the political structure of the evolving and expanding state.

History of the Office The first office of the *shaikh al-Islam* was established in Khurasan in the tenth century, and it was soon adopted in others part of the Islamic world: Anatolia (Turkey), Egypt, Syria, Safavid Iran, Central Asia, the Delhi Sultanate, and China. Between the fourteenth and thesixteenth centuries the office served different functions in different countries. The *shaikh al-Islam* was the chief jurisconsult in Ottoman Turkey, a judicial official of some sort in Safavid Iran, one who distributed gifts to the Sufis in India, and an examiner of the religious credentials of Islamic teachers in Central Asia and China. Turkey abolished the office of the *shaikh al-Islam* in 1922.

Today, the position continues to exist in different formats—in the form of a ministry, a council, or an individual—in the Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bosnia, and Tanzania, as well as in certain Muslim-minority countries, such as Thailand.

The Office of Chularajmontri/ Shaikh al-Islam in Thailand until 1945

The office of the *chularajmontri* or *shaikh al-Islam* of Siam came into existence during the Ayutthaya dynasty (1351–1767), which had a substantial population of Shia Muslims who had migrated from Iran. 35 They lived alongside Sunni Muslim immigrants from Champa, Indonesia, and India. The local Persian Shia merchants and scholars in Ayutthaya not only engaged in trade but also served as ministers at the court of Ayutthaya. They managed the Ayutthayan navy and maritime trade as part of their professional expertise. There was also an exchange of embassies between the Persian and the Ayutthaya courts. Other foreign communities in Ayutthaya included the Chinese and the Portuguese. The first *chularajmontri* or *shaikh al-Islam* of Siam, appointed by the Ayutthaya king PhrachaoSongtham (r. 1620–28), was the Persian Shia scholar Shaikh Ahmad Qomi (1543–

1631). He was entrusted with the task of overseeing Muslim community affairs, and also served as the king's minister of foreign trade.[8]

The first thirteen *chularajmontris* of Thailand were Shia Muslims who were descendants of ShaikhQomi. During this period and up until 1934, which marked the end of the last Shia*chularajmontri*, their jurisdiction did not extend to the independent southern Malay kingdoms. But with the incorporation of the Malay kingdom of Patani in 1906, Islam became the largest minority religion in Thailand; this created the problem of integrating the southern Malay Muslims into the Siamese (Thai) nation. Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, but it continued to face new linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious problems relating to the Malay Muslim majority provinces of southern Thailand. In 1945 the Thai government passed the Patronage of Islam Act, which sought to form a link between the central political authority and the religious leaders of the Muslim community. The act created the Islamic Center of Thailand, headed by the*chularajmontri*or shaikh al-Islam, and also the Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs.

1.7 Impact on Political Institution: From *Bodhisattva* to *Insan al-Kamil*

Some scholars of Southeast Asian Islam have commented that the Sufi doctrine of *al-insan al-kamil* and the Buddhist conception of bodhisattva formed the basis of interactionbetween the incoming religious tradition of Islam in Southeast Asia and the already domesticated Hindu-Buddhist religious tradition of the region.

Southeast Asian societies have followed a common pattern of religious conversion. Before the coming of Islam, the conversion of the king to Hinduism or Buddhism was followed by the conversion of his community. Similarly, the conversion of a *rajah* to Islam was followed by that of his community. Since the meeting of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Southeast Asia was essentially a meeting of religious mysticisms, many Buddhist concepts acquired Islamic names. For example, r*ajahs* adopted the title of —*sultan* upon conversion, and belief in forest spirits became belief in *jinns*.[9]

The concept of *al-insan al-kamil* meaning perfect human being is based in the prophetic hadith reported by IbnHanbal that, —God created Adam in His image ['*alasuratih*].

Sufis such as Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240), Mahmud al-Shabistari (d. 1320) and Abdul Karim al-Jili (1365-1417) have commented lengthily on the term al-insan al-kamil. It should be remembered that their usage of the term *al-insan al-kamil* is different from that of al-Hallaj (857-922) who referred to himself as —*ana al-Haqq* (I am the Absolute, the Truth meaning —I am God.

From Southeast Asian Bodhisattva Rajas to al-Insan al-Kamil Sultans: The Political-Religious Dimension of an Interchange between Buddhist and Muslim Concepts.

The sociopolitical and religious interchange between Islam and Buddhism is evident in the adoption of Islamic politico-religious titles by the rajas of Southeast Asia who converted to Islam. Upon their arrival in Southeast Asia, the Muslims as mentioned earlier encountered the parallel presence of Hinduism and Buddhism, manifested in the worship of both Siva andBuddha. Their religion was composed of a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist religious doctrines and concepts. Both of these religions were seen as different but equal paths for attaining moksha and nirvana—liberation and enlightenment.

The Sufi propagators of Islam offered the ideal of *al-insan al-kamil*—the perfect human being— as an alternative Muslim concept to the Hindu-Buddhist *bodhisattva rajas*. The Buddhist concept of bodhisattva was employed by the Hindu-Buddhist rajas of Southeast Asia to identity themselves

with the idealized personage of Buddha. Hence, the concept of al-*insan al-kamil*served as a new medium for interreligious dialogue and conversion between Hindu-Buddhist syncretic religion and Islam. Upon conversion to Islam, the Indonesian and Malay kings appropriated the title of al-insan al-kamil in order to legitimize their royal positions both politically and religiously.

The Hindu and Buddhist kings of Java, Sumatera, and Celebes, who had previously presented themselves as *dev rajas* (incarnations of Siva) or *dhammarajas* (kings of Buddhist law), also adopted titles such as *al-insan al-kamil* or Arabic-Persian royal titles such as sultan, shah, or *zillullahfilalam* (God's Shadow on Earth). The Sufi pantheistic poet HamzaFunsuri spoke of the Sultan of Aceh in one of his poems as —one of Allah's elect. The Hindu *rajas* of Patani were particularly interested in the Sufi doctrine of the *al-insan al-kamil*, and upon conversion to Islam used it as a way to hold together their complicated socio-cultural structures. The sultans of Patani claimed that they were *al-insan al-kamil*—one with God and blessed by Him. Hence, the new Islamic concept of *al-insan al-kamil* fitted well with their previous beliefs. In this way, the Muslim sultans of Southeast Asia sought to represent themselves as saints worthy of emulation leading to the conversion of their communities to Islam.

Sufi practices of asceticism, penitence, and meditation were seen as the means of attaining union with God. This fitted well with the goals of Hinduism and Buddhism of seeking union with *Brahman* or *Nirvana*. Soon there also appeared Malay Sufi interpretations of the concept of *al-insan al-kamil* that came to be associated with the idea of *martabattujuh*—the idea of seven grades for attaining the state of *al-insan al-kamil*, which was the highest of the seven. This concept is attributed to Muhammad Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri (d. 1590) and also to Southeast Asian *wujudis*—pantheists such as Hamzah al-Fansuri (d. 1599) and his disciple Shams al-Din al-Sumaterani (d. 1630).

The sultans also came to be seen as endowed with special powers capable of performing *karamat* (miracles) and also possessing *berkah*—spiritual gifts that they could pass on to others during their lifetime or after death. Such notions were not far from those of local Hinduism and Buddhism.

Thus the history of religions in Southeast Asia illustrates that the two mystically-oriented concepts of the *al-insan al-kamil* and the bodhisattva became the ground for dialogue between Islam and Hinduism-Buddhism. In Muslim Southeast Asia the concept of *al-insan al-kamil* replaced that of the *bodhisattva* at the religious, political, and social levels. As a result of this phenomenon, the mystical dimension of Islam and the tolerant aspect of Buddhism played a significant role in forming the character of religious coexistence in Southeast Asia. Thus the encounter between Islam and Hindu-Buddhist civilization that took place in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand was a sort of dialogue between a monotheistic and pantheisticform of Islam and the monistic and non-theistic religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The locals also adopted Sufi practices with the view that asceticism, penitence and meditation would enable them to attain union with God. This mystical approach fitted well with their previously inherited world views from Hinduism and Buddhism.[10]

1.8 Persian Influence on the Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is one Asia's oldest kingdoms, having been in existence for more than 1,500 years and was an imperial power from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Its recorded history spans 600 years. Prior historical references have been found Chinese and Hindu chronicles of the sixth and seventh centuries referring to Brunei as "Polo", "Puni" and "Poli". Early writers have also called it "Brunei" and "Brune".

The early king of Brunei was called Sang Aji, or Reverend Monarch, a title of Sanskrit origin. The Brunei ruling dynasty changed during the early 1360s when AwangAlakBetatar, a prince from a powerful kingdom

in western Borneo, ascended the Brunei throne. He became the first Brunei ruler and the present ruler is his descendant.

AwangAlakBetatar was the first Brunei Raja to accept Islam, changing his title and name to Sultan Muhammad Shah (1363-1402) in honour of the Prophet. With Islam, Brunei asserted and expanded its role as an independent and dominant trading power in the region. Its trade and territories grew with the spread of Islam to encompass existing Malay kingdoms in Borneo and the Philippines.

During the early spread of Islam in Brunei, many Arab Muslim missionaries married into Brunei royal family. The most notable was Sharif Ah from Taif, Arabia, who married a daughter of the second sultan, and later ascended the throne as the third Sultan in 1425. His orderly and just rule based on Islam made Brunei Darussalam a respected and powerful country. As a result with the neighbouring kingdoms in the Malay Archipelago, China and the Arabs flourished, and Brunei Darussalam entered an era of peace and tranquility. Thus the sultanate became known as Negara Brunei Darussalam(Brunei, the Abode of Peace).

Brunei rose to prominence in the 15th and 16th centuries when the country extended throughout Borneo and the whole of the present day Philippines.The first sultan to embrace Islam in Brunei was Sultan Muhammad I who reigned for 39 years in the 14th century. About the year 1478, the sultans in the region were strong enough to free themselves from the influence of Hindu rulers. The stability of the sultans that followed this period firmly rooted Islam in Brunei. In the pre Islamic Brunei the first capital Puni was established in the district of Temburong. Later the capital was moved to Kota Batu where the Brunei Museum now stands. Finally it was established in Bandar Seri Begawan during the reign of Sultan Muhyiddin I in the 17th century. In the past Brunei's wealth was founded on the export of camphor, pepper and gold.

Robert Nicholl, a former Brunei Museum Curator argued in another paper entitled "Notes on Some Controversial Issues in Brunei History" in 1980 that the name Ma-ho-mo-sa could be pronounced as Maha Moksha which means Great Eternity. MahaMokhsa would make it a Buddhist name. Nicholl goes on to argue that even the Brunei Sultan who died in Nanjing in 1408 was not a Muslim. Another European Historian, Pelliot, Ma-na-jo-kia-nai-nai was reconstituted as MajarajahGyana (nai). But the closest title would have been Maharaja Karna. However Brunei historians have stated that the King was Sultan Abdul Majid Hassan who would have been the second Sultan of Brunei.

Nicholl further argued that Sultan Muhammad Shah converted to Islam as late as the 16th century and not during the 14th century as is widely known. However according to Brunei historians, Sultan Muhammad Shah converted to Islam in 1376 and that he ruled until 1402. After which time, it was Sultan Abdul Majid Hassan, who died in China who ascended the throne. That was when Sultan Ahmad reigned in Brunei beginning 1406.

Most likely there were two waves of Islamic teachings that came to Brunei. The first was brought by traders from Arabia, Persia, India and China. The second wave was brought about by the conversion of Sultan Muhammad Shah. With the coming of the second wave, Brunei's Islamisation hastened.

The propogation of Islam in Brunei was led by a Syarif with the name of Syarif Ali who was a descendant from Rasulullah S.A.W. through his grandsons Sayydinia Hassan or SayydiniaHussin.

Syarif Ali arrived from Taif. Not long after he arrived in Brunei, he was married to a daughter of Sultan Ahmad. Syarif Ali built a mosque in Brunei. Syarif Ali was closely connected to a few other well known Islam propogationist in the region such as Malik Ibrahim who went to Java, SyarifZainalAbidin in Malacca, Syarif Abu Bakar or SyarifulHashim in Sulu and SyarifKebungsuan in Mindanoa.

Syarif Ali ascended the throne as the third Sultan of Brunei when he took over from his father-in-law. Because of his piousness, he was known as Sultan Berkat (Berkat means 'blessed').

The mosque especially the pulpit was used by Sultan Syarif Ali himself. Sultan Syarif Ali himself conducted the sermons during Friday prayers. So he was not only the Sultan but he was also the Imam and brought the religion directly to the Brunei people.

According to Thomas Stamford Raffles in his book "The History of Java", the Islamic activities of Sultan Syarif Ali was not limited to Brunei. He was also known to have gone over to Java to propagate Islam where he was known as Raja Chermin. He tried hard to convert the Majapahit King named PrabuAngkaWijaya.

The efforts of the Brunei Sultans in spreading Islam helped to spread Islam not only in Borneo but also as far north as to the southern Philippines islands. When Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, it was Brunei which played a major role in the spread of Islam in the region.

By the 16th century, Brunei had built one of her biggest mosques. In 1578, Alonso Beltran, a Spanish traveller described it as one of five storeys tall built on the water. Most likely it had five layers of roofs to represent the five pillars of Islam.

Islam was firmly rooted in Brunei by the 16th century. This mosque was unfortunately destroyed by the Spanish in June that same year.[11]

Another article by same author states:

It has been debated when Islam actually first arrived in Brunei. A number of relics showed that Islam could actually be practised in Brunei by the 12th century.

Amongst these were tombstones found in the various Islamic graveyards in Brunei particularly the one at Rangas which showed one with a Chinese Muslim by the name of Pu Kung Chih-mu. He was buried there in 1264. This is more than a hundred years earlier before the conversion of AwangAlakBetatas as the Islamic Sultan Muhammad Shah, the first Sultan of Brunei.

Pu is the common surname which according to Chinese historians identified them as someone who is a Muslim. The tombstone also identified Pu Kung Chih-mu as one who had originated from Chuan-chou City in China. During the Sung Dynasty, Arab and Persian Traders flocked to the Kwang Chow (Canton) in Kwangtung Province and Chuan-chou in Fukien Province.

It was not the only Chinese Muslim grave there. In another grave nearby belonged to another Chinese Muslim by the name of Li Chia-tzu from Yung Chun (Fukian) who died in 1876. Yung Chun is also another city in China where Muslim travellers frequently trade.

According to Chinese records, stated in the "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca Compiled From Chinese Sources" written by WP Groeneveldt in 1880, one Chinese Islamic trader arrived in Brunei in the 10th century. His name was P'u-lu-shieh. He was both a trader and a diplomat. SQ Fatimi writing in the Sociological Research Institute in Singapore in 1963 under an article entitled "Islam Comes to Malaysia", P'u-lu-shieh name is akin to Abu al-Layth.

The Brunei King at that time was named Hiang-ta. The arrival of the diplomat-trader from China was greeted with great ceremony. If this is so, Islam has actually arrived in Brunei in the year of 977.

One may discount the fact that the Muslim diplomat-trader did not do anything in Brunei but merely brought greetings and therefore one should not read too much into this. However the interesting thing was that the Brunei King's delegation to China to return the Emperor's greetings was headed by another Muslim by the name of P'u A-li (Abu Ali).

Based on this fact alone, Abu Ali must have held an important position in the Brunei Government if he was tasked to be Brunei's Ambassador in those days and even if the King of Brunei then was not himself a Muslim, some members of his royal court were Muslims.

A number of European historians claimed that Brunei was still not a Muslim nation until the 15th century. However, the Ming Shih, Book 325, a Chinese reference book noted that the King of Brunei in 1370 was Ma-ho-mo-sa. Some say that this should be read as Mahmud Shah. But local Brunei historians take this to refer to "Muhammad Shah" the first Islamic Sultan of Brunei.

Robert Nicholl, a former Brunei Museum Curator argued in another paper entitled "Notes on Some Controversial Issues in Brunei History" in 1980 that the name Ma-ho-mo-sa could be pronounced as Maha Moksha which means Great Eternity. MahaMokhsa would make it a Buddhist name. Nicholl goes on to argue that even the Brunei Sultan who died in Nanjing in 1408 was not a Muslim. Another European Historian, Pelliot, Ma-na-jo-kia-nai-nai was reconstituted as MajarajahGyana (nai). But the closest title would have been Maharaja Karna. However Brunei historians have stated that the King was Sultan Abdul Majid Hassan who would have been the second Sultan of Brunei.

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Section 2

2.1 Contemporary Sunni-Shia Relation of Tensions

Religious sects in Islam are politico-religious not religio-political which means that the religious divisions between the Sunni and Shia are based on the disagreements over the question of political succession after the death of Prophet Muhammad and not over religious/theological differences over his teachings as contained in the teachings of the Qur'an.

Dispute over the issue of political succession led to the rise of Ummayads and the Shia Ali – party of Ali which over centuries turn into the difference between the Sunni and Shia as sects with different political theologies.The early Alid Shia were made up of Ghulat(extremist group)[13]

and between the IsmailiShia (Seveners)[14] (made up of the Nizari– Mustali – Druze Shia) and the Ithnaashari (Imamiyyah/Twelvers).[15]

While the Sunnis were divided into over different interpretation between different schools of theologies (which are both hermeneutical and political) such as the *Mutazilah, Maturidiya,Ash'ariya andAthari* (followers of Ahmad IbnHanbal, IbnTaymiyyah) and also represented today in the forms of the Barelvi/Deobandi/Salafi (early Salaf, Islamic modernists and Salafi-Wahhabi of today). The sectarian historywithin Islam has been a source of conflict between the Muslims.[16] The Qur'an does not support sectarianism.

$$إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ$$

"As for those who divide their religion and break up into shias (sects), you have no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did." (Qur'an, 6:159)

The transliteration of the Arabic reads:

Inna allatheenafarraqoodeenahumwakanooshia' an lastaminhum fee shay-in innamaamruhumilaAllahithu mmayunabbi-ohumbimakanooyafAAaloona

"As for those who divide their religion and break up into shias (sects), you have no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did." (Qur'an, 6:159)

Recent political events mentioned below have exacerbated Sunni-Shia tensions at the global level.

1) The Iran–Iraq War (1980-1988) the armed conflict between Iran and Ba'athist Iraq supported by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and USA directed against the spread of Islamism into the authoritarian Sunni states in the Middle East.

2) The emergence of Iraq as the first Arab Shia state in the Middle East after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and end of the rule Saddam Hussein has led to serious Sunni-Shia conflict today extending from Morocco to Indonesia.

3) The event of Arab Spring 2011 also witnessed Sunni-Shia conflict in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Syria.[17]

4) Sunni ulama such as Yusuf Qaradawi and Shaikh of al-Azhar have called for stopping the rise of Shiism in Sunni countries.

5) Over the period of last one year, Indonesia and Malaysia have seen the sectarian conflict between the Sunni and Shia at the national level.

6) King Abdullah II of Jordan, talks of the "Shia Crescent" i.e. countries where Shi'a Muslims form a dominant majority are Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Iran, Bahrain and Iraq. The shape of these countries put together resembles a crescent to be distinguished from Sunni neighbors. Shia minorities also exist in Turkey, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, India, UAE, and Syria.

7) The popular Sunni support for Hizbullah and Hamas in the Middle East, is critiqued by the rulers and their *ulama.*

2.2 Attempts at *Taqrīb* -Sunni-Shia Reconciliation

There have been several attempt at reconciling and building peaceful relations between the Sunni and the Shia. For example, in modern times the famous 1959 al-Azhar fatwa by Mahmud

Shaltut, "The Ja'fary school of thought which is also known as al-shiaal-ImamiyahAthna-asharee is a school of thought which is religiously correct to follow as other Sunni Schools of thought."[18]

The politico-religious tensions between the two Muslim sects in contemporary times have been on the rise since the success of the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 when the Sunni states engaged in activities aimed at preventing the spread of the effects of that revolution into their sphere. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the phenomena of increase in the Sunni-Shia entrenchment and militancy in the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia whose effects are seen until today.

Currently the sectarian tension is being worsened by the controversy over Sunni-Shia conversion taking place from Sudan, Egypt and Jordan to Thailand and Indonesia with Malaysia clamping down Shia proselytization within its territory. Thus there is an urgent need for reviving Sunni-Shia efforts towards *taqrīb* - rapprochement as a serious undertaking from the level of street mosque to the national level. and the need for its serious undertaking today.

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The phenomena of taqrīb (rapprochement) is not something new, ijtihād by fuqaha - jurists such as SayyidJamaluddin al-Afghani, Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Shaykh Muhammad Shaltut, Imam Khomeini, AbulAlaMaududi and philosophers like Muhammad Iqbal, Ali Shariati, Abdul Rahman Wahid -Gus Dur have engaged in this activity.[19] For example, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani sought to build, "supra-sectarian approach to various trains (sic) of Islamic thought affected Muslim milieus of his time and inspired them with a better understanding of their common heritage regardless of their doctrinal differences."[20]

MaulanaAbulAlaMaududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami to taqrīb. MaulanaMaududi undertook efforts to reinterpret Shi'a doctrines within the broader perspective of Islamist discourse. He welcomed the 1979 Iranian revolution and also played a leading role in the establishment of *MilliYikjahatiCouncil* - Council of National Unity in Pakistan with the aim to put an end to Sunni-Shia sectarian violence in that country.

On the Shia side, the following theological works set precedence for building Sunni-Shia unitye.g. Ayatullah Muhammad HusaynBurujirdi's regards proto-Sunni traditions as the background for Shī'ī jurisprudence and comparative fiqh – jurisprudential work suc as, *al Fiqh 'alā al-Madhāhib al-Khamsah* – Islamic Law According to the Five Schools by Lebanese Muhammad JawadMughniyyah.

In Iran, Imam Khomeini and AyatollahTaleghani instituted*Salat al-Jumah -* Friday congregational prayer(a largely Sunni practice as an effort towards *taqrib*) they both gave priority to the concept of *maslahah-* public welfare in Shia Iran.

Contemporary efforts and approaches towards *taqrīb* such as the work done by the *Dār al-Taqrīb*, the publication of *Risālat al-Taqrīb*/Journal of Rapprochement from Tehran and the annual celebration of "Week of Unity" instituted by the Iranian government since 1984 are also worthy

examples of continuation of *taqrīb* efforts amidst intense Sunni-Shia conflict which are largely based in ignorance rather than scholarship.

Prof. Ahmad KazemiMoussavi,has said that in spite of efforts of rapprochement there lurk many fears on the both sides of the sectarian divide. Yet, there are chances to develop inter-school dialogue. He concludes by saying, "If there is any possibility for Sunni-Shii understanding it lies in the emergence of a new generation of *mujtahids* who can combine their knowledge of the tradition with critical analytical scholarship in an effort to revive Islamic values. This effort has the potential to create new priorities which would leave behind historical differences and generate a natural dialogue wherein such differences could fade into the background."[21]

Prof. Abdul Karim Crow has remarked that we have to move away from the in vogue "deformist" mentality misleadingly labeled as "Salafist," "Deobandi" or "Wahhabi" which is, "uncompromising in … condemnation of diversity, critical thinking and spiritual experience represented by other streams of Islamic thought and practice, particulary the Sufis and the Shia"[22] has emerged as a barrier to intra-Muslim understanding. While the Qur'an calls for Muslim unity:

$$\text{إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ}$$

"*Surely, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher..»* (Qur'an 21:92)

Prof. Crow comments that, "If reflective Muslims today fail to seize the opportunity of better understanding the nature of this division in the body of the Ummah through well-informed critical re-thinking of its historical shaping and evolution, then they shall be condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past."[23]

In our present times, two prominent Sunni and Shia *ulama*viz.,Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi of Qatar and Ayatullah Muhammad Ali Taskhiri of Iran, jointly initiated efforts towards *taqrīb* but they have now fallen out in current times due to several reasons such as Middle Eastern politics and attempts to convert Sunni into Shia and Shia into Sunni.

The present tensions and violent conflicts perpetuated in the name of sectarianism around the Muslim world is in direct contradiction to the Qur'anic advise of, "And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate." (Qur'an 3:103)

2.3 Imam Khomeini on Shia-Sunni Unity

The 1979 Islamic revolution is a landmark event in the history of Islamic revivalism in the Muslim world which at that time was struggle with the impact of secular authoritarian political regimes, Western model of education and its impact on knowledge, thought and culture, the global Cold War, etc and the influence of capitalism and communism as political ideologies.

It was a period during which Islamic movement in Iran led by Imam Khomeini, Dr. Ali Shariati and others were struggling against the authoritarian dictatorship of pro-American Shah of Iran, while in Pakistan, MaulanaMaudadi of Jamaat e Islam, in Egypt Hasan al-Banna, Syed Qutb and other leaders of Ikhwan al-Muslimoon, in Malaysia PAS, ABIM led by Anwar Ibrahim, in Indonesia Muhamadiyah, NU and non-partisan Islamic scholar and activist NurcholishMadjid and others, in Tunisia Rachid al-Ghannoushi were all engaged in confronting the authoritarian, secular regimes of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Anwar Sadat, Suharto and Ben Ali by asserting the Islamic identity of their countries with emphasis on respect for human dignity, political democracy, removing corruption,

need for socio-economic welfare for the poor sections of society and adding Islamic epistemological (not only theological) dimension to knowledge to educational process.[24] They all also called for Sunni-Shia unity.

The success of the Islamic revolution in Iran was a great boost to Muslim morale which was at its lowest point during that era. The revolution was welcome by Muslims worldwide, its impact in the form of desecularization of politics, project of Islamization of knowledge, economics, banking, social-welfare and Muslim feminism (the appearing of hijab/chador),etc, raising fear of insecurity and loss of global power among the super powers such as USA, USSR and undemocratic regimes in the Third World.

Amidst this Imam Khomeini called for building up of Shia-Sunni unity. In his message to the Hajj pilgrims in 1980, which still remains valid for us in 21st century,[25] Imam Khomeini called for:

1) unity of Muslim brotherhood based on shared belief in *tauhid* - the fundamental religious belief shared by all Muslims;
2) Muslim need for awareness about the enemies plans to sow dissensions among Muslims;
3) Muslim alertness about nationalism programs within Muslim countries which are aimed at creation of enmity between the Muslims on the basis of national and ethnic identities;
4) need to be cognizant of the sinister plans to create dissensions between Sunnis and Shias, when the fact is that they both believe in same God, same prophet and the same Qur'an. In this context, Imam Khomeini remarked:

"Our Sunni brothers in the Muslim world must know that the agents of the satanic superpowers do not desire the welfare of Islam and Muslims. The Muslims must dissociate themselves from them, and pay no heed to their decisive propaganda. I extend the hand of brotherhood to all committed Muslims in the world and ask them to regard the Shi'is as cherished brothers and thereby frustrate the sinister plans of foreigners."[26]

Unfortunately, Muslim unawareness, ignorance or misinformation about the above matters lead to our own tragic problems resulting in the weakening and the splitting of the *ummah*by forces of terrorism from within and outside. It is time to respond to them dynamically.

2.4 Imam Khomeini's Proposal For Building Sunni-Shia Unity

Imam Khomeini remarked:

"Today, world peace is such that all countries are under the political influence of the superpowers; they observe a control everywhere and have schemes for defeating every group. The most important of these is sowing discord among brothers.

Muslims should be awake, Muslims should be alert that if a dispute takes

place among Sunni and Shia brothers, it is harmful to all of us, it is harmful to all Muslims. Those who want to sow discord are neither Sunni nor Shia, they are agents of the superpowers and work for them.

Those who attempt to cause discord among our Sunni and Shia brothers are people who conspire for the enemies of Islam and want the enemies of Islam to triumph over Muslims. They are the supporters of America and some are supporters of the Soviet Union.

I hope that through considering this Islamic precept - that all Muslims are brothers - all Islamic countries will triumph against the superpowers and succeed in actualizing all Islamic ordinances.

Muslims are brothers and will not be segregated by the pseudo-propaganda sponsored by corrupt elements. The source of this matter - that Shias should be on one side and Sunni on the other - is on the one hand ignorance and on the other hand propaganda of the foreigners.

If Islamic brotherhood comes to the fore among Islamic countries, such will become a great power which none of the global powers will be able to cope with.

Shi'ites and Sunnis brothers should avoid every kind of dispute. Today, discord among us will only benefit those who follow neither Shia nor Hanafi. They neither want this nor that to exist, and know the way to sow dispute between you and us. We must pay attention that we are all Muslims and we all believe in the Qur'an; we all belive in Tawheed and must work to serve the Qur'an and Tawheed."[27]

Imam Khomeini has also said:

O Muslims! Keep Away From the Disuniters!

O you powerful Muslims! Beware! Know yourselves and let the world know you.

Cast aside the sectarian and regional disputes, which have been created by theWorld-devouring powers and their corrupt agents for the purpose of plundering you and treading upon your human and Islamic honor.

You are to cast away, in accordance with the judgment of Allah, the Most High, and the Glorious Qur'an, the disuniters, such as the mercenary akhunds and the nationalists who know nothing of Islam and of the interests of the Muslims. The harms of these people to Islam are no less than those of the world-devourers. They show Islam upside-down and pave the way for the plunderers. May Allah, the Most High, deliver Islam and the Muslim countries from the evil of the world-devourers and their affiliated and connected agents

The Difference Between the Shias and the Sunnis Is the Want of the Foreigners

If there happens a dispute between the Iranian nation and the other nations, or between the Sunni brothers and the Shia brothers, it will be to the disadvantage of all of us, of all Muslims.

Those who want to cause disunion are neither of the Sunnis nor of the Shias. They are the directors of the Super Powers and they are serving them.

Those who try to create disunity between our Sunni brothers and our brothers of the Shia, are the groups who plot for the enemies of Islam. They want to help the enemies of Islam to overcome the Muslims. They are the followers of America, and some are the followers of the USSR. The Muslims, wherever they may be must be aware that disunion between a country in the farthest end of the world and another one on the other end of the world, does not mean a local dispute.

The world of today is not like before. It will not be the question concerning only that part of the world. If there is a dispute among you brothers in Iran, it will concern the whole world, and if there is a dispute between the Iranian brothers and the Iraqi brothers, i.e., the Iraqi nation, it is a matter concerning the whole world, not a local matter between Iran and Iraq.

It is considered in the whole world, as those in the world who want to put the profits of the world in their own pocket and to impose their control over the whole world, they exploit any disunion which may happen between the Shia brothers and the Sunni brothers in Iran. Similarly, if it happened between our

Iranian brothers and the brothers who are in Pakistan, they exploit the situation, too.

We must be awake and know that the divine judgement says: "The believers are but brothers" (Surah al Hujurat: 10). There is nothing among them other than brotherhood, and they are obliged to have brotherly conduct. It is a political point to have all the Muslim nations-nearly a milliard in number- be brothers to one another, in which case no harm may befall them and none of the Super Powers will be able to transgress them. O brothers! Pay attention to this!

Sunni and Shia Brothers Should Avoid All Disputes.

A group of the Muslims are Shia, a group of the Muslims are Sunni, a group areHanafi, a group are Hanbali, a group are Akhbari. Basically it was erroneous from the beginning to suggest such ideas. In a society where all want to serve Islam and to be for Islam, such matters should not be suggested. We all are brothers and are

together. It is merely that your ulama issued a set of fatwas and you followed them in imitation, and so you became Hanafi. Another group became Shafi`i and followed him. Another group followed the fatwa's of the Imam Sadiq and became Shia. These should not be causes of difference. We should not have any difference or contradiction. We all are brother's.

The Shia and Sunni brothers should avoid all differences. Today, our differences will be in the interest of those who believe neither in Shiism nor in the Hanafi or in the other sects. They want neither this nor that to be. Their way is to cause differences between us. We must realize that we are all Muslims, followers of the Qur'an and of tawhid, and that we must toil for the Qur'an and to serve tawhid

The Muslims of the World Are to Join Together

They are uselessly trying to create disunity. The Muslims are brothers and would not be disunited by the evil propaganda of some corrupt elements.

The origin of this question concerning Shia and Sunni, the one on one side and the other on the other side, is caused by ignorance and by the propaganda waged by the foreigners.

They even cause disunion among the Shias themselves. They do the same among the Sunni sects, too, placing one group against another. Today all the sects of the Muslims are facing the Satanic powers who want to uproot Islam, because they do know that what can be dangerous to them is Islam, and that the greatest danger is in the unity of the Muslim nations.

Today is the day on which all the Muslims of the whole world must come together. Today is not the day for a group in a place to say: "Only we" and another group in another place say: "Only we". Today is the day on which all are to be united on the basis of the rule of Islam and the Judgements of the Qur'an.

They are not to dispute. The dispute among the Muslims, in any way it may be, is prohibited by the Qur'an. Dispute will bring them failure and effaces the attractive qualities of man and nation. This is the command of Allah, the Generous.

Those who try to create disunion, and yet claim to be Muslims, have not found the Islam whose Book is the Qur'an, the Islam whose ka`bah is its Qiblah. They do not believe in Islam. The ones who believe in Islam are those who accept the Qur'an and its contents, the content which says: "The believers are but brothers".

So they must comply with what brotherhood requires.Brotherhood requires that if some misfortune happened to you all the other brothers, wherever they maybe, sympathize with you. If you are happy, all will be happy, too.[28]

In other words, the Muslims believe in same Allah, same prophet Muhammad and same Qur'an so why should there be difference, conflict and violence against each other? Rather there should be intra-religious tolerance, respect for diversity and dialogue. Thus the *Ulama* who are influential members of the society and also the custodians of Islam having direct influence on the Muslim community from village to the country are expected to act with responsibly and should be sources for building unity not disunity.

On the other hand, academics need to do the same in the area of education for the formation of Muslim unity of mind, thought and society amidst diversity.

The reality today is that the Muslim world is victim of terrorism both from outside and also inside. This is largely the result of external interference in the Muslim world and also the Muslim disunity. Only Muslim commitment to the unity of religion and *ummah*and working for the upliftment of the *ummatanMuhammadan* can prepare us to face and defeat terrorisms.

Conclusion - Building Culture of Resistance to Disunity

Sunni Islam in Southeast Asia has always been cosmopolitan, moderate and tolerant. It has been shaped by the Perso-Indian Sufism as Islam became the dominant religion of maritime Southeast Asia.

This paper has shown that Islam in Southeast Asian has always been multi-ethnic, multi-cultural as it co-existed with Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. The recent rise of anti-Shia sentiment in Southeast Asia is largely due to the coming of exclusivist theological influences from the Middle East spread through the distribution of puritanical interpretations of the Qur'an, Hadith corpus, free dates during the month of Ramadhan!

It is critically necessary that the Southeast Asian *ulama* start out of the theological boxes in which they are trained be it in Middle East or in Southeast Asia.

The coming 2015 formation of the ASEAN community and the progression of democracy will not benefit the Southeast Asian Muslims adopt exclusivist sectarian interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith for this leads to formation of bias, hatred, conflict and violence between Sunni and the Shia and also with other religious minorities in the region. Such religious attitude and practice in spite of theological unity – Allah, Muhmmad- Quran as the basis of Muslim identity does augur well for the Muslim future in ASEAN. There is a need to heed to the advise of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani that, "Do not cut the head of religion with the sword of religion."

Sectarian conflict between Southeast Asian Muslims will destroy the bright future that awaits Muslim Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia along with China are located in the economically advanced and multicultural zone of the world. Muslim disunity in Southeast Asia will bring down one of the only two advanced economic parts of the Muslim world, the other being Turkey.

It is time for Southeast Asian Muslim to think of their future critically by shun the promotion of intra-Muslim conflict and violence.

ASEAN Muslim countries with their rich historical experience with in moderate approach to Islam, openness to multiculturalism can be an great example to learn from for the other Muslim cultural-linguistic zones in current age and the challenge of globalization. The choice is between self-destruction or self-construction through Muslim religious identity.

It is time to build the Muslim culture of resistance to sectarianism, this can be done by building and implementing policies in the interest of Islam and the *ummatic* unity. The policy makers should respond to the sectarian conflict between the Sunni and Shia in Southeast Asia by commitment to Islamic conscience of unity. This requires:

- tolerance for diversity and practice the ethic of disagreement, without engaging in violence;
- strengthening of Muslim consciousness of unity.

These can be done by promoting educational process which does not spread sectarian bias and prejudice where Islam is viewed as a world civilization of unity in diversity; made up of Persian, Arabian, Egyptian, Indian, African, European, Central Asian cultural linguistic zones which make up the composite Islamic worldview and culture. Such an approach to Islamic civilization by politicians, educators and the *ulama* will help remove the evil of Sunni-Shia disunity. The accomplishment of such Muslim worldview requires the promotion of mutual understanding, dialogue, ecumenism and tolerance. Unfortunately, the Muslims lag behind in this activity more than any other religious

groups which makes Muslim infighting between the Sunni and Shia to be become a permanent part of Muslim psyche.

The current worldwide intra-MuslimSunni-Shia tensions, conflict and violence from the Maghrib (Morocco) to Nusantara the name of sectarianism are in direct and clear contradiction the Qur'anicteaching of:

$$\text{وَاعْتَصِمُواْ بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيعًا وَلاَ تَفَرَّقُواْ}$$

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate." (Qur'an 3:103)

Otherwise:

"We cut off the head of religion only with the sword of religion." Jamal al-din al-Afghani

Endnotes:

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[3] Willem Floor, "COMMERCE vi. In the Safavid and Qajar periods "http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/commerce-vi

[4] M. Ismail Marcinkowski, "THAILAND-IRAN RELATIONS" http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/thailand-iran-relations

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[11] RozanYunos, " The Golden History of Islam in Brunei" 8 March 2010, http://news.brunei.fm/2010/03/08/the-golden-history-of-islam-in-brunei/

[12] RozanYunos, "The Golden History of Islam in Brunei" http://news.brunei.fm/2010/03/08/the-golden-history-of-islam-in-brunei/

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"Traditionally, the first of the *ghulāt* was Abd Allah ibn *Saba'*, who may have denied that Ali had died and predicting his return (*raj'a*), which was considered one form of *ghulū*. Also, the notion of the absence (*ghayba*) of an imam who is due to return and establish justice as mahdi seem to have appeared first among the *ghulāt*. Other positions which seem to have been considered *ghulū* by early writers were the (public) condemnation (*sabb*) of Abu Bakr and Umar as usurpers of Ali's right to be a successor of Muhammad, and the notion that the true imams were infallible (*ma'ṣūm*).

In later periods, mainstream Shia groups, especially the Imamiyya, have identified three acts that have been judged as "extremism" (*ghulū*). These acts of heresy are: the claim that God sometimes takes abode in the bodies of the Imams (*ḥulūl*), the belief in metempsychosis (*tanāsukh*), and considering Islamic law to be not obligatory (*ibāḥa*), similar to antinomianism." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghulat

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[27] "Shia - Sunni Unity- In the Opinion of Imam Khomeini available at: http://www.introducingislam.org/info/khomunity/title.php

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