



Strengthening Buddhist-Muslim Relations in Southeast Asia

Islam and Buddhism As Unifying Forces for Peace and Harmony in ASEAN Region

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Introduction

3 Parts Presentation:

1. History of Muslim-Buddhist Relations and Islam-Buddhism Parallels.

2. Islam in Southeast Asia – An Overview.

3. Case studies of Islam-Buddhism relations and conflicts in contemporary Southeast Asia

PART 1

1. History of Muslim-Buddhist Relations and Islam-Buddhism Parallels.

Approach/Methodology

Based in a Muslim's approach to history of religion:

- non-polemical to understand the place of Buddhism in our shared common religious history in Southeast Asia.

- it employs Wilfred Cantwell Smith's reference to "unity among the religions"

i.e. humankind shares a singular religious history.

This is done without:

- 1) imposing the finality of Muhammad's prophetic

position on the Buddhist;

- 2) or imposing the Buddhahood of Siddhartha on the Muslims; for both positions are

unacceptable at the institutionalized levels of Islam and Buddhism. (Smith, 1990, p. 4

Dalai Lama and the Muslims





Islam and Buddhism

- ❖ Indonesia is the land of the Buddha and Muhammad. Palembang, Borobudur, Prambanan and Aceh represent the Indonesian synthesis of Islam and Buddhism - the two main traditions of the ASEAN identity.
- ❖ This presentation about what role can Indonesian Islam and Buddhism can play in fostering peaceful coexistence in Southeast Asia.
- ❖ Southeast Asia is the only part of the part of the Muslim world today which has direct relations with the Buddhism in terms of co-existence.
- ❖ Thus while the rest of the Muslim world may ignore Buddhism, Muslims of Southeast Asia cannot afford to do that.

Islam and Buddhism

This topic raises important question for study and research in Southeast Asian Islamic Studies.

- ❖ Need for new approaches to Islamic Studies in Nusantara.
- ❖ I see Buddhist-Islam conflict emerging in Nusantara very soon in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand.
- ❖ Largely, rooted in mutual ignorance which is eroding trust between the Muslims and the Buddhists in ASEAN region.
- ❖ This needs to be addressed urgently.

Islamic Studies and Asian Religions

1. Need for Islamic Studies to engage with the Asian religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto.
2. Develop a new crop of scholars, researchers and educators who know Asian languages – Sanskrit, Pali, Thai, Chinese, Japanese religions and cultures for building bridges of understanding, dialogue is a far cry.
3. Asian Muslims have abandoned the study of Asian religions since the beginning of the colonial era until today.

Islamic Studies and Asian Religions

- ❖ Islam and Buddhism are the two largest religions in the Southeast Asia and the ASEAN - Islam 42% Buddhism 40%
- ❖ Rise of Islamophobia with Asian face rooted in local ethno-religious conflicts and the global imaging of Islam as religion of violence, terrorism and danger to world peace.
- ❖ Currently only a handful of Southeast Muslim academics are trained in the modern academic study and research of Asian religions of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Hinduism.
- ❖ And develop strategies for the tensions between Islam and them.

Task for ASEAN Schools and Universities

- ❖ Buddhist Universities in Thailand already studying other religions. Tolerant towards others but firmly grounded in their own religion.
- ❖ Need for the Muslim Universities in ASEAN countries to study Asian religions especially Buddhism as taught by their followers not us.
- ❖ Intercultural Studies of religions in Southeast Asia. Past and present – **Indonesia was converted to Islam by Jihad.**
- ❖ Study ASEAN languages

Building the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community ASCC

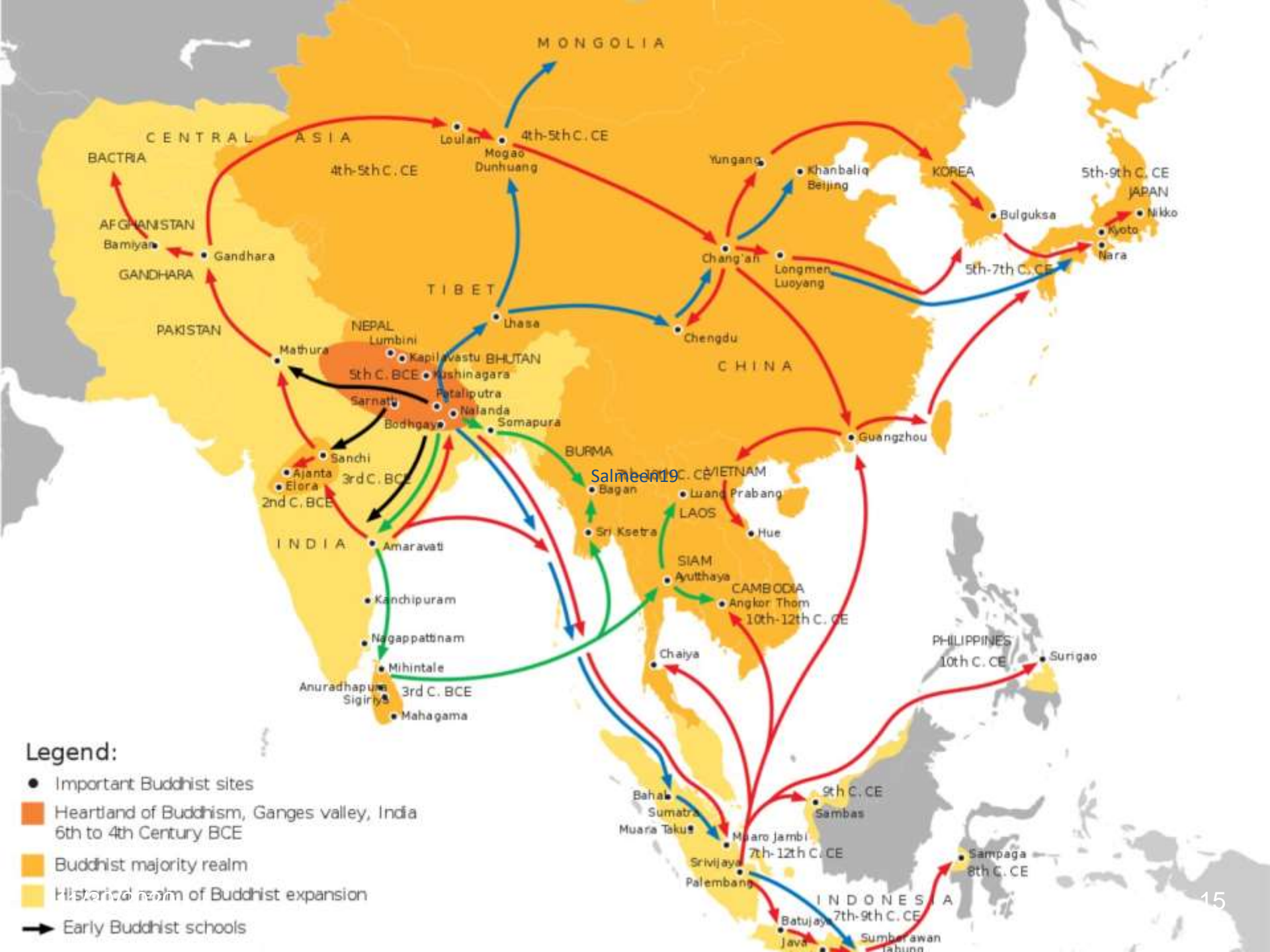
- ❖ The semi-secular, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural countries of the ASEAN have agreed to form a people-centered ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) for:
- ❖ the promotion and strengthening of cooperation in areas that address the well-being of the people.
- ❖ ASCC will be an inclusive, people-centered community where the well-being, livelihood and welfare of the people are enhanced.

Islamic Studies for Building the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

- ❖ ASCC emphasizes close cooperation in the following areas:
 - ❖ - Human development;
 - ❖ - Social welfare and protection;
 - ❖ - Social justice and rights;
 - ❖ - Environmental sustainability;
 - ❖ - Building the ASEAN identity; and
 - ❖ - Narrowing the development gap.

Islamic Studies for Building the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community

- ❖ ASEAN Islamic Studies has to move away from its current religious exclusivist mode of pedagogy.
- ❖ Need to move away from the dominant Southeast Asian ethnocentric understanding of Islam.
- ❖ Muslim-Buddhist understanding and dialogue is needed.





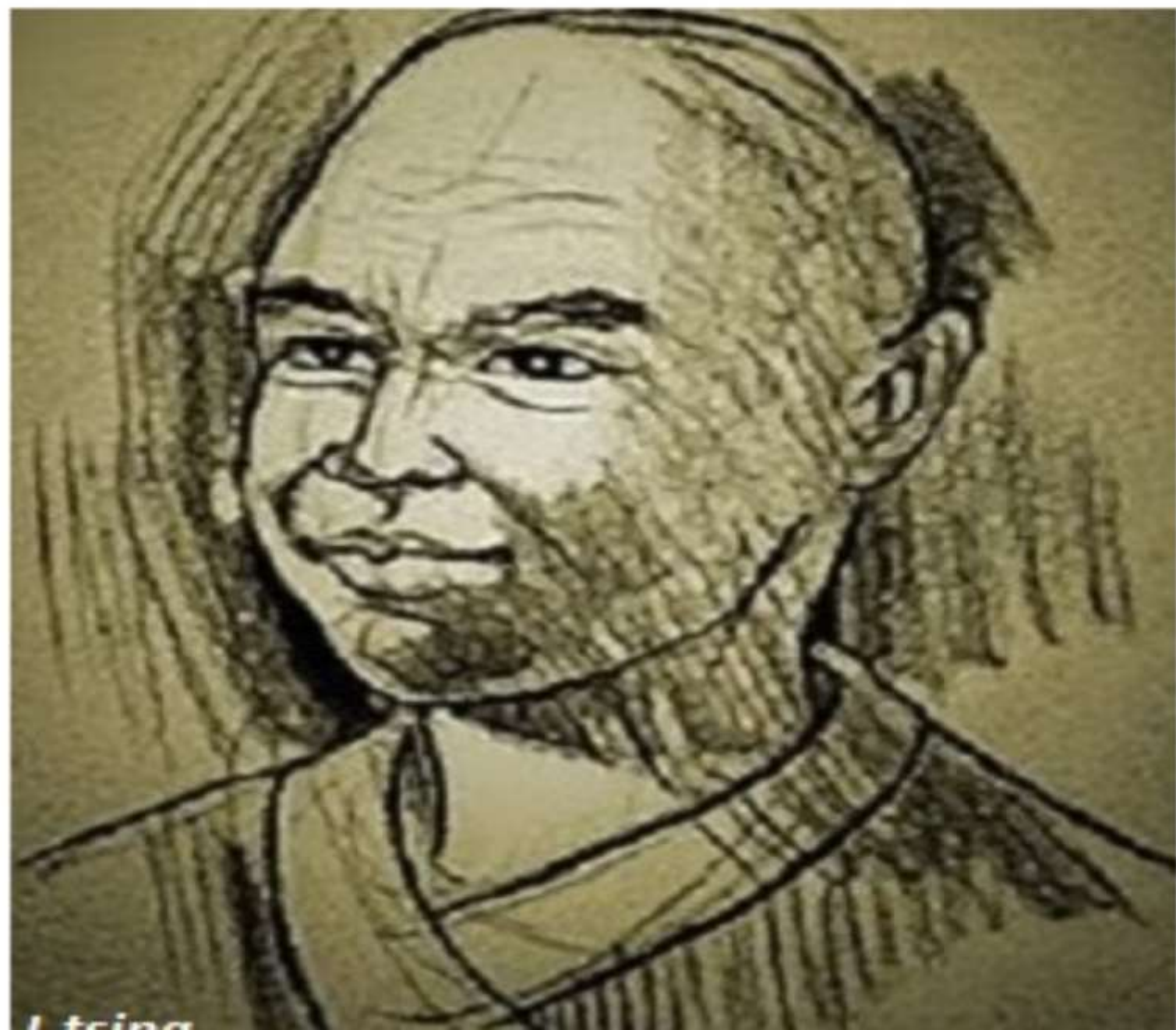
Srivijaya – Past Buddhism - Islam

Srivijaya was then known as the wealthy trade hub as well as the center for Buddhist learnings.

- Monks from China, India and Java used to congregate here to learn and teach the lessons of Buddha.
- 671 BCE famous Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing or I Ching stayed in Palembang for six months on his way to India. He wrote that there were more than 1.000 Buddhist monks in the Palembang city and advised Chinese monks to study Sanskrit in Palembang before proceeding to India.
- Srivijaya kings traded in gold, spices, silks, ivories and ceramics with foreign merchants who sailed in from China, India and Java. In 1025, the Chola king from south India destroyed the Srivijaya kingdom.
- Chinese admiral Cheng Ho, emissary of the Chinese emperor visited Palembang in the 15th century.

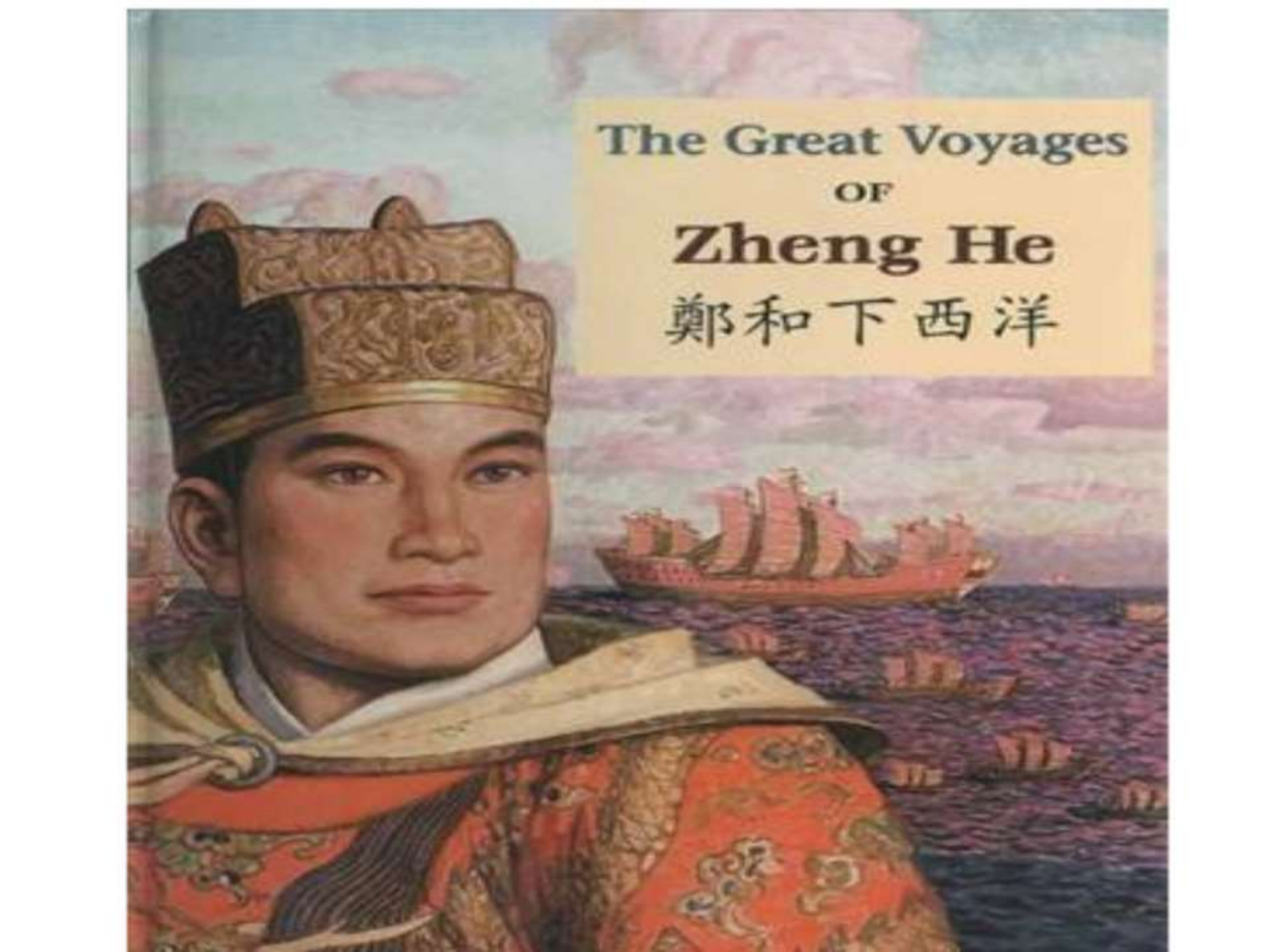






L. tring



The background of the book cover is a painting of Zheng He. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a tall, ornate crown with gold and black details. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the right. He wears a red robe with gold cloud patterns and a white collar. In the background, a large red Chinese sailing ship with multiple masts and sails is on the water. Other smaller ships are visible in the distance. The sky is a mix of blue and pinkish clouds.

The Great Voyages

OF

Zheng He

鄭和下西洋





Record of Islam and Buddhism Meeting and Dialogue

Encounters between Islam and Buddhism are as old as Islam itself.

The first encounter between Islam and Buddhist communities took place in the middle of the seventh century C.E.

Early Muslims extended the Qur'anic category of *ahl al- Kitab* (People of the Book or revealed religion) to Hindus and Buddhists in Sindh.

During the second half of the eighth century C.E., Central Asian Muslims translated many Buddhist works into Arabic. Arabic titles such as *Bilawhar wa Budhasaf* and *Kitab al-Budd* are clear evidence of Muslim learning about Buddhism.

Islam-Buddhism encounter is mentioned in *al- Firhist* of Ibn al- Nadim (d. 995 C.E.)

The Barmak family of Central Asia, played an influential during the early Abbasid caliphate.

Record of Islam and Buddhism Meeting and Dialogue

al- Tabari (d. 923 C.E.), reported that Buddhist idols were sold in a Buddhist temple next to the Makh mosque in the market of the city of Bukhara in modern Uzbekistan.

‘ Abd al- Karim al- Shahrastani (1086–1153 C.E.), in a section called *Ara’ al- Hind* (The Views of the Indians) in his *Kitab al- Milal wa ’l- Nihal* (Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects), identifies the Buddha with the Qur’anic figure of al- Khidr as a seeker of enlightenment.

Rashid al-Din (1247-1318 C.E.) of the Persian Il- khanid court, wrote an introduction to Buddhism in his monumental *Jami al- tawarikh* (*Compendium of Chronicles*), aiming to make Buddhism accessible to Muslims.

The 12th -15th centuries encounters between Islam and Hindu-Buddhist civilization in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand was of a mystic orientation.

The *pondoks* or *pasenterens*, Muslim religious schools of Southeast Asia, seem also to have been influenced by the Hindu and Buddhist temple schools

The Remaining Buddhist Sites in the Muslim World –

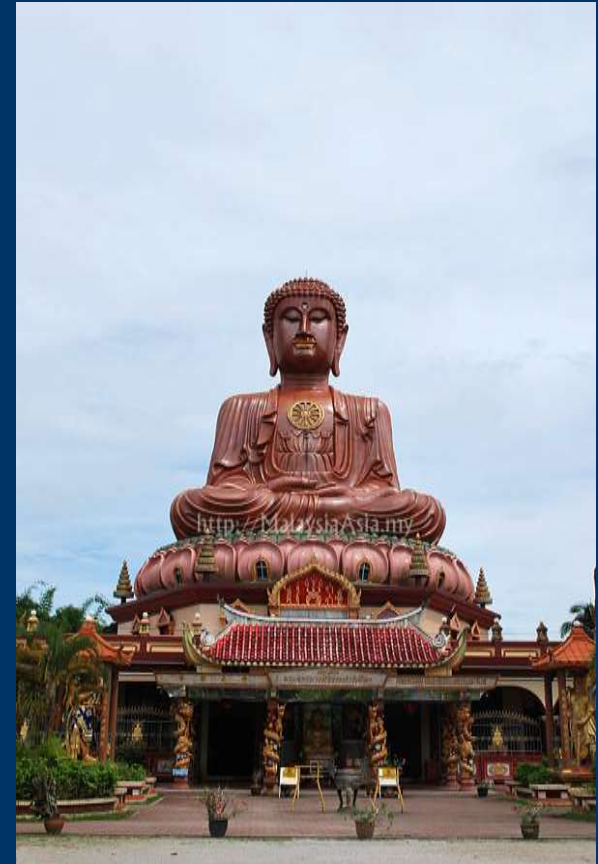
IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA- NOT THE MIDDLE WEST – LIVING EXAMPLES OF MUSLIM TOLERANCE





Wat Machimmaram – a Thai Buddhist Temple with a giant sitting Buddha statue located in the Tumpat district of Kelantan, about 20 km from Kota Bharu.

There is an ethnic Thai community here in an overwhelmingly Muslim state.



Buddhist Monuments in the Muslim World - This is the largest sitting Buddha statue in Asia at Wat Machimmaran in Tumpat, Kelantan, Malaysia.



Buddhist Monuments in the Muslim World - Borobudur, or Barabudur (Indonesian: Candi Borobudur) is a 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple in Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, as well as the world's largest Buddhist temple, and also one of the greatest Buddhist monuments in the world. The central dome is surrounded by 72 Buddha statues, each seated inside a perforated stupa.

Built in the 9th century during the reign of the Sailendra Dynasty, the temple was designed in Javanese Buddhist architecture, which blends the Indonesian indigenous cult of ancestor worship and the Buddhist concept of attaining Nirvana



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Muslim pioneers in History and Phenomenology of Religion 11th - 13th Centuries

- Abd al- Karim al- Shahrastani (1086–1153 CE) an influential Persian historian of religions and a historiographer and the author of “*Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*” (lit. The Book of Religious Parties and Schools of Philosophy” was one of the pioneers an objective and philosophical approach to the study of religions.
- According to him the Qur’anic perspective of the universal institution of prophethood, the **Buddha is one among 124,000 prophets that have appeared in human history in different places and different languages.**
- As per Eric J. Sharpe, “the honor of writing the first history of religion in world literature” belongs to al- Shahrastani, he described and systematized all the religions of the then known world as far as China. (Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (Duckworth Publishers, 2009, p. 11.)

Muslim pioneers in History and Phenomenology of Religion 11th - 13th Centuries

- Rashid al-Din, (born 1247—died 1318), Persian statesman and historian. He was a Jewish convert to Islam and the author of a universal history, *Jamī' al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles). He was vizier to the Mongol Ilkhans Gazan (1295-1304) and Oljeitu (1304-16), he compiled a book containing not only materials on Islamic and Persian history, but also on the Mongols and other peoples with whom they came into contact: Turks, Franks, Jews, Chinese, and Indians. His book has been referred to as the “first world history.”
- In his works he aimed at making Buddhism accessible to Muslims.
- Sheila S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid Al-Din's Illustrated History of the World* (Khalili Collections, 1995).

A folio from the *Jami' al-tawarikh*
(Compendium of Chronicles)

Shakyamuni offering fruit to the devil,
from the life of the Buddha

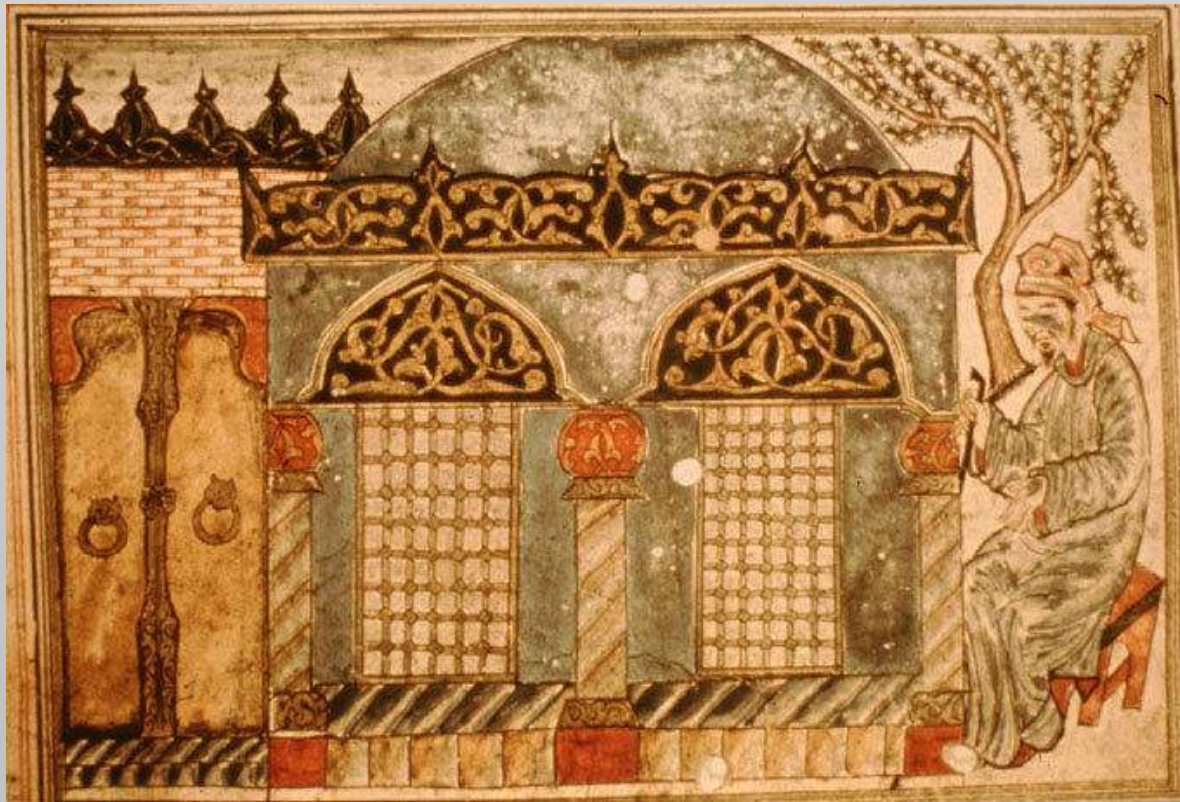


A folio from the *Jami' al-tawarikh*
(Compendium of Chronicles)
The Grove of Jetavanam (Rsipatana) -
where the Buddha achieved Enlightenment



A folio from the *Jami' al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles)

Kushinagar, where the Buddha achieved Nirvana



Muslim pioneers of Study of Hinduism and Buddhism in the 11th - 13th Centuries–

- Hafiz-e Abru (Persian: حافظ ابرو) died June 1430, was a Persian historian working at the courts of Timurid rulers of Central Asia.
- Author of many historical and historico -geographical works in Persian, which were commissioned by the Mongol king Shahruk, the Timurid ruler of the 15th century.
- His book *Majma' al- tawarik* is a universal history up to the year 830/1426, written for Shahruk's son Baysongor.
- It discusses the pre-Islamic prophets, Muhammad and the caliphate and the dynasties contemporaneous with the Abbasids and the Mongols up to the death of Abu Said.

و سگهان را حاضر کرد و تعجب بر او نمود و خواب برشید ایشان نهاد از نانی و تفک بسیار با آنها و گفتند این خواب علامت می کند
 بر آنکه او را میری شود که پادشاه جهان بر او شهادت بود که خدا گشای و را عهد کند نهاد از آن خون مقدس استی او
 از نه ماه گذشت و بر رسید ماه ما را اسم تفریح بیای زقت و بدست راست میامی از میس کرده درین حال از وی خبری و او بود



شاکوی من سید کمال گفت و بهر چنین رود و سیرت و احوال شکر و ادب و صفی با هم داشتند گفت از هر یک
روزه می خوردم و مانند این بودی گفت از هر چنین سیرت با ما می آید و بعضی رشت ده خدش گفتی گفت

Fig. 7. Sakyamuni greeting a Brahmin (the dervish Vasishta). Herat, ca. 1425. From the *Majmaʿ al-Tawārikh* of Hafiz-i Abru. (Photo: courtesy C. L. David Foundation, Copenhagen)

Sakyamuni, known to the Brahmins as Gautama the Monk accompanied by his disciples, meets the hermit [called a dervish in the Persian] Vasishtha who leads a life of strict asceticism, taking nourishment only once in 72 days. To Sakyamuni's enquiry as to his physical and psychical decline, Vasishtha answers that this can be attributed to the asceticism which he imposes upon himself in order to obtain Paradise as a reward. Hereupon Sakyamuni teaches him that the abstinence inherent in this ascetic life cannot lead him to the true end because it arouses only feelings of anger and hate. Then Vasishtha implores to be shown the right Way.²⁹

and Sakyamuni instructs him how to attain this.

The artist has illustrated the text here as straightforwardly as the painter of the Buddha's birth. In the center of the page Śakyamuni gestures toward Vasishṭa at the right. Vasishṭa does not appear emaciated, but he is dressed as a holy man and holds a fly whisk. One of



Fig. 8. The appearance of Sakyamuni. Herat, ca. 1425. From the *Majma' al-Tawārikh* of Hafiz-i Abru. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Nasli M. Heeramaneeck Collection, Gift of Joan Palevsky. (Photo: courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Buddha's companions draws his forefinger to his lips in the standard Persian gesture of astonishment. Presumably he is shocked by Vasishta's appearance.

The last of the Persian depictions of the Buddha Sakyamuni of which we know the whereabouts is another rendition of the death of the Buddha and his attainment of nirvana (fig. 8). Recalling the text from the 1314 version of this scene, we will note the inclusion of the domed building in which Sakyamuni lies while the dark-skinned Indians watch him from outside. Unlike the earlier artist, the painter of this scene has taken up the challenge of portraying the Buddha inside the crystal mausoleum with no entrance. Conforming to the other Hafiz-i Abru illustrations, the painter has eschewed artistic license in favor of precision, and he thus succeeds in providing the visual equivalent of the text.

Neither this work nor the *Jamī*⁵ *al-Tavārikh* painting shows the beam of light that signals the Buddha's attainment of nirvana, so both scenes may represent the moment before that event. Although later the text

A Comparative Note

The first comprehensive academic study of Buddhism from Western Christian perspective was written in 1844 (19th century) by the French scholar of Sanskrit Eugène Burnouf titled - *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien*.

In early European view, the Buddha is of African origin, it is an idolatry religion and Buddhism is more of a threat to Christianity than Islam.

It set the ground for the beginning of the Western studies about Buddhism while the Muslim abandoned the study of Buddhism until today.

Over decades the content of Christian- Buddhist understanding changed and is more vibrant movement today.

See : Donald S. Lopez Jr, *From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha*, Reprint edition. (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

در راه طلب عاقل و دیوانه یکیست
در شیوه عشق خویش و بیگانه یکیست
آنرا که شراب وصل جانان دادند
در مذهب او کعبه و بتخانه یکیست

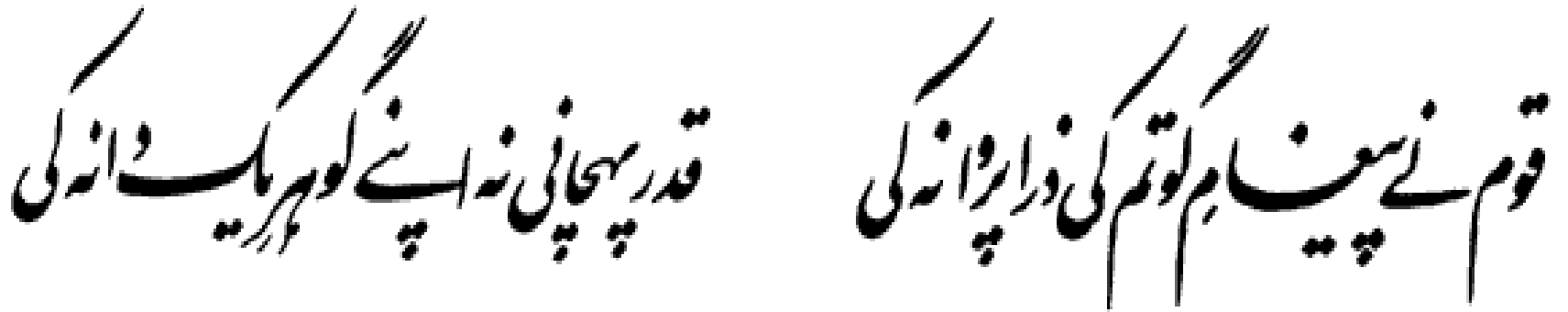
*"Dar rah-e taleb 'aghel wa diwaneh yekist;
Dar shuyuh-e ehsgkh khish wa biganeh yekist;
Anrah keh sharab-e wasl-e janan dadand -
Dar madhhab-e u Ka'abe wa butkhaneh yekist."*

*On truth's path, wise is mad, insane is wise.
In love's way, self and other are the same.
Having drunk the wine, my love, of being one with you,
I find the way to Mecca and **Bhutkhane** – Buddhist
monastery are the same.*

Rumi, Kulliyat-e Shams-e Tabrizi 302



Nanak



Qoum Ne Pegham-e-Gautam Ki Zara Parwa Na Ki
Qadar Na Pehchani Na Apne Gohar-e-Yak Dana Ki

The nation could not care less about Gautama's message—
It did not know the price of its unique pearl!

اے ابد قسمت ہے آواز حق سے خبر
غافل اپنے پھل کی شیرینی سے ہوتا ہے شجر

Ah! Bad-Qismat Rahe Azwaz-e-Haq Se Be Khabar
Ghafil Apne Phal Ki Sheerini Se Hota Hai Shajar

Poor wretches! They never heard the voice of truth:
A tree does not know how sweet its fruit is.

اشکار اُس نے کیا جو زندگی کا راز تھا
ہند کو لکین خیالی فلسفے پر ناز تھا

Ashakara Uss Ne Kiya Jo Zindagi Ka Raaz Tha
Hind Ko Lekin Khayali Falsafe Par Naaz Tha

What he revealed was the secret of existence,
But India was proud of its fancies;

شمع حق سے جو منور ہو یہ وہ محفل نہ تھی بارشِ رحمت چوتی لیکن زمین قابل نہ تھی

Shama-e-Haq Se Jo Munawwar Ho Ye Woh Mehfil Na Thi
Barish-e-Rehmat Huwi Lekin Zameen Qabil Na Thi

It was not an assembly-hall to be lit up by the lamp of truth;
The rain of mercy fell, but the land was barren.

اے اشدور کے لیے ہندوستان غم خانہ ہے دردِ انسانی سے اس بستی کا دل بیگانہ ہے

Aah! Shudar Ke Liye Hindustan Ghum Khana Hai
Dard-e-Insani Se Iss Basti Dil Begana hai

Alas, for the shudra India is a house of sorrow,
This land is blind to the sufferings of man.

برہمن سرشار ہے اب تک مے پندار میں شمع کو تم جل رہی ہے محفلِ غیبِ ر میں

Barhman Sarshar Hai Ab Tak Mai-e-Pindar Mein
Shama-e-Gautam Jal Rahi Hai Mehfil-e-Aghyar Mein

The Brahmin is still drunk with the wine of pride,
In the assembly-halls of foreigners burns Gautama's lamp.

بُتِ کدہ پھر بعد مدت کے مگر روشن ہوا نورِ ابراہیم سے ازار کا گھر روشن ہوا

Butkada Phir Baad Muddat Ke Magar Roshan Huwa
Noor-e-Ibraheem Se Azar Ka Ghar Roshan Huwa

But, ages later, the house of idols was lit up again—
Azar's house was lit up by Abraham!

پھر اٹھی آخر صدا توحید کی پنجاب سے
ہند کو ال مرد کامل نے جگایا خواب سے

Phir Uthi Akhir Sada Tawheed Ki Punjab Se
Hind Ko Ek Mard-e-Kamil Ne Jagaya Khawab Se

Again from the Punjab the call of monotheism arose:
A perfect man roused India from slumber.

Yes, for some Muslims Rumi is heretic

Islam-Buddhism

The main difference between Islam and Buddhism lies in their being **theistic** and **non-theistic** religions.

The idea of a creator God is not CENTRAL to Buddhism – Humanism is central. (NOT WESTERN DEFINITION)

Emphasis on ethic of Dharma – the Eternal

Nibbana/Nirvana – Enlightenment requires a special attention when Islam dialogues with all world religions.

Muslims should not seek the presence of a creator God or single holy scripture in Buddhism.

Buddhists should not search for the concepts of *Nirvana*, dependent origination and rebirth in Islam.

Buddha and Muhammad— In History of Religion and Founders of Religious Traditions

Buddhism and Islam hold that human beings have always engaged in search for meaning.

- Buddhas and prophets before historical Buddha and Muhammad.

- Qur'an mentions 25 prophets, including Muhammad from the Semitic tradition and institution of prophethood as a universal phenomenon: Ghafir (The Forgiver)

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّن قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

And indeed, [O Muhammad], We have sent forth apostles before your time; some of them We have mentioned to thee, and some of them We have not mentioned to thee (Quran 40: 78; cf. 4: 164).

Rasuls and Buddhas

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

And never have We sent forth any apostle otherwise than [with a message] in people's own tongue . . . (Qur'an 14: 4).

The Qur'anic concept of *risalah*, or prophethood, offers an analogue with the Buddhist concept of “Buddha” in certain ways.

Buddhas appear in different epochs to teach the path to *nirvana*.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

Muhammad and the Buddha sought answers to age-old questions about the human predicament: What does it mean to be human? Why is there anguish and suffering?

The Buddha called this phenomenon *dukkha* (suffering)

The Qur'an refers to man as being created in *kabad*- struggle and toil or affliction. (Qur'an 90: 4)

Through *nirvana*, the Buddha was liberated from the fetters of suffering (*dukkha*) and entered a state of relief, peace, and rest. Freedom from confusion, turmoil, anguish and distress, and entered a state of bliss.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

The messages of the Buddha and Muhammad are the messages of Truth about:

- Allah/God – the Absolute, respectively.
- *Sunyata* as Emptiness based in the doctrine of *Dharma* – about universal order/natural law and liberation through *nirvana* – enlightenment.

We have ethnicized and nationalized them by giving them passports and identity cards like ourselves.

They carry many passports today.

Islam-Buddhism – Main Issues

Since there are no prophets in Asian religions and no Buddhas in Islam. Can the Buddha be consider as a prophet and Muhammad as an enlightened founder of a religion for the purpose of building dialogue? - This is thinking the unthinkable.

Answer – Yes and No.

For the Buddhists, the Buddha is more than a prophet and for Muslims Muhammad is the last prophet.

Since both of them are a part of human religious history it is possible to proceed on Muslim-Buddhist dialogue by viewing them as founders of religions. But with the caution not to include one into another and vice-versa for that would eclipse their original positions.

Islam-Buddhism

The main difference between Islam and Buddhism lies in their being **theistic** and **non-theistic** religions.

Muslims should not seek the presence of a creator God or single holy scripture in Buddhism.

Buddhists should not search for the concepts of *Nirvana*, dependent origination and rebirth in Islam. It is a futile exercise from a dialogical perspective.

Islam and Buddhism need to be understood on their own terms without Islamizing Buddhism nor Buddhizing Islam.

The Quranic advise for the Muslims to be a *ummatan wasatan* (the Middle Nation) and the Buddha's teaching of *majjhima-patipada* (the Middle Way) as deterrence against extremism and intolerance serve as the common ground for socio-religious interchange and dialogue between Islam and Buddhism.

Islam-Buddhism

Islam and Buddhism belong to two different and historically unrelated cosmological worldviews which met along the path of history and commerce between Arabia, Anatolia, Iran, Central Asia, India, Southeast Asia and China.

Main Features of Islam-Buddhism Relations:

1) The main difference between Islam and Buddhism lies in their being theistic and non-theistic religious orientations. Their essential misunderstanding lies in Muslims viewing Buddhism as a polytheistic religion along the lines of pre-Islamic Arabian idolatry.

And the non-theist Buddhist inability to comprehend a creator God,
- Buddhist have no problem with the idea of God if it is more than merely a personal creator along the line of “*Dhamma* universal order/natural as God.”

The problem here lies in excess personification of God in Muslim theology.

Islam-Buddhism

2) The Buddhist stress on *Ahimsa* – non-violence as article of faith is another important difference between Islam and Buddhism. It challenges Muslims to answer Buddhist queries about the state of war and violence in Islam.

3) Islam-Buddhism meetings through history and commerce in Arabia, Anatolia, Iran, Central Asia, India, Southeast Asia and China can be divided into 3 phases.

A) The early phase of Sindh (Pakistan) the Muhammad bin Qasim era when the Buddhists were categorized as *Ahl al- Kitab* – People of Book and during the Silk route trade era of the 10th CE.

B) The Turkic warrior era of Mahmud of Ghazni onwards war, when the Buddhists were seen as polytheists leading to the destruction of **Nalanda Buddhist University**. The beginning of Buddhist bias against Islam and Muslims.

Islam-Buddhism

C) The Muslim-Buddhist encounter in Southeast Asia between the 12th–15th centuries with Siva-Buddhism - dialogue between Islam and:

- Hindu monistic view of *moksha* (liberation);
- the Buddhist notion of *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 Universal Being) as expounded in the monotheistic pantheism of the Sufis.

Emergence of 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.

Buddha and Muhammad— In History of Religion and Founders of Religious Traditions

Buddhism and Islam hold that human beings have always engaged in search for meaning.

- Buddhas and prophets before historical Buddha and Muhammad.
- Qur'an mentions 25 prophets, including Muhammad from the Semitic tradition and institution of prophethood as a universal phenomenon:

Ghafir (The Forgiver)

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّن قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

And indeed, [O Muhammad], We have sent forth apostles before your time; some of them We have mentioned to thee, and some of them We have not mentioned to thee (Quran 40: 78; cf. 4: 164).⁵⁹

Rasuls and Buddhas

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

And never have We sent forth any apostle otherwise than [with a message] in people's own tongue . . . (Qur'an 14: 4).

The Qur'anic concept of *risalah*, or prophethood, offers an analogue with the Buddhist concept of “Buddha” in certain ways.

Buddhas appear in different epochs to teach the path to *nirvana*.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

The messages of the Buddha and Muhammad are the messages of Truth about:

Sunyata – Emptiness

Allah/God – the Absolute, respectively.

- *Sunyata* as Emptiness based in the doctrine of *Dhamma* – about universal order/natural law and liberation through *nirvana* – enlightenment

In Islam, salvation through belief in Allah/God as *mono- theos* revealed to Muhammad.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

In theistic religions the divine, “is cosmic manifestation as Ontological cause and anthropomorphic personification”

In Buddhism the Absolute is of, “acosmic and anonymous character ... Nirvanic Grace” projected through the Buddhas. (Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (2003) p. 21)

Buddha's Nirvana is a super-rational unveiling of mercy about how to deal with the problem of suffering, (Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (2003) pp. 10-11.)

After their enlightenments, the Buddha and Muhammad engaged in healing - the Buddha for 45 years and Muhammad for 23 years.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

Muhammad and the Buddha sought answers to age-old questions about the human predicament: What does it mean to be human? Why is there anguish and suffering?

The Buddha called this phenomenon *dukkha* (suffering), whereas the Qur'an refers to man as being created in *kabad* - struggle and toil or affliction. (Qur'an 90: 4)

Through *nirvana*, the Buddha was liberated from the fetters of suffering (*dukkha*) and entered a state of relief, peace, and rest. He was freed from confusion, turmoil, anguish and distress, and entered a state of bliss.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

The Buddha realized the state of being a compassionate *arahant* (an enlightened human being).

Prophet Muhammad's experience of *wahy* (revelation) liberated him from the suffering rooted in *kufr* - (ingratitude to and denial of the existence of One Unseen God) and *shirk* (attributing divinity to other than God)

Each of them defeated the antagonistic forces of evil, called *mara* in Buddhism and *shaytan* in Islam.

Messages of Buddha and Muhammad

In religious terms, dialogue between Islam and Buddhism is an exchange about the Buddhist notion of *Dhamma*) realized through *sunyata* - emptiness and the Islamic concept *Tauhid* - monotheism through *fanaa* meaning to dissolve oneself into the color of Allah and *baqaa* – permanency – a state of life with God, through God, in God, and for God. Not only in Sufistic sense.

If the Jewish *shofar* – blast of a ram’s horn, Christian bells and the Muslim *adhan* (call for prayer) are calls for meditation by drawing the human being upwards, the heavy and deep sound of the Buddhist temple bells take us down into ourselves – “our supra-personal Center.” (Frithjof Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (2003) p. 36)

Buddhism and Islam are not only “philosophical empiricism” “systems of meditation” or political theology, legal system or ideologies as often portrayed.

Each in their own right offer answer to the basic existential question about what is to be human - to live and to die.

A Muslim View of Buddha

The history of Islam-Buddhist relations is made of both appreciation of the Buddha and Buddhists and also criticism. Today, Islam and Buddhism mainly coexist in Southeast Asia. Early Muslims viewed the Buddhists as *ahl al- Kitab* - the people of Book similar to the Sabians mentioned in the Qur'an. Professor Muhammad Hamidullah (d. 2002) promoted the view that the Buddha was a Prophet. He refers in particular to the mention of a fig tree (*ficus religiosa*) in the Qur'an's Surah – Chapter 95: 1

A Muslim View of Buddha

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونَ ➤

By the fig and the olive, ➤

وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ ➤

By Mount Sinai, ➤

وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ ➤

And by this land made safe; ➤

- Prof. Hamidullah holds that since the Buddha attained *nirvana* under a wild fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*) – and since this tree does not figure in the life of any of the Qur’anic Prophets. The mention of fig in the Qur’an is a symbolic reference to the Buddha (Hamidullah 1974).

A Muslim View of Buddha

Several commentators of the Qur'an also believe that the mention of *Dhu'l-Kifl* maybe a reference to the Buddha's place of residence Kapilavastu. (Hamidullah 1974 : 54).

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

And (mention) Ishmael, and Idris, and Dhul Kifl. All were of the steadfast. (Quran 21:85)

وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ

And make mention of Ishmael and Elisha and Dhul Kifl. All are of the chosen. (Quran 38:48)

This is not acceptable to Buddhists and is seen as stretching as trying to own Buddha.

I am just reporting that such a view is present among Muslims. In contrast to this is the other Muslim view that Buddhism is a false religion like others.

Buddhist-Islam Metaphysics

Buddhism is metaphysics of *Sunyata* – void, unreality of the world, everything is impermanent, momentary. "Life is nothing but a series of manifestations of becoming and extinctions. It is a stream of becoming." (Radhakrishnan, 2009, p. 367)

Buddhism's stress on *Sunyata* as being the inherent nature or essence is commensurable to Islam's distinguishing between God's *sifat* – qualities, attributes or *asmaa* – names and *dhat* – essence- quiddity of God which is immaterial, it transcends human thought – is ineffable, infinite.

Islamic metaphysics views Ultimate Reality as *al- Ahad* or One, Allah, who has revealed Himself in the Quran as both Absolute and Infinite.

Here God is the One Pure Being, Source which transcends all existence.

- the supra-rational and supra-ontological essence/non-substantial Being.

Buddhist-Islam Metaphysics

Frithjof Schoun in *Treasures of Buddhism* (1993) remarks, “Islam’s teaching that the world has a beginning and not an end and Buddhism’s that the world has an end but no beginning represent two apocatastasic or primordial condition. (Schoun 131)

It alludes to truth of suffering, struggle, toil as universal problematic condition or spiritual illness of self-delusion leading to greed and hate which can be corrected the understanding of the truth of *sunyata* (emptiness) or dhat (essence) leading to the recognition and practice of *metta* – compassion or *rahma* –mercy towards all being which is the essence of *Dhamma* or Allah/God.

Such comparative view of Islam and Buddhism is based in the Qur’anic recognition of diversity of religious approach to the Truth.

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةً هُوَ مُوَلِّيُّهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

For, every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Compete therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, God has the power to will anything. Quran 2:148

Popular Buddhist Muslim Views of Each Other

A common Buddhist view about Islam is that it is violent religion:

- Islam caused the end of Buddhism in India, this is refuted by Marshall Hodgson, Johan Elverskog and Romila Thapar;
- the Muslim view that Buddhist persecute the Muslims in southern Thailand and Myanmar;
- common Muslim view that the Buddhists are *kafirs* – unbelievers and *mushriks* – polytheists, pork eaters;
- - Buddhist view that Muslims are violent, dirty, uneducated.

Cultural – Linguistic Zones of the Muslim World

- The Arab Middle East including non-Arabic regions such as Iran, Turkey, Kurdistan and Afghanistan.
- Africa - the Maghreb or North Africa, West Africa and East Africa.
- Central Asia – comprising of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- South Asia – Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.
- Southeast Asia – Indo-Malay Archipelago and mainland Southeast Asia.
- Balkan – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania.
- Muslim Diaspora in Europe and North America.

PART 2

Islam in Southeast Asia – An Overview.

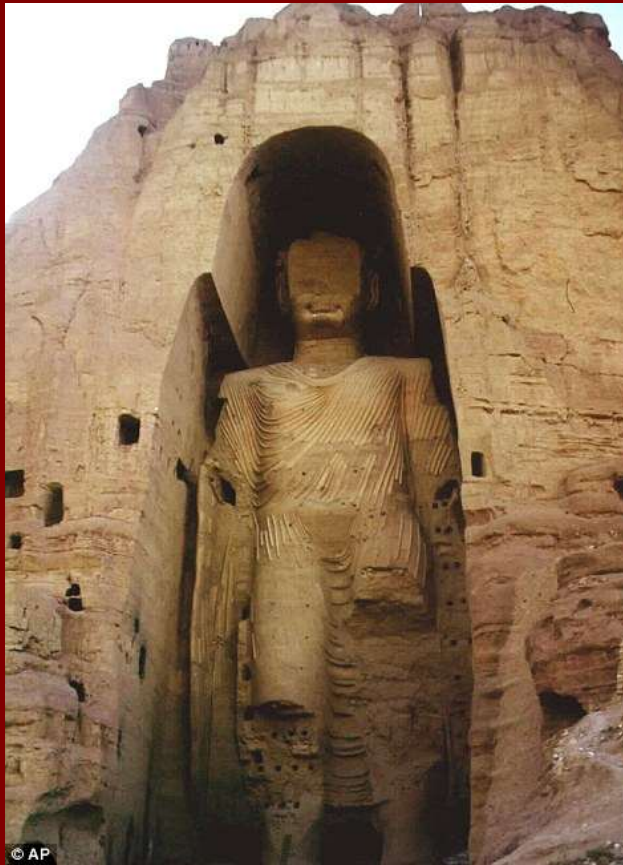
Current State of Muslim- Buddhist Relations

Muslim-Buddhist relations have been badly damaged by events such as: the Afghan Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in 2001; the 2013 bomb blasts at Bodh Gaya; violence against the Muslim Rohingya and the rise of 969 movement in Myanmar, and the emergence of nationalist Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) coupled with riots in Sri Lanka last month, the southern Thailand conflict. In every case, the violence was mobilized in the name of Islam or Buddhism.

The 57 Muslim member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) chose to remain silent over the Bamiyan and Bodh Gaya incidents while speaking out loudly over the conflict in southern Thailand, the plight of the Rohingya and the Sri Lankan Muslims, this has not helped build bridges between Islam and Buddhism.

Buddhist minorities in Southeast Muslim majority countries are also facing hardship and discrimination. Special implications for the ASEAN region, where Muslims and Buddhist coexist as the two largest religious communities.

Buddhist Monuments in the Muslim World - The Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan built in 4th- and 5th-centuries were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.



After the Destruction



ISLAM IN SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA

MUSLIM POPULATION (2020)

229,620,000 INDONESIA

22,070,000 MALAYSIA

6,330,000 PHILIPPINES

4,290,000 THAILAND

2,200,000 MYANMAR

950,000 SINGAPORE

340,000 BRUNEI

320,000 CAMBODIA

180,000 VIETNAM

<10,000 LAOS

<10,000 TIMOR-LESTE

MUSLIMS AS PERCENTAGE OF COUNTRY POPULATION (2020)

<1%

1% - 9%

10% - 24%

25% - 49%

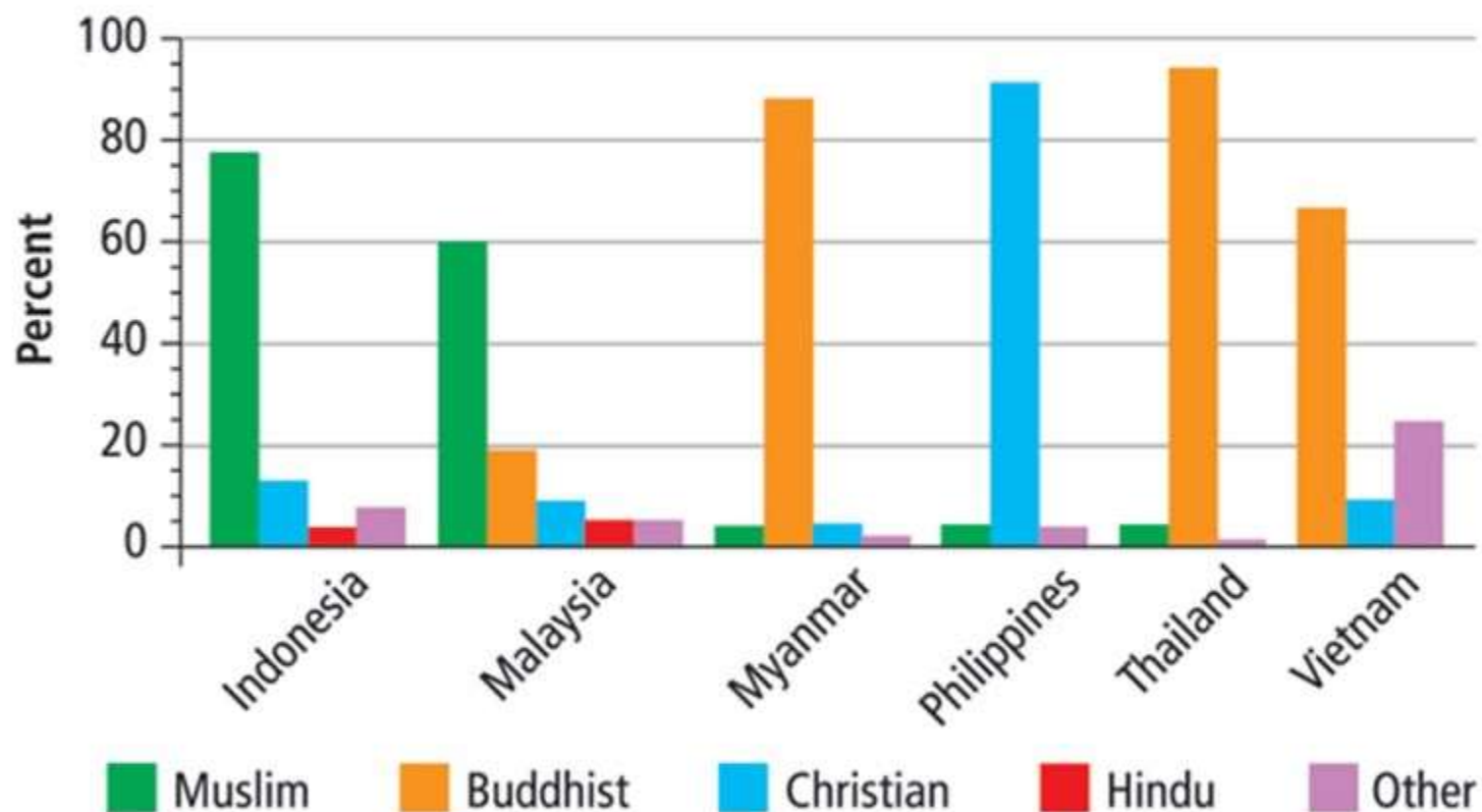
50% - 74%

75% and above

DATA: "The Future of World Religions:
Population Growth Projections,
2010-2050," Pew Research Center
(2015), except data for regions of
Indonesia from Operation World
(2010)

DESIGN BY
cartoMission.com

Religious Composition of Major Southeast Asian Nations



SOURCE: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

Indonesia

The Masjid Agung
Demak or great mosque of
Demak the oldest mosque
in Java, Indonesia.

The mosque is believed to
be built by Sunan Kalijaga –
one of the nine saints of
Indonesia during the reign
of Sultan Raden Patah in the
15th century under the over
lordship of Majapahit.



Indonesia

Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Banda Aceh - Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam.

This mosque was in 1612 by Iskandar Muda, the Acehnese sultan, but the structure was burnt down by the Dutch during their second invasion on Christmas 1873.

The current mosque was rebuilt by the Dutch in 1875-1881 to win "hearts and minds" during the Acehnese War.



Indonesia

Mesjid Jami Tan Hok Liang, mosque built in Chinese style by famous preacher **Anton Medan aka KH Ramadhan Effendi aka Tan Hok Liang** for Chinese Muslims of Indonesia in Cibinong - West Java.



Indonesia

Al- Manar Mosque in Kudus
- Central Java, built in 1549 by
Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Shodiq),

This mosque integrates a 20m
high ancient Hindu watchtower
as its minaret, and a Balinese
temple gate as its main
entrance.

Traditional Javanese Muslims
believed seven pilgrimages here
during the Gerebeg Besar (Idul
Adha) festival is worth one
complete pilgrimage to Mecca.
Kudus, which means "holy" in
Arabic, is the only town in
Indonesia with an Arabic name.



Indonesia

Nurul Iman Mosque in Kupang, West Timor. This Suharto-era mosques follow a joglo (four-sided square) pattern with tiered-roofs, and the metal roof-tip showing the word "Allah" is surrounded by a pentagon to signify the five principles of Pancasila.





Islam and Buddhism in Southeast Asia - Religious Character of SEA Societies

- Both the Muslim and Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia are facing the challenges of evolving into civil societies in respect to their multi-religious and multi-ethnic compositions.
- Southeast Asian population of 568,300,000 million is made up:
 - 42% Muslims and 40% Buddhists respectively
 - Christians are about 10 % approx.
- Southeast Asian Muslims make up 25 % of the total world Muslim population of 1.6 billion.
- The Southeast Asian Buddhists make up 40% of the world Buddhist population of 350 million.

Islam in Southeast Asia – Demography

- Out of total Southeast Asian population of 568,300,000 million, Muslims are around 239,566,220 million.
- They make up about 42% of the total Southeast Asia population and 25 % of the total world Muslim population of 1.6 billion.
- Majority belong to the Sunni sect and follow the Shafii school of Muslim law.
- Three Southeast Asian countries viz., Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei have Muslim majority populations.
- Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam have Muslim minority populations.

Islam in Southeast Asia – Demography

- Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and Brunei.
- It is one of the officially recognized religions of Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines.
- In Vietnam (communist) constitution - All religions are equal before the law.
- Buddhism enjoys privileged position in the constitutions of Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos – Theravada countries.
- Southeast Asian Muslims are made of many ethnic groups speaking different ethnic languages such as Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, Javanese, Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Thai, Chinese, Burmese, etc.

Islam in Southeast Asia – Demography

- Southeast Asia is the only part of the world today where Islam and Buddhism coexist with direct religious, cultural and political contact.
- Buddhism took root in Southeast Asia from the 7th-11th centuries and Islam from the 12th-15th centuries.
- Thus while the rest of the Muslim world may ignore Buddhism, Muslims of Southeast Asia cannot afford to do so.
- Theravada Buddhism is the main religion of mainland Southeast Asia except Vietnam which is Mahayana Buddhist.

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- Southeast Asian Muslims are made of many ethnic groups speaking different ethnic languages such as Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, Javanese, Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Thai, Chinese, Burmese, etc.

Islam in Southeast Asia

- Islam is a major religion in Southeast Asia. Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei are majority Muslim states while Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam have minority Muslim populations.
- Both the Muslim and Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia are facing the challenges of evolving into civil societies in respect to their multi-religious and multi-ethnic compositions.

Islam-Buddhism in Southeast Asia

Hinduism-Buddhism was established in Southeast Asia between 7th-11th centuries — the era of rise of Islam in the Middle East.

Islam got established between Southeast Asia in 12-15th century.

Christianity arrived in the 15th century.

In the 900 years history of Islam-Buddhism's coexistence in Southeast Asia though early Islam was syncretic in terms of culture and not theology (still continues to be so in some quarters) both of the world religions acquired ethnic identities.

As far as I know there is no Southeast Asian Muslim scholar of Buddhism and vice-versa.

Islam-Buddhism in Southeast Asia

There is also lack of knowledge about shared religious language/terms such as *agama/ sasana* – religion; *puasa* – fast; *hari raya* – day of celebration and even shared personal names due to the mixing of Sanskrit, Pali, local Indo-Malay languages and their dialects, Persian, Arabic, etc.

Islam-Buddhism Relations in Southeast Asia

If Southeast Asia is “*Serambi Mekkah*” – the verandah of Mecca than Southeast Asia is Mecca of Buddhism.

As the largest Buddhist country in the world, Thailand is the Saudi Arabia/Vatican (world political and missionary center) of Buddhism;

Myanmar and Sri Lanka are the al- Azhars (intellectual centers of Buddhism. Hence the importance of Muslim-Buddhist dialogue.

An Example of Shared Religiosity

The Buddhists and Muslims of Southeast Asian know about more about Christmas, Valentine and Halloween than about shared religious languages, cultures and rituals.

Imtiyaz Yusuf, “Finding Common Ground To Build Better Understanding” *The Nation* (Bangkok) 26 July 2014

This year the Buddhist and Muslims celebrated two religious events during the same period without common knowledge of it. i.e. Ramadan fasting and the Buddhist retreat of *Khao Phansa* (Pali - *vassa*) - the three-month "rains retreat" for monks and laity on the path to seeking.

The article highlighted the shared objectives of Ramadan and Khao Phansa as being to instill a spirit and sense of mercy and compassion towards all beings.

Asian Islamophobia

Most of the Islamic literature in Southeast Asia is for internal Muslim consumption.

Heavy use of Arabic confessional language which makes no sense to local Buddhists.

In absence of local literature, Buddhists from Yangon to Korea read books on Islam written by Western authors either in English or through their local translations.

Such a situation is bound to lead to rise of Islamophobia with an Asian face soon or maybe it is already there.

PART 3

Case studies of Islam-Buddhism relations and conflicts in
contemporary Southeast Asia

Religion and Peace

“There will be no peace among the nations
without peace among religions.”

Hans Kung

Religion and Peace

- ❖ No religion is free from the stain of violence.
- ❖ Religious truth is not the exclusive property of any one religion - it is available to all.

Conflicts in SEA Societies

- ❖ **Minority conflicts in the region are ethno-religious:**
 - **Karennis of Burma are Baptists or Roman Catholics;**
 - **Rohingya of Myanmar, Pattani Malays and Mindanao Moros (13 ethno-linguistic groups) are Muslims;**
 - **Hindu and Christian minorities in Malaysia, Indonesia.**





Southern Thailand: The Conflict Zone



Source: UCA News

Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand

- The conflict in southern Thailand is an ethno-religious insurgency not a *Jihad* - not linked to international Jihadist movement.
- Southern Thai conflict is a Muslim nationalist movement with political character and ethnic and religious dimensions.
- It reemerged in 2004 after a brief lull in the 1980s and 90s, so far it has resulted in 7,000 deaths.
- Historical root of the conflict goes back to 1906 when Siam annexed the southern Malay Muslim kingdom of Patani.
- This annexation was strengthened by 1909 Anglo-Siamese treaty in which the British recognized Siam sovereignty over Pattani. In return, Siam recognized British control over the Malay states of Kelantan, Kedah, Perak, and Perlis.

Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand

- Since 1909, Siam embarked on a assimilation and centralization policy
 - imposition of Thai language, culture and administrative system on the three deep southern Malay provinces.
- Most of the appointed state officials in the South were Buddhists, unfamiliar with the local Malay language, culture and religion, this led to Malay social antagonism and political resistance to all things Thai.
- Siam gave religious freedom to the Malays i.e. freedom to practice Islam as religion and for family law i.e. religious autonomy but retained political and economic power to itself.

Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand

- Siam also sought to replace the *Jawi* language – local Malay dialect by Thai language and Malay culture by Thai culture.
- Southern Malay Muslims are culturally, linguistically and religiously different from Thai Buddhists, they see the Thais as occupiers of the Malay land.
- Southern Thai conflict is rooted in history of misrule by the Center and neglect of local culture, language, religion and social practices.
- It was a clash of powers and cultures.

Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand

- This resulted in destroying of social relations between the Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, which are currently at their lowest level with distrust and alienation on both sides. Many Buddhists are migrating out of the 3 deep southern provinces.
- Thai state has been responsible of using excessive force in dealing with the conflict e.g. the -Se mosque incident of 28 April 2004 and Takbai incident of 25 October 2004 during Thaksin regime resulted in large number of deaths.
- The Malay nationalists in the separatist movement seek to sever the deep South from the rest of the country. While the majority see autonomy as an acceptable option.

Ethno-religious Conflict in Southern Thailand

- Over last 50 years, numerous political groups and movements were formed to support the political cause of Pattani. The present insurgency is largely faceless.
- The current insurgents have blended into the local population and plan to surface after gaining enough strength on the ground support from the local Malay community.
- *Barisan Revolusi Nasional - Coordinate* (BRN-C) is considered as the main insurgent group today, it revived itself in 1990 and is recruiting a new and younger generation of radical insurgent



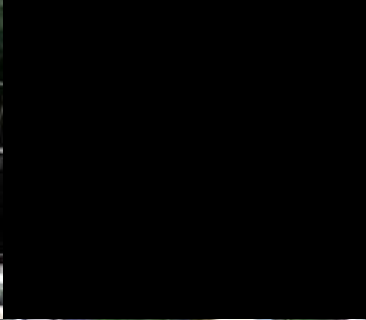
200 year old Kruse Mosque in Pattani, Southern Thailand

Thai insurgents attack southern army base



Masjid Krue Se, Pattani
28 April 2004





Takbai - 25 October
2004











Thais Brace After Botched Militant Attack

Agence France-Presse/Getty Images Thai police stood guard during a suspected insurgents attack at a military base in Thailand's southern province of Narathiwat on Wednesday 13 Feb 2013.



Thai Army Urges Curfew after Insurgents Attack Base

Security personnel investigate around bodies of insurgents at the site of an attack on an army base in the troubled southern province of Narathiwat, February 13, 2013.



The Strange Thai Insurgents Who Like Sorcery and Get High on Cough Syrup
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/05/the-strange-thai-insurgents-who-like-sorcery-and-get-high-on-cough-syrup/275614/>

Security personnel inspect the site of a roadside bomb blast in southern Thailand's Pattani province on January 11, 2013. (Surapan Boonthamon /Reuters)













11/30/2020

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กลุ่มมารา ปาตานี แกล้ง
ร่วมพูดคุยสันติสุขชายแดน

Burma/Myanmar



Burma/Myanmar

Ethnic groups:

Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, other 5% - Rohingya are not recognized as citizens.

Religions:

Buddhist 89%, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim 4%, animist 1%, other 2%

Population:

54,584,650 (July 2012 est.)

Muslim Groups of Burma

1. Indian Muslims from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan they are in majority.
2. Rohingya distantly related to Bengalis.
3. Panthay – Chinese Muslims from Yunnan.
4. Zerbadi Muslims are descendent community of intermarriages between foreign Muslim (South Asian and Middle Eastern) males and Burmese females.
5. There are 3,000 Sunni and 9 Shia mosques in Burma.

Rohingya of Burma

The Rohingya are a minority tribe in the West of Burma in 2012 it was estimated that there are around 800,000. Many have left.

United Nations describes them as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world.

The Burmese military sees as refugees from neighboring Bangladesh and should not be recognized as citizens of Burma.

Some historians hold that the Rohingya were people from a ship wreck from a trading ship that came from Arabia.

The term Arakan refers to coastal region between Chittagong and Sandoway and the kingdom of Rakan (1430-1638) it was ruled by Muslim kings, there was peaceful co-existence between the Muslims and Buddhists.

It was annexed by the Burmese king Badowpaya 1785. Next it became the part of British Burma and present Burma.

Moshe Yegar, (2002) *Between Integration And Secession: The Muslim Communities Of The Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, And Western Burma/Myanmar.*

Rohingya of Burma

The 1875 Census Report of British Burma (p. 30) says:

“There is one more race which has been so long in the country that it may be called indigenous and that is the Arakanese Mussulman. These are descendants, partly of voluntary immigrants at different periods from the neighbouring province of Chittagong, and partly of captives carried off in the wars between the Burmese and their neighbors ... differing from Arakanese but little except in their religion and the social customs which their religion directs. It was annexed by the Burmese king Badowpaya 1785. Next it became the part of British Burma and present Burma.”

Rohingya of Burma

Present Arakan state is made up of Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingya Muslims.

Burman and Rakhine Buddhists refer to the Rohingya as “Kala”- dark skinned as a racial slur or “Bengali” people in derogatory way. Different from the "fair and soft" Burmans.

Gen. Aung San promised their security to Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

Independent Burma under U Nu – the first PM of Burma decreed Buddhism as the state religion of Burma against the will of the ethnic minorities and various religious organizations including Burma Muslims.

When General Ne Win came to power in 1962 - 1988, the status of Muslims changed. For example. Muslims were expelled from the army. Burma has a Buddhist majority

Rohingya of Burma

Under the First Schedule to the Burma Independence Act 1947, the Arakanese were declared as having permanent home in the Union of Burma.

1948 Union Citizenship Act states, “any person descended from ancestors, who for two generations at least have made have made of the territories included within the Union shall be deemed to be a citizen of Union.”

The Burma Citizenship Law (1982) states: Chapter II – Citizenship

Nationals such as the Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine or Shan and ethnic groups as have settled in any of the territories included within the State as their permanent home from a period anterior to 1185 B.E., 1823 A.D. are Burma citizens.

The Council of State may decide whether any ethnic group is national or not.

The name Arakanese (Rohingya) was not included in list of 135 national races.

Rohingya of Burma

In 1982 law Rohingya can become citizens if they have that their ancestors have lived in Myanmar since 1823. No Records kept.

In 1994, General Than Shew's government stopped issuing Rohingya children with birth certificates.

In the past they temporary household identification “white” cards

- following pressure from Buddhist religious groups the Myanmar government stripped 400,000 Rohingyas of the white card with which they had voted in the 2008 constitutional referendum and also 2010 national elections. In my frank view, the Rohingya will in the end never get citizenship.

Rohingya of Burma

In face of Burmese oppression there arose several Rohingya resistance movements such as:

The Mujahid Party – 1947 seeking to join Arakan with East Pakistan

North Arakan Muslim League - 1948

Arakan Liberation Organization (1956-1962) linked to Islamic groups in Pakistan

Rohingya Independent Force – 1963 also known as Rohingya Patriotic Front (1974)
Rohingya Solidarity Organization 1982

Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front – 1987

Arakan Rohingya National Organization – 1998

Arakan Rohingya Salvation (ARSA)also known by its former name Harakah al- Yaqin (Faith Movement) is a Rohingya insurgent group northern Rakhine State, Myanmar, it emerged in 2015.

WILL MYANMAR BECOME ASEAN AFGHANISTAN FOR RES??

Rohingya of Burma

After winning the 2015 Myanmar election with a landslide majority, the State Councilor Suu Kyi – the current minister of foreign affairs is the powerhouse behind the current Burmese political scenario.

She declared that from now on the Rohingya will be referred to as the “Muslims in Rakhine” state which has the Rakhine Buddhist majority population.

She has also denied that there is ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya; advised the new United States ambassador to Myanmar to drop using the term “Rohingya”;

And last week deny visas to United Nations investigation commission to visit Myanmar on the pretext that it will hamper the Myanmar government’s “efforts to solve the issues in a holistic manner”

Iran on the Inside/Veterans and Service

TIME

Burns
and
Winifred

THE
FACE OF
BUDDHIST
TERROR

HOW MILITANT MONKS ARE FUELING ANTI-MUSLIM VIOLENCE IN ASIA

BY HANNAH BEECH



11/30/2020

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(emptiness) and the Islamic concept of *fana'* (the passing away of one's identity by its merging into the Universal Being) as expounded in the monotheistic pantheism of the Sufis. 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, peculiar to the region.







Sri Lanka

Anti – Islam movement is also on rise in Sri Lanka led Bodu Bala Sena - Buddhist Power Force (BBS) which is spearheading Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka.

After going against the Christians and Tamils – Sri Lanka Buddhist nationalist are now attacking the Muslims.

Portraying Islam as anti Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism.

RSS (HINDU NATIONALISTS OF INDIA) – BBS (SRI LANKA) – 969 (MYANMAR) PHRA APHICHAT (THAILAND) A RADICAL THAI MONK HAVE FORMED A TRANSNATIONAL THERAVADA BUDDHIST ALLIANCE.

MOORS

Sri Lanka

- ★ National capital
- Province boundary
- Province capital
- Railway
- Road

0 20 40 Kilometers

Map 2000



Map
area

Sri Lanka

ETHNIC POPULATION

74.9% Sinhalese

11.2 Sri Lankan Tamil

4.2 Indian Tamil

9.2 Sri Lankan Moor

0.5 Other

SOURCES: Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics

Palk Strait

Jaffna

Vavuniya

★Colombo

SRI LANKA

Bay of Bengal

Puthukkudiyiruppu

Nandikadal
Lagoon

Mullaittivu

4 km

50,000 civi
were trapp
a 7 square
combat zo
in May 200

Vanni District

Majority ethnicity*

Sri Lankan Tamil

Indian Tamil

Sinhalese

Sri Lankan Moor

No majority

* By DS Division, 2012 Census

50 km

Galagodaatte Gnanasara, head of Sri Lanka's nationalist Bodu Bala Sena









Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue

- Interreligious dialogue is a movement away from monological to dialogical understanding of religious coexistence.
- It leads to a new and richer understanding of the relationship between the humankind and the ultimate reality.
- Engagement in Muslim-Buddhist dialogue requires abandoning of biased terminology e.g. monotheists describing Asian religions as being polytheist or non-monotheistic and Buddhist obsession with non-theism, which are a non-starters.

Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue

Even the use of terms such as non-theism and atheism (naively by some Buddhist) creates problems of understanding or loosing of meaning in translation.

There is a need for employment of empathy (it does not mean conversion) when it comes for interfaith/intercultural dialogue between Islam and Buddhism/Asian religions.

Approaching Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue

- ❖ Not use concepts of one to describe the other, it leads to misapplication:
- ❖ Buddhists are not *kafirs* / *mushriks* – rejecters of Ultimate Reality and polytheists.
- ❖ Nor are Muslims philosophically inferior and second class citizens.
- ❖ Begin with dialogue of action/social work over dialogue of theology/doctrine – for basic differences between the two do not offer enough ground for beginning of dialogue. The ground has to be searched.

Approaching Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue

- ❖ Find common grounds between the two religions – concepts like:
- ❖ *Sati - smṛti* – mindfulness body-mind awareness of Buddhism/ *Taqwa* - God consciousness of Islam. Mindfulness of Breathing through or presence of *ruh* - breath of God in human being as source of life.
- ❖ *Iman* – faith and *Shraddha* – Trust in teachings of the Buddha.
- ❖ *Buddha- dhātu* – seeking the luminous mind - *Din al fitrah* – natural human disposition

Approaching Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue

- ❖ Find common grounds between the two religions – concepts like:
- ❖ *Metta* – Compassion and *Rahma* – Mercy
- ❖ Environmental Ethics – biodiversity
- ❖ Ethics and morality – common ethical concerns
- ❖ *Jihad* and overcoming *kilesa* (defilements of fear, anger, jealousy, desire, depression) as inner struggle.
- ❖ Reviving of the message and the practice of the *ummatan wasatan* (the Middle Nation) and the Buddha's teaching of *majjhima-patipada* (the Middle Way) is an urgent task especially today when the extremism of religious nationalists and fundamentalists threatens to wreak havoc on humanity.

Conclusion

- ❖ Southeast Asian Muslims and Buddhist share similar cultural patterns
- ❖ The differences hinge around matters of ethnicity, language power relations and religion in different countries.
- ❖ Need to separate between religious worldview, race and ethnic identities.
- ❖ In my view, the majority-minority model of citizenship - a colonial construct - has run its course. There is a need to address the issue of conflicts from the perspective of multicultural citizenship, not multiculturalism only, for globalization has brought with it the challenge of acceptance of diversities.

Conclusion

- ❖ Building a positive future requires transcending the past through the development of relations between Buddhism and Islam as civilizations, not as provincialisms.
- ❖ Buddhist-Muslim dialogue will help transcend local, regional and international tensions.
- ❖ In the face of rising religious nationalism and fundamentalism in both the faiths, there is need to build Muslim-Buddhist understanding through pedagogical and socio-cultural projects that are more than mere tourist symbols.
- ❖ This will enable the Buddhists and Muslims to embark on a shared dialogical journey for building much needed peace in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

- ❖ To realize this, Southeast Asia's Muslims need to take this initiative on their own. They cannot wait for the lead from their Middle Eastern co-religionists, for they live alongside Buddhists in Asia and not the Muslims of the Middle East.
- ❖ ASEAN Muslims and Buddhists also need to transcend attitudes that equate ethnicity with religion, for the former is local while the latter is universal and diverse.
- ❖ Otherwise, ASEAN Muslims from Yangon to Tokyo will soon be faced with the rise of Asian Islamophobia (in fact, it could be here already).
- ❖ Real efforts to build interfaith understanding will also help in the construction of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, which is an integral part of the region's coming Economic Community.

Conclusion

- ❖ Need for building ASEAN interreligious relations and common social engagement.
- ❖ There is a need to build a new concept of multicultural citizenship.
- ❖ Globalization has brought with it the challenge of acceptance of diversities – accept human diversities as normal.
- ❖ Need to address the challenge the rise of ASEAN Buddhist Islamophobia.

Conclusion

- Muslim mystic Rumi said that:
- *“The wars of men are like the quarrels of children; both are meaningless and stupid.”*
- *PICTURES BELOW*

Conclusion

- IT IS THE TIME TO BUILD MUSLIM-BUDDHIST BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING BASED ON THE HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF LIVING TOGETHER PEACEFULLY.
- NOT DESTROY FRIENDSHIP.
- INDONESIAN UINs SHOULD PLAY A CENTRAL IN THIS TASK.



วิทยาลัยศาสนศึกษา มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

CRS International Center for Buddhist-Muslim Understanding
College of Religious Studies (CRS), Mahidol University

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International Conference on

Compassion: The Bridge Between Buddhism and Islam

ความเมตตา: สะพานเชื่อมโยงศาสนาพุทธและศาสนาอิสลาม

on 3-4 October 2013



Dr. Azlan Baharudin

Ven. Jayasiddha
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