An Ideal Concept of *Ketua Agama*, Religious Leader and Az-*za'īm Ad-dīnī:* A Preliminary Linguistic Analysis.[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the concept of religious leader from the linguistic aspect in assessing the features and characteristics of some definition derived from the Malay, English and Arabic language. Results shown three ideal basic concepts derived from the linguistic matter. For example, the characteristics and features of religious leaders necessitate (1) Physical quality: internal and external (experienced, ability to lead, ability to plan, ability to handle leadership, responsible, possess the characteristics of a mentor (including spiritual mentor). (2) Religious Quality and Spirituality (religious knowledge and understanding, piety to God, good relation with fellow human beings and adhere to religious teachings. (3) Principle of Authoritative such as equipped with the authority to decide on a matter with good judgment and wisdom, a role model inside and outside of the community and remain neutral when faced with a variety of situations and circumstances.

Keywords: Religious Leader, Linguistic

1. Introduction.

Discussion related to the aspects of a leader is inseparable from the matters of leadership. Hence discussions related to religious leader should not negate from the issue of religious leadership. This is because leadership is a general matter whereas religious leaders are specific in nature. In other words, aspects in the discussions of religious leaders should also include the debate on religious leadership.

In this study the authors will focus only on question in connection with religious leaders by specifically referring to those who lead religious groups, endowed with characteristics such as having religious education background, holding key positions in religious organizations and also a source of reference for the adherent over issues of religious matters. Thus the authors will not describe in detail the debate on leadership but will apply the concepts and theories of leadership in analysing religious leaders.

2. Religious Leader and Their Involvement in Interfaith Dialogue.
Interfaith dialogue in Malaysia's context has gone through a transformation (1980 -2000) starting from a demand made by one party, and becoming essential tools in Malaysian community composed of various religions and races. During the implementation process there are many issues and shortcomings which slowed the progress of dialogue while its implementation does not fulfil the main purpose of inter-religious dialogue. Among the flaw that is considered as significant and the main focus of this study is the involvement of religious leaders in ensuring the implementation and process of inter-religious dialogue, either inter or intra-dialogue, particularly within the context of conflict resolution.

Research conducted by the U.S. Institute of Peace (2004), Sterland and Beauclerk (2008), Mohamed Abu-Nimer (2001), Lowndes and Chapman (2005), had came to know that the implementation of a dialogue process takes place in a number of categories or groups of people. Among them (1) The Supreme Religious Leader (High-level religious leader) / Faith leadership, (2) Inter-religious bodies (Interfaith bodies / organization / network), (3) Intermediate Society (Middle group) and (4) Lower Community (Grassroots participant). From Malaysia context, it can be categorized into (1) Government bodies, (2) Non-governmental bodies (religion or religious-based), (3) Academician / Research Institutions and (5) the public. (Khairulnizam & Suzy Aziziyana 2009: 62 -63).

In view of the authors, if a comparison is made with the information on the categories of groups involved in inter-religious dialogue outside Malaysia, the difference is not that noticeable. However, if the scope and focus is seen from the context of religious conflict and dialogue practitioner as agents of conflict resolution between religions, then the difference becomes major. In Malaysia, the group categorized as High-level religious leaders / faith leadership acting as agent in the context of the conflict resolution does not exist and inter-religious dialogues which were to serve as medium for religious leaders also does not take place. (Berita Harian March 6, 2004, Ghazali Basri 2005:13, Khairulnizam Mat Karim 2005: 70-95, 128-157, New Straits Time February 27, 2002, Utusan Malaysia August 4, 2004, Hunt 2009).

The authors believe that the group categorized as Supreme Religious Leader (high-level religious leaders / faith leadership) is the most important agent in implementing inter-religious dialogue particularly conflict resolution between religions, since for example sending a wrong representative to a dialogue aimed at resolving the religious conflict would render a negative outcome. (Khairulnizam 2005: 167).

In further examining the question of religious leaders as agents of inter-religious dialogue, the authors wish to define the meaning of religious leaders from the linguistic perspective. This is for the purpose of displaying elements, features and basic concepts inherent in the definition of the word 'religious leader' so that the conclusions and precise definition both in theory and reality can be achieved. From the concept of the religious leaders, it is clear that inaccuracy to choose a representative for inter-religious dialogue can be avoided, especially when it involves inter-religious conflict.

The authors will examine the linguistic aspect of to the Malay, English and Arabic language.

3.   The definition of *Ketua Agama*, Religious Leader, *Az-za'īm Ad-dīnī*.

In this section, the author wish to discuss the appropriation as to see the elements or characteristics in the word 'religious leader 'and not to discuss it based on thoughts or philosophical debate. Among the words used to describe religious leaders in the Malay language: "Ketua Agama"; in English language "Religious Leader"; and "Head of Religion" and in Arabic: "Al-Za'im ad-Dini", "al-qāid ad-Dini" and "raasa ad-Din". Considering that there is more than one word used to describe religious leaders both in English and Arabic, the authors only choose the word "Religious Leader" for English and "az-Za'im ad-dawn" for Arabic.

(a) *Ketua.*

According to a number of Malay dictionaries, a "Ketua" or leader is the eldest person, having a lot of experience, who leads, responsible and oversees the running of association, organization, and other groups. Additionally it is also been defined as someone who is very senior and important, who also guides, advises, leads, directs and rules. (Noresah et al 2000: 669, Teuku Iskandar 1970: 546-547, Zainal Abidin 1995: 895-896, Hasan Haji Hamzah et al 1997:628. Othman Puteh et al 2001:515, Mashitah Taharin et al 2000: 435).

(b) Leader.

Whereas in English, the word leader means a person who leads, guides, commands, directs or supervises, conducts, rules and controls (Treffry et al 2000:880, Abate et al 1999:448, The World Book Dictionary (2001: 1991), Tulloch et al 1997:866, Pearsall & Trumble 1996:813, Adams D. et al 2000:553, Adams G. et al 1998:745). In addition, it is also referring to the one 'who guides or direct others by showing them the way or telling them how to behave" (Rooney et al 1999:1070). These definitions are paired with other notable characteristics of a leader such as leadership quality like responsible, influential, particularly in providing spiritual guidance, (The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language: Encyclopaedia Edition: 724), having initiative, especially in the leadership and most importantly a person having authority (Kirkpatrick et al 1997:409) to lead the people under his leadership.

(c) *Za'īm.*

In the Arabic language, the word leader encompassed several terms explained in most Arabic references. Among them is "za'im", qāid, murshid, rais (Doniach 1995:675) and "Sayyid" (person in guiding or foremost position)(Ahmad Mukhtar Umar 2008:986). As stated earlier, descriptions will focus on the word "zaim", which is derived from the words "al-za'im ad-dini". Etymologically the word al-Zaim is derived from "za'ama", "yaz'umu", "za'man" "za'āmatan" which means "to master", "to bear" and "to guarantee" especially in connection with ethnicity (Ahmad Mukhtar Umar 2008:985, Ibn Manzur (ND): 1835-1836, Wan Abdul Hamidet al 2006:1025). In addition it also meant to be a "master" and "leader", from the etymology of "za'uma", "yaz'umu", "za 'āmatan". Other words associated with the person are "az'ama", "yuz'īmu", "iz'āman" which means "to obey " and "to observe " people (Mukhtar Ahmad Umar 2008:985 , Wan Abdul Hamid et al 2006:1025). From this definition it can be understood that the leader is someone who has mastering ability, such as controlling a group or a people, as well as being responsible such as readiness to bear burdens and keeping trust and promises made.

(d) *Agama*.

Agama in Malay language means belief in God, His attributes and power and acceptance of His teachings and commandments, (Hjh Noresah et al 2000: 12, Haji Hasan Haji Hamzah et al 1997:13), belief in the supreme power of dominance over nature and the ways to adore and follow him; having trust with the Almighty (Teuku Iskardar et al 1970: 1312). In addition, it also means things related to spiritual feed (Haji Zainal Abidin Safarawan 1995:20), the duties related to the implementation of [a] belief (Othman Puteh et al 2001: 9), role model and guidance. (Masitah Taharin et al 2000:9). When it is defined in adjective form, religious, it raises features or attributes that is visible in a person or groups. Among the features or attributes derived from the word "religious" is to follow the teachings of religion, a devout, persistent in worship, do good for people, lead a good life, a faithful servant, carry out designated duties and God-fearing.

(e) Religion.

In dictionary, the word 'religion' in English language means (1) related to belief and worship, which is a belief in the existence of a god or gods, who have created universe and given man his spiritual being (2) A particular system of faith and worship where such belief is based on a particular religion as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and others. (3) Guidance for living of particular religion referring to rules and guidelines that is divine in nature. Additionally it also gives the meaning of controlling or influencing one's life. Among the features or attributes derived from the word 'religion' as a noun to the word 'religious', is a person or group who have belief and faith in God and their religion, determination in practice of worship or religious practices or ceremonies, to be obedient and faithful to the principles and rules of its teaching. (The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language: Encyclopaedia Edition: 1064, Rooney 1999:1587, Treffry et al 2000:1301, R.Abate et al 1999:675, Tulloch et al 1997:1295, 2001:1766 World Book Dictionary, Gadsby et al, 1998: 1124-1125)

(f) *al-Dīn.*

In the Arabic language, '*al-Dīn*'[5] is etymologically derived from the root word " dāna ", "yadīnu", "Dinan", diyānatan "which means" bow "," obedient "," obey ". In addition, it also means "people who reckon themselves (self-reflection)," to lead "and" to serve "(Ahmad Mukhtar Umar 2008: 795, Wan Abdul Hamid Wan Teh et al 2006:802). Ad-Dinu " means "religion", "faith", "holding" and also gives connotation to Islam as ad-Dīn (Ahmad Mukhtar Umar 2008: 797, Wan Abdul Hamid Wan Teh et al 2006:803) When it refers to a particular person or race, it would eventually connotes people who "hold on to religion", "pious"," power ","judicial-punishment" (Wan Abdul Hamid Wan Teh et al 2006:803) . However, when it refers to the word "ad-dinatu", it could also mean "obedient" and "worship"(Wan Abdul Hamid Wan Teh et al 2006:803).

## 4.	Conclusion.

From the above definitions, the authors can conclude that religious leader is founded upon leadership qualities consisting of, first: Physical Quality composing of (a) External Physical Qualities (experienced, ability to lead, head and oversee the running of organizations, groups or communities. Additionally, is the ability to plan, strategize and managing various matters to ensure the good condition of organization or group. Furthermore, a religious leader should be able to give orders and directives, deciding upon important matters like punishment and to ensure that their plans are implemented particularly planning framework which involves problem or conflict between religions. (b) Internal Physical Quality (qualities embodies in a person who is responsible, able to provide guidance, gives advise and spiritual guidance, such as being able to lead a religious ceremonies. A religious leader is also an influential person, with serious initiative in carrying out duties entrusted to him, guiding and ensuring the well-being of a large community put under his leadership.

Second: Religious Quality and Spiritual Quality: Viewed from an Islamic perspective, where a religious leader should possess qualities and have understanding in the basic concepts of Islam such as the aspects of God, moral and ethics. Among the notable features expected from a leader are (a) have trust and faith in God, (b) to comply, subject to and adhere to all the religious teachings, (c) a devout, constant in his worship, pious, and (d) ensuring good relationships with other people.

Third: Principle of Authoritative: Seen from the authority of a religious leader in leading, deciding any matters and possesses ability to be a determining influence or voice and to be balance in any circumstances or situation. These qualities are very important assuming that if these religious leaders is lacking of credibility and unable to make decision, then surely people would lose their trust and confidence in his leadership. This quality is also very important in the process of addressing problems in a pluralistic society where religious conflicts are prone in such surroundings.

It is then clear to the authors the significance of choosing leaders especially religious leaders endowed with capabilities and qualities to lead. To the authors, religious leaders are the role models

and portrayed significant role to the community under his patronage, and in a pluralistic society as Malaysia where their roles are sought after to solve tensions and conflicts.

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[5] In elaborating this definition the authors do not wish to comment on religious term or ad-Din propounded in the writings of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, a prominent Muslim scholar. This definition aims to look at the characteristics or attributes existed in the word "religion". The foundations that exist in the word "religion" will form the basis for the features or attributes that every religious leader should possess. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in describing religion had in fact ejected the usage of the term "religion" as understood by the West. This is due to the narrow understanding of the West and their inablity to provide accurate meaning of religion as "a way of life". Therefore his description of the term religion is "ad-Din, "which in his view is very accurate, and in particular the positive connotations associated with" Human Reality "and" Reality of Knowledge." Al-Attas has highlighted four key concepts found in the term ad-Din which are also important to the Islamic fundamental teachings (1) indebtedness , (2) Submissiveness, (3) Judicious Power, (4) Natural Inclination or tendency. For further information please refer to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1993), Islam and Secularism, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), p.p.51-96.

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