



**CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN MALAYSIA:  
ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES AND  
MODERATING VARIABLES**

**BY**

**ARMAS ELIPUTSE ETUTALA SHIKONGO**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)**

**Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human  
Sciences**

**International Islamic University Malaysia**

**JANUARY 2011**

## **ABSTRACT**

The general objective of this study was to investigate individual religious conversion, specifically, conversion to Islam: an important academic area that seems to be currently under-investigated in Malaysia. The study focused on pre- and post-conversion to Islam experiences. The key variables of the study were general life dissatisfaction, general life satisfaction, truth search, truth discovery, negative experiences, attractiveness of Islam, commitment to Islam, demographic factors and personality factors. The sample consisted of 161 converts to Islam in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Data were collected using self-tailored questionnaires in English and Malay. The sample was selected through convenience and snowballing sampling techniques. Using SPSS version 16.1 for Windows, descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. Results support the correlation hypotheses partially. There were significant correlations between some of the key variables. The study has made unique contributions to knowledge in terms of theory, method and applied psychology. The findings of this study have important implications for psychological practice, with specific reference to clinical and counselling psychology. The results highlight a unique need to conceptualise and develop a post-conversion to Islam therapeutic approach to help new Muslims to better cope with their pre- and post-religious conversion experiences. Religious conversion or faith-based lifestyle change has been found to be one of the most psycho-socially challenging experiences that need professional attention, especially in terms of adjustment to a new way of life.

## ملخص البحث

الهدف العام من هذه الدراسة اسكتشاف ظاهرة التحوّل الديني، خاصة التحوّل إلى الإسلام، وهي تعدّ ساحة أكاديمية هامة مازالت تحت التحقيق والدراسة في ماليزيا. وتركز الدراسة على الخبرات المتعلقة بما قبل التحوّل إلى الإسلام وبما بعده. وقد أستخدمت متغيرات محددة في الدراسة وهي؛ القناعة أو الاستياء من الحياة، والبحث عن الحقيقة واستكشافها، والخبرة السلبيّة تجاه الإسلام ثم الانجذاب والانقياد إلى الإسلام، كما أستخدمت فيها العوامل الديموغرافية والعوامل الشخصية. وتحتوي عينة الدراسة على ١٦١ شخصاً اعتنقوا الإسلام في ولاية سلانجور بماليزيا. وتمّ جمع البيانات من خلال استبيانات موجهة باللغة الإنجليزية والملايوية. أما طريقة اختيار العينة فقد تمّ اختيار نوع العينة المريحة والعينة المرجعية. وأستخدم برامج التحليل الإحصائي للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) إصدار ١٦,١ ليتّم الوصف الحسابي والاستنتاج الإحصائي. وكانت النتيجة تُظهر وجود علاقة نسبيّة لفرضيات الدراسة، فهناك علاقة بارزة بين بعض المتغيرات المحددة، لذا فهذه الدراسة تقدّم بعض الإضاءات والإسهامات العلمية المميزة تتعلق بالنظرية والمنهجية وعلم النفس التطبيقي. والنتائج الحالية تؤكّد الحاجة إلى الاهتمام بالخبرات ما قبل اعتناق الإسلام وتطوير الأسلوب العلاجي المناسب لها من أجل مساعدة المسلمين الجدد في التصدي بشكل أفضل عند مواجهة خبراتهم المتعلقة بما قبل التحوّل إلى الإسلام وبما بعده. إنّ التحوّل الديني أو التغيّر نحو نمط حياة على اعتقاد جديد يعدّ من أصعب التجارب النفسية والاجتماعية التي تحتاج إلى عناية من قبل المختصّين، خاصة كلي يتأقلم ويتكيّف الشخص المعني مع نهج جديد من الحياة.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

The thesis of Armas E E Shikongo has been approved by the following:

---

Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman  
Supervisor

---

Syed Sohail Imam  
Co-Supervisor

---

Ahmad Abd. Al-Rahim M. Nasr  
Internal Examiner

---

Intan Hasimah Mohd. Hashim  
External Examiner

---

Nasr Eldin Ibrahim Ahmed  
Chairman

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated and acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Armas E E Shikongo

Signature .....

Date .....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION  
OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

Copyright © 2011 by Armas E E Shikongo. All rights reserved.

**CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN MALAYSIA:  
ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES AND  
MODERATING VARIABLES**

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below.

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

Affirmed by Armas E E Shikongo.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date

This thesis was dedicated to one important cause, three important persons in my life and the founder of the International Islamic University Malaysia.

Firstly, the study was dedicated to the “universal spread of Islam” – i.e. Islamic missionary activities and to all sincere converts to Islam everywhere. Secondly, the study was dedicated to the most important three women in my life, my mother, wife and daughter. As the Almighty Allah revealed in the *Quran, al-Nisa: 4:1*.

*“O Mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women – reverence Allah, through Who you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over (you)”*.

Thirdly, the study was dedicated to the founder of the International Islamic University Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, and the former Prime Minister of Malaysia - for his visionary, transformational and *smart* Muslim leadership.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All the praises are due to Allah, the Most High, Who has granted me the chance to pursue knowledge and truth in His Path, with the hope of earning His Good Pleasure.

I would like to thank my able supervisors, Prof. Dato' Dr. Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman (pre-viva main supervisor); Associate Prof. Dr. Syed Sohail Imam (pre- and post viva supervisor) and Assitant Prof. Dr. Mariam Adawiah Dzulkifli (post-viva supervisor), for their critical guidance, patience, inspiration, encouragement, generosity of time and understanding for the entire duration of my research project. I believe I gained most of my advanced academic awareness, technical research skills and knowledge from them. I must also thank my thesis examiners, internal and external, Prof. Dr. Ahmad A.M. Nasr and Dr. Intan H. Hashim, respectively.

I have to give immeasurable gratitude to my parents. They are the ones who took care of me right from my infancy to adulthood. I am, particularly, grateful for the type of moral and ethical education they imparted on me, which has carried me over throughout my entire life. It is to their credit that I owe my deep love for critical knowledge, the love of Allah and a passionate desire to seek for the Truth.

Profound gratitude is due to the Government of Malaysia, specifically the Ministry of Higher Education for providing me with a scholarship and living expenses. I would also have to extend my deepest thanks and gratitude to the University of Namibia and the Psychology Department for granting me a paid (and re-extended) study leave, which helped me to concentrate on my studies while studying away from home. I am further grateful for the financial support received from the office of the Staff Development Committee as chaired by Prof. O.D. Mwandemele, to help me fly back to Malaysia for the viva-voce (live defence) of my thesis.

I have to thank my friends, family members, well-wishers and fellow Muslims who have encouraged and assisted me to do advanced studies. I would like to specially thank, Minister H. Katali, Major General P. Nambundunga, Mrs. L. Katoma, Dr. S. Nyati, Prof. O. Kasule, Prof. M. Badri, Dr. J. Othman, Prof. R. Fazal, Dr. I. Mikhael, Prof. P. Mfunne, Prof. K. Mchobu, Dr. A. Jaleel, Assistant Prof. Dr. U. Muhammad, Dr. A. Jeleel, Br. I. Bulushi, Br. Nour M., Mr. W. Gonzo (my former HOD), Dr. E. Dada, Sheikh A. Al Misfer, Sheikh Dr. R. Ssemuddu, Sheikh E. Matola, Sheikh Y.O.M. Ondingo, Br. R. Suphian, Br. Fareed, M.A.A., H. Amadhila, L. Shaanika, P. Shikongo and T. Shikongo, for all their advice, moral support, technical knowledge, practical guidance and great sacrifices.

I must extend my profound gratefulness to Mr. Neville Gertze, former Namibian High Commissioner to Malaysia, the current Namibian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Mr. Ben Kandanga, Ms. Linda Nambili, Dr. John Uanivi, Meme Haileka, Meme Selma, and all their staff members at the Namibian High Commission in Malaysia.

I have to thank my dear wife, Aina and our lovely daughter, Jameelah, for their constant encouragement and motivation to do my work, especially during those times when I felt that I was not living up to the expectations of being a responsible student! I would also like to thank all my research participants and respondents, the responsible people at PERKIM, JAWI, ABIM, JIM, Al-Hunafa, MAIS, IIS, Saba Islamic Media, Bright Future Training, and Success Excellence Center for the willing and ready co-operation during the tough process of data collection.

I must finally thank all members of the Psychology Department and fellow post-graduate students at the International Islamic University Malaysia, for their constant encouragement, inspiration, kindness and valuable help they gave me in the course of my post-graduate studies in Malaysia.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Abstract in Arabic .....	iii
Approval Page.....	iii
Declaration .....	v
Copyright .....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xvii
List of Abbreviations .....	xviii
List of Statistical Symbols and Acronyms.....	xix
Transliteration .....	xx
Explanation of Vital Words, Names, Titles and Concepts used in the Thesis.....	xxi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study .....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	6
1.3. Justification of the Study .....	7
1.4. Research Objectives.....	12
1.5. Research Questions.....	13
1.6. Research Hypotheses .....	14
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.0. Introduction.....	15
2.1. Psychology of Religious Conversion .....	15
2.2. Definitions of Religious Conversion .....	20
2.3. Conversion to Islam in Malaysia: Past and Present.....	21
2.4. Role of Government and Non-governmental Muslim Organisations in Islamic Missionary Activities in Malaysia .....	25
2.5. Conversion Narratives Data.....	29
2.6. Conversion to Islam: Empirical Studies Data.....	34
2.7. Interrelationship between Antecedents, Consequences, and Moderators .....	41
2.8. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.....	46
2.9. Conceptual and Operational Definitions .....	51
2.9.1 Antecedents to Conversion to Islam.....	51
2.9.2. Consequences of Conversion to Islam.....	52
2.9.3. Moderating Variables in Conversion to Islam.....	54

<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHOD .....</b>	<b>54</b>
3.0. Introduction.....	54
3.1. Research Design .....	54
3.2. Sample Size and Sampling Frame .....	54
3.3. Measures .....	57
3.4. Procedure .....	61
3.5. Pilot Study .....	62
3.5.1. Reliability of the Questionnaire: Pilot Study Results .....	65
3.5.2. Validity of the Questionnaire: Pilot Study Results.....	70
3.6. Distribution of the Questionnaire: Main Study .....	77
3.6.1. Reliability of the Questionnaire: Pilot and Main Study Results.....	78
3.6.2. Validity of the Questionnaire: Pilot and Main Study Results.....	79
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....</b>	<b>90</b>
4.0. Introduction.....	90
4.1. Description of Sample.....	90
4.2. Qualitative Data: Results .....	111
4.2.1. Theme 1: Most Pleasant Experience (s) (Q.24) .....	112
4.2.2. Theme 2: Most Unpleasant Experience (s) (Q.25) .....	113
4.2.3. Theme 3: Most Important Personal Characteristic (s) (Q.26).....	114
4.3. Quantitative Analyses: Exploring the Data.....	116
4.3.1. Testing for Normality Assumption .....	117
4.3.2. Histograms (with normal curve) of the Study Variables .....	120
4.4. Screening for Outliers and Influential Data .....	128
4.5. Testing: Linearity and Multi-collinearity.....	133
4.6. Hypotheses Testing .....	137
4.6.1. Correlation Analyses Results .....	137
4.6.2. Multiple Regression Results .....	138
4.7. Quantitative and Qualitative Data.....	141
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>142</b>
5. 0. Introduction.....	142
5.1. Summary of Data and Results .....	144
5.2. Hypotheses Testing.....	144
5.2.1. <i>H1</i> : General Life Dissatisfaction before Conversion to Islam will positively correlate with General Life Satisfaction after Conversion to Islam .....	144
5.2.2. <i>H2</i> : Truth Search before Conversion to Islam will positively correlate with Truth Discovery after Conversion to Islam .....	146
5.2.3. <i>H3</i> : Demographic Factors will moderate the relationship between General Dissatisfaction before Conversion to Islam and General Life Satisfaction after Conversion to Islam.....	147
5.2.4. <i>H4</i> : Personality Traits will moderate the Relationship between Truth Search before Conversion to Islam and Truth Discovery after Conversion to Islam.....	148
5.2.5. <i>H5</i> : Attractiveness of Islam before Conversion to Islam would negatively correlate with Negative Experiences after Conversion to Islam .....	149

5.2.6 <i>H6</i> : Attractiveness of Islam before Conversion to Islam will positively correlate with High Commitment to Islam after Conversion to Islam .....	151
5.3. Research Findings and Theoretical Model .....	151
5.4. Theoretical Implications .....	152
5.5. Methodological Implications .....	152
5.6. Practical Implications .....	153
5.7. Significance of the Study .....	154
5.8. Limitations of the Study .....	155
5.9. Recommendations for Future Research.....	155
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	158
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	166
Appendix: A Pilot Study Feedback Form.....	167
Appendix: B Study Questionnaire (English) .....	167
Appendix: C Study Questionnaire (Malay) .....	176
Appendix: D Letter of Request to Conduct Research.....	186
Appendix: E Letter of Request for Convert's Statistics .....	187
Appendix: F Letter of Certification from Psychology Department (IIUM) .....	188
Appendix: G Letter of Permission from JAWI.....	189
Appendix: H Bar Charts of Sample Descriptive Statistics .....	190
Appendix: I Qualitative Data .....	226

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.1	Summary of Statistics of Religious Growth Worldwide	3
1.2	Statistics of the Global Growth of Islam (1989-1998)	4
1.3	Racial Composition of Converts to Islam in Selangor (2001-2004)	28
3.1	List of Muslim Welfare Organisations and Statistics of Converts to Islam, 2008	56
3.2	Reliability Statistics of Sub-scales	65
3.3	Reliability Statistics of new Sub-scales (1-7)	67
3.4	Measure of Demographic Factors in Conversion to Islam (C1)	72
3.5	Measure of Reasons and Explanations to Conversion to Islam (C2)	72
3.6	Measure of Attractiveness of Islam (C3)	73
3.7	Measure of Personality Traits in Conversion to Islam (C4)	74
3.8	Measure of life after Conversion to Islam (C5)	76
3.9	Reliability Statistics of all Sub-scales (1-7)	78
3.10	Measure of Demographic Factors in Conversion to Islam	80
3.11	Measure of Antecedents to Conversion to Islam	81
3.12	Measure of General Life Dissatisfaction	81
3.13	Measure of Truth Search	82
3.14	Measure of Attractiveness of Islam	83
3.15	Measure of Personality Traits in Conversion to Islam	84
3.16	Measure of Consequences of Conversion to Islam	85

3.17	Measure of General Life Satisfaction	88
3.18	Measure of Truth Discovery	89
3.19	Measure of Negative Experiences	89
3.20	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Gender	90
4.1	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Age Group	91
4.2	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Race	91
4.3	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Socio-Economic Background	92
4.4	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Previous Religion	93
4.5	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Educational Background	93
4.6	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Occupation	94
4.7	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Marital Status	94
4.8	Frequency Distribution of Sample by State of Origin	95
4.9	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Year of Awareness of Islam	96
4.10	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Place of Awareness of Islam	97
4.11	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Discovery of Islam	98
4.12	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Knowledge of Islam at Conversion	98
4.13	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Perceptions of Islam before Conversion	99
4.14	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Sources of Information about Islam	99
4.15	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Year of Conversion to Islam	100
4.16	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Age at Conversion	101

4.17	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Place of Formal Conversion	102
4.18	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Witness of Conversion	103
4.19	Frequency Distribution of Sample by levels of difficulty regarding the Final Decision to Convert	103
4.20	Frequency Distribution of Sample by whether Conversion Secret	104
4.21	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Duration secret kept	104
4.22	Frequency Distribution of Sample by First Person secret revealed	105
4.23	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Reaction to Secret Revelation	105
4.24	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Levels of Excitement at Conversion	106
4.25	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Levels of Parental Anger	106
4.26	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Levels of Non-Muslim Friends' Shock	106
4.27	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Levels of Non-Muslim Friends' Hostility	107
4.28	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Born-Muslims' Reactions to Conversion	107
4.29	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Coping with Islam	108
4.30	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Learning Islam	108
4.31	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Practising Islam	108
4.32	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Name Change	109
4.33	Frequency Distribution of Sample by How Name Change was done	109
4.34	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Parental Reaction to Name Change	110

4.35	Frequency Distribution of Sample by Non-Muslim Friends' Reaction to Name Change	110
4.36	Responses to the Qualitative Questions	112
4.37	Frequency of Responses: Most Pleasant Experience	113
4.38	Frequency of Responses: Most Unpleasant Experience	114
4.39	List of Important Personal Characteristics	117
4.40	Skewness and Kurtosis Values of the Study Variables	128
4.41	Normal Distribution of the Study Variables	131
4.42	Extreme Values for Mahalanobis Distance Using the Variable MAH_1	132
4.43	Extreme Values for Mahalanobis Distance Using the Variable MAH_2	134
4.44	Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations between GLD, GLS, and DFC	134
4.45	Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations between TS, TD, and PTC	135
4.46	Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations between ATT, NE, and CTI	136
4.47	Collinearity Statistics for GLD, GLS and DFC	136
4.48	Collinearity Statistics for TD, TS and PTC	138
4.49	Testing for Moderator Effects Using Hierarchical Multiple Regression for GLS	138
4.50	Coefficients of the Multiple Regression for GLS	139
4.51	Testing for Moderator Effects Using Hierarchical Multiple Regression for TD	139
4.52	Coefficients of the Multiple Regression for TD	140

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No:		Page No:
2.1	Graph of the Growth of 5 Major World Religions	5
2.2	Conceptual Framework: Cognitive-Behavioural Approach	48
4.1	General Life Dissatisfaction (GLD)	120
4.2	General Life Satisfaction (GLS)	121
4.3	Demographic Factors in Conversion (DFC)	122
4.4	Truth Search (TS)	123
4.5	Attractiveness of Islam (ATT)	124
4.6	Personality Traits in Conversion (PTC)	125
4.7	Truth Discovery (TD)	126
4.8	Negative Experiences (NE)	127
4.9	Responses from Questionnaire Item on Commitment to Islam	130

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A-B-C	Antecedents, Behavior and Consequences
A-M-C	Antecedents, Moderators and Consequences
ABIM	Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ATT	Attractiveness of Islam
CE	Common Era
CTI	Commitment to Islam
C1-C7	Section C1 to Section C7
DFC	Demographic Factors in Conversion
DV	Dependent Variable
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
GLD	General Life Dissatisfaction
GLS	General Life Satisfaction
HQ	Holy Quran
IV	Independent Variable
IUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IISF	Islamic Information Services Foundation
JAIS	Jabatan Agama Islam
JAWI	Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan
JIM	Jemaah Islah Malaysia
KL	Kuala Lumpur
MACMA	Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association
MAIS	Majlis Agama Islam Selangor
NEO-PI-R	NEO- Personality Inventory Revised
NE	Negative Experiences
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PERKIM	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia
PTC	Personality Traits in Conversion
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
S-R-C	Stimulus Response Consequences
TD	Truth Discovery
TS	Truth Search
US	United States
UTU	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

## LIST OF STATISTICAL SYMBOLS AND ACRONYMS

$r$	Pearson correlation or regression
$B$	Unstandardised coefficient
$B$	Standardized Betas
$\hat{R}^2$	Coefficient for multiple determination or “ $R$ squared”
$r^2$	Coefficient of determination between two variables, “ $r$ squared”
$Df$	Degree of Freedom
$F$	$F$ ratio or $F$ test
$R$	Multiple correlation
$M$	Mean
$SD$	Standard Deviation
$P$	Probability value or significant level
=	Equal to
>	Greater than
<	Smaller than
$H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6$	Hypothesis, 1,2,3,4,5,6.
$N, n$	Number of respondents or survey subjects
$Z$	$Z$ score or standard score
$T$	individual regression coefficients
$SE$	Standardized error
$Sig.$	Significance Level

## TRANSLITERATION

ء	’	ع	‘
بـ	B	غ	Gh
تـ	T	فـ	F
ثـ	Th	قـ	Q
جـ	J	كـ	K
حـ	ḥ	لـ	L
خـ	Kh	مـ	M
دـ	D	نـ	N
ذـ	Dh	هـ	H
رـ	R	وـ	W
زـ	Z	يـ	Y
سـ	S	ـَـ	A
شـ	Sh	ـِـ	I
صـ	ṣ	ـُـ	U
ضـ	ḍ	ـَـ + ا	Â
طـ	ṭ	ـِـ + يـ	Ī
ظـ	ẓ	ـُـ + وـ	Û

## EXPLANATION OF VITAL WORDS, NAMES, TITLES AND OTHER CONCEPTS USED IN THE THESIS

### Religious Names and Words

**Allah** - God Almighty, the Creator (used to refer to the Supreme Being in Arabic). This word is also interchangeably used with the word "God" in some places in the thesis, however, the word Allah is most preferred and was used more frequently.

**Animism** - (from Latin *anima* "soul, life") is a philosophical, religious or spiritual idea that souls or spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, rocks, natural phenomena such as thunder, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment. Animism may further attribute souls to abstract concepts such as words, true names or metaphors in mythology. Animism is particularly widely found in the religions of indigenous peoples, although it is also found in Shinto, and some forms of Hinduism, Sikhism, Pantheism and Neopaganism.

**Buddhism** - is a religion and philosophy encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha (Pali/Sanskrit "the awakened one"). The Buddha lived and taught in the northeastern Indian subcontinent sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. He is recognized by adherents as an awakened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end suffering (or dukkha), achieve nirvana, and escape what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth.

**Christianity** - (from the Greek word , *Khristos*, "Christ", literally "anointed one") is a monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the New Testament. Christianity comprises three major branches: Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy (which parted ways with Catholicism in 1054 A.D.) and Protestantism (which came into existence during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century). Protestantism is further divided into smaller groups called denominations.

**Hinduism** – is the predominant and indigenous religious tradition of South Asia. Hinduism is often referred to as (a Sanskrit phrase meaning "the eternal law") by its adherents. Generic "types" of Hinduism that attempt to accommodate a variety of complex views span folk and Vedic Hinduism to bhakti tradition, as in Vaishnavism. Hinduism also includes yogic traditions and a wide spectrum of "daily morality" based on the notion of karma and societal norms such as Hindu marriage customs

**Islam** – is the monotheistic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a text considered by Muslims to be the verbatim word of God (Allah), and by the Prophet of Islam Muhammad's teachings and normative example (which is called the Sunnah in Arabic, and demonstrated in collections of Hadith). *Islam* literally means submission to God (Allah).

**Judaism** - is the "religion, philosophy, and way of life" of the Jewish people. Judaism, originating in the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Tanakh) and explored in later texts such as the Talmud, is considered by Jews to be the expression of the covenantal relationship God developed with the Children of Israel.

**Muslim** - the word for an adherent of Islam or one who submits totally to Islam

**Taoism** - philosophy and religion of China founded by Lao-tzu in the 6th century B.C

Taoism (or Daoism) refers to a variety of related philosophical and religious traditions that have influenced Eastern Asia for more than two millennia, and have had a notable influence on the western world particularly since the 19th century. The word 道, *Tao* (or *Dao*, depending on the romanization scheme), roughly translates as, "path" or "way" of life.

**Sikhism** - is a monotheistic religion founded in fifteenth century Punjab on the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev and ten successive Sikh Gurus (the last being the sacred text Guru Granth Sahib). It is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat (literally *the counsel of the gurus*) or the Sikh Dharma. *Sikhism* originated from the word *Sikh*, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit root meaning "disciple", or meaning "instruction".

### **Organisations with Malay Names**

**Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia** – Muslim Welfare Organisation Malaysia

**Jabatan Agama Islam Wilaya Persekutuan** – Islamic Religious Department

**Jemaah Islah Malaysia** – Malaysian Organisation for Social Development

**Majlis Agama Islam Selangor** – Selangor Islamic Religious Council

### **Names and Titles of People**

**Tun** – Honorific title given to an individual who have served Malaysia with great honour by the King in Malaysia

**Orang Asli** - (*lit.*, "original peoples" or "aboriginal peoples" in Malay) is a general Malaysian term used for any indigenous groups that are found in Peninsular Malaysia

Source: *Wikipedia English - The Free Encyclopedia (2010)*.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter covers background of the study, statement of the problem and justification of the study. The chapter also outlines research objectives, research questions and research hypotheses.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Islam is widely recognised as the fastest growing religion in the world today, with various demographic data suggesting that part of the growth is attributed to individual religious conversions (Yahya, 1999a, 2003b, 2004c; Armstrong, 2003; Endan, 2006; Dirks & Parlove, 2007; Sulaiman-Hill, 2007). These observations and facts are acknowledged by various interested parties and are also reflected on the Internet ([www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil), 2006; [www.IslamReligion.com](http://www.IslamReligion.com), 2006; [www.Islamicweb.com](http://www.Islamicweb.com), 2006; [www.sultan.org/articles/convert.html](http://www.sultan.org/articles/convert.html), 2007, [www.convertstoislam.org](http://www.convertstoislam.org), 2008; [www.pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org), 2009, [www.turntoislam.com](http://www.turntoislam.com), 2009; [www.Islamtube.com](http://www.Islamtube.com), 2009).

It has, thus, become an acknowledged fact that Islam is currently attracting an increasing number of individual religious converts in many parts of the world, and Malaysia is no exception (Yahya, 1999a, 2003b, 2004c; Ma, 1995a, 2000b; Chuah, 2005; Sulaiman-Hill, 2007; Chuah and Shukri, 2008). In Malaysia, more than 20 000 individuals are documented to have voluntarily converted to Islam as from 1967 to 2008 (Ma, 1995; Chuah, 2005; Chuah and Shukri, 2008, Selangor State Religious Department, 2009). Interestingly and relevant to this study, such a religious

development has long been predicted in the Holy Qur'an (HQ) – the meanings of which are translated (Malik, 1997):

It is Allah who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth so that He may make **it prevail over all religions**, even though the disbelievers and polytheists may detest it (HQ, *at-Tauba*: 33). (Emphasis mine)

A similar prediction is made in another chapter of the Holy Qur'an:

It is He Who has sent His *Rasool* (Messenger) with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, so that He may **exalt this religion over all other religions**: and sufficient is Allah as a witness (HQ, *al-Fatah*: 28). (Emphasis mine)

What are of particular fascination to the researcher are the cited Qur'anic predictions, their meanings, implications and the time factor. The fact that these predictions were made in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia and are still being witnessed and documented in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is intriguing. In specific terms, the predictions were made to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) some 1430 years ago, regarding the destiny of Islam as a potentially dominant and universal way of life.

Hence, the Qur'an presented Islam as a favour to the human race, a way of life "completed and perfected" by Allah (Qur'an, *al-Maida*: 3). A relevant prophetic statement refers to Islam, as '*Al-Din-al Fitra*', which may be translated as "the lifestyle of pure nature" or "the natural religion" (Muhammad, 1996; Khan, 2000; Asad, 2002). It is against this background that individual conversion to Islam can be considered as a 'natural' event (Khan, 2000). Thus, the converts to Islam are considered to be 'reverts', that is, individuals who are re-turning to their natural state of being (www.converstoislam.org, 2008; www.turntoislam.com, 2008).

The present study was, however, aimed at investigating the growing phenomena of conversion to Islam in Malaysia, in particular and the world, in general. According to Leonard (2003), Islam is not only the fastest growing religion, but the