



CHRISTIAN USAGE OF THE TERM “ALLAH” FOR  
GOD IN THE MALAY LANGUAGE:  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The controversy of the Christian usage of the term “Allah” to translate “God” (English) or “Eloah”, “El” and “Eloahim” (Hebrew) into the Malay language and the way it has been developed have upset both the Muslims and Christians alike. Many people who comment on this issue are not really clear about its comprehensive context, hence creating confusion and tension between the two religious communities, and even with the other communities in the nation too. This study examines the use of “Allah” by Christians in Malaysia in the context of Christian theological understanding compared with the usage of “Allah” in Islamic theology. Besides the theological aspect, this work also analyzes several arguments presented by both Christians and Muslims who agree or disagree with this usage. This study refers to printed materials such as books, original documents and other relevant materials. It also conducts interviews with the involved parties and makes references to their press statements. As the usage is on trial in court when the research is carried out, this study also uses Internet sources recommended by the concerned bodies, especially for the arguments of the Christians. The study finds that this issue has a very long historical root and it only reappears after an effort to mend the situation was initiated by the government. This study suggests that sensitive issues related to religions and the Constitution should be resolved through negotiations and inter-faith dialogues conducted by the academia, clerics and executive bodies and done with integrity and transparency to convince the public, rather than through the courts.

## ملخص البحث

لقد تسبب استخدام لفظ الجلالة (الله) لدى المسيحيين الماليزيين ككلمة مرادفة لكلمة (god) بالإنجليزية أو (إيل) أو (إيلوه) أو (إيلوهيم) بالعربية إلى اللغة الملايوية وطرق نشوء الأزمة وتطورها إلى حدوث أزمة أزعجت بها المسلمين والمسيحيين على حد سواء. فالجمهور الذي تعرض لهذه المسألة بالمداخلات والتعليقات لم يكن لديه تصور كامل عن أطراف هذا الاستخدام ما أدى بها إلى تشويش في مفاهيم العوام وتواتر في العلاقة بين هاتين المجموعتين الدينية، بل أفضت إلى إيقاع مجموعات أخرى بماليزيا في هذه الأزمة. هذه الدراسة تبحث في استخدام المسيحيين لهذا اللفظ حسب مفهومهم العقدي مقارنة بالمفهوم العقدي للفظ لدى المسلمين، ثم تقوم الدراسة بتحليل الحجج التي أدلى بها المسيحيون والمسلمون على حد سواء، واختلاف آرائهم حول هذا الاستخدام. تعتمد الدراسة على المطبوعات المتخصصة وغيرها من المستندات والوثائق التي لها صلة وثيقة بالموضوع، كذلك تقوم بإجراء المقابلات الشخصية مع الأشخاص والأطراف المعنية والرجوع إلى تقريرهم الصحفي في حالة عدم إمكانية المقابلة. وبما أن الدعوى القضائية المتعلقة بالموضوع لا تزال تحت الإجراءات في المحكمة، استفاد البحث من بعض مواقع الإنترنت التي أشار إليها بعض الأشخاص والجهات المعنية في الموضوع، خاصة فيما يتعلق بحجج المسيحيين. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى أن هذه الأزمة لها جذور تاريخية قديمة ولم تظهر آثارها السلبية إلا بعد محاولة حكومة ماليزيا إزالتها. يقترح هذا البحث أن تعالج القضايا الحساسة المرتبطة بالأديان، ودستور البلد عن طريق الحوار الثقافي والمصالحة تحت قيادة أهل العلم وأولي الأمر، مع الالتزام بالشفافية والأمانة حتى تنال ثقة الشعب، ويقترح البحث كذلك تخريب رفع قضايا الأديان في المحاكم.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşûl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşûl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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Revealed Knowledge and Human  
Sciences

## DECLARATION

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

Ahmad Faizal Bin Ramly

Signature.....

Date .....

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**CHRISTIAN’S USAGE OF THE TERM “ALLAH” FOR GOD**  
**IN THE MALAY LANGUAGE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

### Consonant

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ب	b	ط	t
ت	t	ظ	z
ث	th	ع	'
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ه	h
ص	ṣ	ء	'
ض	d	ي	y

### Diphthongs and Vowels

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
اَ	a	أَ	an
إِ	i	إِ	in
أُ	u	أُ	un
أَ، آ، ِ	ā	أَو	aw
أَي	ī	أَي	ay
أُو	ū	أُو	ū (in final position)
		أَي	iyy (in final position)

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Christians exertion to use the term “Allah” for God has become a concern since the early 70's. It arises with the effort of the Bible Society of Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia (BSSBM) in 1974 to initiate a Malay version of the Bible in place of the Indonesian translation which was already in use.<sup>1</sup> The latter is allegedly said to be giving difficulties in understanding and is causing confusion among the Malay speaking Christians due to discrepancies between the two languages. This initiative has roused serious discontent and suspicion among the Malay Muslims as it is perceived as an attempt to disseminate Christianity among Malays. Therefore, the government and some state religious councils have restricted the usage of certain Islamic words namely Allah, *Ka'abah*, *Baitullāh* and *ṣolāt* among others.<sup>2</sup> The Christians interpret this restriction as a denial of their right to practise religion freely and the freedom of speech which are guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.<sup>3</sup>

Following this, some events took place including arrests under the Internal Security Act. In 1982, the then Deputy Home Minister signed a gazette approving the

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<sup>1</sup> BSSBM printed the first Malay Common Language New Testament *Perjanjian Baru: Berita Baik Untuk Manusia Moden* “New Testament: Good News for Modern Man” in 1974. It was mainly the work of a West Malaysian pastor of Indonesian background named Rev. Elkanah T. Suwito. The full Malay Bible Alkitab: *Berita Baik Untuk Manusia Moden* “Bible: Good News for Modern Man” (TMV) was published by BSSBM in 1987. See Soesilo, Daud H, *Part I: A Bird's Eye View of the History of the Malay Bible Translation*. <[http://www.bible.org.my/update/the\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_malay\\_bible\\_translation\\_part\\_1](http://www.bible.org.my/update/the_history_of_the_malay_bible_translation_part_1)> accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Prohibition of Publication (no.3) Order made 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1981 (KHEDN: 0.59/3/9/Jld.4: PN (PU:2) 24 pt II).

<sup>3</sup> See example, Edward Churchill, *Statement of Association of Churches Sarawak on Allah Dated 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013*, ccmalaysia.org. <<http://ccmalaysia.org/index.php/2014/12/statement-by-association-of-churches-sarawak-on-allah-dated-14th-nov-2013/>> accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

usage of “Allah” in the Malay Bible with several conditions.<sup>4</sup> Later in 1984 when the Printing and Publishing Act was introduced, this issue gradually subdued. The Malay Bible version known as *Today’s Malay Version* (TMV) that retains the word “Allah” was printed in 1987. It is commonly called *Alkitab* similar to the Bible used in Indonesia. This issue appeared again when the Catholic weekly bulletin, *The Herald* has its renewal of printing permit passed with a condition that the word “Allah” should not be in its Malay edition in a series of letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Dissatisfied with the conditions, the Titular Catholic Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur filed a judicial review in 2008 and later in 2009 to quash the condition made by the government of Malaysia and the Ministry of Home Affairs. In December 2009, Judge Lau Bee Lan who tried the case in the High Court ruled that the government’s conditions are illegal and void and that the applicant has the constitutional right to use “Allah”.<sup>5</sup> The Government of Malaysia later appealed to the Court for a review. The Appeal Court decision in October 2013 stated that the Government’s banning was legal on the basis that the word “Allah” is not an integral part of Christianity. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2014 the Federal Court affirmed the government ban as “Allah” is not integral in Christian practice.

Up to this juncture, this issue posed great public anxiety on the part of the Muslims and Christians. The appeal made by the Penang Chief Minister for the usage in his 2012 Christmas speech is one such example. The issue was debated heatedly again with comments made by numerous individuals, bodies and NGOs, worsened by a threat to put the Bible ablaze.

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<sup>4</sup> Prohibition of Publication (no.4) Order made 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1982 (KHEDN: 0.59/3/9/A: PN (PU:2) 24 pt II).

<sup>5</sup> Lau Bee Lan. “Titular Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur vs. Menteri Dalam Negeri & Anor” *Current Law Journal Malaysia*. Vol.2 No. 2(February 2010).256-257.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The use of “Allah” as God in the Malay language by Christians is an issue with multiple and complex dimensions. It involves a comprehensive understanding of the Divine nature according to the two religions. In addition, it also implies constitutional matters and legal technicalities. The historical issues also need to be viewed especially those pertaining to Christianity and its growth in Malaysia and the region. Likewise, the character of the Malay language must also be understood to see if such translation fits the meaning of “Allah” as used in the language. More importantly, this issue has dragged the Muslim and Christian communities into intense disputations which pose threat to pluralistic co-existence in the country, not only between the two communities but to Malaysian citizens in general.

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, the proposed study attempts to look into the problem through a holistic and objective approach by applying various methods in comparative religion. This research will look into the history and phenomenon of Bible translation into Malay as well as the concept of divinity in both faiths and their understanding of God’s name. It will also examine the arguments of all parties to defend what they see as their rights. Along with these, this study will also try to unravel the factors that contribute to the polemic.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This research aims at the following:

1. To understand the Muslim and Christian concepts of divinity through their understanding of God’s name.

2. To examine the arguments of Malaysian Christians who want to use the term “Allah” for God in the Malay language and the arguments of those who reject.
3. To study the arguments of Malay Muslims who insist that the use of the term “Allah” to be restricted only for Islam and the arguments of those Muslims who think that the term “Allah” can be used by other religions.
4. To determine the significance of the Christian usage of the term “Allah” in the Malay language on the Malay Muslim state of *‘aqīdah*.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the Christians’ and Muslims’ concepts of divinity through their understanding of God’s names?
2. What are the Christians’ arguments to defend their usage of “Allah” as the Malay word for God?
3. What are the rationale and justification in the Muslims’ arguments on the use of the term “Allah” in Christianity?
4. What are the impacts of the Christian usage of the term “Allah” in the Malay language on the *‘aqīdah* of the Malay Muslims?

#### **1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH**

Although the application of the term “Allah” in the Malay translation for God by Christians in Malaysia has been going on for some time, not much has been studied academically on the matter. There are some writings on certain aspects of the

problems whereas most others are only assumptions and superficial assessments mostly with political intonation. This research attempts to study the problem academically and tries to suggest solutions by discussing the issue through authentic and reliable sources.

## **1.6 RESEARCH SCOPE**

This research focuses on the issue of the Christians' exertion to use the term "Allah" for God in the Malay language. This includes "Allah" in the Bible translation and other religious publications, literature, sermons and daily prayers. The research analyses the Christians' and Muslims' concepts of divinity through their understanding of the term "Allah". The enlisted arguments cover the theological perspective to lingual, social and historical interpretations whenever relevant. The arguments discussed in the research will be based on what are articulated mainly by academicians and the religion's personalities.

## **1.7 METHOD OF RESEARCH**

This research will be qualitative descriptive. It attempts to interpret, verify, evaluate and analyse the phenomenon of the issue of the Malaysian Christians' exertion to use "Allah" for God in the Malay language. In general, the methods are library research and interviews of relevant persons. Thus, collection of data entails materials such as books, documents, articles, theses, dissertations, seminar and conference papers, journals and authentic websites. As for the interviews, they are conducted with religious officers and personnel who are directly or indirectly involved with the issue.

## 1.8 LINGUISTIC TERMS

Some of the terms expounded in the discussion on the issue are Allah, *Ilāh*, *Tuhan* and Lord. The term “Allah” is an Arabic word which cognates to other Semitic words namely Hebrew’s *eloah* and *eloahim* and the Syriac *alaha*.<sup>6</sup> The Muslims perceive “Allah” as the proper name of God, in fact the Most Exalted Name among His other Names.<sup>7</sup> Although *al-Ilāh* is not specifically used for referring to Allah alone in Arabic, the word is adopted in the Malay language as *ilahi* (without *al*) as a notion for Allah’s divinity such as in *takdir ilahi* (divine predestination). The Malays assert that their usage of these terms starts when Islam was introduced to them. It is such that both words i.e. “Allah” and “*al-Ilāh*” were conceived in the Malay language according to the Islamic view.<sup>8</sup>

To the Christians, the pre-Islamic Arab word “*ilāh*” was taken from the Hebrew’s *eloah* which means “god” and it is a generic noun.<sup>9</sup> Hence to them, “Allah” as used in Malay also shares the same generic meaning.<sup>10</sup>

“*Tuhan*” is a Malay word commonly understood as deity. In the proto Malayic vocabulary “*Tuhan*” is the old spelling for the word *Tuan*<sup>11</sup> which refers to master or lord as *Seri Paduka Tuhan* in the Kuala Berang inscription of 1302. Later in the classical Malay era (14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) during the rapid promulgation of Islam, the

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<sup>6</sup> Yūnus Shaikh al-Yasū‘ī, *Al-Naşrāniyyah wa Ādābuhā bain ‘Arab al-Jāhiliyyah*, (Beirut: Dār Mashriq, 1986), 158-159.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ali Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Al-Ta‘rīfāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1405H), 40.

<sup>8</sup> Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, “The State of Islamization in the Malay Peninsula as Reflected in the Terengganu Inscription” in *Batu Bersurat of Terengganu, Its Correct Date, Religio-Cultural, and Scientific Dimension* edited by Muhammad Zainy Othman, (Kuala Lumpur: CASIS, 2012), 35-39.

<sup>9</sup> Ng Kam Weng, *Allah: The Noun and the Name- The Root of Confusion*, Krisis & Praxis, <<http://krisispraxis.com/archieves/2013/05/allahthe-noun-and-the-name-the-root-of-confusion/>> (accessed in 4 June, 2013)

<sup>10</sup> Ng Kam Weng, *No One Religion Can Monopolize or Copyright the Term “Allah”*, Krisis & Praxis, <<http://krisispraxis.com/archieves/2007/12/no-one-religion-can-monopolize-or-copyright-the-term-allah/>> (accessed 24 March, 2013)

<sup>11</sup> John Crawfurd, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language*, vol.2, (London: Smith Elder & Co. 1852), 206.

semantic of the word “*Tuhan*” was separated from the word “*Tuan*”. The word “*Tuan*” was thus conceived to refer to lord or master alone while “*Tuhan*” was only for god.<sup>12</sup> “*Tuhan*” and “*Tuan*” remain in the understanding of the Malays until today as perceived since the classical Malay era, i.e “*Tuhan*” for god and “*tuan*” for master or lord.

The word “Lord” in the English Bible is translated as *Tuhan* in the Malay *alKitab* which is considered right according to proto Malay. Because the word “Lord” has already been translated to *Tuhan* in the Bible, it is argued that the word “God” cannot be translated as *Tuhan* also since they are semantically different.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

The earliest written evaluation on the usage of Malay terms in Christian literature in Malaysia was initiated by Abdullah Munshi. In his biography *The Hikayat Abdullah* he reported his two involvements in translating the Bible into Malay. He first translated Matthew and Acts of the Apostles together with Thomsen.<sup>14</sup> The second work was a revision of Thomsen’s works made with Stronach and Keasberry.<sup>15</sup> Abdullah Munshi was very meticulous and cautious in his review and translation works. He held to the opinion that the translation source must be in the original language of the Bible which is Greek. This also must be supported with the exegesis of the Bible in extracting the accurate meaning of the text. To him, the translation must use the exact idioms as in the Malay language and it must be free from any

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<sup>12</sup> Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 38-39.

<sup>13</sup> Ng Kam Weng, *Allah and Tuhan in Bible Translation*, Krisis & Praxis <<http://www.krisispraxis.com/archieves/2010/01/allah-tuhan-in-bible-translation/>> (accessed 23 March, 2013)

<sup>14</sup> A.H . Hill, “The Hikayat Abdullah: An Annotated Translation” *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society JMBRAS*. Volume 28, part 3, June 1955. 119-120

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 256

foreign language influence lest it would be ridiculed by Malay readers. Abdullah Munshi seemed to avert to literal translation and preferred the functional equivalence approach. Because of his expertise in language, Abdullah Munshi was very disappointed with the translation by Thomsen whom he characterized as incapable of fathoming the genius of the Malay style; not to mention that he was stubborn and controlling. According to Abdullah Munshi, there were hundreds of places in the St. Matthew's Gospel alone where the idioms were incorrect and words were used in impossible contexts.<sup>16</sup>

Abdullah Munshi was later involved with the group led by Stronach who was a good Greek scholar, who knew some Malay and was exceptionally good in English. The translation task was also made easy by the availability of many references and commentaries on Bible stories made by scholars. For Abdullah Munshi, this translation was not bad compared to the translation by Thomsen. Although Abdullah Munshi acknowledged the progress, he was not fully satisfied especially with some wrongly used Malay words including "Allah". He says:

Nevertheless there still remained a few obscure phrases. For the missionaries did not approve of my changing a number [of] expressions which are not normally used by Malays. Examples are *kerajaan shoorga, mulut Allah, anak Allah, Bapa-mu yang ada di-shoorga, kehidupan yang kekal* and so on. They must necessarily sound awkward in the ears of the Malays who hear them in time to come. If the missionaries, that is Mr. Stronach, Mr. North and Mr. Keaseberry choose to put these mistakes right, very good. If they do not so I am absolved from any blame on their account and the people will not be able to cast aspersion on my reputation or say that the expressions I used were wrong.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the history of Bible translation, in his book *Mengenal Alkitab Anda*, Daud Soesilo chronologizes a comprehensive historical background of Bible translation into Malay, from the first translation of the Gospel of Matthew by Albert

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 119- 120

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 256.

Cornelisz Ruyl in 1612 to the *Terjemahan Baru Indonesia* (TB 1974).<sup>18</sup> However, he misreports about Abdullah Munshi by stating that Abdullah Munshi was content with the work of Keeseberry.<sup>19</sup> He confuses Abdullah's dismay of the work of Thomsen with Abdullah's partial approval of Stronach and Keeseberry's work. Unfortunately, Soesilo's mistake is later followed by Robert Hunt in his often referred article *History of Translation of Bible into Malay*.<sup>20</sup>

Also, as Soesilo's book was first printed in 1982 and the second publication in 1990, information about the controversial TMV 1987 and its 1996 revised version was not presented. Nonetheless, Soesilo writes an article which is published in the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM) website entitled *Malay Bible Translation: What's in Store for Malaysian Churches*. This article contains brief data on the Malay Bible translation from the beginning until its revision for TMV 1996.<sup>21</sup><sup>22</sup> In his account, the use of "Allah" in the latest revised Bible is due to honouring the unanimous decision made by Heads of Malaysian Churches in 1985 and 1989 to use the word. He supports the usage as "Allah" has been historically in the Malay *Alkitab* from the beginning and secondly, the Arabic Bible also uses "Allah". Soesilo, however, does not mention the theological aspect of the word nor mention the court case.

There are some books written by Muslims in Malaysia who support the use of "Allah" by Christians such as *Polemik Kalimah Allah: Antara Targhib dan Tarhib*. The book is co-authored by Muhammad Nur Manuty and Wan Ji Wan Hussin. In

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<sup>18</sup> Soesilo, Daud H. *Mengenal Alkitab Anda*, (Indonesia: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1990).42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.48.

<sup>20</sup> Hunt, Robert. "History of Translation of Bible into Malay", *Journal Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 62 (1989).38-40.

<sup>21</sup> Soesilo, Daud H., "Malay Bible Translation: What's in Store for Malaysian Churches", Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), <<http://www.bible.org.my/updates/body.php?id=55>> (accessed 24 March, 2013)

<sup>22</sup> The said article was later removed by the website master in the midst of the Bible confiscation controversy between Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS) and BSM.

general, the book discusses this issue from the political perspective as Muhammad is a political activist, as is Wan Ji.

The chapter written by Muhammad calls upon the Muslims not to fear the fact that Christians are likely to use “Allah” for propaganda purposes, rather that Muslims should look at this issue optimistically as an opportunity to reach out to the non-Muslims. According to him, the concern is real and legitimate but has been excessively overemphasized by politicians who exaggerate this issue to create an atmosphere that fosters unrest and racism. To him, Muslims should believe in the “Truth” and the intellectual power of Islam. Thus, they must believe that the “Truth” will always prevail and Allah will endow Muslims with guidance to dismiss all the confusions created by the non-Muslims in the Islamic beliefs.<sup>23</sup> He also denounces some small fractions of Muslims who choose the path of extremism. Clearly he states that such issues should be addressed by means of civilizational dialogue and understanding of what comparative religion is all about.<sup>24</sup>

The second author of the book, Wan Ji, a social activist, writes his chapter with his *uṣūl fiqh* and *siyāsah syar’iyyah* background. His comments basically centered on the rights of non-Muslims that must be given to them in a Muslim state. And in the case of “Allah” he accommodates many verses of the Quran where non-believers are stated as mentioning the word “Allah”.<sup>25</sup> To him this clearly is an endorsement from Allah that even non-Muslims are allowed to use “Allah” to depict their deity. He uses the debate method through which he states his opponents’ questions and later answers them using *qawā’id fiqhiyyah* (Islamic legal maxims) to counter the questions. Wan Ji neither clarifies the theological part of the case as he

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<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Nur Manuty & Wan Ji Wan Hussin, *Polemik Isu Kalimah Allah; Antara Targhib dan Tarhib*, (Kuala Lumpur, Penerbitan Ilham Baru, 2010) 3-11.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 15-17

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.62-68

emphasizes mostly the juridical and political aspects, nor does he try to see why the Christians should use “Allah” from the Christians’ viewpoint.

To understand the Malaysian Christians’ viewpoint on the usage of “Allah”, many Malaysian Christian churches and authorities have referred to the writings of Ng Kam Weng. Ng is a researcher and director at Kairos Research Center and he operates a website since 2006 named *krisispraxis.com*. The website loads many articles, responses and studies written by him and others to explain the Christian viewpoint on this issue from the beginning until now. In general, Ng’s articles are objectively academic in nature, not emotional and no personal attacks. He writes about Christian theological or ideological arguments which are comprehensive and are often based on historical and linguistic data. He insists that “Allah” is not a translation from English source but rather from the Hebrew source. He also emphasizes on the difficulties that arise if “Allah” that has been used for 400 years by Malay literate Christians is asked to be changed.<sup>26</sup> He often questions the source of the Muslims’ writings on Christianity.<sup>27</sup> However, the validity and factuality of the data that he raises about Islam in some places are not so accurate making some of his conclusions in need for further assessment.<sup>28</sup>

With a different perspective on the issue, Poh Boon Sing writes his monograph *Should Christians Use the Word “Allah”?* He argues against the usage in terms of

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<sup>26</sup> Ng, Kam Weng, “Allah is for All Malay Speaking People in Nusantara” *Krisis & Praxis*, <<http://www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2008/01/allah-is-for-all-malay-speaking-people-in-nusantara/>> (accessed 26 March, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Ng, Kam Weng, “Response to Prof. Dzulkifli Abd. Razak Misreading of the Malay Bible” *Krisis & Praxis*, <<http://www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2009/03/response-to-prof-dzulkifli-abdul-razak-misreading-of-the-malay-bible/>> (accessed 26 March, 2013). (accessed 24 March 2013).

<sup>28</sup> For example, his claim that according to Islamic classical study, God has never revealed His name and also Allah is not listed by the Muslims to be among God’s 99 names. Some of Ng’s relevant claims are discussed in this thesis. See, Ng Kam Weng, *Refutation of Muslim Scholar Arguments in the Allah Controversy Part 2/3*, *Krisis & Praxis*. <<http://www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2010/06/refutation-of-muslim-scholars-argument-in-the-allah-controversy-part-23/>> (accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015).

lingual, historical and theological facts. He explains how “Allah” which is God to Muslims is different from Christian understanding of God. Poh says though the Christians may first use “Allah” before the Muslim and the Muslim have virtually “hijacked” the usage, the word is widely associated with Islam today and this seems to be the reason for certain Christian groups to reject its use in favour of other words.<sup>29</sup> Poh’s writing is important to look at for the balanced opinions among Christians in Malaysia.

Another writing with the same issue on God’s name but in a different context is *Confronting Confucian Understandings of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation* by Paulos Zhanzhu. Among the issues raised is the translation of God as *Shen* which according to some Chinese Protestants, is confusing. In Confucianism, besides giving a singular meaning for Heavenly Deity, *Shen* also provides plural connotation for lower gods in the heavens. Thus, some Chinese Protestants choose *Shendi* as translation for Christian God.<sup>30</sup> However, there are several differences between Allah and the *Shen* case. Allah is said to be congruent with *Eloah* in Hebrew and *Aloah* in Syriac which are found in the earlier Christian texts. *Shen* or *Shendi* are clearly words loaned later by Christian preachers in China that have nothing to do with the early Christian language. To some extent, there are still some similar situations where comparison can be made between these cases, for instance in the issue of confused and misguided meanings.

At the global level Christian literature, in 2006, *The International Journal of Frontier Missiology* includes articles related to the Christian absorption of foreign culture, beliefs and religion. “Allah” as God's name has been addressed in articles like

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<sup>29</sup> B.S.Poh, *Should Christians Use the Word “Allah”?* (Kuala Lumpur, Good News, 2009), 4-21.

<sup>30</sup> Huang, Paulos Zhanzhu, *Confronting Confucian Understandings of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation - A systematic theological analysis of the Basic Problems in Confucian -Christian Dialogue*, (Leiden, Brill,2009), 77-78