

Towards mutual understanding or religious intolerance?

Impacts and implications of the recent Iban Bible issue in Malaysia

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Summary

This paper discusses an issue that affected the Christian community of Malaysia in early 2003: the ban imposed on the Iban Bible by the Ministry of Home Affairs and its withdrawal within two months. The authorities cited the use of the term 'Allah Taala' in the Bible as the reason for the ban. They believed that this term might confuse Muslims in the country and this would be detrimental to public peace. Religious terms common to Islam and Christianity indicate that these two religions have shared roots that lie in Semitic monotheism. However, these terms are considered 'sensitive' by Muslims in Malaysia. Since the 1980s, authorities have imposed restrictions on the use of certain terms by Christians. These restrictions have gradually become a hindrance to mutual understanding between the two communities. I would like to elaborate upon the issue by focusing on the Christian perspective and how the Christians sought the immediate lifting of the ban although the core problem still persists.

Keywords: Iban Bible, Sarawak, common religious terms, restriction, appellation for God

1. Introduction

This paper is an attempt to highlight an issue that recently affected the Christian community in Malaysia, i.e. the ban on *Bup Kudus* ('bup' means 'book' and 'kudus' means 'holy') or the Iban Bible by the Ministry of Home Affairs in early March 2003. The authorities cited the use of the term 'Allah Taala' (God Most High) in the Iban Bible as the reason for the ban. They believed that this term might confuse the Muslims in the country and this would be detrimental to public peace. Within two months, the ban was lifted after a consultative process between the Minister of Home Affairs, who is a Muslim, and eleven Christian leaders. Yet, there appears to be scarcely any inter-faith dialogue on this issue between Muslims and Christians. Probably, this was deemed to be a political issue and not a purely religious matter. Further, since race and religion are considered to be sensitive issues or taboos in Malaysia, people generally preferred to maintain silence once the matter had been settled through discussions between the top political leader and other religious leaders.

While this may appear to be a simple, transient issue, it must be noted that there have

been similar instances of tension in the 1980s regarding the use of the term 'Allah' in *Alkitab* ('al' is an equivalent of the definite article 'the' in English and 'kitab' means 'book') or the Malay Bible¹⁾ and the Indonesian Bible (Appendix 1).²⁾

The relationship between the Malay-Muslim majority and the non-Malay Christian minority in Malaysia naturally implies certain conflicts in values that could trigger ethnic, political and religious tensions. Islam and Christianity are both universal missionary religions by nature. Therefore, the activities conducted by these two religions to propagate or proselytise among the Malay-related indigenous people are competitive. In Malaysia, religious terms common to Islam and Christianity do not lead to a mutual understanding between the two communities. Rather, they contribute to religious polarisation due to claims of Islamic supremacy and demands for the protection of the Muslim majority from Christian influence.

It is true that people of all ethnic and religious communities in Malaysia have made efforts to maintain a peaceful and harmonious society in sensitive situations. However, I am of the opinion that communal friction between Muslims and Christians may continue to smoulder in various forms until the two communities arrive at a mutual agreement and make adjustments in their relationship.

In this paper, I would like to focus on the Christian perspective, describe how they sought an immediate withdrawal of the ban on the Iban Bible and analyse its aftermath. However, I encountered a few limitations during the course of my study. Firstly, I was unable to gather the opinions of Muslims on this issue. Secondly, the minutes of the closed-door meeting between the Minister of Home Affairs and several Church leaders are confidential. Therefore, the real reason for suddenly targeting the Iban Bible through the ban remains ambiguous, unclear and speculative. Thirdly, since my original speciality is not Iban studies, I did not collect firsthand information from the Iban Christians in Sarawak for this case study.

2. An overview of Malaysia

2.1. Brief background

The Federation of Malaya gained political independence from Britain on 31 August 1957, and the Federation of Malaysia was formed comprising the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak on 16 September 1963 despite strong opposition from Indonesia and the Philippines. The geography of the land is depicted in Figure 1. After the separation of Singapore on 9 August 1965, the Federation consisted of 13 states with Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia, Figure 2) and Borneo states (East Malaysia, i.e. Sabah and Sarawak, Figure 3). Presently, the Federation covers a total area of 329,847 sq.km and has a population of 24,918,300.³⁾

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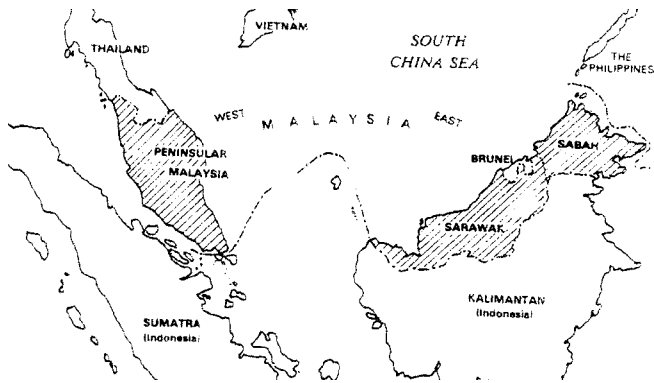


Fig. 1. The Federation of Malaysia



Fig. 2. Peninsular Malaysia

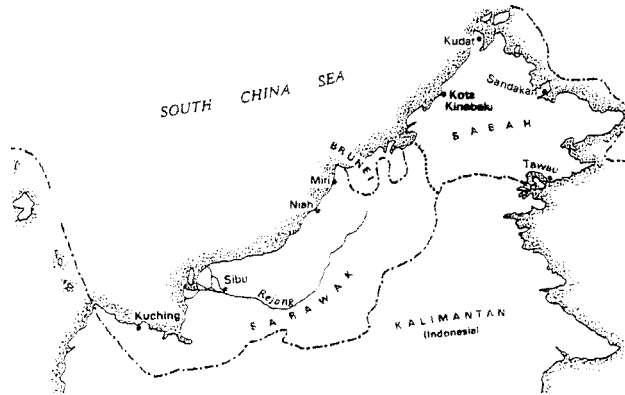


Fig. 3. Sabah and Sarawak

2.2. Ethnic composition

Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-religious and multilingual country with a rich cultural diversity and heritage. The ethnic groups have been divided into two main categories on political rather than ethnological grounds. Malay and Malay-related indigenous groups are classified as Bumiputera (sons of the soil) while people from non-Malay lands (Nusantara or the Malay Archipelago) are classified as non-Bumiputera. The latter category consists of the Chinese, the Indians and smaller communities of Arabs,⁴⁾ Sinhalese, Eurasians and Europeans.⁵⁾

According to the official statistics provided by the government of Malaysia, the estimated percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups is as follows:

Table 1.1. Estimated percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups in Malaysia(2003)⁶⁾

Ethnic group	Percentage*
Malay	50.3%
Non-Malay Bumiputera	11.0%
Chinese	24.0%
Indian	7.0%
Others	1.3%
Non-Malaysian citizens	6.4% -
	100.0% -

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

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Table 1.2. Estimated percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia (1998)⁷⁾

Ethnic group	Percentage*
Malay	59.0%
Non-Malay Bumiputera	0.9%
Chinese	28.1%
Indian	9.3%
Others	2.7%
	100.0%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

Table 1.3. Estimated percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups in Sabah (2002)⁸⁾

Ethnic group	Percentage*
Malay	12.3%
Kadazan Dusun	17.9%
Bajau	13.0%
Murut	3.2%
Other Bumiputera	14.8%
Chinese	9.9%
Others	4.8%
Non-Malaysian citizens	24.1%
	100.0%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

Table 1.4. Estimated percentage distribution of population by ethnic groups in Sarawak (2003)⁹⁾

Ethnic group	Percentage*
Malay	22.4%
Iban	29.1%
Bidayuh	8.0%
Melanau	5.5%
Other Bumiputera	5.7%
Chinese	25.6%
Others	0.4%
Non-Malaysian citizens	3.3%
	100.0%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

It must be noted that ethnic composition is different in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. In Peninsular Malaysia, the Malays represent the majority of the population; in Sabah, the Kadazan Dusuns are predominant and in Sarawak, the Ibans form the largest ethnic group.

2.3. Language

Malaysia has approximately 145 languages; 130 of these are spoken by indigenous people. According to the National Language Act 1963/67 (revised in 1971), Bahasa Malaysia ('bahasa' means 'language'), the Malay language, is the sole national and official language.¹⁰ English is widely used and is the second most important language. Other languages, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Tamil, Punjabi, Arabic, Thai, etc., are chiefly spoken in Peninsular Malaysia. In Sabah and Sarawak, the linguistic situation exhibits greater diversity.

3. Religions in Malaysia

3.1. Position of Islam and other religions

The major religions of the world have a substantial representation in Malaysia.

According to Articles 3 and 11 of the Federal Constitution,¹¹ Islam is the religion of the Federation. Freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed only to non-Muslims. In practice, non-Muslims are free to convert to Islam or any other religion; however, conversion from Islam to any other religion is strongly discouraged.

Table 1.5. displays the most recent percentage distribution of population by religion.

Table 1.5. Percentage distribution of population by religion (Malaysian citizens only) (2000)¹²

Ethnic group	Percentage*
Islam	59.1%
Buddhism	20.2%
Christianity	9.1%
Hinduism	6.5%
Confucianism/Taoism	2.8%
Animism/Folk religion/Others	1.2%
No religion/Unknown	1.1%
	100.0%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

The high correlation between religion and ethnicity is a unique characteristic of Malaysia. Under Article 160 of the Federal Constitution, 'Malay' refers to a person who is a Muslim, conforms to birth and domicile requirements, habitually speaks the Malay language

and follows Malay customs.¹³⁾ In other words, Islam is primarily identified with the Malays and the Malay culture. A Malay expression, 'masuk Melayu' (literally, 'enter Malay') implies 'to convert to Islam' or 'to become a Muslim'. For example, if an Indian converts to Islam, speaks in Malay daily and follows the Malay custom, he/she is categorised as a Malay. However, a person who merely belongs to the Malay stock is not recognised as a Malay unless he/she embraces Islam.

Among the ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia, a significant proportion of the Chinese population is Buddhist and a majority of the Indians are Hindus. Generally, the Chinese practise Confucianism and Taoism, and the North-Indians practise Sikhism. Buddhism is practised by Sri Lankans, Thai and the Chinese. Among the non-Islamic religions, Baha'i and Christianity can be practised by all the ethnic groups, except for the Malays. On the other hand, since the situations in Sabah and Sarawak are more complex and complicated, they cannot be identified with that in Peninsular Malaysia.

3.2. Christianity in Malaysia

In the *Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook*, the advent of Christianity in this land is explained as follows:¹⁴⁾ 'International trade in early times played a key role in bringing Christianity to this part of the world. Some Persian traders were Nestorian Christians. Later, in the middle ages, Catholic diplomats, travellers and priests travelled through the Straits enroute [sic] to China. Among the traders residing in Melaka during the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century were Nestorians and also Armenian Christians from what is today Eastern Turkey. Churches were established in the area with the coming of the Portuguese in 1511, the Dutch in 1641 and the British in 1786. However, in this early period, the Christian community was still largely an expatriate community. Chinese Christians sometimes migrated as communities as in the case of Basel Mission Hakkas to Sabah and Methodist Foochows to Sibul, Sarawak and Sitiawan, Perak. Christian missionaries played a key role in the field of education and medical services by establishing schools and hospitals in various parts of the country.'

Further, Christianity today is described in the following words:¹⁵⁾ 'With the gaining of independence in 1957, the country's churches also underwent its [sic] own process of nationalisation. Foreign missionaries could only have their visas renewed up to a total of ten years. At the same time, relatively few visas were granted to new missionaries. This had the effect of forcing the churches to nurture local leaders. Today, the Christian Church in Malaysia is largely local in leadership, membership and finance.'¹⁶⁾

3.3. The relationship between Islam and Christianity

Table 1.6. shows the ethnic distribution of Islam and Christianity across the total population.

Table 1.6. Ethnic distribution of monotheistic religions across the total population (Malaysian citizens only) (2000)¹⁷⁾

Religion	Malay	Malay-related	Chinese	Indian	Others	Total
Islam	53.4%	4.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.8%	59.1%
Christianity	0.0%	5.8%	2.5%	0.6%	0.2%	9.1%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

As mentioned in section 3.1., on account of the constitutional definition there are no Christians listed under in the Malay population in the table. A majority of the 'Others' are Muslims, but the Christian population is larger than that of the Muslim population among the Malay-related indigenous people (non-Malay Bumiputera), the Chinese and the Indians.

Further, the population density of the followers of Islam and Christianity differs regionally.

Table 1.7. Population density of monotheistic religions by state (2000)¹⁸⁾

State	Islam	Christianity	Other religions*
Johor	58.8%	2.2%	39.0%
Kedah	76.9%	0.8%	22.3%
Kelantan	94.5%	0.2%	5.3%
Melaka	64.2%	3.9%	31.9%
Negeri Sembilan	58.6%	2.7%	38.7%
Pahang	73.8%	1.2%	25.0%
Perak	53.9%	3.1%	43.0%
Perlis	85.4%	0.5%	14.1%
Pulau Pinang	44.2%	3.6%	52.2%
Sabah	63.7%	27.8%	8.5%
Sarawak	31.3%	42.6%	26.1%
Selangor	55.7%	4.3%	40.0%
Terengganu	96.9%	0.3%	2.8%
† Kuala Lumpur	46.2%	5.6%	48.2%
† Labuan	76.3%	12.8%	10.9%
Malaysia	60.4%	9.1%	30.5%

(*Note: Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

(† These two regions are not states but Federal Territories.)

According to the above table, in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu, the Muslim population is considerably dense; it is over 90%. In Kedah, Pahang, Perlis and Labuan, Islam is the predominant religion as compared with all others, including Christianity. In six other states, namely Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Sabah and Selangor, the Muslim

population ranges between 50% and 65%. However, in Pulau Pinang, Sarawak and Kuala Lumpur, the proportion of Muslims is less than 50%. Sarawak, in particular, is the sole state in Malaysia where the Christian population far exceeds the Muslim population. On the whole, the Muslim population is just over 60%, and the non-Muslim population is approximately 40% within the country. These rates indicate a precarious balance between the two communities and a potentially high risk of religious tension.

With regard to the Christian mission during the British colonial period, it must be noted that the Pangkor Treaty between the British Governor, Andrew Clarke and Malay Sultan of Perak, Raja Abdullah on 20 January 1874 eventually discouraged Christian evangelisation among the Malays¹⁹. Missionary activities were thus limited to the non-Malay immigrants or the non-Malay indigenous population. This trend continues until today.

To date, there have been an extremely limited number of cases of Malay apostasy to Christianity.²⁰ Muslims who have converted to another faith are detained in rehabilitation centres to ensure the restoration of their original faith, Islam. If the apostates do not give up their new faith, they are forcibly exiled from Malaysia to other immigrant-based countries, such as New Zealand.²¹ As long as they do not defame Islam, apostates from Islam cannot be sentenced to death or punished by any such government legislation.

4. Christianity and the Ibans in Sarawak

The advent and spread of Christianity and its missionary activities among the Ibans in Sarawak under the governance of Sir James Brooke (White Rajah) is discussed in detail in the history of the translation of the Bible into the Iban (Sea Dayak) language (Appendix 2).²²

Historically, Christianity was introduced earlier than Islam to the Ibans of this region. The Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM)²³ explains the relationship between the Christian mission and the Ibans as follows: 'Ever since the colonial rule, the Bible was instrumental in changing society via the efforts of Christian missions such as in the setting up of orphanages for the homeless children, the provision of education through the building of schools; not to mention the caring of the sick in hospitals...Along similar lines, the Ibans were also recipients of the Good News but at a much later period. They were transformed by the teaching of the love of Christ Jesus. These people were former Sea Dayaks who were fierce warriors waging wars against one another and collecting heads as mementos of manhood. Strangely enough, a whole pantheon of spirits used to control these fierce tribal people. It was God's mercy, that the Bible liberated them from the yoke of fear and animism.'²⁴

In Sarawak, where Islam is a minority religion, the authorities and certain Muslim groups have tried to convert people in a bid to increase the Muslim population;²⁵ however, this has apparently not met with success. Theodore Gabriel, a Christian academician from India records the change in the percentage distribution of population by monotheistic religions in

Sarawak as follows (Theodore 1996: 105):

Table 1.8. Percentage distribution of population by monotheistic religions in Sarawak between 1947 and 1980

	1947	1960	1970	1980
Christian	7.9%	15.8%	17.6%	28.5%
Muslim	24.6%	23.4%	26.3%	26.3%
Others	67.5%	60.8%	56.1%*	45.2%*

(*Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

According to the 1991 census, the percentage of Christians in Sarawak is 36.6% while that of Muslims is 28.8%.²⁶⁾ Thus, the percentage distribution of population by monotheistic religions in Sarawak between the years 1947 and 2000 is as follows:

Table 1.9. Percentage distribution of population by monotheistic religions in Sarawak between the years 1947 and 2000

	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000
Christian	7.9 %	15.8%	17.6%	28.5%	36.6%	42.6%
Muslim	24.6%	23.4%	26.3%	26.3%	28.8%	31.3%
Others	67.5%	60.8%	56.1%*	45.2%*	34.6%*	26.1%

(*Percentages have been calculated by the author.)

The above table indicates that the Muslim population has grown steadily in a stable condition while the Christian population has exploded at a much faster pace.

A Catholic priest, Father Christopher Laden, belonging to the diocese of Kuching (the capital city of Sarawak) explained the reason behind the conversion of the Dayaks (the Ibans) to Christianity in the following words: 'It is because Jesus Christ and the Church explained who God is and promised eternal life. We Dayaks believe in God the Creator, but we don't know who he is: if he is good or bad, if he loves us or cares at all for us. Our belief is that after death there is nothing. Christianity gives us hope. The second reason is sociological. By becoming Christians, we enter into a community that helps us and creates brotherhood, whereas the old tribal community is disappearing. We Dayak [*sic*] refuse Islam because it is too far from our mentality and does not fit in with our beliefs.²⁷⁾ This article also reports that Muslims are few in number in the forest regions outside of Kuching. Conversion to Islam occurs through marriage, business contacts or because benefits and privileges are promised for furthering education or career. Father John, a Catholic priest, reportedly stated that the aborigines chose Christianity because 'when the [*sic*] encounter Christ, they experience a

change in their personal, [*sic*] life as well as that of the family and the village.²⁸⁾

Ghazali Basri (1999: 86, 91) states that according to his research findings, the Muslim population among the Ibans is only 0.6% while the Christian population is over 50.0%.²⁹⁾ The remaining 49.4% either follow animism or profess no religion. Official statistics estimate the number of the Ibans to be 644,900.³⁰⁾ Thus, there are at least approximately 300,000 Iban Christians in Sarawak.

As for the linguistic traits, Asmah Haji Omar (1981: 5) states that the Iban and Malay languages are similar in terms of grammar and phonetics and there exists a close relationship between the two. Iban is spoken not only by the Ibans but also by the Chinese and other ethnic groups in Sarawak.³¹⁾

5. The issue of the Iban Bible

5.1. Imposition of the ban

As of 5 March 2003, the publication control unit of the Home Ministry (Kementerian Dalam Negeri, KDN) had banned 35 religious books on Islam and Christianity in Malay and Iban. A list of these books was gazetted under the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (amended in 1987) and Printing Presses and Publications (Control of Undesirable Publications) Order 2003 by the Minister of Home Affairs (Menteri Dalam Negeri).³²⁾ The *Bup Kudus* or the Iban Bible was one of the banned books (See No.2 in Appendix 3). Of the other 34 books, 20 were on Islam and 14 were on Christianity.³³⁾

An interesting fact is that the media did not publicly address this issue until 9 April 2003; it was first reported by *Bernama.com* on its website on the night of 8 April 2003.³⁴⁾ Once it was publicised by *Bernama.com*, other important domestic media, such as *New Straits Times Online*,³⁵⁾ *The Star Online*,³⁶⁾ *Utusan Malaysia Online* (English edition),³⁷⁾ *Berita Harian Online* (Malay edition),³⁸⁾ and Singaporean media, such as *The Straits Times*,³⁹⁾ carried this piece of news on the following day. Of the 35 books, the ban on the Iban Bible attracted the most attention. This is because while other banned books were imported from Indonesia,⁴⁰⁾ the Iban Bible was published domestically by the BSM. During a personal interview with the then General Secretary of the BSM,⁴¹⁾ I was told that until one of the Christian lawyers requested a news reporter to widely publicise the gazette, there was no direct official notice from the Home Ministry to the Christian organisations. Hence, the BSM continued selling the Iban Bible to customers as usual.⁴²⁾ This suggests that there was a time lag of more than one month between the dates of the gazette issued by the authorities and the public announcement by the media.

According to media reports, the Islamic Advancement Department (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM) led to the banning of the Bible because it contained the term 'Allah Taala', which sounds similar to an Islamic term.⁴³⁾ Mr. Elias Mat Rabi, a senior official and the

enforcement chief of the Home Ministry's Film Censorship and Publication Control Division in Sarawak, was directly involved in the ban on the Iban Bible.⁴⁴⁾ He reportedly said that the banned books breached the guidelines for non-Islamic religious books because they employed several terms that might confuse Muslims and endanger national security. However, soon after this statement, he declined to comment on this issue.⁴⁵⁾

The 'guideline' referred to by Mr. Elias Mat Rabi is reproduced in Appendix 4. The official letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs, dated 5 December 1986, prohibits all Christian publishers in the country from using the four Malay terms (Allah, Kaabah, Baitullah and Solat) in Christian publications.⁴⁶⁾ Appendix 5 displays sample passages from the Sea Dayak/Iban Bible. Apart from the term 'Allah', these passages show no trace of the other three terms.⁴⁷⁾

5.2. Actions and reactions

As soon as newspapers reported the ban on the Iban Bible, the Christian leaders in Sarawak and at the headquarters of Christian organisations in metropolitan areas, namely Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya promptly issued press releases.⁴⁸⁾ They expressed 'surprise', 'shock', 'dismay', 'anxiety' and 'fear' on behalf of the Christian community because they did not understand the cause of the sudden ban. The Iban Christians had been using this Bible since 1988 and had not encountered any problem. They also wanted to discuss the matter with and explain it to the Minister of Home Affairs, hoping that this would lead to a consultative solution.

It must be noted that Haji Kuthbul Zaman Bukhari, the president of the Malaysian Bar Council advised the authorities to lift the ban immediately because it infringed upon the constitutionally guaranteed right to the freedom of religion.⁴⁹⁾

Eventually, the English domestic media began to continuously monitor this issue in sharp contrast to the Malay media, which offered relatively poor coverage of the matter. *Malaysiakini.com*, an alternative online medium keenly followed the issue, hosting debates and discussions through letters posted by its visitors.⁵⁰⁾ Initially, the participants were mainly Christians but they were soon followed by several Muslims. Muslim opinion on the use of the term 'Allah' by Christians was divided.⁵¹⁾ A few Muslims agreed that Christians and Jews believed in the same God as Muslims. On the other hand, one of the reasons for negative responses was the disparate concept of God in Christianity and in Islam. Since Christians believe in the Trinity, Muslims consider it offensive and insulting if they use the term 'Allah'. Muslims who did not agree on sharing the term with Christians held that the Al-Quran was not equivalent to the Bible, which contained translations from various languages. Another Muslim recommended that Christians should use the term 'Allah' only in the Arabic Bible. In addition, there was a Muslim who admitted that while it was technically correct for Christians to use the same term as Muslims, certain Christian missionaries used the common religious

terms as a means to persuade Muslims to embrace Christianity.⁵²⁾

5.3. Other reactions from the public

Protesting via the Internet, several people reacted against the ban imposed by the authorities. Firstly, an online signature petition was initiated by Mr. Ong Kian Ming, a Chinese Christian.⁵³⁾ The campaign garnered more than 1,500 signatures along with personal comments from domestic Malaysians including non-Christians as well as foreigners and expatriate Malaysians requesting the Home Minister to lift the ban immediately.⁵⁴⁾ Secondly, several international media reports and international Christian groups took up this issue.⁵⁵⁾ Many of these reports subtly criticised the Muslim authorities for religious oppression and intolerance towards the Iban Christians. Thirdly, on 21 April 2003, Mr. Chan Yat Hee, the president of the Catholic Lawyer's Society of Kuala Lumpur, appealed to the government in a press statement to safeguard the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution.⁵⁶⁾

Among the political parties, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), a predominantly Chinese opposition party with some professional Indian members and supporters, actively protested the ban on the grounds of protecting human rights, freedom of religion and democracy.⁵⁷⁾

Meanwhile, the NECF⁵⁸⁾ donated RM 100,000 to the Malaysian International Peace Fund for the people of Iraq on 22 April 2003.⁵⁹⁾ Deputy Home Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung received it on behalf of the Acting Prime Minister. This display of religious tolerance and concern for others by the Christian community should not be overlooked. Christians did not wish be labelled anti-Muslim or anti-Malay merely because they protested the ban on the Iban Bible. Instead, they attempted to express their love and concern for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

An Iban Christian suggested that if Muslims were unhappy with the use of the common term, the term 'Allah Taala' could be reverted to 'petara', which was originally used by the Ibans in the pre-Christian era.⁶⁰⁾ This will be discussed later in the form of a response from the BSM (Section 7).

6. A consultative process for resolution

6.1. A closed-door meeting

In response to various reactions and strong protests from the Christian and non-Malay communities across the country as well as overseas through the Internet, the Acting Prime Minister promptly accepted the request to meet the Christian leaders and hear their explanation.

In fact, the Christian representatives were reportedly 'optimistic' about this closed-door meeting with the Acting Prime Minister. This was primarily because certain Iban Christian

ministers in the cabinet had already conveyed the message of the Christian leaders to the Acting Prime Minister.⁶¹⁾ The details are displayed in Appendix 6. Eleven Christian leaders from Sarawak and Kuala Lumpur/Petaling Jaya belonging to several denominations and ethnic backgrounds,⁶²⁾ gathered together to seek a consultation with the Acting Prime Minister in Putrajaya on 22 April 2003.

The meeting was reportedly 'very cordial and conductive', and Christian leaders expressed their appreciation to the Acting Prime Minister for his positive and open-minded attitude.⁶³⁾

When Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri, Executive Secretary of the CFM,⁶⁴⁾ explained to the Acting Prime Minister that the missionaries had begun the translation of the Bible into Iban over 100 years ago⁶⁵⁾ and that the term 'Allah Taala' had been used by the Iban-speaking Christians without any problem, the Minister reportedly stated that he was unaware that the book in question was actually the Iban Bible.⁶⁶⁾

During the meeting, the Acting Prime Minister was 'satisfied' with the explanation provided by the Christian leaders and was convinced that the ban on the Iban Bible should be lifted. However, he recommended a compromise, whereby the cover of the revised versions of the Iban Bible would carry the symbol of the cross with a disclaimer stating, 'This is the translation of the Bible in the Iban language.' This would enable any Muslim who accidentally picked up the book to easily recognise that it was a Christian book.⁶⁷⁾

6.2. Lifting the ban

After the closed-door meeting, the Acting Prime Minister announced that the ban on the Iban Bible would be lifted with immediate effect in Johor Bahru on 25 April 2003.⁶⁸⁾ The official notice regarding the withdrawal of the ban on the Iban Bible was issued on 30 April 2003 (Appendix 7). For the Christian community, this implied that the consultative process was successful in peacefully securing a resolution of the issue. The domestic media reported that the Christians were 'happy' and 'grateful' to the Acting Prime Minister for his sensitivity and sympathetic concern towards the Iban Christians.⁶⁹⁾ This was regarded as an intervention by the Acting Prime Minister through the good office of Datuk Amar Leo Moggie, the then cabinet minister.

7. The aftermath

When I met lay Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, in the metropolitan areas of Malaysia in August 2003, they appeared relieved that this issue was immediately resolved and that the furore had already been curbed. In fact, the leading Christian leaders had instructed them not to voice their opinion regarding the issue any more in order to prevent unnecessary social discontent.⁷⁰⁾ A superficial observation reveals that the issue was resolved peacefully

and no further problem should arise. The *Berita CCM*, for example, stated, 'All's well that ends well.'⁷¹⁾ Similarly, the Catholic stance appeared to be one of calm and patience.⁷²⁾

However, it should be noted that on 24 April 2003, the BSM received information that the officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs had confiscated 1,000 copies of *Alkitab*, the Indonesian Bible.⁷³⁾ The General Secretary and the staff of the BSM tried to contact the Ministry on numerous occasions but in vain.⁷⁴⁾ Further, according to the NECF report, the Home Ministry in Sabah has yet to release 1,500 CDs and tapes worth over RM 18,000 belonging to the Maranatha Church for the Kadazan Dusuns in Kota Kinabalu after they were confiscated in November 2002.⁷⁵⁾ A few Christians confided that, for local Christians, the Iban Bible issue was neither new nor special as they were already accustomed to the 'threat' posed by the authorities. From this perspective, it must be acknowledged that while the ban on the Iban Bible was promptly lifted because of the sincerity and understanding of the Acting Prime Minister, in reality, the core problem between Muslims and Christians remains unsolved.

Appendices 8, 9, 10 and 11 state the linguistic and theological reasoning for the use of the term 'Allah Taala' in the Iban Bible. As evident in Appendix 8, of the three words that refer to the deity, 'Allah Taala' was the most appropriate phrase in Iban that expressed the Christian concept of God. In addition, as indicated in Appendix 9, 'Allah'-related terms have been used in approximately 60 languages across the world. For example, it is a well-known fact that there has been no issue between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia regarding the use of this term. Appendix 10 proves that the BSM had already provided the explanation of the term in the Iban Bible published by them. Appendix 11 supports the facts that (1) the choice of the term 'Allah' is based on pre-Islamic religious tradition, (2) the sharing of common religious vocabularies between the two faiths is logical, and (3) the status quo must be maintained.

8. Conclusion

Brian William Newton (1988: 91) states, 'It has seemed for many years that the Iban [*sic*] presented the main obstacle to the establishing of a unified Malaysian culture, which has Malay/Muslim values as its core.' If this statement is correct, one of the reasons for the ban on the Iban Bible was the underlying motive of certain authorities to propagate Islam and increase the Muslim population in Sarawak. Sarawak is the only state where Islam is in the minority in 'Tanah Melayu' ('tanah' means 'land') or the Malay land. My speculation stems from the fact that it sounds unrealistic to consider that a Malay or an Iban Muslim may be confused while reading the Bible in Iban merely because of the use of the term 'Allah Taala'. Rev. Wong Kim Kong rightly stated that if Muslims are indeed confused, authorities must ensure that they are educated instead of restricting the right of non-Muslims.⁷⁶⁾ Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri had also categorically denied the possibility of confusion among the Muslims

regarding the common terms.⁷⁷⁾

However, to be fair to the government, the NECF was of the opinion that the ban was most probably the act of certain overzealous Home Ministry officials who had arbitrarily imposed it without following the proper guidelines and consulting the relevant religious groups.⁷⁸⁾ It further stated that the government generally formulates effective policies that encourage pluralistic harmony; however, the implementation of the policies is often flawed due to the religious bias of certain civil servants.⁷⁹⁾

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the contribution of Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi. According to the media report released on 22 December 2003, he had distributed 1,500 Christmas cards to pastors and church leaders throughout the country. Among the five Malaysian Prime Ministers, he was the first to extend such a gesture.⁸⁰⁾ Further, he delivered an impressive address at the Plenary Commission on *Faith & Order* of the World Council of Churches held in Kuala Lumpur on 3 August 2004. Quoting verses from Al-Quran and the Bible, he stated, 'I come here not just as the Prime Minister of the host country, but as a Muslim who wants to initiate a dialogue with his Christian friendsAs Prime Minister of Malaysia, I am not a leader of Muslims, but a Muslim leader of all Malaysians.....It is my duty to spread the message of tolerance among all; especially to the Muslim majority....It is fair to say that there is less trust and goodwill between Islam and Christianity than there was a few years ago.'⁸¹⁾ Later, Rev. Dr. David Yemba, the moderator of the commission, presented the Prime Minister with an Arabic translation of the Bible.⁸²⁾

The anecdote presented above is a symbolic endeavour by the Prime Minister, who is representative of the moderate Muslim leader. The key to this issue still lies in the hands of the people.

NOTES

- 1) See Tsunashima (2003: 108-112, 118-122).
- 2) After several protests from the Christian community, the ban was partially lifted so that only Christians and churches could possess the Bible. (Chew 2000: 280).
- 3) *Siaran Perangkaan Bulanan (Monthly Statistical Bulletin) Malaysia*, Mac (March) 2003, Table 2.1., p.7.
- 4) Some Arabs have been assimilated into the Malay community through intermarriages. These Arabs are considered to be Malays.
- 5) *Information Malaysia 1995 Yearbook*, p.51. After the racial clash between the Malays and the Chinese on 13 May 1969 in Kuala Lumpur, the New Economic Policy (Dasar Ekonomi Baru) was implemented. This policy eventually became equivalent to the Bumiputera policy that grants socio-economic privileges to the Bumiputera. In other words, according to this policy, the non-Bumiputera are not entitled to the same privileges, and this unequal social status renders them frustrated and irritated.
- 6) *Siaran Perangkaan Bulanan (Monthly Statistical Bulletin) Malaysia*, Mac (March) 2003,

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- Table 2.1., p.7.
- 7) *Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook*, p.79. Non-Malaysian citizens are omitted.
 - 8) *Siaran Perangkaan Bulanan (Monthly Statistical Bulletin) Sabah*, Mei (May) 2003, Table 2.1., p.9.
 - 9) *Siaran Perangkaan Bulanan (Monthly Statistical Bulletin) Sarawak*, Mei (May) 2003, Table 2.5., pp.20-1.
 - 10) In this paper, the terms 'Bahasa Malaysia' and '(the) Malay (language)' have been used in specific contexts. The former is mainly popular among the non-Malays who employ it in a general or national context. The latter is preferred by the Malays. The term 'Bahasa Melayu' is also widely used within the Malay community. In this paper, when I employ the term '(the) Malay (language)' in other contexts, the usage is purely linguistics-oriented. For details, refer to Tsunashima (2003: 107-8).
 - 11) Federal Constitution (Perlembagaan Persekutuan), Article 3. Religion of the Federation. (1) Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation. Article 11. Freedom of religion. (1) Every person has the right to profess and practise his religion and, subject to Clause (4), to propagate it. (4) State law and in respect of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya, federal law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam. (*Federal Constitution, 2002*, p.13, p.19).
 - 12) *Banci Penduduk dan Perumahan Malaysia 2000 (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000)*, Table 4.1., p.70.
 - 13) Federal Constitution (Perlembagaan Persekutuan), Article 160. Interpretation. "Malay" means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and – (a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is [sic] on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (b) is the issue of such a person. (*Federal Constitution, 2002*, pp.141-2).
 - 14) *Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook*, p.28.
 - 15) *Ibid.* p.28.
 - 16) The denominational history of Christianity in Malaysia is best described by Robert Hunt, et al. (1992). The history of the Catholic mission in Borneo has been well documented by John Rooney (1981). Also see, Ngoh (1994: 70-129).
 - 17) *Banci Penduduk dan Perumahan Malaysia 2000 (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000)*, Table 4.1., p.70.
 - 18) Hompej Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (Homepage of the Department of Statistics, Malaysia) 2000.
 - 19) See Andaya and Andaya (1982: 154-5). As for the other interpretations of the treaty by Christian missionaries, see Ngoh (1994: 117-120).
 - 20) However, one of the articles on *Asia Times Online*, 'Malaysia makes its case on conversion' by Ioannis Gatsiounis (28 July 2004), reported an active Christian proselytism among the Malays. An anonymous pastor reportedly said, 'My work is God's will and I have a worthy cause to fight for. [Malays] have a right to find Jesus.' The article also states that his evangelical church has 12 branches throughout Malaysia and 30 affiliates. The pastor

estimates that '100 Muslims are converting to Christianity every month in Malaysia.' According to the article, Christian groups estimate that there are 30,000 Malay converts although some Muslim groups claim that the figure is much lower. However, 'most converts are said to live in secrecy for fear of harassment from the government, family and fellow Malays.' (*Asia Times Online* was founded in 1999 and is registered as an Internet publication in Hong Kong that focuses on the Asian perspective.) While this could be true, I personally doubt the accuracy of this report. A majority of the Christians I have met respect and follow the law of Malaysia that permits them to practise their activities of propagation only among non-Muslims, though a few of them admit that they experience an inner dilemma because they are unable to share their faith with the Malays.

- 21) There have been two well-known cases in the past. (1) In 1987, Joshua Jamaluddin, a Malay Muslim who had converted to Christianity, was detained under the ISA (Internal Security Act) and subjected to brutal torture. The officials tried to force him to recant his belief in Christianity, but they did not succeed. Eventually, they freed him on the condition that he would leave the country if he wished to continue embracing Christianity. He is said to be currently living in New Zealand. (2) Ashley Lopez's wife, who is the daughter of a Haji Muslim, renounced her faith in Islam through a deed poll. She chose Catholicism as her new religion. The couple had to seek refuge in New Zealand to continue practising Catholicism. These two cases were recently referred to on *Malaysiakini.com* under 'Malaysian religious conundrums' by Chacko Pannicker on 1 July 2004.
- 22) In this paper, 'Sea Dayak' is equivalent to Iban. The Ibans were formerly known as Sea Dayaks and are largely concentrated in the Second and Third Divisions in Sarawak.
- 23) The beginning of organised activity by the BSM ('Pertubuhan Bible Malaysia' in Bahasa Malaysia) dates back to the year 1815 when the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) and the American Bible Society had initiated their activities in Malaya. In 1957, the Bible Society in Malaya celebrated the independence (Merdeka) of Malaya together with the National Bible Society of Scotland and BFBS. In October 1967, the Malayan Bible Society was renamed as the Bible Society of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, affiliated to the National Bible Society of Scotland and BFBS. In November 1971, the society set up its office in Singapore. On 9 August 1983, the society applied to the government of Malaysia for registration as the Bible Society of Malaysia. In November 1985, it was officially registered as the Bible Society of Malaysia with the government and in January 1996 it acquired associate membership of the United Bible Societies (UBS). From September 2002, the BSM has obtained the status of full member with the UBS.
- 24) *The Engager* (Vol.2 Number 3), June-August 2003, p.1.
- 25) For example, Theodore Gabriel (1996: 45, 50) mentions the activities of BINA (Angkatan Nahadathul Islam Bersatu, United Islamic Renaissance Movement). This body calls itself a frontline Islamic organization for the enhancement of Dakwah (Islamic revival), mainly targeting indigenous people in the interiors. According to him, the brochure of BINA cited a few examples of Christians converting to Islam (p.64). Ghazali Basri (1999: 101) claims to hold a successful record in BINA as the pioneer of converting several Christian families to Islam.
- 26) *Banci Penduduk dan Perumahan Malaysia (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia*

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- 1991), *Laporan Am Banci Penduduk (General Report of the Population Census)* Jilid (Volume) 1, Jadual 3.9., p.77 (Table 3.9., p.74).
- 27) 'Borneo: A new Church is born among the Dayak' by Piero Gheddo on *AsiaNews.it* on 28 May 2004.
 - 28) *Ibid.*
 - 29) They belong to various denominations such as Catholic, Methodist, Sidang Injil Borneo, Seventh Day Adventist and Anglican. Anglican Christians, in particular, are found among the Iban intellectuals (Ghazali 1999: 95).
 - 30) *Siaran Perangkaan Bulanan (Monthly Statistical Bulletin) Sarawak*, Mei (May) 2003, Table 2.5., p.20.
 - 31) Personal interviews with Dr. Yu Suee Yan on 8 August 2003 and with Dr. Victor Wong on 12 August 2003 in their respective offices.
 - 32) Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi was appointed the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs in January 1999. When the issue was reported by the domestic media on 9 April 2003, he was the Acting Prime Minister for two months as the successor of the 4th Prime Minister, Tun (then Dato' Seri) Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad. He became the 5th Prime Minister of Malaysia on 31 October 2003. Born to a famous Islamic family of Pulau Pinang, he is reputed to be a moderate Muslim leader. He has graduated from the University of Malaya in 1964 with a B.A. (Hons.) in Islamic Studies. However, the fact that he studied at Penang Methodist Boy's school during his secondary education should not be overlooked. The educational history of Malaya/Malaysia reveals that Methodist mission schools played a vital role in fostering a multi-racial learning environment and in developing prominent leaders within the Malays as well. However, there was no conversion from Islam to Christianity. Now, Dato' Seri Abdullah's political leadership aims to create a modern and progressive Islamic governance under the secular Federal Constitution.
 - 33) The reason for the ban on these Islamic books remains unknown. To the best of my knowledge, there were no protests against the ban from the Muslims. Fourteen other Christian books, which were translated into Malay from English, were banned probably because they employed the term 'Allah'. It is reported that the original English versions were sold in the country without any problem. I have not yet received any information on the lifting the ban on these books.
 - 34) 'KL Home Ministry Bans 35 Books' at 21:33 pm on 8 April 2003. 'Bernama', established in May 1968, is the national news agency of Malaysia.
 - 35) 'Home Ministry bans 35 books' on *New Straits Times Online* on 9 April 2003.
 - 36) '35 books, detrimental to public peace, banned' on *The Star Online* on 9 April 2003.
 - 37) 'Home Ministry bans 35 books' on *Utusan Malaysia Online* (English edition) on 9 April 2003 (7 Safar 1424).
 - 38) '35 penerbitan diharam' on *Berita Harian Online* on 9 April 2003 (7 Safar 1424).
 - 39) '35 Books Banned On Peace Grounds' on *The Straits Times* on 9 April 2003.
 - 40) To the best of my knowledge, the Indonesians did not raise their voices against this issue. Most probably, this was because the diplomatic relations between both countries are at a delicate stage, and Indonesians have grown accustomed to such a situation.
 - 41) A personal interview with Dr. Victor Wong in his office on 12 August 2003.

- 42) Sidang Injil Borneo (Evangelical Church of Borneo) is the chief local contributor involved in the translation of the Bible into Iban. Currently, two full-time translators and seven reviewers are working on the second revision of the Iban Bible, which will be completed by the year 2005. The Bibles are priced at RM 68 (leather cover with zip) and RM 26 (soft cover) per copy. As of 12 August 2003, an annual stock of 2,572 copies of the Iban Bible was in the possession of the BSM. (Personal interviews with Dr. Yu Suee Yan on 8 August 2003 and with Dr. Victor Wong on 12 August 2003 in their respective offices.)
- 43) 'Documents relating to the Iban Bible Saga' in *Berita CCM* (April-June 2003) p.9.
- 44) *Ibid.* p.8.
- 45) 'Bible Ban Shock in Southeast Asian Democracy' by Patrick Goodenough on *CNS News.com*. on 17 April 2003.
- 46) At first, the use of 16 terms was not permitted, but after strong protests from the Christian community, the number of banned terms was reduced to 4, provided any publication using the other 12 permitted terms placed the phrase 'Untuk Agama Kristian' (literally, 'For the Christian religion' which implied that it was 'For Christians Only') on the front page. Now, Bibles and Christian literature in Bahasa Malaysia usually avoid terms like 'Kaabah', 'Baitullah' and 'Solat' and have replaced them with other relevant phrases because even the local Christians do not want to use these Islamic terms. Philip Koh Tong Ngee (1987: 23) states, 'The Ministry's letters do **not** have the force of law and at best is [*sic*] evidence only of the Executive's perceptions of the issue at hand.' See also, *Catholic Asian News* (May 1988: 2-3, 7-8), *Catholic Asian News* (October 1988: 5-6, 31), Shastri (1989: 120), Means (1991: 104,109), Ghazali (1992: 37), Okumura (1993: 230), Ngoh (1994: 152-160), Cassian (1996: 70), Ho (1996: 266), Chew (2000: 280-1), *Berita NECF* (May-June 2003: 3) and Tsunashima (2003: 108-9, 118-120). Interestingly, Rt. Rev. Prof. Dr. Kenneth Cragg, a former Anglican assistant bishop in Jerusalem also mentions the disparity in the Arabic religious terms common to Islam and Christianity, drawing examples from the Malaysian case. (Cragg 1991: 285, 300).
- 47) However, I believe that for Muslims, the most offensive, disputatious phrase in the Bible is 'Anak Allah' (the Son of God).
- 48) Statement issued by the Association of Churches in Sarawak, which was signed by Pastor Lawrence Banyie (Seventh Day Adventist), Rt. Rev. Made Katib (Anglican), the Most Rev. Dato' Sri Peter Chung (Catholic), Rev. Jonathan Jelanding (Methodist), Rev. Ting Daik Choung (Methodist) and Pastor Kalip Besar (Sidang Injil Borneo). Press release on 10 April 2003: 'Banning of the Bible in the Iban language' by Rt. Rev. Julius Paul (President of the CCM and Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia) and Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri (Methodist, General Secretary of the CCM). (Reference: *Berita CCM*, (April-June 2003) pp.8-9). Following these statements, the Association of Churches, Sibü Branch also appealed a jointly-signed statement on 17 April 2003 by Rev. Mathew Uibun, Rev. Johnny Ganggok and Latan Ambai (Anglican), Rev. Jonathan Jelanding (Methodist), Pastor Melai Belingau (Sidang Injil Borneo), Bishop Dominic Su, Temenggong Adrian Ringau, Michael Ili and Justin Balang (Catholic).(Reference: 'Local church leaders appeal for lifting of ban' on *Sarawak Tribune* on 19 April 2003). The 'Association of Churches in Sarawak' ('Persatuan Gereja-Gereja di Sarawak' in Bahasa Malaysia) was formed in January 1991 (Ghazali 1994a: 3). CCM refers to the Council of Churches of Malaysia ('Majlis Gereja-Gereja Malaysia' in

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Bahasa Malaysia). It has its roots in the Malayan Christian Council that was formed in 1947 and officially began on 9 January 1948. In those days, 17 denominations combined to form an advisory ecumenical organisation. In 1967, it was renamed as the Council of Churches of Malaysia and Singapore. In 1975, it was again renamed as the Council of Churches of Malaysia. The CCM consists of the Anglican Church, the Basel Christian Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church, the Methodist Church, the Orthodox Syrian Church, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Protestant Church in Sabah, the Salvation Army, the Bible Society of Malaysia, the Boy's Brigade, the Girl's Brigade, Malaysian Care, YMCA, YWCA, Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and the Sabah Theological Seminary.

- 49) 'Bar: Iban Bible ban vague and ominous' on *Malaysiakini.com* on 17 April 2003. 'Bar Council: Lift ban on Bup Kudus immediately' on *New Straits Times Online* on 18 April 2003.
- 50) *Malaysiakini.com*, the first independent online medium in Malaysia, was launched on 20 November 1999. The editor-in-chief is Mr. Steven Gan. It is considered to be a pioneering medium because while mainstream domestic print media are controlled or censored by the authorities and owned by certain political parties, *Malaysiakini.com* provides free, objective views to readers in both Malay and English. It also generates active participation from readers of varied racial, religious and ideological backgrounds, as well as from foreign writers. In September 2002, the staff applied for a publishing license to release a weekly print edition, but they have not yet received a response from the Prime Minister. As of 20 November 2003, the readership is more than 100,000; in August 2004, it received over 50,000 hits a day.
- 51) 'We're not taught to hate Jews' by Umar Mukhtar on 21 April 2003. 'Why not use Iban word for "Allah" in Bible translation?' by HF on 24 April 2003. 'The word "Allah" is not the monopoly of Muslims' by PM on 28 April 2003. 'Bible not an equivalent to Quran' by Al-han on 28 April 2003. 'Islam is submission to God, regardless of race or language' by West Malaysian Muslim on 28 April 2003. 'Use "Allah" only in the Arabic bible' by Arbibi Ashoy on 29 April 2003. 'Muslim use of "Allah" is specific' by Islamic Monotheist on 7 May 2003.
- 52) Dr. Victor Wong also told me that in Bangladesh some foreign Christian missionaries used these 'Islamic' terms to explain Christianity to Muslims. (A personal interview with Dr. Victor Wong in his office on 12 August 2003.) Ms. Lim Siew Foong commented that the discussion on the terminology issue was currently in progress. (A personal conversation in her office on 12 August 2003.)
- 53) He works as a senior policy analyst with an independent think tank called the Socio-Economic Development and Research Institute (SEDAR). He claimed that 'within a week, the number of signatories had reached 1,500' (Ong 2003: 7). However, according to my record, the online petition registered a total of 1,035 signatures by 9:25 pm on 24 April 2003. The number rose to 1,506 on 9 May 2003 and did not change until 1 June 2003. This implies that the petition continued to attract support even after the official announcement of the withdrawal of the ban. However, this website no longer exists. As for his opinion, refer to 'What about other banned Christian books?' on *Malaysiakini.com*. on 28 April 2003.
- 54) He reportedly stated that a printout of the petition was informally passed on to the authorities.

- 55) For details, refer to the list of 'Articles from Websites' in the 'References' section.
- 56) Though he is a Chinese Catholic, he displayed concern for the Muslims as well by demanding an explanation from the authorities for the ban on the 20 Islamic books.
- 57) Other ethnic political parties did not seem willing to directly express their concern regarding this issue.
- 58) NECF stands for the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia ('Persaudaraan Kristian Evangelikal Nasional Malaysia' in Bahasa Malaysia). On 21 March 1982, 41 evangelical Christians gathered at Lutheran House in Petaling Jaya for fellowship. In May 1983, this group was officially registered. Its members include 2,500 churches and 500,000 believers.
- 59) 'Christian group gives RM 100,000' on *The Star Online* on 23 April 2003. 'Christian group donates M [sic] 100,000 to Iraq Fund' on *Sarawak Tribune* on 23 April 2003. This was not the first time that the NECF had donated funds to the government. In the past, for example, they had made several donations during times of turmoil in Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey, Palestine, Afghanistan, etc.
- 60) The concept of 'petara' has been well described by Edwin H. Gomes (1911: 194-8). According to him, 'petara' is the only word to refer to the deities that are supernatural but most human-like beings. Asmah Haji Omar (1981: 3-4) states that 'petara' shows both Javanese and Hindu influences.
- 61) The three important Iban Christian ministers who organised the meeting between the Acting Prime Minister and the Christian representatives are as follows: 1. Datuk Amar Leo Moggie anak Irok (Catholic, Minister of Energy, Communication and Multimedia)* 2. Datuk Douglas Uggah Embass (Anglican, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department)* 3. Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr. Alfred Jabu anak Numpang (Anglican, Deputy Chief Minister and Rural and Land Development Minister)* (Note: * Previously held portfolios). This is a Christian strategy to facilitate better communication with the Malay-Muslim authorities. As long as they are classified as Bumiputera, Ministers of Christian Bumiputera from Sabah and Sarawak receive better treatment than non-Bumiputera Christians in Peninsular Malaysia at the hands of Malay-Muslim political leaders.
- 62) The denominations of the representatives were Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Assembly of God, Brethren, Evangelical, Independent, etc. They belonged to diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Iban, Indian and Chinese from Sarawak and the metropolitan areas.
- 63) Usually, Christian leaders do not adopt a confrontational approach every time they meet and discuss the concerned issue with the Malay-Muslim authorities. An exception was not made in this case.
- 64) CFM or the Christian Federation of Malaysia ('Persekutuan Kristian Malaysia' in Bahasa Malaysia) is the national Christian body representing the churches and organisations of the Catholic Church, the CCM and the NECF. It was formed on 6 February 1985 and received its certificate of registration on 14 January 1986 from the government. More than 40 denominations are part of the CFM and it represents approximately 90% of the Christian population in Malaysia. As the national Christian body, the CFM acts on behalf of the Christian community in matters pertaining to the government and other religious

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- communities. (*Information Malaysia 1995 Yearbook*, p.16)
- 65) See Appendix 2. In brief, the first portion of the Bible in Iban appeared in 1864.
 - 66) A personal conversation with a few informants revealed this should not always be considered an excuse in Malaysia simply because the high-ranking political leaders are extremely busy and at times, they may sign official documents without checking the content. Some of the other informants, however, were rather doubtful of the Acting Prime Minister's ignorance.
 - 67) Rev. Lawrence Banyie, one of the representatives, reportedly accepted this suggestion. During a personal interview with Dr. Victor Wong in his office on 12 August 2003, I learned that the BSM disagreed with this suggestion because Bibles in all languages should be treated equally. If the BSM accepts the suggestion, the Iban Bible may be considered inferior to the Bibles in other languages such as English, Mandarin, Tamil, etc.
 - 68) 'Pengharaman "Bup Kudus" ditarik balik' on *Utusan Sarawak* on 23 April 2003. 'Ban on Bup Kudus lifted' on *Sarawak Tribune* on 23 April 2003. 'Ban On Iban-Language Bible Lifted' on *Bernamea.com* on 25 April 2003. 'Ban on Iban-language Bible lifted' on *Utusan Malaysia Online* on 25 April 2003. 'Ban on Iban Bible lifted' on *The Star Online* on 26 April 2003. "Bup Kudus' ban lifted, says Abdullah' on *New Straits Times Online* on 26 April 2003. 'Ban on Iban Bible lifted' on *Malay Mail* on 26 April 2003. This incident was also reported in Singapore. 'KL to revoke Iban Bible ban' on 25 April 2003 and 'KL lifts ban on Iban Bible' on 26 April 2003 on *The Straits Times*.
 - 69) For example, 'Ibans grateful [*sic*] ban on Bup Kudus lifted' on *Sarawak Tribune* on 27 April 2003. To the best of my knowledge, there was no such article on *Utusan Sarawak*, the Bahasa Malaysia edition on the same day.
 - 70) UBS Latest News 242-Malaysia, 'General Secretary urges patience after Malaysia [*sic*] Bible ban is lifted', 1 May 2003.
 - 71) 'Bup Kudus is open again...' in *Berita CCM*, April-June 2003, p.1.
 - 72) 'Ban on *Bup Kudus* the Iban Bible lifted' in *Herald*, 4 May 2003, p.20.
 - 73) A personal communication via e-mail with Dr. Victor Wong on 5 June 2003.
 - 74) The officer's main contention was that 'Untuk Agama Kristian' was not stamped on the front page of the Bible.
 - 75) 'Tapes and CDs Seized For Containing "Allah"' in *Berita NECF* (May-June 2003) p.3.
 - 76) 'Bible Ban Shock in Southeast Asian Democracy' by Patrick Goodenough on *CNS News.com*. on 17 April 2003.
 - 77) A personal interview with Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri in his office on 13 August 2001. He clearly stated 'the government knows that foreign Muslims do not confuse'. Dr. Victor Wong presented the same opinion by saying 'I don't believe so (Muslims are confused)'. (A personal interview with Dr. Victor Wong in his office on 12 August 2003.) On the other hand, Ms. Lim Siew Foong told me that it was a case-specific issue that depended on each individual. There could be some Christians who might be confused to see the term 'Allah' being used in Christian contexts because they may recognize it as one that is inherently associated with Islam. (A personal conversation in her office on 12 August 2003.) In any case, I believe that Christians in Malaysia would not dare to openly state that the Muslims could be confused since it would connote that the former despise or underestimate the latter's intelligence.
 - 78) 'Lessons from the Ban' in *Berita NECF* (May-June 2003) p.1.

- 79) *Ibid.* Catholic Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing of Melaka-Johor Diocese also said in the interview that he believed 'top government leaders in Malaysia are moderates, though lower-rank civil servants who implement the government policies do take laws into their own hands... unfortunately some of these people are bigots.' (*UCAN* (ML 6603.1301) 10 August 2004).
- 80) 'Christmas Cards From Abdullah' on *Bernama.com* on 22 December 2003. It must be noted, however, that he and his government officials reportedly criticised the inaccuracy of the US international religious freedom report of Malaysia released on 18 December 2003. ('PM: No truth in US report' on *New Straits Times Online* on 20 December 2003.) The report contained a mention of the Iban Bible issue as well. Despite the PM's reaction, the NECF believed that the entire report was fair (*Berita NECF*, January-February 2004, p.9). Thus, the distribution of Christmas cards by the Prime Minister may be interpreted as a rhetorical act.
- 81) 'Dialogue: The Key To Unity Of Multireligious, Multiethnic And Multicultural Societies'
- 82) 'Malaysian prime minister calls for concerted effort to initiate inter-faith dialogue' in News Release dated 3 August 2004 by World Council of Churches. (<http://www2.wcc-coe.org/presreleasesen.nsf/index/>)
- 83) The asterisk (*) signifies that these articles of *The Engager* and *Berita CCM* carried the phrase 'For private circulation only' or 'For internal circulation' on their front pages. Without these phrases, the articles may not receive permission for publication from the authorities. Distribution is permitted only among Christians in Malaysia; thus, Muslims are protected from the influence of non-Islamic religions. However, some partial contents may be accessed through websites.
- 84) *World Christian Information, Christianity @ World News, World Christian Information Service*. The Japanese contents were identical because the original news source is CJC (Christian Journalist Congress).
- 85) In this list, some words from the titles of No.10 and No.11 were omitted due to the use of different languages in one version of the document. That is, page 52 is in English and page 53 is in Malay. By referring to the news reports from *New Straits Times Online* and *Utusan Malaysia Online* (English edition) on 9 April 2003 (7 Safar 1424), I have added the missing words here: the full title of No.10 is "*Belajar Berjalan Dengan Allah*" (literally 'Learning to walk with God') and that of No.11 should be "*Alkitab: Buku Untuk Masa Kini*" (literally 'The Bible: The Book for Today') by John R. W. Scott published by the Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab.

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- Christian websites (English, French and Japanese)
Canadian Bible Society's News Site/Christian Headlines/The Voice of the Martyr (Canada: 6 articles), *The Prayer Book Society, Anglican* (Philadelphia, USA: 4 articles), *Christian Monitor, Christian Persecution* (Hong Kong: 3 articles), *Christian Journalist Congress* (Japan: 3 articles)⁸⁴⁾, *Touchstone Magazine, A Journal of Mere Christianity* (Illinois, USA: 3 articles), *Council for World Mission/Ekklesia- a new way of thinking* (UK: 2 articles), *Anglican Media/Harvest West* (Australia: 2 articles), *Maranatha Christian Journal* (California, USA: 1 article), *Christian News Today.com, Christian World News* (Ohio, USA: 1 article), *Infocatho* (France: 1 article), *Christian Today India* (India: 1 article), *Agenzia fides* (Vatican: 1 article).
- Other websites hosted by Christian individuals and organisations
Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur: <http://www.archway.org.my>
Council of Churches of Malaysia: <http://www.ccmalaysia.org>
National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia: <http://www.necf.org.my>
Petition: <http://www.petitiononline.com/BibleBan/petition.html>.
Union of Catholic Asian News: <http://www.ucanews.com>
United Bible Societies: <http://www.biblesociety.org>
- Online discussion forums on Sarawak
Minyu Sarawak Talk (13 articles): <http://www.malaysia.net/sarawak>
Randau Ruai (18 articles): <http://www.malaysia.net/randauruai>

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Ban on the Indonesian Bible *Alkitab* on 2 December 1981



(Cited from *Warta Kerajaan (His Majesty's Government Gazette)* Jil.26 No.2, 21hb Januari 1982, Tambahan No.3 Perundangan (A). P.U. (A) 15. p.21.)

Appendix 2. History of the translation of the Bible into Sea Dayak/Iban
(Area: between Sadong River and Bintulu in Sarawak)

Year	
1848	Francis T. McDougall (Anglican) began to work among the Sea Dayak at the invitation of James Brooke (White Rajah) of Sarawak.
1853	The mission was supervised by W. Chambers. S.P.G.
1855	Francis T. McDougall was consecrated the first Bishop of Labuan.
1864	W. Chambers translated and published the Gospels of <i>St. Matthew</i> and <i>St. Mark</i> . S.P.C.K.
1869	W. Chambers succeeded Francis T. McDougall in the bishopric of Labuan.
1874	W.R. Mesney (later Archdeacon of Sarawak) translated <i>St. Luke's Gospel</i> . It was printed at the Sarawak mission press. S.P.G.
1877	W.R. Mesney translated <i>St. John's Gospel</i> . S.P.G. Sarawak. J. Perham (later Archdeacon of Singapore) translated <i>The Acts</i> . S.P.C.K. Sarawak.
1879	J. Perham translated <i>James; 1 and 2 Peter; and 1, 2 and 3 John</i> .
1880	J. Perham translated <i>Surat Zabor (Psalms)</i> . S.P.C.K. London.
1881	The Catholic Mission, Mill Hill Fathers, came to Kuching, Sarawak.

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- 1888 J. Perham translated *The Liturgical Epistles*. It was published by S.P.C.K.
- 1892 S.P.C.K. reprinted *The Psalter*.
- 1893 The Translation committee, including G.F. Hose (Bishop of Singapore, Labuan and Sarawak), W.R. Mesney, W. Howell, J. Perham and F.W. Leggatt translated *Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians*. S.P.G. Sarawak.
- 1896 The Translation committee prepared *St. Mark's Gospel (Revised), 1 and 2 Timothy, Philemon and Hebrews*. S.P.G. Sarawak.
- 1897 Translation committee prepared *St. John's Gospel (Revised)*. S.P.G. Sarawak.
- 1902 *St. Mark's Gospel (Revised)* and *St. John's Gospel (Further revised)*. S.P.G.
- 1912 W. Howell translated *St. John's Gospel (Revised)*. B.F.B.S. London.
Injil Kudus nunda ka S. Markus (St. Mark's Gospel in Sea Dayak). B.F.B.S. London.
Injil Kudus nunda ka S. Joan (St. John's Gospel in Sea Dayak), (Revised version by W.R. Mesney). B.F.B.S. London.
- 1913 *St. Mark's Gospel* by W. Howell. B.F.B.S. London.
- 1914 *Injil ti ditulis S.Lukas (St. Luke's Gospel in Sea Dayak)* was translated by W. Howell. B.F.B.S. London.
Surat Sambayang iya nya, sambayang pagi enggau sambayang lemari enggau sambayang sakramen, enggau adar bukai dalam adat sembah eklisia nunda ka eklisia England (The Book of Common Prayer of the Sea Dayak Mission). Christian Knowledge Society, London.
- 1930 *Surat Sembaiyang orang Christian nunda adat Ecclesia Katolica*, (hoc. opusculum a missionariis societatis), (S. Joseph exaratum in lucem editum fuit A.D.1904 et a Rev. A. Klerk emendatum A.D. 1929). Hong Kong.
- 1933 *Penyanggup Baru, iya nya surat ti madah ka Penyanggup Isa Almesih tuhan enggau pinglepas kitai (New Testament in Sea Dayak)* was translated by W. Linton (S.P.G.) with the assistance of W. Howell, R.W. Stonton and two Dayaks, namely, L. Angking and Lawat. B.F.B.S. London.
- 1938 *Surat Sambiang (A prayer book in the Sea Dayak language, authorised for use in the Diocese of Labuan and Sarawak)*. Church of England, S.P.C.K. London.
- 1940 *Surat Pantun (Prayers and hymns in Sea Dayak)*. S.P.C.K. London.
- 1950 *Surat Pantun—Sea Dayak Hymns (Second Edition, Enlarged)*. S.P.C.K. London.
- 1952 *Penyanggup Baru, iya nya surat ti madah ka penyanggup Isa Almesih tuhan enggau pinglepas kitai (New Testament in Sea Dayak) (Revised)*. B.F.B.S. London.
Salalu Sambiang (Sea Dayak Book of Private Devotion, Liturgies). Macmillan & Co. London.
- 1956 *Injil ti ditulis S.Mark (St. Mark's Gospel in Sea Dayak)*. B.F.B.S. London.
Katekismus (Catechism in Iban) translated by J. Buis. Jesselton.
- 1957 *Surat Sambiang (A prayer book, authorised for use in the Diocese of Borneo, etc.)*. Church of England, S.P.C.K. London.
- 1959 *Penyanggup baru iya nya surat ti madah ka penyanggup Isa Almesih tuhan enggau pinglepas kitai (New Testament in Sea Dayak)*. B.F.B.S. London.
- 1963 Sidang Injil Borneo (Evangelical Church of Borneo) was established.

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- 1968 *Exodus* (mimeographed) was translated by the former S.P.G., Interchurch Committee for Bible Translation (Anglicans: Basil Temengong, Ngitar Mai and Alfred Chabu; Roman Catholic: J. Aker; United Methodists: Stanley Bain, Burr Baughman, Vinson Sutlive, Joshua Bunsu and Lucius Mamora.)
- 1978 *Penyanggung Baru: iya nya surat ti madah ka Penyanggung Isa Almesih Tuhan Enggau Pengelepas Kitai* (New Testament in Iban). The Bible Society of Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei. Singapore.
- 1981 *Berita manah ka rebak diatu: Sempekat Baru dalam jako Iban* (New Testament in Iban). The Bible Society of Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei. Singapore (Note: The place of publication may be inaccurate).
- 1988 *Bup Kudus—Berita Manah Ka Rebak Diatu Sempekat Lama enggau Sempekat Baru* (Old and New Testament in Iban). First Edition, The Bible Society of Malaysia. Malaysia.
- 1990 *Bup Kudus* (2nd Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.
- 1992 *Bup Kudus* (3rd Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.
- 1994 *Bup Kudus* (4th Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.
- 1996 *Bup Kudus* (5th Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.
- 1997 *Bup Kudus* (6th Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.
- 2001 *Bup Kudus* (7th Printing) published by the Bible Society of Malaysia.

(Notes: S.P.G. = Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
S.P.C.K. = Society for Promoting of Christian Knowledge
B.F.B.S. = British and Foreign Bible Society)

(Sources: *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture* (1963)
The Book of a Thousand Tongues (Revised Edition) (1972)
Christianity In Malaysia: A Denominational History (1992)
Online Catalogue in the British Library
Online Catalogue in the Library of Congress
Online Catalogue in the Library of the Japan Bible Society)

Appendix 3. The 15 banned Christian publications in Iban and Malay⁸⁵⁾

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SCHEDULE				
<i>Title of Publication</i>	<i>Compiler</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Printer</i>	<i>Language</i>
1. Metode Penelahaan Alkitab	Dick & Tinem Maitinoe	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab, Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta-10510	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab, Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta-10510	Malay
2. Bup Kudus	—	The Bible Society Of Malaysia	The Bible Society Of Malaysia	Iban
3. Mengenal Tulisan Perjanjian Baru	I. Suharyo Pr.	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta	Malay
4. Sejarah Kerajaan Allah Jilid 1/2 Perjanjian Lama	Dr. F.L. Bakker	P.D. Nilakandi	P.D. Nilakandi	Malay
5. Sejarah Singkat Liturgi Baris	Theodor Klanner	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta 55281	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta 55281	Malay
6. Seri Pemahaman Doktrin Alkitabiah: Manusia Baru	Jl Packer MA, D. Phill	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Malay
7. Seri Pemahaman Doktrin Alkitabiah: Dunia Kepnyaan Allah	Arthur E. Cundall BA, BD	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Malay
8. Surat-surat Paulus 2	Lembaga Biblka Indonesia	Penerbitan Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta 55001	Penerbitan Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Derasan Yogyakarta 55001	Malay
9. Tafsiran Alkitab Wahyu Yohanes 1	Dr. J.J. de Heer	Percetakan BPK Gunung Mulia	Percetakan BPK Gunung Mulia	Malay
10. Belajar Berjalan	Charlie Riggs	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab	Malay

P.U. (A) 83/03

<i>Tajuk Hasil Penerbitan</i>	<i>Pengarang</i>	<i>Penerbit</i>	<i>Pencetak</i>	<i>Bahasa</i>
12. Memahami Isi Alkitab	John R.W. Stott	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510.	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Melayu
13. Bekal Hidup	—	CV Haji Masagung Jalan Kwitang No. 8 Jakarta 10420	CV Haji Masagung Jalan Kwitang No. 8 Jakarta 10420	Melayu
14. Doa Santap	Sr. Bernadette PMY	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Deresan Yogyakarta, 55281	Penerbit Kanisius Jalan Cempaka 9 Deresan Yogyakarta 55281	Melayu
15. Seri Pemahaman Doktrin Kebenaran	William L. Lane Th. D	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Persekutuan Pembaca Alkitab Jalan Cempaka Putih Tengah 11/1, Blok D-8 Jakarta 10510	Melayu

Dibuat 5 Mac 2003

[KDN: UKP(S) 600-2/1; PN(PU)³417/VI]

DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
Menteri Dalam Negeri

PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS ACT 1984

PRINTING PRESSES AND PUBLICATIONS (CONTROL OF UNDESIRABLE PUBLICATIONS) ORDER 2003

In exercise of the powers conferred by subsection 7(1) of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 [Act 301], the Minister makes the following order:

Citation

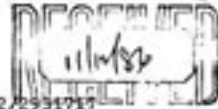
1. This Order may be cited as the **Printing Presses and Publications (Control of Undesirable Publications) Order 2003**.

Prohibition

2. The printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing, sale, issue, circulation, distribution or possession of the publications which are described in the Schedule and which are prejudicial to public order are absolutely prohibited throughout Malaysia.

Appendix 4. The official notice from the Ministry of Home Affairs restricting the use of the terms in Bahasa Malaysia

KEMENTERIAN DALAM NEGERI
(BAHAGIAN KAWALAN PENERBITAN)
TINGKAT 1, BANGUNAN STRAITS TRADING
LEBOK PASAR BESAR, PETI SURAT 10382
50712 KUALA LUMPUR.



Tel: 2931322/2931717

Kepada :

Ruj. tuan :
Ruj. kami : KDN: S.59/3/9/A Klt. :
- (17)
Tarikh : 5th hb Disember, 1986

Semua Penerbitan Agama Kristian

Tuan/Puan,

Penggunaan Istillah/Perkataan Yang Digunakan
Dalam Penerbitan Agama Kristian Berbahasa Malaysia.

Adalah saya diarah merujuk kepada perkara di atas berhubung dengan kekeliruan dikalangan masyarakat tentang istillah/perkataan yang merujuk kepada agama Islam yang juga digunakan dalam penerbitan agama Kristian dalam Bahasa Malaysia.

2. Adalah dengan ini diberitahu iaitu Kerajaan telah memutuskan perkataan dibawah ini boleh digunakan dalam penerbitan agama Kristian :-

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1. Al-Kitab | 7. Injil |
| 2. Firman | 8. Wahyu |
| 3. Rasul | 9. Nabi |
| 4. Syariat | 10. Syukur |
| 5. Iman | 11. Zikir |
| 6. Ibadah | 12. Doa |

Sekiranya penerbitan tersebut berbentuk buku atau risalah yang hendak disebar atau dijual perkataan "UNTUK AGAMA KRISTIAN", disyorkan ditulis di kulit luar (muka depan) buku atau risalah tersebut.

3. Perkataan yang tidak boleh dipakai atau digunakan dalam semua penerbitan Kristian di negara ini ialah :-

Towards mutual understanding or religious intolerance?

- 2 -

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Allah | 3. Baitullah |
| 2. Kaabah | 4. Solat |


Untuk makluman, Majlis-majlis Agama Islam Negeri-negeri dalam hal ini mempunyai bidang kuasanya untuk memutuskan perkara berkaitan dengan hal ehwal Agama Islam bagi negeri masing-masing.

4. Tujuan Kerajaan mengambil ketetapan berhubung dengan istilah/perkataan serta syarat di atas kepada penerbitan Agama Kristian adalah semata-mata untuk menjaga ketenteraman awam dan mengelakkan berlakunya salah faham diantara umat Islam dengan penganut-penganut agama Kristian. Oleh itu tujuannya adalah dengan ini diingatkan supaya mematuhi arahan Kerajaan dalam semua bentuk penerbitan agama Kristian yang diterbitkan.

Sekian, dimaklumkan.

" BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA "

Saya yang menurut perintah,


(HASSAN BIN HJWAN)
b.p. Ketua Setiausaha,
Kementerian Dalam Negeri.

S.k.

Pengarah Cawangan Khas,
Ibu Pejabat Polis Diraja Malaysia,
Bukit Aman,
50560 KUALA LUMPUR.

(u.p: Encik Zairul Azmi bin Hj. Zabidi)

(0. A paper to the P.M - on the campaign.

Appendix 5. Sample passages from the Sea Dayak/Iban Bible

DAYAK: SEA

- 1 TU pun injil Isa Almesih, Anak Allah Taala.
 - 2 Munyi ti ditulis dalam surat nabi Isaiiah, ko iya, Ingat, aku ngasoh pengasoh aku dulu ari nuan, Iya ka ngemas ka jalai nuan;
 - 3 Nyawa orang ti ngangau di menoa puang: Kemas ka olih kita jalai Tuhan; Gaga jalai iya lurus.
 - 4 Nyadi John datai, lalu maptisa di menoa puang, iya ngajar orang baptisa enggau ngesal ati ngambi ka penyalah diampun. 5 Lalu pansut ngagai John samoa orang
- Mk 1. 1-4 1952

(Cited from *The Book of a Thousand Tongues*, p.105)

BUP PEMUNGKAL

Jerita penumbuh dunya

I Leboh maya Allah Taala berengkah ngaga dunya enggau langit,^a ²dunya endang apin bisi bakal tauka gamsal. Leboh maya nya semina ribur ti deras^b bisi bepuput atas tasik besai ti agi petang. ³Nya alai meda dunya agi petang dia Allah Taala lalu bejako, ko iya, "Awak ka dunya bisi penampak," nya alai dunya lalu tampak. ⁴Lalu penampak nya dipeda Allah Taala manah. Lepas nya iya lalu nyerara penampak enggau pemetang; ⁵lalu penampak nya dikumbai iya "siang", nyadi pemetang dikumbai iya

^aTauka "berubah-ubah iya keia Allah Taala ngaga dunya enggau langit."
^bTauka "Roh Allah Taala."

Genesis 1: 1-5

(Cited from *Bup Kudus –Berita Manah Ka Rebak Diatu* (2001), p.1)

INJIL TI DITULIS SAINT MARK

Ajar John Pemapitisa

(Peda Mat. 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:19-28)

1 Tu-pun Berita Manah pasal Jesus Kristus*, ti Anak Allah Taala. ²Munyi ti ditulis dalam surat nabi* Isaiah, ko iya:

" 'Tu seruan aku,' pia ko Allah Taala;

'Aku deka ngasoh iya datai dulu agi ari nuan, awak ka bisi nyendia jalai ka nuan.'

³Munyi nyawa orang siko ti ngangau di menoa puang.

'Gaga, lalu sedia ka jalai Tuhan; gaga jalai ti lurus ditengah iya bejalai!' "

⁴ John datai di menoa puang, maptisa orang mayoh sereta nusoi pesan iya. Ko

iya, "Ngesal sereta lengka ka dosa kita, lalu dibaptisa, lalu Allah Taala deka ngampun dosa kita." ⁵Mayoh orang ari menoa Judah enggau ari nengeri Jerusalem, datai ngagai John. Sida ngaku dosa diri, lalu iya maptisa sida di Batang Jordan.

⁶ John ngena gari ti digaga ari bulu unta*, punggung iya dibeli ngena belulang kulit; iya beridup makai buntak* enggau ai madu. ⁷Ko iya merita ka orang mayoh, "Iya ti datai dudi ari aku lebih agi bekuasa ari aku; indah meremi sereta muka selipar iya deh aku enda patut. ⁸Aku maptisa kita ngena ai, tang iya deka maptisa kita ngena Roh* Kudus."

St. Mark 1: 1-8

(Cited from *Bup Kudus-Berita Manah Ka Rebak Diatu* (2001), p.48)

INJIL TI DITULIS SAINT JOHN

Jako pengidup

1 Apin dunya nyadi, Jako endang udah bisi. Iya enggau Allah Taala, lalu iya endang Allah Taala. ²Kenyau ari mula kelua, Jako endang enggau Allah Taala. ³Ulih iya Allah Taala ngaga samoa utai; nadai siti utai ti udah digaga tau nyadi enti nda ulih iya. ⁴Jako nya pun pengidup, lalu pengidup nya mai penampak ngagai nensia. ⁵Penampak manchar dalam peang, lalu pemetang nadai ulih madam ka ya.

⁶ Allah Taala ngirum ka siko seruan

iya, lelaki ti benama John. ⁷Iya datai besaksi ngagai orang mayoh pasal penampak nya, ngambi ka samoa orang ninga lalu arap ulih nya. ⁸Nyadi iya empu ukai penampak; iya datai deka besaksi ka penampak. ⁹Tu penampak ti bendar, penampak ti datai ngagai dunya lalu manchar atas samoa mensia.

St. John 1: 1-9

(Cited from *Bup Kudus-Berita Manah Ka Rebak Diatu* (2001), p.129)

Appendix 6 A closed-door session between the Acting Prime Minister and Christian representatives



(Cited from: <http://www.ccmalaysia.org>.)

Date: 22 April 2003 (for an hour)

Place: Putrajaya

Participants of the session:

Centre Front: **Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi**
(Acting Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs)*

Standing from left: **Rev. Dr. Hermen Priyaraj Shastri**
(Executive Secretary, CFM and General Secretary, CCM)
Rev. Aeries Sumping Jingan (Iban Anglican Father from Sarawak,
Association of Churches in Sarawak)
Rev. Mathew Ubun (Iban Anglican Archdeacon from Sarawak)

Towards mutual understanding or religious intolerance?

Archbishop Most Rev. Anthony Soter Fernandez, D.D.

(President, Catholic Bishops Conference and Archbishop of KL)*

Rev. Jonathan Jelanding Munting

(President, Sarawak Iban Annual Conference)

Mr. Kong Yeng Phooi

(Executive Committee member, BSM)

Mr. Loo Jana (Iban lay person)

Seated from left:

Bishop Rt. Rev. Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Lim Cheng Ean

(Executive member, CFM and Deputy President, CCM)

Rev. Lawrence Banyie

(Chairman, Association of Churches in Sarawak)

Rev. Datuk Dr. Prince Guneratnam

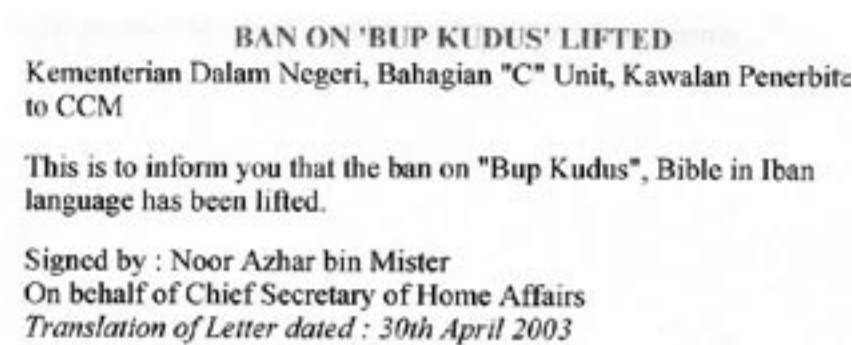
(Chairman, CFM and NECF)

Rev. Wong Kim Kong, J.M.N.

(Principal Secretary, CFM and General Secretary, NECF)

(* Previously held portfolios)

Appendix 7. Withdrawal of the ban on the Iban Bible by the Ministry of Home Affairs



(Cited from: <http://www.ccmalaysia.org>.)

Appendix 8. The words 'petara' 'Entala' 'Allah Taala' refer to the deity in Iban

petara (p.281)

(Skr., *pitr*; 'ancestors').

1. Deity (*juata*) esp. of the heavens (*langit*) and invoked for help to men (*mensia*) at *gawai*, who may appear in assumed form. Pron. *batara* might derive from Skr. *bhatta*, 'holy' ; or Skr. *avataara*, 'descent' (manifestation from on high), but *pitr* is most likely. Banks and Perham both give an Indian origin and equate deities:
2. Supreme deity, Creator, *Entala*, *Keri* (BIKU) *Raja P.P.* had 'sisters' :

Entala (p.88)

(Ar., *Allah Taala*) *Raja E.*, Creator, God, *Keri Raja Petara*. *Raja E.* is a soul with senses and will but no corporeal members, who created two birds called *Ara* and *Iri*.

Allah Taala (p.6)

(Ar., 'God Most High') (Christian) God : ENTALA.

(Cited from *An Iban-English dictionary* (1981))

Towards mutual understanding or religious intolerance?

Appendix 9. Christian terms for God in various languages

Ala: Kambara, Koalib, Krongo, Nirere, Nuba and Wajewa

Alatalla: Dayak and Manyan

Alla: Bambara, Eggon, Kuranko, Madurese, Maltese, Mandingo, Maninka, Soso and Yalunka

Allach: Gagauzi and Turkish

Allah: Algerian Arabic, Arabic, Balantian, Bentuni, Bisaya, Eggon, Fulani, Goulei, Hausa, Indonesian, Javanese, Judeo-Arabic, Kabba Laka, Kabyle, Kazan, Kumuk, Macina, Madjingai, Malay, Mbai, Murut, Ngambai, Nogai, Palestinian Arabic, Pashto, Sara, Sasak, Shilha, Sundanese, Syriac, Transcaucasian and Turkish

Allah Taala: Land Dayak and Sea Dayak

Allaha: Fula, Futa-Jalon and Macina

Allahi: Egyptian Arabic and Tunisian Arabic

Allahu: Hebrew and Moorish

Alla-taala: Bugis and Macassar

(Cited from Table 9-12, 'Names for God in 900 languages' in *World Christian Encyclopedia : A Comparative survey of churches and religions in the modern world*, Vol.1, 2nd Edition, p.252.)

Appendix 10. Explanation of the terms 'Allah Taala' and 'Tuhan' in the Iban Bible

JAKO PENERANG

Dulu kelia Sempekat Lama ditulis dalam Jako Hebrew, tang bisi mega disalin dalam jako Gerika enggau Latin. Kadang kadang enti enda berapa terang dalam Jako Hebrew sida ti nyalin nitih ka Jako Gerika tauka Latin, lalu nulis jako bukai dibaroh.

Bisi ayat ari Sempekat Lama ti disebut baru dalam Sempekat Baru ti enda tentu sabaka laban Sempekat Baru ditulis dalam Jako Gerika lalu bisi bebida mimit.

Dalam salin tu 'Allah Taala' dikena nyalin 'God' (Elohim) lalu 'Tuhan' dikena nyalin 'LORD' tauka Jehovah (Yahweh).

Nyangka bisi leka jako ti enda ditemu samoa orang Iban, laban adat sida kelia enda sama enggau adat kitai. Nyadi leboh bisi leka jako baka nya, tauka jako ti bisi reti ti mar mimit bisi* terubah jako nya pansut ba siti daun. Enti peda belakang Bup Kudus tu bisi *Penerang Leka Jako* ti nerang pasal reti jako nya.

Belakang Bup Kudus tu mega *Penunjok Endor* ngiga jako ti beguna dalam Bup Kudus. Bisi ayat ditunjok awak ka belajar pasal pengidup orang, pendiau Allah Taala enggau Jesus, jako sempama enggau kereja ajih iya.

Bisi mega 8 iti *Kar* ti tau nulong kitai ngiga menoa enggau nengeri ti dipadah ka dalam Bup Kudus.

Dalam Bup Kudus tu kitai nitih ka Meterik, leboh itong pemanjai enggau pemerat utai. Ba belakang mega bisi utai ti ngajar kitai ti bedau nemu mereti.

(Cited from *Bup Kudus—Berita Manah Ka Rebak Diatu* (2001))

Towards mutual understanding or religious intolerance?

Appendix 11. Appellation for God in the translated version of the Bible

Response of the Bible Society of Malaysia

(Excerpts from ‘The Aftermath of Lifting of [*sic*] the Iban Bible Ban (Part II)’ in *The Engager* (Sept-Nov 2003) pp.1-2) (Note: Sentences and words have been changed by the author.)

Question: Won't it be more convenient to use the word 'Tuhan' in order to avoid the confusion?

Answer: Historically, Christians have used the words 'Allah' and 'Tuhan' to refer to the deity in this region.

1. Since the pre-Islamic era Arab Christians have been using the Arabic term 'Allah' while worshipping God. The ancient and modern Arabic Bibles and Christian literature in Arabic have long used the term 'Allah' to refer to God.
2. No religious group possesses monopoly over a language or a set of vocabularies. Generally words belong to the users, though different groups may assign different meanings or varying significance to a particular term. Merely because Christians have been using the term 'Allah' for a long time, others cannot be precluded from using that term and vice versa.
3. Since Christians in various places have been using both the terms 'Allah' and 'Tuhan' for a considerable period of time, any attempt to change these terms or combine both the terms into one would not only be unjust to the biblical evidence but will also create confusion in the churches. This may result in churches rejecting such translations.

List of appellation for God in the Bible translation

	Hebrew	Greek	English	Malay/Indonesian, etc.
General title	el/elohim	theos	God	Allah
Divine name	YHWH	kurios	LORD	TUHAN
General term	adon/adonay	kurios	Lord	Tuhan