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The Thought of Islamic Literature in Modern Malaysian Literature

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***Abstract*—**This study aims to investigate the emergence of the thought of Islamic literature in the development of modern Malay literature in Malaysia. It examines the views, approaches and theories discussed and argued by literary scholars. Further, this study investigates the influence of the thought of Islamic literature on the development of modern Malay literature in Malaysia by examining the emergence of prominent scholars and bodies that organized competitions for writing Islamic literary works. Findings reveal that in the 70's, the movement began to be accepted by the literary society. Government bodies played an important role in creating and disseminating the Islamic literary works.

***Keywords*—**Islamic literature, modern literature, Malay literature, Islam.

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I. Introduction

ABDUL Ghani Ismail pointed out the roots of Islamic literature in Malaysian literature, flourished from the traditional literature which comprises the strong Islamic spirit. Hazami Johari [1] insisted this led to the emergence of many writers and scholars who are aware of their responsibility towards the community; they are also using literature as a tool to spread the Islamic message. According to Yusof Zaki Yacob [2] in the modern era the Islamic trend disappeared gradually because of a generation of writers who did not have any Islamic background, and they were influenced by trends of the Western colonialists. In the fifties of the twentieth century the thought of Islamic literature arose in modern Malaysian literature. The aim of this research is to explore the Islamic trend in modern Malaysian literature in terms of its origins, development, and scholars and the debate between supporters and opponents, and then to review the literary arts that represent this trend.

II. The Idea of Islamic Literature in Modern Malaysian Literature

According to Rosni Samah [3] at the beginning of the modern era, the thinking of Islamic literature did not get the interest of writers and researchers, especially after the Second World War. It is because of the complexity of the literature as a result of various trends, and the many writers who did not understand the Islamic culture involved in the left direction.

In this situation, some writers and researchers who have Islamic orientation need to clarify the meaning of Islamic literature and to raise community awareness and behavior. Behind this situation, the echoes of Islamic literature aroused the attention of writers and researchers.

The foundation for the beginning of interest in Islamic literature in Malaysia was due to an article published by Ramsa Asmara [4], on the thought of Islamic literary entitled "Literature and Religion" in the Journal Guru. He is a pioneer in this area, and tried to explain the theory and the details of the Islamic concept and its dimensions. He insisted that the literary expression must be issued according to Islamic concepts, reflecting the reality of the Muslims, pointing out aspects of language reform in a manner that combines ease and clarity.

In this regard, he adopted a Hamka personality as a model for the world's Muslim who managed to inspire the Islamic spirit in literary creativity. Also he suggested that the Islamic literary works should be voiced only by scholars who have literary taste and who realize the idea of the Islamic sense. The requirements for these scholars are they should have the power of creativity and the ability to imagine the Islamic literary concept.

When and how to consider a thinker or scholar to be Islamic literary writers? Ramsa answered these questions by saying that the writers must have an Islamic background or awareness of the Islamic teaching. He urged and called on scholars to join the literature field. The main point of his idea is that Islamic literature is, an eloquent expression containing the Islamic values, moving to self-awareness and sensitizing the responsibilities assigned to the Islamic values. In other words: Islamic literature is literature aimed at achieving the total surrender to God Almighty.

III. The Development of Islamic Literature in Sixties

Norazmi Kuntum [5] stated that during the decade of the sixties, the issue of Islamic literature developed with full support and encouragement. It appeared in the columns of Editorial Board of several journals like Dewan Bahasa, Dewan Sastera, Dian, Utusan Zaman and Berita Minggu. The first appearance was in journal Dewan Bahasa in May 1961 entitled: *The Role of Literature in the Achievement of the Islamic Spirit.* It must be noted here that the article came from the result of the reaction from a working paper entitled: *The Role of Malay Literature to the Achievement of the Islamic Spirit in the Malay Community*, which was presented at the seminar for the Islamic students of University Malaya, held from 31 March to 2 April, 1961. This paper expressed that the interest in Islamic literature began to disappear, and the emergence of Islamic literature is not new, but began since the advent of Islam in the Malay land. The writers devoted their

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efforts to highlight the advantages of this literature for centuries.

In the newspaper Berita Minggu (weekly newspaper) from 1960 until 1965 some articles have appeared discussing literature from the Islamic perspective. In August 1960 an article was published entitled "*Impact of Religious Literature in the Malay Community*". In January 1962 another article was published entitled: "*Islamic Literature and Philosophy*". The writer tried to clarify the philosophical values that constitute the theory of Islamic literature.

Norazmi Kuntum [6] mentioned in February 1962 an article entitled: "*Islamic Literature in Europe*" was published. The writer was able to demonstrate the positive impact of the development of Islam in European literature since the thirteenth century AD.

In 1964, Mohamed Labib published his article in the Journal of Dian entitled: "*Literature as a Bridge to Teaching*". He presented the role of literature in the beginning era of Islam.

In 1965 an article appeared entitled: "*Access to Religious Elements in the Malay Novels*" published by Hidir Abdul Rahman. He attempted to highlight the Islamic writers' personalities and indicated their characteristics and advantages.

In 1966, Badruddin H.Q published his article entitled: "Islamic conception of literature," He stated that the writers who are involved in Islamic literature should have clear perception and behavior to think about Islamic literary creation. He emphasized the views of Muhammad Qutb in his approach to creating Islamic art.

This article tried to illustrate the basic elements in Islamic literature, and how they can be developed with the other literary works, and also emphasized the need and importance of this literature in the Muslim community. At the end of the article he discussed the concept of arts from the Islamic perspective.

During the festival for celebrating the Prophet's birthday on January, 1968, held in, Kota Baru, Yusoff Zaki Yakob delivered a speech stressing that the field of Islamic literature is not a new area, but it prevailed a long time ago, and has competed with the other literary works, and has occupied a prominent place in the literature of the Muslim community. He added that the development of Islamic poetry in that era has led to the emergence of new perspectives, revival and prosperity in modern Malaysian literature.

We have mentioned in the discussion above the views of researchers which were considered the main ideas highlighted in the issue of Islamic literature in the fifties and sixties. They described these views and positions by their feelings about Islamic literature and its importance in the interaction with the other literature in the world. According to Nurazmi Kuntum [7] it is unfortunate that these views received only little attention and feedback from researchers and writers. It was considered just opinions and attempts to spread the first sense of responsibility towards Islamic literature that has developed in the early period in Arabic literature.

Apart from the discussion above, we have discovered that the media has become a distinct platform and has contributed in addressing the issues of Islamic literature by developing and shedding light on the problem of Islamic literature since its emergence.

The news papers mentioned above continued in the seventies and eighties the valued efforts to disseminate the issues of Islamic literature, and devoted a column in their front pages to be a platform for discussion of Islamic literature.

IV. The Flourish of Islamic Literature in Seventies and Eighties

In the seventies, the movement towards the idea of Islamic literature and creation of Islamic theory began to explore with a stronger and enthusiastic spirit. It is to attract new writers and literary scholars to be involved in Malaysian literature. In this decade, literary voice of Islam is being debated by scholars who are aware of the importance of Islamic literature in building a community. According to Ungku Maimunah [8] in the development of modern Malaysian literature, the phenomenon of Islamic literature began to appear in the 1970s. Clearly this is closely associated with the "missionary" movement in Malaysia. At that time, there appeared several bodies organizing the Islamic literary writing contest. According to M. Fadezli Jaafar [9], the decade 70s witnessed the development of concept for Islamic literature and it polemic.

In addition, Norazmi Kuntum [10] mentioned at the official opening ceremony of the fourteenth competition to recite the Koran at the Independence Square in Terangganu, in October 24, 1972 by Tan Sri Mr. Naseer, a supervisor for the contest expressed in his opening speech the lack of emergence of creativity in Malaysian Islamic literature. He stressed also for the Holy Quran to be a source of innovation in literature, especially for creative Islamists, and added that we need to create Islamic literary works to satisfy readers with Islamic values in the fields of poetry, prose, short story, novel, drama and others. He also stressed that the creative literature derived from Quranic perspective will instill the core of faith and moral values in the hearts of readers so as to rationalize their lives and move towards a well-directed destination in their present lives. Finally he concluded that there are too many writers in the field of Malaysian literature but unfortunately they are not drawing in the Islamic perspective.

In another article, the writer wrote about the need to produce Islamic literature in society. He pointed out that what we need now are sacrifices to mould Muslim writers who have a preference and awareness of Islam as well as a talent in drawing the Islamic perspective. He admitted to the lack of Islamic literature. This occurs as a result of no assistance given by the appropriate bodies to hold a competition to create Islamic literary works.

The views of the idea of Islamic literature discussed in the first half of the seventies are the basic views highlighted the lack of Islamic literary works and the lack of attention to creative literary works according to Islamic perspective. They

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did not introduce the concept of reality, its dimensions and horizons to be a guideline for writers and researchers.

According to Nurazmi Kuntum [11] the summit discussion towards the views of Islamic literature can be seen in the conference of literature and religion organized by Gapena and Pelita in 1973 in Kuala Terengganu. The writers and scholars realized that the idea of Islamic literature has been posed and discussed by individuals. Up to now no group appears to discuss the detailed concepts of Islamic literature. The problem is how to expand the Islamic literature. They realized that the Islamic literature is an effective media for planting missionary faith in the society. It is required to the graduates of faculties of Islamic studies from local and universities abroad especially from Arab countries to involve themselves in the field of Islamic literature to fulfill the vacancy.

In another forum on the contemporary Islamic literature, held on August 28, 1973, Dato' Wan Abdul Kader Ismail, deputy of Parliamentary Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister delivered a speech elaborating the views of Islamic literature. He divided it into two categories: First for creative Islamic literature and second for uncreative like theology, jurisprudence, mysticism, philosophy, etc. The first category represents the genre of literature such as novel, short story, drama, and poetry according to Islamic perspective.

On the same occasion, Anwar Ibrahim, president of ABIM at that time presented a keynote address focusing on the concept of Islamic literature. According to him, the Islamic literature is the creative literature consisting value, standards, spirit and philosophy according to the Islamic concept of literature, although it did not mention the names of Arab or Islamic worship or decrees of Islamic as long as it did not deviate from the Islamic perspective. Also it refused any elements deviating from an Islamic perspective, such as a poem, "*God is dead*" by Kassim Ahmad, and also rejected all the pornography.

Another scholar, Safwan Fathi [12] discussed the importance of Islamic literature, saying that the role of the author is not quite different from the role of the teacher, who guides the people and guides them to the right way, and delivers them from straying. He argued that the speech of the Prophet for the reward and the penalty for those who guide people to the right way and punishment for those who do otherwise.

Norazmi kuntum [13] mentioned that Awang Sarian wrote an article about the Malaysian literature in the Islamic transition, mentioning the three elements representing the perspectives of the Malaysian Islamic literature:

- The emergence of Malaysian literature and its development should be parallel with an Islamic perspective.
- Islamic literature should reflect strongly the Malay culture.
- Islamic literature should portray the different cultures.

According to Rosni Samah [14] the movement of Islamic literature in the early seventies can be seen by the contributions of writers and researchers interested in the revival of Islamic literature since the fifties. They started to introduce the theory and creative in Islamic literature which has witnessed the appearance of effects which were represented in the following:

1. Attention to bring forward Islamic literature issues in education. The Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the National University of Malaysia offered the subject on the history of Islamic literature and its characteristics and evolution.
2. Lecture delivered by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas in the graduation ceremony held in 1972, dealt with the Islamic concept of literature focusing on the role played by Islam in upgrading the traditional Malay literature.
3. Conference on literary and religious organized by the writers association in Kuala Terengganu in 1973. This conference raised the issues of Islamic literature. Mohamed Osman Kelantan (1973) presented a paper on Islamic literature talking about the concept of Islamic literature, its dimensions and horizons.
4. Encouragement from the association to apply widely the Islamic literature in Malaysia such as university students association which called for the radical change in the Islamic trend in literature, writing associations, the missionary movement, and Malaysia Islamic Youth Society.
5. Establishment of new writing association under the name of the Malaysian Islamic Writers Association in 1976.

In mid-1976, another scholar Ismail Hamid [15] invited Muslim scholars and writers to wake up from their sleep and produce Islamic literary creative. He published an article entitled "*Towards an Islamic Literature* ". According to him, the Islamic literature should proceed according to the Islamic view of the universe, life and rights. He stressed and drew three dimensions: first, the art of message delivering, second, the art of community, and third, art for art's sake. All these must be with an Islamic perspective.

In the following month, Mana Sikana [16] published his article entitled: "*Islamic Literature and its Relationship to Malay Literature*". He highlighted the concept of Islamic literature by quoting the views of earlier researchers. According to him the Islamic literature is the literature that shines its light, piety and encourages individuals and groups on good works as stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It should be applied in the creative which includes the Islamic moral values and as a tool to highlight community service. Then he pointed out that Islam is the main factor that helped the development of Malay literature and prosperity since the ancient times to the modern era. He added that Islamic literature has been neglected by researchers and writers.

According to Ungku Maimunah [17] the Malaysian literary scholars agreed that the maturity issue of Islamic literature can be witnessed in the article published by Shahnon Ahmad in July 1977 entitled: "Islamic literature". According to him the practice of culture, art and literature must be parallel with an Islamic perspective, such as the worship of God. The creativity on the basis of the Islamic faith is required and

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considered within the writer's responsibility in community service and to draw them closer to God.

The efforts to build Islamic literary theory can clearly be seen after researchers doubled their efforts to highlight in news paper column and journal, and then followed by the issuance of special books. It is worth mentioning that Shahnon Ahmad is one of the most prominent personalities, for his interest in Islamic literature and creative. He called writers to apply Islamic perspective in Malaysian literature. His article drew the attention of writers and raised a debate on Islamic literature between the supporters and the opposers. Also the publication of his book entitled "Literature and ethics of Islam" contributed to the heated debate.

The late seventies and early eighties witnessed the strong development of Islamic literature in Malaysia. It began publishing creative literature resulted from the efforts of individuals and several institutions. To achieve these goals in the revival of this literature, the religious section of the Office of the Prime Minister promptly to establish and organize a series of competitions for creating the Islamic literature since 1977, on the occasion of the fifteenth century of Hijrah, and then gather the wining literary creations such as short stories, novels, theaters and poetry and published them to the readers. The result of these contests produced full sets of the short story, novel and drama, as well as the issuance of Islamic poetry collection.

In continuing the efforts, Malay for The Institute of Language and Literature (abbreviated DBP) participated in enriching the library of Islamic literature in cooperation with the Islamic educational institution in organizing competitions for creative Islamic literature and monitoring the prizes for the winners. It succeeded in holding the competitions eight times since 1986 until 1998 and then collected the awarded creations for promoting and disseminating to readers. In addition to the literary creations issued through competitions conducted under the auspices of the religious section and DBP, there was also a literary creation produced by the individual writers as well as those associated to the Arqam group.

In the eighties, the Islamic literature began to develop in higher education fields. It witnessed the announcement of the decision by the Ministry of Education to make Islamic civilization as a compulsory subject in the universities and higher educational institutions in Malaysia, in 1982. This article contains the literature according to the Islamic perspective.

In this decade, the development of Islamic literature touches the real-life. Literary creations appeared discussing about everyday situations and issues of everyday life. They deal with these issues from the Islamic perspective. This direction spreads among those interested in Islamic literature including writers who never have an interest in this issue before.

V. Islamic Literature between the Supporters and Opposers

The origin and development of Islamic literature and its concept since the fifties invited researchers and writers to involve in a controversy between supporters and opponents. According to Ismail Hamid [18] the controversy rose as a result of the issuance of an article published by Shahnon Ahmad in 1977 who claimed that the practice of culture, art and literature on Islamic teaching considered as worship to God. He stated in conclusion that the Islamic literature was designed to serve the religion and benefit all the people. This controversy became worse according to publication of his book entitled *Literature and the Islamic Ethics*.

Shahnon Ahmad is the leader of supporters He is a distinguished academy personality and most prominent novelists in Malaysia. He published several accounts of the valued novel which gained great success as well as he won several awards including award for International literary writing. In seventies he began to be concerned with Islam and belonged to the Islamic Da'wah Foundation. He wrote about Islam and Islamic literature, trying implementing the Islamic elements in Malaysian literature creative. In 1980 he published a book on literature and ethics of Islam. During production of the novels, he tried to highlight the Islamic dimension.

On the other hand Qasim Ahmed is the leader of opponents. He has reputation among researchers and writers. He always raised a lot of issues, that were opposite to the Islamic trend, such as the rejection of the Sunnah, and his poem entitled "God is dead". In the late seventies he tried to confront Islamic literature and criticize the views of those supporting Islamic literature.

He raised the heated debate according to publication of his article in November 1982. He criticized the views of Shahnon Ahmed on the concept of Islamic literature in his book "*Literature and the Islamic Ethics*" and said that Shahnom Ahmed failed in attempting to explain the theory of Islamic literature. He only talks about the Islamic doctrine and Islamic history, which does not include the theory of Islamic literature [19].

Nurazmi Kuntum [20] pointed out that in the midst of this debate on Islamic literature, there appeared many directions; the direction proposed by supporters of Shahnon Ahmed, the opposition direction which represented by supporters of Qasim Ahmad, the third trend stand alone not in favor of any groups, and the fourth direction considered the literature can be either Islamic or not.

The first trend is the most powerful of these trends, the most prevalent and with more supporters. Among them are Kamal Hassan, Shafie Abu Bakar, Hashim Musa, S. Rizzi. Q., Nahmer Jamil, S. Osman Kelantan, Osman Mohammadi, Ismail Hamid, Yusoff Zaki Yacoub, Abdel-Rahman Rukhaini, and Ali Haji Ahmad.

The pro team began to expand the scope of debate. Among them, Rahman Shaari, who contributed to raise the controversy on the concept of Islamic literature. According to him [21] Islamic literature is a literature, based on Islamic views and its way to solve the problems. Among them, Nahmar Jamil [22] emerged to refute the views of Qasim Ahmad and accused him of being behind the world of Islamic literature and his views have no value to assess the Islamic literature. He did not provide any views to build the theory of

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Islamic literature, but he endorsed the concept of Islamic literature produced by Shahnom Ahmad.

Beside the supporter, Ismail Hamid [23] mentioned Rastom Disturki, who tried to intervene in this area by rejecting the views of Qasim Ahmed who weighs the Islamic literature by using the Western standards. He took a middle way by not favoring any party and does not indicate support for Shahnon Ahmad's view. Qasim Ahmed has responded to the opinion of Rastom and supported him. On the other hand Shahnom Ahmad did not show any reaction to him.

In the convention of Islamic writers held in Perak on 9 to 12 April 1983, Syafie Abu Bakar raised this argument when he presented a working paper on Islamic literature. He rejected the concept of Islamic literature introduced by Kasim Ahmad, who said that all the literary creations produced by the Muslims authors or non-Muslims in conformity with Islamic values considered as an Islamic literature.

Then Syafie Abu Bakar [24] introduced the concept of Islamic literature by saying that the Islamic literature is the literary creations produced by the Muslim authors, excluding any literary creations produced by non Muslim, even if they meet the requirements of Islamic values.

At the symposium of literary criticism held at the National University from 30 September until the first day of October 1983, the controversy rose again. Nurazmi Kuntum [25] explained that Baha Zain presented his views on Islamic literature, stressing the need for conformity to Islamic values, but not limited to what was produced by Muslims, including creation produced by non-Muslim authors. He agreed with the views introduced by Kasim Ahmed of Islamic literature, thereby he rejected the views of Shahnom Ahmed. Then Shahnon Ahmed criticized him saying that the Islamic literature must be produced by Muslim authors and Muslim critics as well.

The debate on this situation between the two teams continues and each other present their arguments and views on the acceptance and rejection of Islamic literature. Each has sought to spread his doctrine. Shahnom Ahmad's view is wide spread and has large number of supporters, while Qasim Ahmed has no acceptance and supporters.

VI. The Concept of Islamic Literature

Since the origin in decade 50s and developments in the 70s and 80s, obviously seen some attempt to establish the Islamic literature's theory and concept. Sahlan M. Saman [26] pointed out that during the two decades (70s and 80s) of it development more than 300 articles pertaining to the Islamic literature published by scholars. Some of them tried to establish the concept and theory. Most of them developed the discussion introduced by others scholars. Throughout the development up to the year 2000, we have at least 3 prominent figures tried founding the theory and concepts of Islamic literature.

First scholar is Shahnom Ahmad the first figure attempting in shaping theory and concepts. His views were accepted by other scholars. According to him [27], the Islamic literature must be based on Islamic teachings. His opinion on Islamic literature is compiled in his book "Literature and Islamic Ethic". According to Nurazmi Kuntum [28], Ungku Maimunah [29], and Harry Aveling [30] his book considered as a first book completely devoted to the development of a discourse on Malaysian Islamic Literature. It is a collection of seven papers written at various times since 1977 up to 1980. Under the title "Islamic Literature: A point of View", it witnessed the clearest statement pointed out by Shahnon on Islamic literature in general. This essay develops from a basis of a few theories linking to the key of religious concepts. According to him any form of culture, art or literature which focuses on Islam is a form of service or worship and exists for God. The purpose of worship is to demonstrate commitment to the unity of God. He asserted that Islamic literature is literature which is written because of God and intended to be service to all mankind.

The second scholar is Syafie Abu Bakar [31], who tried to explain his theory on the basis of monotheism. In his view, Islamic literature should be based on monotheism. He introduced *takmilah* as a theory in discussion of Islamic literature. He emphasized the point of content and theme. The contents should bring good value, positive perspective and give example to the reader. The theme should be the good theme which improves the community life. Among the Islamic values, more important is the theme of divine and prophecy.

Third scholar is Mohd. Affandi Hassan emerged in the early 2000 introduce the discussion on Islamic literature' theory and emphasized that Islamic literature should be based on monotheism. According to him [32] Islamic literature should consists of three elements. They are spiritual, physical and mental. He stressed that it should deal with three natures. There are the nature of man, the nature of knowledge and the nature and functions of literature.

In discussing the nature of man he added that every man, in particular writers should be aware of this fact. They are beings who were created to honor and privileged to take responsibility in bringing good on the face of the earth. In the nature of knowledge he explained that true knowledge will be the basis of charity received by God. In the nature and functions of literature he stressed that the responsibility for every writer is delivering the message to the society through his writings. Rahmah Ahmad and M. Shahrizal Nasir [33] stated that M. Affendi in discussing the theory of Islamic literature stressed three elements; emphasizing the message (knowledge), relationship between literature and life and recognizing the ancient literature.

After presenting the concept of Islamic literature introduced by three scholars above, it is obviously seen that they have discussed three elements as a tool for Islamic literature. There are monotheism, worship for good and Islamic missionary message. According to them, Islamic literature should be based on monotheism, creative writing considered as worship to God and any literary creative should contain the missionary message for readers. Apart from their opinion, the theme for Islamic literature can also include the religious like missionary, worship, conversion and repentance. According to Rahmah Ahmad H. Osman [34] The Islamic Literature in

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Malaysia is more down to earth and is concerned with the daily necessities of Muslims.

VII. Contribution of Government Bodies in Promotion of Islamic Literature

Government bodies played great role in the development of Islamic literature. Among them the Islamic Affairs Department in the Prime Minister's Office, Terengganu state government through Yayasan Islam Terengganu, Sabah state government through the Department of Chief Ministry and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and its branches. Their involvements are most clearly seen through the promotion and sponsorship of prizes for literary competitions. According to M. Faizal Musa [35] as a reaction to the rise of Islam, activities of Islamic literature as a phenomenon has been widely held involving government bodies.

Rosni Samah [36] noted that the first initiative taken by the Islamic Affairs Department in the Prime Minister's Office has organized seven times a short story writing contest since 1975 until 1996 and produced seven anthologies of prize wining short stories. Among the anthologies of prize wining short stories are *Tantangan, Tuhan, Bagaimana Akan Ku Carimu, Mati, Runtunan and Sebuah Lampu Antik*. In 1980 in conjuction with 15 century of Hijrah, a competition for drama writing was organized. Among the literary works resulting from the above competition, an anthology entitled *Asar Belum Berakhir* was published in 1984.

Terengganu state government through Yayasan Islam Terengganu succeeded in organizing Islamic novel writing competition. One novel resulting from the competition was published entitled Ku Ingin Kasih Mu by Siti Hawa M. Hassan.

Darul Iman Literary Award was then organized by the same state in 1983. Among winning literary works published are *Seorang Guru Tua (1985), Arbain (1985), Fajar di Hujung Malam (1991) and Sekepal Tanah (1995).*

Beside the state of Terangganu, Sabah state government through the Department of Chief Ministry also participated in organizing writing contest with the conjunction of 15th century of Hijrah. Published work from this competition is *Di Sebalik Qubah*.

Among the government bodies, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) is considered most important body that played an effective role in promoting the Islamic Literature. It organized the series of writing competition and published the prize winning works. In organizing the contest, it also collaborated with other organization.

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka works together with the Islamic Affairs Department at the Prime Minister's Office to organize writing competition across genres involving poetry, short story, novel and drama at least 8 time during 1987 – 1998. They succeeded in organizing poem writing competition in 1980.

In another contest, the Sabah branch of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka collaborated with the Sabah Islamic Affairs Department to organize many poetry writing contests and creating the prize entitled Tokoh Sastera Islam since 1994. During 1987 to 2000 they succeeded in publishing 13 Islamic poetry anthologies resulting from the contests. As a result of the above competitions, most literary works were published for society.

VIII. Conclusion

The thinking of Islamic literature began to emerge in Malaysia since the 50s with relevant articles published in several magazines for opening the discussion. It received warm respond among literary scholars. In 70s the discussions eventually led to raise the polemic between Shahnon Ahmad and Ahmad Kasim in defending their arguments. As a result of this polemic, emerged scholars who try to clarify the dimensions of Islamic literature, as well as writers publishing their literary works. This development of polemic, eventually invited certain bodies to take the opportunity to organize competitions for writing Islamic literary works. Among them, Islamic Affairs Department in the Prime Minister,s Office, Terengganu state government through Yayasan Islam Terengganu, Sabah state government through the Department of Chief Ministry and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and its branches. Finally Islamic literature works which won the competition were published for society.

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