

Contesting Blind Obedience in Islam within the Malay-Language Media: Case Study of 'I Want to Touch a Dog' Event

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Abstract : The reporting of Islam in the Malaysian government-controlled press is complicated and occurs almost daily. This is due to the Islamisation process that has been heavily politicized in recent years. This article analyses media representations of Islam in the Malaysian media through the social responsibility theory. A provocative case study of media reporting on the “I want to touch a dog” event was analysed since dog’s saliva is ritually considered unhygienic by Muslims. This paper will not question the Islamic ruling on the dog’s issue. Instead, it calls for discussions in relation to openness and maturity in religious discourse with respect to the dog’s saliva dialogue in 1937. It applies Hage’s “minor and major reality” to explain the increasing percentage of Muslim who define their own understandings of Islam vs the government’s dogmatic versions. This paper employs Alatas’s method of “sociological investigation in Southeast Asia” by using ethnographic examination on selected mass media. Through Asiaticity approach, this paper revisited the local framework of Alatas’s New Man encouraging Muslims to engage in knowledge and to appreciate diversities in Islamic jurisprudences. Despite government’s control, findings showed that non-Malay languages and online media are more comprehensive in reporting the news about Islam. Clearly, there has to be a re-conceptualization of Islamic discourses in the Malay-language media.

Keywords : dog, Fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence, Malaysian media, New Man, social responsibility

Conference Title : ICCFMS 2016 : International Conference on Communication, Film and Media Sciences

Conference Location : Bangkok, Thailand

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2016