

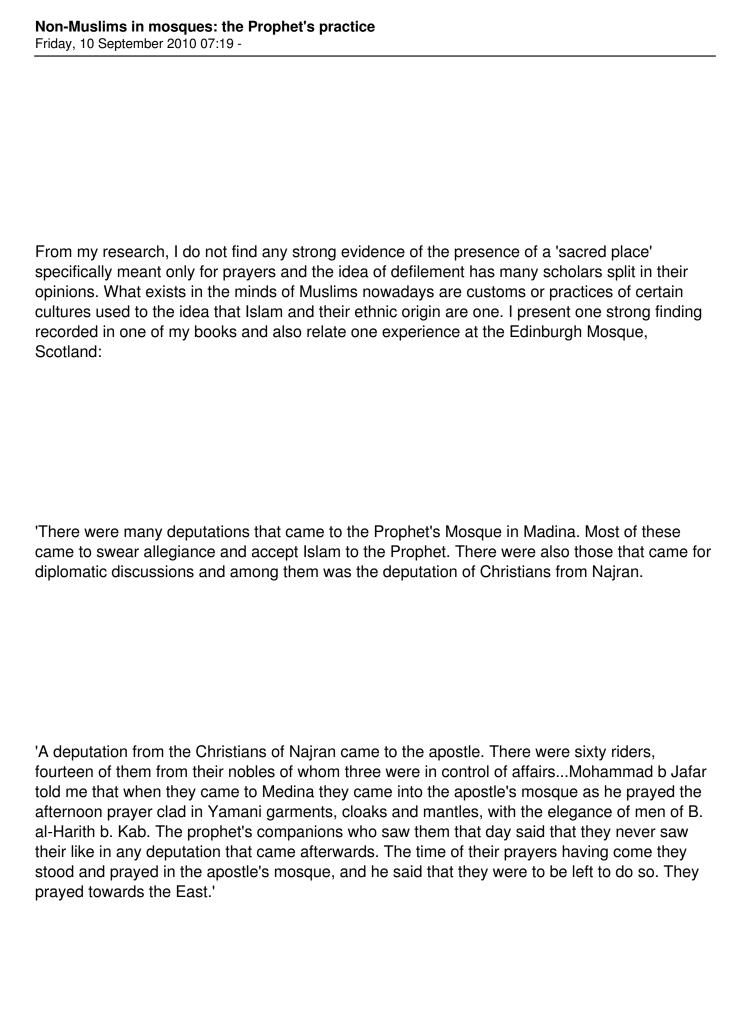
By Prof Dr Mohamad Tajuddin Mohamad Rasdi First published in Malaysiakini Letters, Sep 7, 2010

I wish to comment on the latest 'incident' of certain Malay group's criticism of the MP Teo Nie Ching's presence in a *surau* in Kajang. There are certain Malays who are bent on 'racialising' Islam and making what is usually a Malay custom or belief be part of the Islamic tradition. In this case, many Malays believe that non-Muslims should not step foot in the mosque especially in the so called 'sacred' area of the prayer space.

If the non-Muslims were to do so, they must wear elaborate robes and step on carpets over the carpets used for prayers by Muslims. As a scholar in mosque architecture, I have completed a doctoral thesis on this subject matter and have published two books thus far; *The Mosque as A Community Development Center* 

by Penerbit UTM and the book

Peranan, Kurikulum dan Rekabentuk Masjid Sebagai Pusat Pembangunan Masyarakat also by Penerbit UTM.



When I was reading my PhD at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, I participated in several outreach programmes at the Great Mosque of Edinburgh. I saw with my own eyes non-Muslims

explanations about Islam. The non-Muslims did not come to be converted or convert but merely to learn about Muslims and their rituals and beliefs. This spirit echoes the spirit of the mosque of

wearing mini-skirts, shorts and tee-shirts being welcomed into the prayer space and given

no other mosque in the world can claim to be so.

the Prophet Muhammad in his early days in Medina.

Our mosques in Malaysia are huge, expensive and monumental but the spirit of tolerance is meager. The Prophet's mosque during his lifetime was small, meager and humble but it's spirit of tolerance shone brightly. Presently, I teach all my architecture students how to create friendly and approachable mosques for Muslims to use with their families and non-Muslims to come and interact socially. I do this out of my understanding of the Islamic way of life as shown by the Prophet Muhammad rather than preconceived sanctified ideas Malays have of mosque spaces and architecture.

A PhD thesis by Zafarullah from UiTM Department of Interior Design discovers that there is great variety in the idea of sanctity in mosques by various Malay Muslims of diverse academic backgrounds. Apparently, Malays do not know and agree among themselves about their own religion and mosques.

I feel extremely sad that my fellow Muslims who are Malays would stoop so low to politiciasing Islam in this manner that puts all Muslims in a bad light. Those who are actually antagonistic towards Islam perhaps feel so when treated in this manner. We have seen so many shameful issues of stepping on a cow's head, of the restriction of the 'Allah' phrase, of making supplication for non-Muslim leaders and the over-sanctification of mosques by the Malays for cheap political agendas that I wonder no more why Islam is being hated with a vengeance.

For the sake of our children and all Muslims in the future, we should stop these efforts of using Islam for economic or political agendas by instigating and flaring up controversial issues such as these. Once again in the annals of Malaysia, Islam is being 'racialised' or 'Melayu-nized' to