

STUDY ON THE RATIONAL FACTORS OF CHOOSING ISLAM AS ALTERNATIVE LIVES

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Abstract

Islam is the most misunderstood religion. Yet, it is still able to attract people of the other faiths not merely to get to know more of this religion but also choosing Islam as alternative lives. The studies on conversion to Islam in multi-faiths and multi-nations show that there are many pushed and pulled factors of religious shift either as rational factors or relational ones. The rational factors which is induced by intellectual search for choosing Islam as alternative live has become the focal point of discussion in this paper. Analyzing rational factors from various experiences of new Muslims in multi-nations' biographical narratives will significantly clarify the misperceptions that marriage is the main factor of becoming Muslim. To prove this argument, the study on the rational factors of conversion to Islam is carried out by examining the secondary and primary data of new Muslim's biographical narratives. The findings show that conversion through the means of rational factors is considered more Islamic because of it is genuinely attaining the main goal of searching for the truth. In addition, the intellectual conversion has helped much on the new Muslim to face the challenge for being a practicing Muslim as the religious choice is rational.

Keywords: Conversion, new muslim, rational factor, biographical narratives, religious choice

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion that connects with the everyday world in which neither secularization nor compartmentalization is allowed in its belief system of life. The secularization particularly in the Western society leads some individuals to seek for a religion which they believe can give them an alternative way of life. Therefore, choosing or conversion to other religion particularly Islam has been seen as a process of fulfilling the spiritual search for those in need of a new way of life. Studies on conversion to Islam among multi-faiths and multi-nations show that there are many contributing factors to this conversion of faith, be they rational or relational factors (Kose 1996, Amway 2002, Nieuwkerk 2006, Allevi 2006, Chuah 2008). The rational factors that are induced by intellectual search for choosing Islam as a way of life is the focal point of this paper. Analyzing these rational factors from various experiences of new Muslims in multi-nation's biographical narratives will significantly clarify the misperception that marriage is the main factor of becoming a Muslim. A study done by Sebastian and Parameswaran (2007) stated that a large number of Chinese in Malaysia converted to facilitate intermarriages with Muslims. The same argument stated by Osman Chuah (2008) that mixed- marriages of converts that leads to the conversion into Islam are quite frequent in Malaysia.

Hence, my approach in this paper is theological rather than sociological, looking at how the key themes of Islamic principles have contributed to the process of religious conversion. The key themes show that Islam is not only an interesting approach to life, but also an acceptable, and, for some, an irresistible way of life. A study on the rational factors of conversion to Islam has been carried out by examining the secondary and primary data of new Muslim's biographical narratives. The findings show that conversion through means of rational factors is considered more Islamic due to its main goal of searching for the truth. This process of searching leads the new Muslim to find that certain Islamic principles are appealing to fulfill their spiritual void and encouraged themselves to become a practicing Muslim.

2. CHOOSING ISLAM AS A PROCESS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

There are many definitions and understandings of religious conversion, which vary according to the standpoint of the scholar or person formulating the definition. 'Insiders' tend to describe their own conversion

in very positive terms, with reference to the transcendent, as a process of spiritual awakening in which they felt they were being guided by God. 'Outsiders', on the other hand, tend to be more interested in the psychological, social, cultural and other forces which may have influenced the process (Nieuwkerk 2006: 6). Karin Nieuwkerk further argues that conversion is an expression of personal religious preference has much wider impact and meaning. It is always a confrontation between two religions, the receiving and the deserted religion.

Conversion is primarily a Jewish and Christian term. Definitions of conversions abound within Judaism and Christianity conversion indicates a radical call to reject evil and to embrace a relationship with God through faith. Some scholars in the human sciences limit the process of conversion to radical alterations in people's beliefs, behaviours and affiliations. Conversion is also considered as a dynamic multifaceted process of changes. For some, the changes will be abrupt and radical. For others, it is gradual and not inclusive of the total changes of a person's total life (Chuah 2008: 16).

In Islamic perspective, Haifaa Jawad (2006: 155) argues that there is no such word as conversion in the Arabic language; rather, the emphasis is on the idea of becoming a Muslim, that is, "submitting" to God in the form prescribed by his final revelation. Hence, to understand conversion to Islam requires an understanding of the word "Islam" itself. Islam denotes an act of submission and envisages not only "the acceptance of the outward forms of any one particular prophets' practice, not even that of the seal of the prophets, Muhammad. Rather, the word represents that pure worship of, and obedience to, the Divine that is exemplified in the lives of all those prophets, from Noah, through Abraham, Moses and Jesus, to the seal of the prophets Muhammad. Hence, to accept Islam is in reality "to take on the ancient, Abrahamic, way of worship, given the specific detailed requirements reflected in the outward practice of the seal of the prophets, Muhammad. Jawad further clarifies that those who embrace Islam often refer to themselves as "reverts" rather than converts.

Becoming a Muslim entails public acceptance of the declaration of faith in front of at least two witnesses, this being the first pillar of Islam. Once this is publicly stated, it is assumed that the "new Muslim" would live according to Islamic rules and regulation dictated by God and the Prophet Muhammad. This involves the performance of the ritual prayer five times a day, payment of the annual alms-tax of zakat, fasting the month of Ramadan and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (Jawad 2006: 156).

Becoming a Muslim means that a person is ready to choose Islam as an alternative way of life. This will take the new Muslim gaining an experience which is not similar as those who chooses other religion as his/her alternative life. The difference can be traced out when the challenge of choosing Islam is slightly heavier than choosing other religion. Karin (2006) affirms that it is those people who choose Islam who also experienced situations in which they fell out of the dominant order. They experienced stigmatization, failure or disintegration within their own context and they articulate these experiences with reference to a "foreign" religion. Converts symbolize maximal distance from their own society or social surroundings. Conversion to Islam according to Karin (2006) may evoke a range of sensitive issues as it crossing religious and ethnic boundaries which generally engender hostility.

The instance of the situation can be seen in Malaysia. Osman Chuah (2008: 42) argues that one of the stereotyping of someone embracing Islam is "masuk Melayu" (becoming Malay). In Chinese, it is known as "jip Huan" or becoming a Malay. In the Chinese Hokkien dialect, it means as entering the ways of an uncivilized race. Islam is synonymous to being Malay. Thus, embracing Islam would mean entering the "Malay way", even though Islam is a universal religion. When a convert expresses the two testimonies of witness (*kalimatayn*) and becomes a Muslim, they are usually branded as entering the "Malayhood". Then, a convert goes for circumcision and stops taking pork. Then, to the non-Muslims, these are proof of entering "Malayhood" as these are also distinctive identities of Malays. On the basis of society, a new convert always feels that he is a marginalized man as he could not fit into the society of his own community of the previous religion and he cannot also easily integrated into the new Malay community. His religion is no longer with his own previous ethnic group and he has become only a new member in the Islamic ummah (Chuah 2008: 101).

There are three important issues in the study of conversion to Islam. First, a consideration of how conversion to Islam requires not only a change in the convert's religious identity, but also a renegotiation of social, gender and national identities. Second, how these new identities are embodied through taking up new bodily practices. Third, the wider context in which these identities are re-created, including power relations, interactions with other Muslims and learning how to be a Muslim in a largely non-Muslim society (Nicole

Bourque 2006: 233)

Furthermore, the converts also have to go through three types of changes namely tradition, transformation and transcendence. Religious tradition includes beliefs and practices that encourage, shape and evaluate changes. Traditional transition refers to the movement of an individual or group from one major religion to another. Moving from one worldview to another ritual system, symbolic universe and lifestyle is a complex process. It also takes places in the context of cross-cultural contact and conflict (Chuah 2008: 20-21). Conversion to Islam is embodied through taking up new bodily practices pertaining to praying, fasting and food consumptions (Karin 2006: 4).

Transformation refers to the process of change manifested through alteration in people's thoughts, feeling and action. This involves changing important markers of identity such as the name and appearance including hijab. Moreover, converting frequently leads to changing social and cultural practices, for instance, those related to celebrations or contacts with the opposite sex. These transformations regularly create problems with the family of origin (Karin 2006: 4).

Transcendence refers to the domain of the sacred encounter with the holy that, according to many religions, constitutes the source and goal of conversion. Religious people affirm that the divine works within the human situations in order to bring people inquiring into relationship with the divine and provide a new sense of meaning and purposes. The religious studies concentrate on transcendence by inquiring into the religious expectations, experiences and worldviews of converts. Conversion is thus not a single event, but an evolving process in which the totality of life is transformed.

Based on the discussion above, it can be summarized that the religious changes are obligatory for those who had embraced Islam as prescribed to the Islamic law and principles. Although the changes in the belief system and social conduct seems to be an obstacle for the converts, this does not kept themselves from making decision of choosing Islam since it offers a message of rationality which can fulfill their spiritual needs. Studying the message of rationality in Islam will lead us to understand that there are some converts who have chosen Islam because of the intellectual factor as they gain knowledge of Islam after studying some literature and observing the lifestyle of practicing Muslim. This intellectual search become the pull factor of rationality on choosing Islam which deny the fact that the converts only choose Islam because of the intention of getting married with the Muslim spouse or have been influenced by any other factors. Hence, to understand further what are the rational factors outlined by the Muslim converts, the discussion below deal with this matter.

3. RATIONAL FACTORS OF CHOOSING ISLAM AS ALTERNATIVE LIVES

The converts entered into the fold of Islam by various means and for a variety of reasons. Some accepted it after studying it for a long time and some other were attracted as a result of the positive examples of Muslims. Nevertheless, there are some converts entered to Islam in order to be able to marry a Muslim (Kose 1996: 193). Allievi (2002) develops a useful typology of conversion to Islam. He distinguishes relational from rational conversions. Relational factors of conversion are those who have went through the discovery of Islam by meeting Muslim believers, while as a tourist or on a business trip to Muslim countries or by falling in love with him or her. Relational conversions are subdivided into instrumental and non-instrumental forms. Non-instrumental relational conversions are induced by relationships with Muslims either by way of marriage, family, meeting immigrants or travelling. Instrumental conversions are usually related to marriage with Muslims (Allievi 2006: 120).

The rational conversions in contrast, are not induced by personal contacts but rather by an intellectual search. The intellectual mode of conversion outlined by Loftland and Skonovd (1981) as quoted by Kose (1996: 96) implies that the individual becomes acquainted with alternative ideologies and ways of life by Muslim individual, private investigation like reading books and other impersonal ways. In the intellectual mode, the individual is still likely to be 'socially involved' with members of the new religion. However, there is little or no external social pressure and a reasonably high level of belief is attained prior to actual conversion.

Furthermore, the intellectual conversion as described by Allievi (2006: 120) is the process of searching religion based on reading the Qur'an, have become acquainted with Islam through books on Islamic mysticism, especially Sufism, which have attracted a wide Western readership. In another literature, Allievi (2002) states that this form of conversion is therefore more specifically Islamic in its discourse and

rationalizations because it involves the process of learning certain content of religious principles. The learning process needs enthusiasm for a search of meaning in life and to identify what is right or wrong in the social conduct. In other words, the search for spiritual needs is considered Islamic in its discourse as it involves reexamining the ground rules and the lifestyle of the new religion which is normally strange from the culture that has been practiced before.

Islam offers a message of rationality which highlights the fact that Islam is not just “faith”, but also provides “proofs”. It is therefore according to Karin Nieuwkerk (2006), conversion to Islam has become rational choice in which it makes sense to individual converts. Nieuwkerk uses biographical data to adapt rational choice theory to her argument that women in Netherland made decision to convert to Islam are based on logical reasoning. She argues that a belief in God is rational because if this belief turns out to be true there is the chance of eternal reward, but there is very little to be gained if the proposal is false, thus religious actors act rationally according to costs and benefits. Finally, she argues that in order to fully recognize the rational nature of women’s religious decisions, it is necessary to analyze their life histories and identities.

In another study done by Ali Kose (1996), he shows that some converts find Islam as a religion that encompassing religious worldview and does not compartmentalize religion, then choosing Islam enables the converts to connect their daily life to their beliefs – direct accessibility of God without mediators make Islam seem rational. The findings are much in common with the study done by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (2006: 32) as she states that some converts identify the daily discipline and specific requirements of Islam as a crucial reason for their conversion. Islamic guidelines provide reasoned answers to their quest for a structured life, for boundaries and for adherence to prescriptions. They have enjoyed having a “guide for life” that is precise and all encompassing, clear and unambiguous. Some converts described their satisfaction in living their lives according to specific rules, regular responsibilities and a tightly regimented way of life. The daily prayers emphasis on personal responsibility and the clear moral message of Islam were also appealing to many converts.

The search for Islam intellectually is further described by Haddad (2006) that converts often write that they were impressed by the inner peace, serenity and strength of belief they witnessed in these Muslims. For many, their investigation of Islam was initiated by curiosity, a quest for knowledge or spiritual fulfillment. Some emphasized their intellectual connection to Islam. These individuals tended to begin their study of Islam out of curiosity. Many claimed that once they had encountered the intellectual evidence of Islam they had “no choice” but to convert. Some were impressed by the “inner logic” of Islam and referred to the wisdom of Islam as “common sense”. Others report that they have been “captured by the Quran”. In several of the testimonials, reading the text is often described as an integral part of an individual’s conversion to Islam. Some recount an emotional response to their first encounter with the text. Some report having been impressed by the scientific aspect of the Quran. Others tended to focus on the intellect appeal of the Quran. They often explained that the clarity and logic of the Quran are what influenced them most. The Quran is easy to read and understand, that it does not have anything in it that a person cannot understand (Haddad 2006: 27).

In another argument, Haddad (2006) explains that the rational factors which attracted the converts to search for the religion of Islam is the theological superiority of Islam over other faiths. This can be described as the most important reason for the converts to choose Islam as a new alternative lives. Islam offers some differences with Christian theology which included the doctrines that have set the two faiths apart: the concepts of incarnation and Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, crucifixion and the doctrine of original sin. Some described the appeal of the pure monotheism of Islam, presented not as a polemic, but in a rational, scientific exposition. Others insisted that they always “knew” that there could only be one God.

The rational factors are initially the pull factors of why people turn to Islam and specifically appeal to Islam. A common observation that Islam appeals because it gives the convert the greatest possible contrast with the culture he or she comes from (Haddad 2006: 32). Some of the women who have related their stories are “serial converts”, those who have set out on a spiritual journey, studied numerous religious traditions, converted to a variety of faiths before looking into Islam. Their encounter with Islam was often described as a part of their ongoing spiritual journey. Others felt that their lifestyle had much in common with that prescribed by Islam. They discover that their reference for modesty and chastity is not strange but is confirmed as a model way of life. It is the highest attainment of living in accordance with divine prescriptions.

Karin van Nieuwkerk (2006: 95) describes the similar findings of the rational factors of conversion to Islam among the Dutch Muslim women. Several converts were attracted to the spiritual and all-encompassing nature of Islam; many were attracted to the rational character of Islam. The other rational attraction that made sense for them on choosing Islam can be highlighted in specific examples - Islam's regulation of sexuality, parental divorce and Islam's promotion of a stable family life, Islam's prohibition of drinking and Islamic prescriptions concerning lifestyle.

Besides the direct relationship with individual biographies, Nieuwkerk (2006: 101) argues that the Dutch converts' religious narratives showed certain consistencies and centered mostly on three themes. Firstly, Islam is perceived as the ideal social and moral religion, providing a stable family life and regulating the relationships between the sexes. Secondly, Islam is perceived as a pervasive, practical religion that is grounded in nature. It gives a clear guidance to spirituality through the direct accessibility of God and regular moments of prayer. Religion thus becomes embedded in daily life. Islam is a natural, social and complete way of life. Thirdly, Islam is a rational, scientific and logical religion and this makes it the most convincing religion as compared to the other monotheistic options. This discourse contrasts Islam and Christianity, using such examples as the concept of the Trinity versus the Unity of God; Jesus as the Son of God versus Jesus as a prophet and the presence versus absence of the idea of original sin. Last but not least, the Quran is held to be compatible with modern science and provide certain rules on economic and social activities (Karin 2006: 108). This explain that Islam is an appealing religion for the converts as it offers the way of life which is considered hard to be found in their previous lifestyle. Hence, embracing Islam make them felt that it had strong, clear values on things they were concerned about.

Stark & Frinke (2000) made the argument that people make religious decisions based on rational choice theory to maximize benefits and minimize losses. In other words, there is a religious calculation that enters into their decision in order to highlight the benefits of their religious choice. Thus, when they convert they tend to choose a religion close in doctrine and practice to their original beliefs in order to conserve their religious capital (Stark & Frinke 2000). They converted to Islam partially because they saw it as a continuation of Christianity. The converts did not come to Islam completely lost and without religion, they moved into Islam as a natural progression from Christianity. Many of them consider the message from the Quran to be a continuation of the story that was begun in the Bible; a message that confirms the beliefs they already had about the prophets communicating God's will to people. Islam is easier for these women to assimilate because the prophets and stories in the Bible are, to a large degree, legitimized in the Quran.

Janet Testerman proposes the opposite that the more closely one examines the biographies of women who convert to Islam, the more apparent the irrational, emotional nature of their religious decisions. The interpretations each of the women make about Islam are not stated as factual knowledge, but are expressions of their understanding of Islam as converts and people newly exposed to the religion and cultures of the Middle East. Most of their reasons were grounded in emotion and tied to their relationships with Muslim men. They became excited about Islam and felt emotional ties to the people involved with the religion. Their experience supported by interpersonal attachments to people encouraging them to convert to enable them to feel contented with accepting Islam into their lives. The argument can be acceptable for certain case of women who had chosen Islam not because of studying the rational teaching of Islam but due to the other push factor such as become excited with the new religion and having affectional feeling with the Muslim spouse. Nevertheless, we still cannot deny that there are some converts who sincerely embraced Islam because of its rational message of the faith.

Based on the discussion above, it will be sum up that choosing Islam due to the rational factors are common observation among the European converts particularly women. The most appealing message of rationality in Islam which offers an intellectual route to Islam is the act of reading the Quran and its contents. The initial reason for studying the Qur'an is usually the acquaintance with Muslims and sometimes observing practicing Muslims. Other than that, some other converts become aware of the existence of an Islamic way of life which offers them the different new lifestyle with a well-defined code of conduct. This kind of situation can also be seen in the experience of Malaysian converts as the data subsequently presented here are collected from the converts in Sabah, the East Malaysia.

4. CHOSSING ISLAM AS ALTERNATIVE LIVES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF MALAYSIAN CONVERTS

Malaysia experiences the process of religious conversion from those who have no religion to those who have converted to certain religion of their choices. There are also some converts who have embraced a certain

religion then choose another religion that they think more suitable with their new lifestyle and able to fulfill their spiritual needs. In this context, the conversion to Islam normally comes from the various ethnic backgrounds of Malaysian society. Those are Chinese, Indians, Orang Asli (indigenous people) and native groups of people in Sabah and Sarawak at the East Malaysia. Normally, these people have their own respective identities, cultures and ways of life with their own ethnic norms.

As discussed before, rationality becomes the pull factor of choosing Islam among the European converts and this indicates almost similar experience with the Malaysian converts. Although their specific experiences vary, there are many commonalities in their conversion to Islam. The following stories help us gain a sense of the variety of ways the converts learned about Islam and the conversion experiences that brought them to the point of declaration of the new faith. The interviews with Muslim converts are gathered from various ethnic backgrounds of those living in Sabah of East Malaysia.

1. I had read the Quran translation for almost three months. In comparison with the Bible, the time taken to read this book was two years. I felt my interest of reading the Bible is not as much as reading the Quran translation. That was why the time taken was longer than reading the Quran translation. I read it non-stop every day. I went through page by page and slept on it. I felt that the Quran communicates directly to me and conveys certain message in the form of story to me. I saw this as the uniqueness of this book. Conversely, the stories in the Bible are not much different from the other books that I have read.

I would give examples of the concept of divinity which my first reading was in surah al-Ikhlās. I read verse by verse and I was attracted with the verse *qulhuallahu ahad* (say o Muhamad there is no God except Allah). I got confident with the oneness of the God which I thought it is the comprehensive attribute of the creator. I started to study and did comparison with the certain teachings that I read from the book of Christianity. For example, the concept of Jesus as the Father and the Son. How could Jesus be the Father at the same time is a Son? I asked my friend is it possible that my name is Li Jun Siang (my previous name before conversion to Islam) and at the same time I also use my father's name Li Jun Pang. Certainly I could not be both for the same entity and identified myself as son and father. I felt dissatisfied when I got no answer, instead they said do not ask many questions because this would cause sinful. They advised me to follow whatever has been stated in the teaching of the religion. I felt discomfort since it did not fulfill my intention to search for the truth. (Source: Interview was conducted on November 18, 2008 at researcher's office UMS, Chinese/M-Lbn-Resp1)

2) My first acquainted with Islam is through the column of question and answer in Malay newspaper. I was seven or eight years old. When I was Form 1 and 2, I thought what if I wanted to be a Muslim? It just a feeling.

So coming back to university, mostly by my own research, all my knowledge about Islam is from English and Arabic. Not so much in Malay. My interest in Islam is started from question and answer. Then I realize, what I already know - Islam is not a religion for the Malays – the poverty is not because of the religion of Islam.

You can say Islam is perfect, man not perfect. Islam is simple religion, but life is hard. To get that level of philosophy take intellectual study. It doesn't develop overnight.

3rd year university, I became Muslim by self-study. I don't like to ask people because I also know that people also don't have good understanding of their own religions. I want to come to a conclusion by my own. I don't want them to influence me. Of course they will be positively biased towards their own religion. You would never find somebody who whatever religions ... of course good la, if not good why you follow. So I don't want to get a biased - self study.

The most common question my housemate always asked, "why do you decided to become Muslim? The easiest way to tell them is, "Islam to me is about universal, you look as you and you look God in every human being and that is the conviction from the early on. But as I know more about the philosophy, I realize that you need to realize that all Muslims are brothers. That is why when a person did something wrong, his fellow friend will cover up his wrongdoing even though it actually denying justice to another people. Another reasons I became Muslim is because justice and love.

I always believe in God, I am not an atheist, I never denying the existence of God, always know there is a God. So I always believe there is a powerful being that create us. It is a quest on what is the truth. To me the truth is one that is a loving God as well to find justice. Islam is a belief in god and justice. Every other thing is

the specific of the religion. I believe as a Muslim this is my way of life. But I trust Islam because of the oneness of god is love and god is justice. Not only justice which appeal to me but in Islam there is a justice to everyone. Not only the people the same religions. Unfortunately that is the practice of most Muslims, Malays and other races especially Africans, they forget one thing because the companion of the prophet, the prophet said "you have to defend your brother regardless whether he is right or wrong. If he is right is okay but if he is wrong then, you correct his mistake that is you defend your brother. (Source: Interview was conducted on September 20, 2008 at house's respondent, Chinese/F-Peninsular-Resp5)

3) I began acquainted with Islam when I was adapted by Muslim family. I saw the lifestyle of practicing Muslim. When I was in school, my football coach who was also a religious teacher always talk some stories about Islam such as the story of the prophets, the concept of life here and hereafter and the story of genes. At the same time, I also kept asking questions on certain religious teaching particularly on the concept of divinity. Starting from that, the religious teacher brought me home and at that time was a month of Ramadan whereby most of the Muslim was fasting. He asked me if I could be fasting. But it was an option to me either I was willing to fasting or not. I said I would try. From now on I got the live experience of observing the practicing Muslim lifestyle. The most attraction part was when I saw his son prayed. Then, I asked the teacher if possible I converted to Islam. (Source: Interview was conducted on Sep-09 2009 at respondent's office, Iban/M-Sarawa-Resp63)

The findings from the biographical data of new Muslims in Malaysia highlight certain message of rationality in Islam such as the concept of divinity, the oneness of God, the concept of universality, the concept of here and hereafter and also the appealing factor of practicing Muslim lifestyle such as performance of daily prayer and fasting. In comparison with the Western Muslim converts, the Malaysian converts show not much difference in expressing their understanding on the message of rationality in Islam. These have become part of contributing factors for the converts to learn and discover the uniqueness of Islamic teachings which eventually lead them to choose Islam as a new way of life.

5. CONCLUSION

It can be sum up that choosing Islam as an alternative way of life is part of the process to search for the spiritual fulfillment. It is considered as one of the various means and reasons for conversion to Islam. The study shows that there are some key themes in Islam that offer the message of rationality for those in need to fulfill the spiritual void. The New Muslim biographical data outline the key themes of rationality in Islam such as the well-defined code of conduct in daily life, the scientific aspect of the Quran, the theological elements in Islam, the Islam's regulation of social relationships and the belief of Islam as to be natural and complete way of life. Hence, studying the rational factors of choosing Islam as alternative life significantly contributes to the understanding on the rational choice theory that the converts made decision to embrace Islam because of logical reasoning. This would deny the fact that marriage with Muslim spouse is the main factor of conversion to Islam.

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