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### TRAINING MANAGEMENT IN THE MALAYSIAN ARMED FORCES RELIGIOUS CORPS PERSONNEL

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#### ABSTRACT

*Islamic propagation in the Malaysian Army has started since its inception in 1933 and was strengthened with the establishment of the Malaysian Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) in 1985. The Islamic Propagation efforts implemented by KAGAT in the military institutions have been successful in establishing Islamic appreciation amongst military personnel; strengthening their spiritual and mental aspect so that they have the strong combat power to defend their nation. This paper discussed on the approach used to develop the quality of the Islamic military missionaries or the personnel of the Malaysian Armed Forces Religious Corps or KAGAT). Library research, survey method using questionnaire, interview and observation have been used to gain data related to the preparation and training for the KAGAT personnel. The questionnaire was used as the field study instrument to study the Armed Forces personnel's perception of the Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) members. A total of 383 respondents from the Malaysian Armed Forces were used as research samples. Random sampling technique was used and the overall survey result was analysed using the SPSS software where both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the data collected. Research results showed that the Malaysian Armed Forces personnel perception towards KAGAT members is generally good (high) and this proved that the KAGAT effort to nurture Islamic appreciation amongst Malaysian Armed Forces personnel is achieved.*

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#### 1.0 Introduction

Islamic propagation is an invitation or a call towards accepting and appreciation of Islamic teachings and values. This aspiration can be realized through systematic propagation management and planning which are in accordance to the al-Quran's recommendation that the propagation should be delivered and propagated widely and effectively. The awareness to deliver Islamic propagation effectively and is to nurture military personnel who are faithful and God-fearing, and at the same time able to work with excellence and effectively. Islamic propagation effort was implemented in the Malaysian Armed Forces organisation more extensively and organized. This paper explained the propagation implementation and the training management carried out by the Malaysia Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) in the Malaysian Armed Forces organisation to deliver Islamic messages give understanding and appreciation of Islam to all Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) personnel.

## 2.0 Religious Services within the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) the Early Stages

The glorious history of Islamic Civilization since the early Islamic period has proven that Islamic values can shape people into excellent human beings. The Arabs in the age of ignorance are known as a retrograded nation but soon after embracing and practicing the Islamic teachings, they built a better and bigger civilisation at the time. They also expanded the Islamic civilisation from Spain in Europe to China in the East. Islam has succeeded in producing a great civilization that brought peace and prosperity to the world, a motivation for human developments in the spiritual and thinking aspect, morally as well as worldly aspect. It has become the main source of knowledge not only benefiting those in the East but those in the West; where they have received intellectual contributions, moral and ideas for material advancements (Wan, 1994).

The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), as a military organisation is based on the model of the British Armed Forces (BAF), having the essential properties and the main features of BAF; which is the element which influenced the fundamental founding and directional construction of the MAF. The history of the MAF establishment started after the establishment of the experimental Royal Malay Regiment which was incepted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1933 in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan (Abdul, 1983). The establishment of this regiment was the result of awareness and pressure from the Malay Rulers and dignitaries at that time on the importance and significance for native-born citizens to be responsible in defending their country. This proposal was voiced out by Sultan Alang Iskandar, the Sultan of Perak; Tuanku Muhammad Ibnu Yam Tuan Antah, the Tuanku Yang Dipertuan Negeri Sembilan, Sir Raja Chulan, the Raja Di Hilir Perak and Dato Abdullah Haji Damat who was the Undang Rembau during the Federal Council meeting in the year 1920, and consequently, the *Malay Regiment Bill* was approved on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1933, as No.11 Enactment. A total of 25 Muslim Malay natives were chosen and trained under Major Mac I.S Bruse's supervision (Abdul, 1983).

Although the basis of the MAF is based on the British model, the MAF still has its own identity in preserving Islamic and local elements; and also has the potential in creating a defence framework concept which is based on Islamic and local environment. Islamic potential is an element that correlates with the enthusiasm amongst Malaysians to free the country from colonization. The colonials indeed realized that religious fervor is a power or strength that could destroy their colonial system, meanwhile Islam on the other hand provides the spiritual support for the Malays. Therefore, the colonials are very careful in dealing with sentiment and welfare in this religious aspect. When the experimental Malay Regiment was established on 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1933, the British did not give serious attention to Islamic religious needs, but after the first Malay Regiment ended their basic training, they started to push the British to include the necessity and welfare of the soldiers from the religious aspects. The pressure resulted in the British creating the "Imam" or Islamic religious leader position on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1933. The Imam's salary was paid using the Regiment's welfare fund (Mohammed, 1989).

The creation of the "imam" post did not mean that the colonials gave religious function to decide the direction of the natives' profession. It only served to please the natives' request by limiting the religious function in a scope that does not challenge the colonial system. Religious programmed were permitted within a limited scope only to the specific worship activities and usually done outside of the official working time. In other words, the religious programmed were not formalized in the regiment's official activity, so much so it showed that the religious function only played its role at religious venues like the mosque and will not be significant in the parade square. The isolation of religious functions from military life had placed both matters in huge disparity.

Although the British did not emphasized religion as an important aspect in the military service at that time, still there were religious teachers appointed within the military, who were actively teaching and guiding the Muslim military personnel only in the permitted scope. The first religious teacher who served in the Malay Regiment is Tuan Haji Ibrahim bin Yusuff, from Kampung Sawah Rantau, Negeri Sembilan whose tenure started in the year 1935 (Najmi, 2005).

The appointed religious teachers strived to expand their role from time to time, suiting the needs and conditions taking into account the views and comments made on all aspects of Islam. The view and advice were brought up from time to time to the military authorities through the Annual Meetings of the Armed Forces senior religious teachers. A lot of administration matters and religious programmed were put forward and given the appropriate attention. However, the function of religion at that time was not connected to the military service and religion has not gained its functionality in the truest sense (Burhanuddin, 2018).

Since its inception in 1933 to the early 70s, it was proven that the military religious teachers played an important role in providing religious guidance to military personnel. This needs to be acknowledged because during

that time, there were many challenges and internal resistance to the Islamic propagation effort. There was also the strong influence which were bound by the customs, code of ethics and rules practiced by the Western colonials. The role played by these military religious teachers is undoubtedly a huge contribution in nurturing the understanding and religious appreciation amongst the Muslim military men and their families, especially from continuing to be influenced with the western way and lifestyle which was rampant at that time (Mohammed, 1989).

At end of 70s and early 80s, the awareness and Islamic resurgence have become a global phenomenon. Islamic awareness and resurgence were also felt in military institutions. The military society began to feel that the religious teachers' traditional role in the military has not succeeded in giving them the spiritual satisfaction any more. The awareness and commitment towards Islamic appreciation have started to permeate in their personal and family's life. At the same time, the religious teachers' service was incapable of fulfilling the military society's needs, whether in terms of quality or quantity. This actually was caused by the "irrelevance" and imbalance in the military religious teachers' service development as compared to the MAF development at that time in all aspects (Mohammed R, 1989).

### 3.0 The Establishment of Malaysian Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT)

The awareness to continue to enhance the greatness of Islam in the Malaysian Armed Forces service, especially amongst the early generation of religious officers in the Ministry of Defence, certainly is the continuity of the struggle of the Prophet and his righteous companions, theologians and previous Islamic scholars. The challenge to continue this greatness in Islamic propagation actually existed since the Prophet's time. This was mentioned by Majid (1969) in his book *"War and Peace in the Law of Islam"*, where he wrote, *"Allah gave Prophet Muhammad four swords (for fighting the unbelievers): the first against polytheist, which Muhammad himself fought; the second against apostates, which Abu Bakr fought; the third against the people of the book, which 'Umar fought with; and the fourth against dissenters, which Ali fought with"*.

Looking back at the propagation process carried out by Prophet (PBUH), it was proven that during the early stages, Islamic propagation was done 'quietly' amongst relatives and closest friends only. Only after a few years after receiving the first revelation, Prophet (PBUH) began preaching openly until he received threats from enemies, which threatened his safety and he was dishonored by his own community. The struggle to enhance the greatness of Islam and the efforts to Islamic appreciation and propagation in the MAF also faced the same form of struggle and challenges.

As mentioned before, the effects from the country and society's sociocultural and political change, especially in the 80s, there were efforts towards the process of the application of Islamic values in the governmental sector. There were also efforts in the application of Islamic values in the military organisation and both experienced similar process. Following the above mentioned development, ideas and efforts to expand the religious service as an organisation in the form of corps under the MAF were initiated. Besides bringing religious personnel towards 'militarization', there were other factors which induced the establishment of KAGAT, as follows:

- a. Planning, coordinating and implementing Islamic propagation efforts and Islamic appreciation to all MAF officers and personnel.
- b. Giving and expanding the teachings of Islamic education especially with emphasis on the high level of moral, attitude and character (*esprit de corps*) besides giving understanding in the truest sense towards military services according to the Islamic views.
- c. Implementing and enforcing all Islamic rules and laws that were set by the Federal Islamic Religious Council and states.
- d. Providing assistance towards the efforts in uplifting heroic spirit amongst the military members in accordance with the MAF's struggle mission (Burhanuddin, 1998).

The 238<sup>th</sup> Army Forces Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1984, has approved the setting up of the Armed Forces Religious Corps Service Scheme which include the technical, staffing, emolument and also service period for officers and Other Ranks (Paper of 238<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Council Meeting). In addition to that, during the 249<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Council on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1986, the council has approved the terms and conditions in the secondment of Islamic Affairs Officers under the Public Service Department to the Ministry of Defence under the military service scheme. The establishment of KAGAT at that time was aimed to achieve the following goals:

- a. To comply with the MAF Muslim personnel and their families' religious requirements.

- b. To provide facility to the personnel and Islamic education for the military society during peacetime, emergency and war.
- c. To build moral stance, strength and strong discipline amongst MAF personnel based on the application of Islamic values in the present time and condition.
- d. To solve Islamic religious administration problems according to legislation enforced from time to time, especially in Islamic affairs and relations between MAF and civilians.
- e. To strive in managing any arising matters for the betterment of Islamic development in the MAF (Najmi A, 2005).

#### 4.0 The Malaysia Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) Goal, Objective, Vision and Mission

In accordance with the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) efforts in military modernization especially in its scope and functions, KAGAT has also expanded its work scope, roles and responsibilities which need to be implemented in accordance with the changing time

Therefore, KAGAT drafted its new vision, mission and objective which suited the strategic management determined by the MAF. Amongst KAGAT's mission, vision and objective in accordance with KAGAT's strategic management 2000-2020; are as follows:

- a. **Vision.** To become the generator of excellence in the MAF's human capital spiritual development.
- b. **Mission.** To help the MAF raise professionalism levels through Islamic teachings and provide religious services to all MAF personnel.
- c. **General objective.** To produce MAF personnel who are knowledgeable, faithful, and god-fearing towards the strengthening of their spiritual and combat power strength.
- d. **Operational Objectives.** As follows:
  - i. To make KAGAT more professional and global through restructuring and good systematic planning.
  - ii. To build a human resources which are professional, progressive, comprehensive, skilful and credible.
  - iii. To provide education, understanding, guidance and awareness towards the appreciation of the genuine Islamic teachings to MAF personnel.
  - iv. To develop, administer and manage prayer rooms and mosques.
  - v. To give spiritual services including family advice service, welfare and social services.
  - vi. To conduct academic and general studies to stabilise and reinforce religious values in MAF.
  - vii. To provide print and multimedia materials as source of reference in MAF.
  - viii. To enhance KAGAT's capability through procurement and management and infrastructure development with more effectiveness and efficiency.
  - ix. To develop a professional and excellent KAGAT human resource.
  - x. To provide Islamic law services for MAF personnel.
  - xi. To provide Islamic education in strengthening combat power/ strength of MAF personnel (Najmi, 2005).

#### 5.0 Analysis of the view on KAGAT Roles in the Malaysia Armed Forces (MAF)

A study was conducted on the implementation of management training for KAGAT personnel and this paper will have discussed the perceptions or views towards KAGAT personnel performance especially in task implementation, Islamic administrative matter in MAF, and also service delivery aspect, as follows:

##### a. View towards duty implementation

In this study, there were 10 items related to KAGAT where views of MAF personnel were recorded, and at the same time served as a cross-reference to identify how much effort has KAGAT committed in the effort to nurture Islamic appreciation amongst MAF personnel. Results showed the respondents' overall perception towards KAGAT role. Overall, it showed the frequency distribution of attitude level was at a low level (10-23) [4 people], moderate level (24-34) [90 people (23.5 %)] and high level (35-50) [289 people (75.5 %)]. This can be explained by the statement which has the highest percentage is the statement on officers and KAGAT personnel who have the credibility and ability to propagate and serve in the MAF. Almost all respondents chosen "agree" and "really agree" with the statement given. It is an honest assessment by every respondent

who are military men, so it may be concluded that the KAGAT officers and personnel have the credibility and ability in preaching and serving the MAF. There may be a few KAGAT officers and personnel who were less credible and firm in their preaching's and this made a few respondents chose "do not agree" and "strongly disagree" with the statement mentioned.

The majority of the respondents also said that the programmed and KAGAT roles can provide guidance to personnel making them faithful, more willing to perform good deeds and in still the fear of God and they also possess high fighting ability; apart from successfully spreading knowledge, comprehension and religious guidance to MAF staff. This showed that KAGAT officers and personnel have succeeded in carrying out their responsibility to almost perfection and can be accepted by every military man. Their approaches and what they do to achieve the objectives are in line with the wants and needs of the MAF. Due to this, it can be concluded that the KAGAT's officers and personnel, meet the needs of the religious service requirement, religious acts, family and religious advice to the MAF staff.

This means KAGAT's has played its role effectively in the MAF. The majority of the respondents supported every statement on the services and KAGAT's role towards the MAF staff. This showed the level of KAGAT's ability to lead and provide knowledge on religious matters and fighting spirit in accordance to the Islamic ways and has somewhat affected the MAF. There were respondents who did not give positive answers and this may be due to the fact that they were unable to visualize and could not understand wholly what KAGAT's role is and could not accept KAGAT's limitations.

The research also found that the MAF's prayer room and mosque are efficiently managed by the KAGAT's and respondents said that KAGAT's has successfully resolved many issues or policies that were not in line with Islam in the MAF. This clearly supports and provides positive feedback towards KAGAT's role. In fact, KAGAT has also reportedly been said to have successfully enhanced personnel's' and officers' to professionalism level through Islamic education and religious service. Although there few unsatisfactory achievements, it could be assumed as less successful such as KAGAT's programmed with members' families and children. In other side the respondents generally said that KAGAT has not yet achieved in administration and management level which is at par with other corps in the MAF. This needs to be given attention by KAGAT itself so as to constantly improve its ways and approaches to MAF staff apart from to strengthen its approaches and make its objectives clearer to be easily understood by the MAF. This is because the needs of the MAF members differ and they are influenced by their background, social condition, friend and environment and emotions.

#### **b. View towards Services Aspect.**

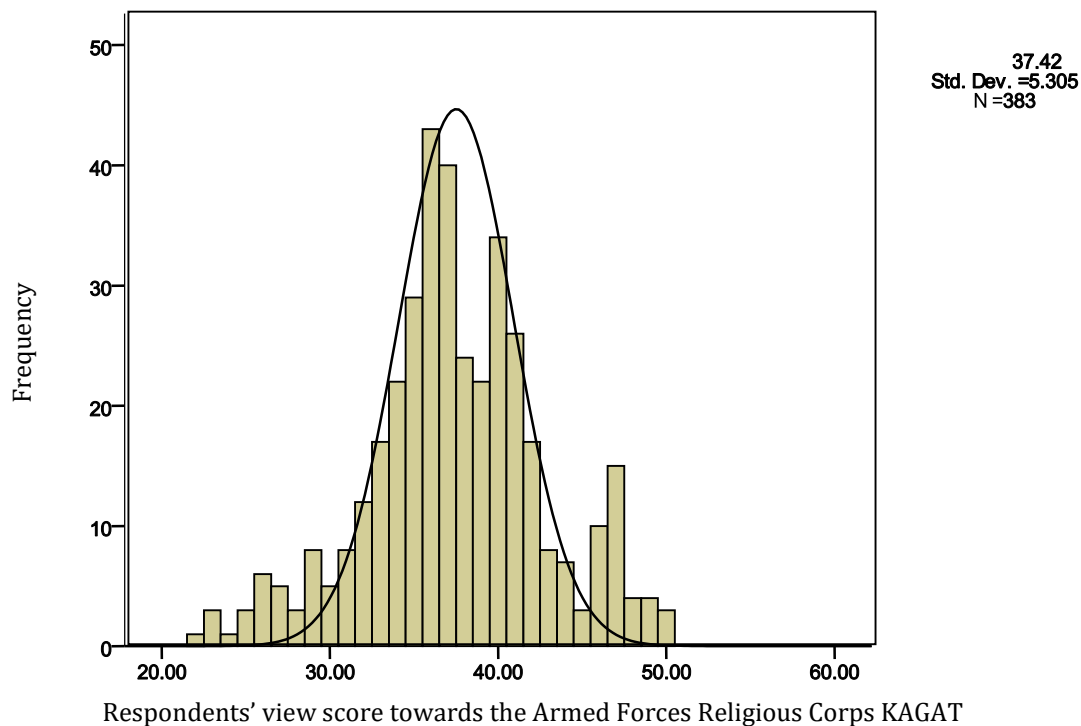
The study results found almost all respondents "agree" and "really agree" with the statement that KAGAT officers and members have the credibility and ability in propagating and to serve in MAF. This showed respondents' good perception towards the services rendered by KAGAT. Likewise, with programme's capacity and KAGAT service in nurturing members who are faithful, perform good deeds and god-fearing, and also possess high fighting ability, which were supported by most respondents. This is in addition to successfully giving knowledge, comprehension and religious guidance to MAF staffs. It actually showed KAGAT service level towards respondents where KAGAT members managed to capture the interest of MAF staffs and determine what is missing or wanted by them and made it KAGAT's responsibility to fulfil it.

An almost similar result was obtained through respondents' perception towards KAGAT's overall role and this was discussed where respondents gave positive feedbacks stating that KAGAT played its role effectively in the MAF and have successfully enhanced members' and officers' professionalism level through Islamic education and religious services.

The only programmed found to be unsatisfactory was with the families and children programmed. This is very clear as only 33.6 percent of respondents agreed and the remainder 66.4% gave negative feedbacks. This may be because KAGAT members were unable to give their services directly to their family members and children, due to time constraint and other conditions. So it was found to give less impact as it was supposed to. Due to this, in general, all respondents said they did not agree that KAGAT has achieved the administration and management level which is equivalent to other corps in the MAF.

### c. View Towards Delivery System Aspect

Next is the respondents' perception towards KAGAT in delivery system, it was also found that this has a high mean value. Generally, respondents "agree" and "really agree" with every statement given. KAGAT officers were found to have met the religious service requirement, religious worship, family and religious advice to MAF staff, the prayer room and mosque in MAF were efficiently managed by KAGAT members and officers. KAGAT has successfully resolved many issues or policies which are contradictory to the Islamic teachings in the MAF. There were few respondents who did not support those statements, and they surely have strong concrete reasons because it involves the religion which they themselves follow. These respondents surely know what they wanted and their actual needs. Because of this, KAGAT could not ignore or out rule their views. Maybe, an action should be taken to improve the propagation management and implementation system so that delivery will be more effective.



**Figure 1:** Level of respondents' perception towards KAGAT

Based on this research, KAGAT should be improve in organisation management aspect. According to Rozhan O. (1990), the management of a propagation organisation can be seen from three aspects namely:

- The propagation organisation capacity to set the ideal worship atmosphere.
- The improvement and goal achievement and organisation functionality.
- The organisation whole manpower utilisation (staff).

Due to this, KAGAT needs to improve its performance as an organisation towards one that is more excellent from the present condition. For that, KAGAT needs to be capable of becoming the means to facilitate MAF members to practice, understand and appreciate Islam fully. Other than that, KAGAT needs to review few things which are pre-requisite to organisational excellence and it is depends on three main factors (Burhanuddin, 2018), namely:

- Organisation 'tarbiah' system. Organisational excellence is heavily dependent on training system, culture and education in the organisation. The total number of officers and KAGAT members is increasing, however, many of KAGAT's early generation who knows KAGAT's history, inspiration and KAGAT's establishment spirit has retired and now the new generation needs to be educated to understand the real objectives and direction of KAGAT. Therefore, the 'tarbiah' system does not only refer to the approaches in understanding organisational culture but it includes the evaluation system, process training needs,

implementation process and organisation control process. The 'tarbiah' system that is effective is a system that aims to provide members or staffs who fulfil organisation's requirement.

- b. Organisational climate. Organisational climate refers to physical and non-physical conditions of an organisation. The element include culture, value, structure and organisational climate. Generally, an excellent organisation is able to facilitate the organisation to function effectively in achieving its objectives.
- c. Organisational leadership. The organisational leadership aspect is very important and KAGAT is not exempted from this aspect. Based on findings, respondents gave a slightly negative view on the present KAGAT's leadership and this condition needs to be improved fast and this include ensuring that KAGAT's leadership is always responsive, strategic, with flexible thinking, accurate in making practical decision, willing to solve problems and prepared to face various conditions which are critical and ready to fulfil MAF's need in both administrative or operational aspect.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Generally, the Islamic propagation efforts in the Malaysian Armed Forces need to be continued, improved, stabilized and fortified. The aspects of supplication strength and religious worship practice need to be established in accordance with weapons' sophistication and the spiritual strength also needs to be heightened and balanced with the physical and mental strength. *Allah (s.w.t.) commands in Surah al-Anfal verse 45 that provides guidance to achieve success in facing the enemy. Allah commands in Surah al-Anfal (8:45): "O ye who believe! When you meet an enemy, then stand firm against it, and remember Allah (with prayer) much, so that you may prosper (achieve success).*

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