

HALAL FOOD CULTURE IN KUALA TERENGGANU: SHARIAH PERSPECTIVE (ISTITĀBAT AL-'ARAB)

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ABSTRACT

Different cultures possess particular uniqueness in their culinary styles. Members in a society connect with each other through similar food patterns. People from different cultural backgrounds consume different foods with different culinary styles including ingredients used, preparation methods and consumption habits. Variations in food culture are basically due to different situations faced which vary according to different societies. Religion is perceived to play a part in shaping Kuala Terengganu's food culture along with availability of food sources, geographical background, and historical background as well as migration. Considering that Kuala Terengganu is a predominantly Muslim district, its local food culture is by any means manifested by the prescription of Shariah Law, which is to consume halalan tayyiban and to bypass haram. This study attempts to review the concept of Istitābat Al-'Arab pertaining to halal food rulings through various references found in different Quranic verses, hadith and principles. Also in this study, the different interpretations from major denominations in Islam (i.e. Hanafi, Maliki, Shafie and Hanbali) regarding the concept of Istitābat Al-'Arab are discussed. Hence, this particular paper explains the concept of Istitābat Al-'Arab in Shariah perspective in shaping Kuala Terengganu's halal food culture with reference to local food rulings.

Keywords: Halalan Tayyiban, Haram, Halal food culture, Istitābat Al-'Arab, Kuala Terengganu

(BUDAYA PEMAKANAN HALAL DI KUALA TERENGGANU: PERSPEKTIF SHARIAH (ISTITĀBAT AL-'ARAB))

ABSTRAK

Budaya yang berbeza melahirkan keunikan tertentu dalam gaya masakan sesuatu masyarakat. Anggota sesuatu masyarakat saling berhubung kait melalui corak

pemakanan yang sama. Masyarakat daripada latar belakang budaya yang berlainan mengambil makanan yang berbeza dan mempunyai gaya masakan yang berbeza termasuk bahan masakan yang digunakan, kaedah penyediaan dan cara pengambilannya. Kepelbagaian dalam budaya pemakanan ini pada dasarnya berpunca daripada perbezaan situasi yang dihadapi oleh sesuatu masyarakat. Faktor agama memainkan peranan penting dalam pembentukan budaya pemakanan masyarakat Kuala Terengganu di samping faktor-faktor lain seperti ketersediaan sumber makanan, latar belakang geografi, latar belakang sejarah dan migrasi. Memandangkan Kuala Terengganu merupakan daerah yang didominasi oleh Muslim, budaya pemakanan masyarakat tempatan tertakluk kepada undang-undang Shariah, berpandukan konsep pengambilan makanan yang bercirikan halal dan tayyiban serta meninggalkan makanan yang haram. Kajian ini mengkaji konsep Istitābat Al-'Arab dan perkaitannya dengan hukum pemakanan halal melalui beberapa sumber rujukan yang terdiri daripada ayat-ayat al-Quran, hadith dan kaedah-kaedah feqah. Di samping itu, kajian ini turut membincangkan tafsiran yang berbeza mengenai konsep Istitābat Al-'Arab menurut mazhab-mazhab feqah utama di dalam Islam; Hanafi, Maliki, Shafie dan Hanbali. Oleh itu, kajian ini memberi penerangan mengenai konsep Istitābat Al-'Arab menurut perspektif Shariah di dalam pembentukan budaya pemakanan halal masyarakat Kuala Terengganu dengan merujuk kepada hukum pemakanan yang digunakan oleh masyarakat tempatan.

Kata kunci: *Halalan Tayyiban, Haram, Budaya pemakanan Halal, Istitābat Al-'Arab, Kuala Terengganu*

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1. Introduction

Every single living creature depends on food in order to sustain their lives, including human being. It is undoubtedly that food is a very crucial element of social life. Every society has their own uniqueness in food preference whether it is in terms of taste, ingredients, preparation and presentation. In fact, in this contemporary period, food has becoming one of the medium in representing a society. Individuals living in a society connecting with each other within the society range through the consumption pattern that they shared together. This shared pattern in food preference among individuals of a society is used as a means of retaining a cultural identity.

Food culture of a society is frequently influenced by several factors such as religion, demographical background, geographical location, migration, colonization, political funding, globalization, availability of local natural resources, technologies, mass media, economic advancement, etc. This is because, the food culture is hybrid, and is stipulated according to various conditions. In fact, due to these conditions, the consumptions and perceptions of certain food varied among societies across the globe. Food ingredient that is considered fit for consumption by certain society might be considered unfit by others. In reference to religion, the consumption of pork in Islam and Judaism is forbidden as the consumption of cattle in Hinduism. Likewise, blowfish is considered as delicacy in Japan while other parts of the world consider it as inedible due to the fatal toxin it contained (Kitter, Sucher & Nelms, 2012). Several Asian countries consider eating scorpion as a delicacy while other nations are repulsed by the idea (Menzel et al, 1998).

Except for Christianity, most religions such Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism have their own food taboos (Sack. 2001; & Nur Aniza et al, 2013). Muslims are prohibited to consume pork and the prohibitions are mentioned explicitly in the main source of *Shariah Law*, the Quran. Muslim food culture is basically hovering in the framework of *Shariah Law* which are the Quran, the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. and the *‘Urf* (local customs). It is no doubt that religion plays important roles in society’s food culture. Although there has been a several research regarding the relationship between religion and food culture, studies regarding the impact of Islamic main sources (Quran and Hadith), and the concept of *Istitābat Al-‘Arab* on local food culture are still scarce.

Apart from several other factors such as geographical location, historical background, and migration, religious practice of local people is perceived as a potential factor that influences food culture in Kuala Terengganu. Considering that Muslims make up more than 90 percent of the Kuala Terengganu population, their food culture is, by any means subjected to *Shariah Law*. In other words, Muslims’ food culture is enclosed to the concept of *halal* (lawful) and *haram* (unlawful). Islam emphasizes Muslim on consuming the *halal* and *tayyib* (good and pure) and avoiding the *haram* and *khathibh* (bad, impure and harmful). To the best value of Islamic prescription, Muslim are urged to observe their consumption which is to consume *halalan tayyiban* for a better quality of life. It is deduced that as *haram* things are definite and explicitly mentioned in Quran and Hadith, least doubt prevailed in this matter. Meanwhile, the vast concept of *halalan tayyiban* creates the diversity in the food culture of various groups of society including within Muslim society. Muslims’ understanding of the concept are subjected to their denominations as they have different interpretations on *halal* compliance rules. Therefore, this paper addresses food culture according to *Shariah* perspective with particular reference to the Kuala Terengganu society. This particular study focuses on the concept of *Istitābat Al-‘Arab* and its role in *Shariah* perspective as a manifestation on local food culture.

2. Food Culture

Studies on food culture have become popular among multidisciplinary scholars which encompass numerous fields of study including art, sociology, anthropology, geography, economics, science and technology, art and literature, history and religious studies. Studies of food and its relation to cultural practices are no doubt interrelated to religious practices in a society. Different societies have their own identity in food as they differ in terms of taste, food ingredients, and methods in food preparation, ways of presentation, and the ways of eating. Members in a society tend to have similar liking and disliking.

In order to understand the concept of food culture, it is crucial to be acquainted with the terminologies in relation to food culture.

Food

Any substances whether in liquid, concentrated, solid, frozen, dried, or dehydrated form (Department of Taxation Ohio, Revised 2015), for ingestion or chewing, provides nutrients for growth and for the purpose basic needs which is to sustain life, consumed for their taste and nutritional value (Kitter, Sucher & Nelms, 2012). Barthes (1975) perceived food as what goes beyond nutritional studies but also includes a

system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviours.

Culture

House et al (2004) delineate culture as a set of practices and values, where practices are the ways things are done, and values are the ways things should be done. Culture according to Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) refers to “the complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits required by humans as members of society”. Basically, culture is a set of beliefs, practices, behaviours and habits shared equally between members of a particular group or society that are transmitted cross generational through a continuous process of learning in order to cope with the society and to satisfy their needs. Culture is actually formed by human proclivity to live in a group in order to sustain their lives that leads to the formation of common habits and behaviours among them. Members of a society tend to perceive things correspondingly. Culture is hybrid in condition as it is responsive to the changing (Kittler, Sucher & Nelms, 2012). For instance, Arabs’ cultures before Islam tend to consume anything without any restrictions (Zaidan, 1958). However, Islam has set guidelines for Muslims to only consume the good and pure things and to leave the bad and filthy. Their food culture then integrated in order to adapt with their new belief. Values, beliefs, region, arts, law, knowledge, language, norms, customs, activities, traditions, attitudes, behaviours and food intake are all include in culture.

Food Culture

Food culture or food habit as defined by Kittler, Sucher and Nelms (2012) refers to the manner in which humans use food from how it is chosen, accessed and distributed, which cover every stages ‘*from farm to fork*’ including the ones who prepare, serve and consume the food. Meanwhile, Anuar Ramli and Mohd Aizat (2016) define food culture as the combination of two elements; tongue and kitchen. Tongue refers to the taste and food preferences shared by individuals in a society, whereby kitchen refers to food preparation, ingredients and menu shared by individuals in a society. Hence, it is easily understood that food culture is the food that locals eat, sharing the similarity of taste, food ingredients, preparation, ways of presentation, and the ways of eating. Members in a society tend to have similar liking and disliking in terms of food preference. The types of food consumed by the members of a society tend to be alike as they are depending on the same food sources available at their place.

Halal Food Culture

Islam is a religion that has its own dietary guideline which is to consume *halal* and bypass *haram*. The term “*halal*”, in Arabic, means allowed, permitted and lawful in accordance to *Shariah Law*. The Islamic dietary guideline is revolved within the framework of *Shariah Law* which is subjected to the concept of *halal* and *haram*. Generally, every food and drinks are considered *halal* in Islam except that are specifically forbidden by Allah S.W.T in the Quran and in the Hadith. Whereas, food that has not been mentioned at all in the Quran and in the Hadith is also considered as *halal*. *Halal* foods are foods which are free from any components that have been prohibited from consuming conforming to *Shariah Law* (MS 1500:2009). *Halal* foods

are not only limited to the ingredients used but also include the ways they are prepared, equipment used during the preparation, storing, transportation until they are served and consumed (Abdul et al, 2009). There should be no contamination with *haram* and filth (*najs*) materials at any stages during the process. *Halal* food culture is the food culture that followed Islamic dietary guidelines prescribed by the *Shariah* which must be adhered to by every Muslim. *Halal* food culture has been existed since the era of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. to guide Muslims until the end of time. Allah S.W.T has laid general guidelines to His servants in His Book (The Quran) and also through His revelations to Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. which is the Hadith. These guidelines serve as a way of life of Muslims including what to eat and what not to. Muslims will be rewarded by consuming *halal* and bypassing *haram*. Equally, consuming *haram* and leaving the *halal* without any compelling reason is consider sinful in Islam (Al-Zuhayli, 1995).

3. Food Culture in Kuala Terengganu

Aside from the religious practice itself, there are other several reasons influencing food culture in Kuala Terengganu, which are the availability of the sources of *halal* food, geographical location, historical background, and migration. The availability of the food sources is closely related to the geographical location of Kuala Terengganu. It is a well-known fact that the state located in east coast of Peninsular Malaysia facing the vast Southeast China Sea. This resulted on most of the Kuala Terengganu delicacy are mainly seafood based, such as *keropok lekor*, *satar*, *otak-otak*, *ikan celup tepung*, *udang celup tepung*, *sotong celup tepung*, *pickle fish* (Suhaila Mohamed & Shaiful Bahri, 2015), *turtle eggs*, *pulut lepa*, *ketupat sotong*, *kari pap ikan*, *nasi dagang*, *laksam*, *laksa Terengganu*, *nasi lemak Terengganu*, *fish fried rice* etc.

Apart from that, due to the geographical location of Terengganu and historical background, by which the state was once under the reign of Siamese (now is Thailand), the food also has shown the influence of Thai culture (terengganutourism.com). For instance, all the rice based dish such, *nasi dagang*, *nasi kuning*, *nasi kunyit*, *nasi berlauk*, *nasi lemak*, *nasi kerabu*, *laksam*, *laksa Terengganu*, *bubur lambuk*, etc. Furthermore, Thai culture also influences Kuala Terengganu food culture in term of taste of the food, by which most of the Terengganu's cuisines tend to be spicy. For instance, they use a lot of chilies in their cuisines and they have something that called as rice accompaniment; *budu*, *sambal tempoyak* and *sambal belacan* during every meal time (Muhammad Shahrin et al, 2011).

It is known that Malay Muslim society is constitute of more than 90% of the Kuala Terengganu population that makes the Malay's cooking style heavily influences the minority of the population, whom are the Peranakan-type Terengganu Chinese. They enjoy typical Malay style food such Malay spices, chilli, *ulam* (fresh raw vegetables), *sambal belacan*, *budu*, and *tempoyak* (Pillai, 2015). Certainly, migration does play an important role in shaping the food culture of Malay Muslim in Kuala Terengganu. For example, *moho* and *caitao kueh* which are influenced by Peranakan-type Terengganu Chinese, *paong* (small, round baked buns) which is an Arab influence, and *Taminsari* (green bean cake) which is a Siamese influence (Pillai, 2015).

Considering that the population of Kuala Terengganu is mostly dominated by Muslims, their food culture is basically manifested by Islamic prescription; to consume *halal*. The commands regarding *halal* consumption and the prohibitions

regarding the consumption of *haram* things are actually came from several verses in the Quran, also in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. However, regarding the things that has been silenced off in the Quran and the Hadith, Muslims may refer to *Istitabat Al-'Arab* and the *'Urf* or the local customs. Nonetheless, in reference to *Istitabat Al-'Arab* and *'Urf*, it is subjected to the denomination school of thought by Muslims of the place. In Malaysia, Muslims are practicing Shafie school of thought as decreed by the ruler of the country and enforced in states of the country by the royal decree of each Royal Head of state (Norizan et al, 2015). Hence, Malay Muslims in Kuala Terengganu are manifested by Shafie School in order to evaluate things that have been silenced off in the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., for their consumption. It is obvious in the following Quranic verse indicated that Allah S.W.T has commanded His servants to consume the good and pure things and He also has forbade His servants the bad things.

Allah has mentioned in the Quran (Chapter 7, Verse 157):

“He (Allah) will make lawful for them all good things (الطيبات) and prohibit for them only the foul (الخبائث)”

The Quranic verse above is the key evidence to the concept of *Istitābat Al-'Arab* that will be discussed in the next section. It is important to understand that the concept of *Istitābat Al-'Arab* is only applicable to the things that have not been mentioned specifically or generally in the main sources of Islamic Law (Quran and the Hadith), regarding the permissibility and the prohibition of consuming, also not mentioned in the Hadith regarding animals that are forbidden to be killed in Islam.

4. Shariah Perspective: *Istitābat Al-'Arab*

Al-Istiṭābah (الإستطابة) originally is a *maṣḍar* (derivatives word) that comes from the word *istiṭāba* (استطاب). The Arabic verb form (*wazan/الوزن*) that constructed this word is *istaf'ala* (استفعل), which usually means to find something changed (in a certain process) (Al-Jurjāni: 1987). On a side note, the word *istiṭāba* etymologically derived from the root word [طاب-يطيب-طَبَّ] (Al-Azhari: 2001; Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organizations, 1999). It usually brings several meanings such as good, fine, pleasant and pure, whereas in terms of food, it is delightful. *Al-tayyib* (الطيب) as defined by Imam al-Māturidi (2005) refers to anything to be good or fine naturally. Al-Ṭarīhi (1985) in his book delineates *al-tayyib* as delightful, hygienic or pure, lawful (halal) in accordance to *Shariah*, or anything that does not bring harm to the body physically and spiritually. The definition as made by al-Ṭarīhi is the best explanation in the sense of food characterisation. Therefore, looking at the epistemological side of this word that consists of its Arabic verb form and etymological meaning, it can be concluded that the word *istiṭābah* primarily means to find or to make something as good, pure, fine, halal, pleasant and delightful (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organizations, 1999).

The opposite of *Al-Istiṭābah* is *Al-Istikhbāth*, comes from the word *istakhbatha* (استخبث). This word etymologically derived from the root word (خَبِثَ يَخْبِثُ-) (خَبِثًا) means something to be filthy and bad (Al-Ṭarīhi, 1985; Ibn Manzur, 1993; Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization, 1999; Al-Azhari, 2001). Carrying the same Arabic verb form as *istiṭāba*, the word *istakhbatha* therefore means a process to find or to make something to be filthy and bad (Ibrāhīm Mustafā et al, 2004). In the perspective of Islamic spiritual cleansing (الطهارة), the term *Istiṭāba* is

commonly used as a metaphor for *Al-Istinjā'* (الاستنجاء) (Al-Ṭarīḥi, 1985) which is a process of cleaning away the discharge of bowel and bladder i.e. urine and stool after urination and defecation using water or any uncontaminated materials, which do not contravene with *Shariah Law* (Al-Zuhayli, 2010). This is because of both words derived from the same meaning etymologically which is to clean away the *najs* (filth) (إزالة النجس). Therefore, it can be concluded that *Al-Istiṭābah* technically means to cleanse and eliminate harm, which is in other way to be pure and beneficial.

Istiṭābat Al-'Arab can be defined as good acceptance of food consumption in Arabs culture which is in line with *Shariah* perspective (Al-Maqdisi, 1996). Meanwhile, it is also can be a jurisdiction of determining *halal* and *haram* for Muslims' consumption of food by taking into consideration the customs (*Al-'Urf*) of the Arabs. However, this jurisdiction is only applicable to things that have not been mentioned specifically in the Quran and the Hadith. Basically, this concept reflects to Arabs food culture. Specifically, the Arabs refer to those living in cities of Hijaz (Mecca and Medina), as they are the first people to be guided by the revelations (the Quran and the Hadith) and to be guided by Prophet Muhammad S.A.W (Salim, 2003). In other words, if the Arabs consider it is good for consumption, then it is *halal*, whereas if they consider it is bad for consumption then it is *haram*. In this context, bad for consumption refers to anything that has been prohibited specifically in the Quran and the Hadith.

Considering that Muslims have grown rapidly across the globe since the period of revelation that makes it as one of the reasons to the emergence of schools of thought, each school of thought has different interpretation from Quran and Hadith regarding *halal* compliance rules. At this juncture, different schools of thought varied in terms of the acceptance towards the *Istiṭābat Al-'Arab* as an instrument in determining the *halal* status. According to Hanafi School, Shafie School, and Hanbali School, anything that has neither been prohibited nor permitted specifically in the Quran and the Hadith, can be referred to Arabs' custom (Khan, 2003).

However, in terms of food that the Arabs have no knowledge about, scholars of Hanafi School view that if there is resemblance to the food they perceive as good (استطابة العرب), then it is *halal* whereas, if there is resemblance to the food they perceived as bad (استخبثات العرب) then it is considered as *haram* or *makrūh tahrīmi* and if there is no resemblance to both, it is considered as *halal*. Above all, Hanafi School and Hanbali School agreed to distinguish between the urban Arabs and the rural as the concept *Istiṭābat Al-'Arab* only covers the urban Arabs with the exclusion of rural (Al-Hanafi, 2000; & Al-Maqdisi, 1968). This is because the rural Arabs ate anything due to availability and difficulty of finding food.

Instead of differentiating residential location of the Arabs, urban or rural, scholars from Shafie School and view availability and sound mind as the yardstick for the Arabs (Al-Khin et al, 1992). In terms of food that the Arabs have no knowledge about, scholars of Shafie School and Hanbali School have agreed that anything (animals) that has been silenced off from the Quran, the Hadith and the *Ijma'* (consensus) regarding the permissibility or prohibitions for consumption as well as the absence of command or prohibition of killing is considered as *halal* (Al-Zuhailly, 2010; Al-Bujairamy, 1995; & Al-Maqdisi, 1968).

The interpretations regarding the concept *Istitabat Al-'Arab* among scholars of Hanafi School, Shafie School and Hanbali School came from the terms 'الطيبات' and 'الخبائث' in the following Quranic verses, (Chapter 7: Verse 157); "He (Allah) will make lawful for them all good things (الطيبات) and prohibit for them only the foul (الخبائث)", (Chapter 5, Verse 4); "They ask you (O Muhammad) what is made lawful for

them. Say: (all) good things (الطيبات) are made lawful for you”, (Chapter 6, Verse 145); “Say, ‘I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine, for indeed, it is impure or it be (that slaughtered in) disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced (by necessity), neither desiring (it) nor transgressing (its limit), then indeed, your Lord is Forgiving and Merciful’”.

Next, in Maliki school of thought, as long as there is no prohibition in the Quran and the Hadith, everything is considered as *halal*. In other words, Maliki School does not acknowledge the concept of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* or *Istikhbāth Al-‘Arab* from Hijaz dwellers (Mecca & Medina) as the instrument in determining *halal* and *haram* (Ministry of Waqaf and Islamic Affairs, 2006). In other words, the determination of *halal* and *haram* in relation to food rulings according Maliki School is more general as compared to the other three schools of thought, namely Hanafie, Shafie and Hanbali.

The views of Maliki scholars regarding the rulings are based on the following Quranic verses (Chapter 2, Verse 29); “It is He (Allah) who created for you all of that which is on the earth”; (Chapter 6, Verse 145); “Say, ‘I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine, for indeed, it is impure or it be (that slaughtered in) disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced (by necessity), neither desiring (it) nor transgressing (its limit), then indeed, your Lord is Forgiving and Merciful”, and (Chapter 6, Verse 119); “He has explained in detail to you what He has forbidden you”. The opinion of Maliki scholars is also supported with the Hadith; ‘Rasulullah S.A.W said: “What Allah made *halal* in his book (*Quran*) is *halal*, and what He (Allah) made *haram* is *haram*, and whatever He (Allah) left unmentioned is a mercy (to you)”. Hence, it can be concluded that aside of the prohibitions mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith, all other things are considered *halal* according to this school.

After all, the main sources in determining *halal* and *haram* in relation to food rulings adopted by all four major schools of thought, namely Hanafi, Maliki, Shafie and Hanbali are the Quran, the Sunnah, the Ijma’ (consensus) and Qiyas. Although there are differing opinions in terms of accepting *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* among all the schools, a conclusion is drawn as all schools agreed that the main sources of *Shariah Law* have prevailed over *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab*. Plus, the practicality of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* is only in used in relation to things that have not been mentioned at all in the *Shariah Law*. After all, in terms of food that has not been recognized by the Arabs, all four schools agreed that it is considered as *halal*.

It is important to address that the concept of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* must not deviate from the scope of several principles. These following principles are the basis of the concept of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab*;

1. “The norm in regard to things is that of permissibility” (*al-asl fi al-ashyā’ al-ibāhat*)

According to Hashim Kamali (2013) permissibility in *Islamic Law* is the original jurisdiction for everything until there is evidence that prove otherwise. Precisely, the term permissible in *Islamic Law* refers to *halal* or lawful. Parallel to Quranic verse (Chapter 2, verse 29): “It is He (Allah) who created for you all of that which is on the earth” shows that Allah S.W.T has created everything on earth by making it

permissible to be utilised by human beings and for their benefit except something that is explicitly forbidden. This is also supported by a hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W:

‘The halal is that which Allah has made lawful in His Book and the haram is that which He has forbidden, and that concerning which He is silent He has permitted as a favour to you.’ (Reported by Ibn Majah)

The hadith above depicts that there are three categories of rulings in terms of permissibility and impermissibility; firstly, things that have been mentioned explicitly regarding the prohibitions in the Quran and the Hadith, the second refers to things that have been mentioned explicitly regarding the permissibility in the Quran and the hadith, and the last category is regarding things that have not been mentioned at all in the Quran and the Hadith. It is no doubt that the first category is to be avoided by Muslims whilst the remaining two categories lied within the framework of permissibility (*halal*) for Muslim consumption.

2. *“Everything that has been silenced off regarding their rulings whether it is obligatory or forbidden is an amnesty” (kullu ma sakata ‘an t̄jābihi au tahrīmihi fa huwa ‘afw)* (Al-Jauziyah, 2000)

Things that have not been mentioned at all (obligatory or forbidden) in the main sources of *Shariah* are considered as flexibility of the religion and charity from Allah S.W.T to all His servants for their convenience. The source of this principle is no doubt extracted from the hadith mentioned above.

3. *“The norms in regard to benefits and good things is lawful, and the norms in regard to detriments and atrocious things is of unlawful” (al-asl fi al-manāfi’ wa al-tayyibāt al-hill wa al-asl fi al-muḍar wa Al-khabāith)* (Al-Razi, 1981)

Anything that is beneficial to soul and body including food, drink and clothing is permitted by *Shariah* for the convenience of human being and to obey Allah S.W.T. Plus, anything that is harmful or bring harm or harm takes precedence over the benefits is forbidden by Allah S.W.T. for the benefit of human beings.

In Islam, nothing is *haram* except what has been prohibited sound and explicitly in *Shariah* main sources, the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. In fact, only a few things have been prohibited in Islam as compared to the *halal*. The original rule for any kind of food and drinks is *halal* as long as it is good, pure and beneficial for consumption. In other words, Islam emphasizes Muslims to consume *halalan tayyiban* in day to day life. *Halalan Tayyiban* in terms of food and drinks are hygienic and pure, nutritious, healthy, wholesome, and safe for consumption as well as does not associated with any harmful and *haram* material which has been prescribed by *Shariah Law*. Indeed, the concept of *Istīḡābat Al-‘Arab* as adopted by the scholars of schools of thought is subjected to the above principles in determining the status of *halal* and *haram* in relation to food rulings.

5. The Practicality of *Istīḡābat Al-‘Arab* in Kuala Terengganu Food Culture

Despite Islamic dietary guideline, the consumption of the foods which are not mentioned specifically or generally in the Quran and the Hadith, the practices of *halal* food culture vary among Muslims across the globe. This variation is resulted from different denominations in Islam which are known as schools of thought. Different schools of thought have different methods in interpreting Quranic and prophetic evidences. For instance, the consumption of hyena is considered as *halal* according to Shafie School and Hanbali School, while Hanafi School considers it as *haram* and it is *makruh* (dislike) according to Maliki School (Al-Jazāri, 2003; Al-Zuhayli, 2010). In terms of spiny tail lizard (*dhab*), Shafie School, Maliki School and Hanbali School consider it as *halal* whereas Hanafi School considers it as *haram* (Ministry of Waqaf & Islamic Affairs, 2006; Al-Zuhayli, 2010).

Considering that Malaysia is practicing Shafie school of thought (Anisah, 2007; Zuhdi, 2007; Wan Zulkifli, 2014), the application of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* as an instrument in determining the rulings in relation to local food is subjected to the guidelines laid by the school. The practicality of this concept is intended to support the local customs pertaining to their food culture. The concept of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* that is adopted in Malaysia is basically manifested by the ‘*Urf*’ of local people, by which it is depending on what is perceived as good according to their knowledge as long as it does not violate the requirements of the *Shariah*. Islam approved the changes in Muslim society food culture as long as those changes meet the prescription of *Shariah Law*. This is because, aside of Islam, Kuala Terengganu local food culture is also associated with other influential factors such availability of food sources, geographical location, historical background and migration. Their food culture has been assimilated with those situations to shape their own specialty in food to represent their society. The meetings between the ethnics among Kuala Terengganu community lead to the formation of new culinary styles that fit the local taste and existing culture (Pillai, 2015). The availabilities of food sources are no doubt played important part in shaping Kuala Terengganu food culture. For instance, the main protein sources in Kuala Terengganu is basically seafood due to geographical location of Terengganu, which is a coastal state facing Southeast China Sea. It can be seen by most of the delicacies of Kuala Terengganu are seafood based, namely *keropok*, *satar*, *otak-otak*, *paih*, *budu*, *pelara*, *nasi lemak ikan tongkol*, *nasi dagang*, *nasi kuning*, etc.

6. Conclusion

Islam shows a great concern with consumptions of the adherents. The emphasis in the consumption of *halalan tayyiban* and to leave *haram* and *najs* must be taking seriously by every Muslim as it is considered as a part of worship towards Allah S.W.T. The concept of *halalan tayyiban* is not only limited to the ingredients used but encompasses through every aspects which covers ‘from farm to fork’. Kuala Terengganu as a predominant Muslim district is practicing *halal* food culture which follows Shafie School of thought. This school of thought is supported by the concept of *Istiṭābat Al-‘Arab* in determining the status of *halal* and *haram* pertaining to food and drinks rulings of local customs.

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