

Integrity: A Study of All Existence

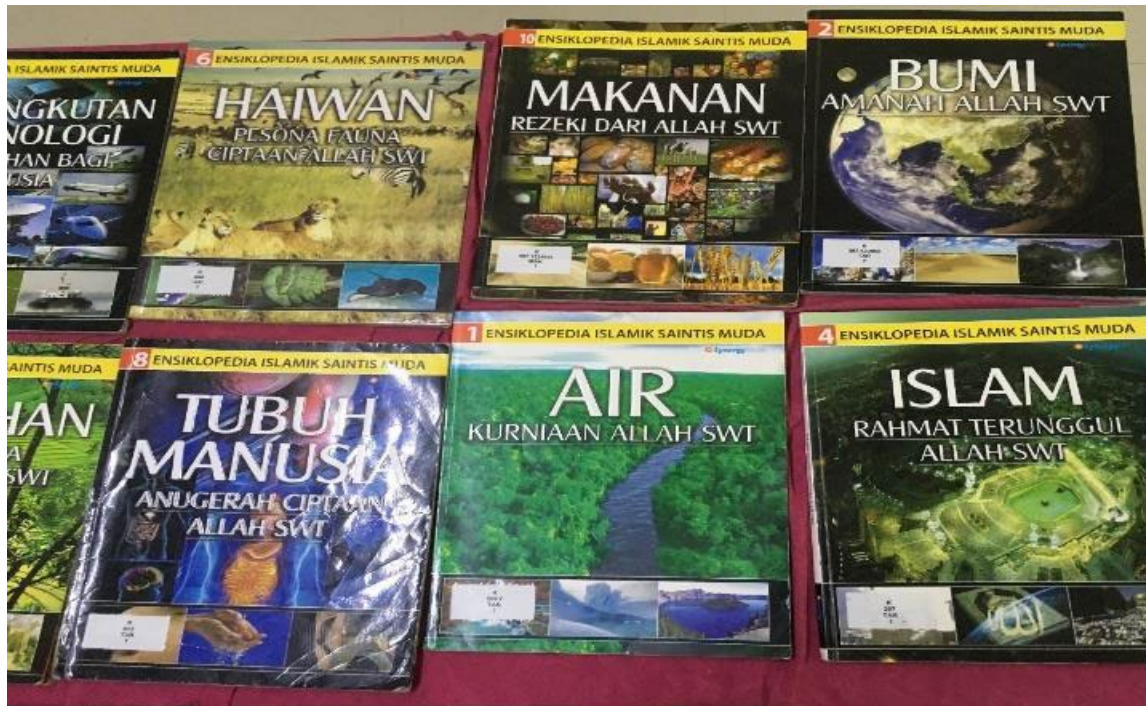
By: Professor Dr. Barry H. Rodrigue

Editor's Note: Professor Rodrigue was invited to give a talk in the Knowledge Sharing Session organized by the Asset Management Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia when he visited Malaysia earlier this year. He is an International Coordinator for both the International Big History Association (IBHA) headquartered in the United States and the Asian Big History Association (ABHA) based in India. He can be reached at rodrigue@archinets.org.

The concept of integrity is often used as a rule or law aimed at establishing social honesty to bring harmony both within ourselves and human society. However, to me integrity has a bigger and broader meaning to it. **Integrity is a study of the relationship between humans and nature.**

Since ancient times, humans have been curious about their own existence. Ancient groups of people moving into family bands used their 'territorial' knowledge to express a worldview that reflected their keen observations of the world around them.

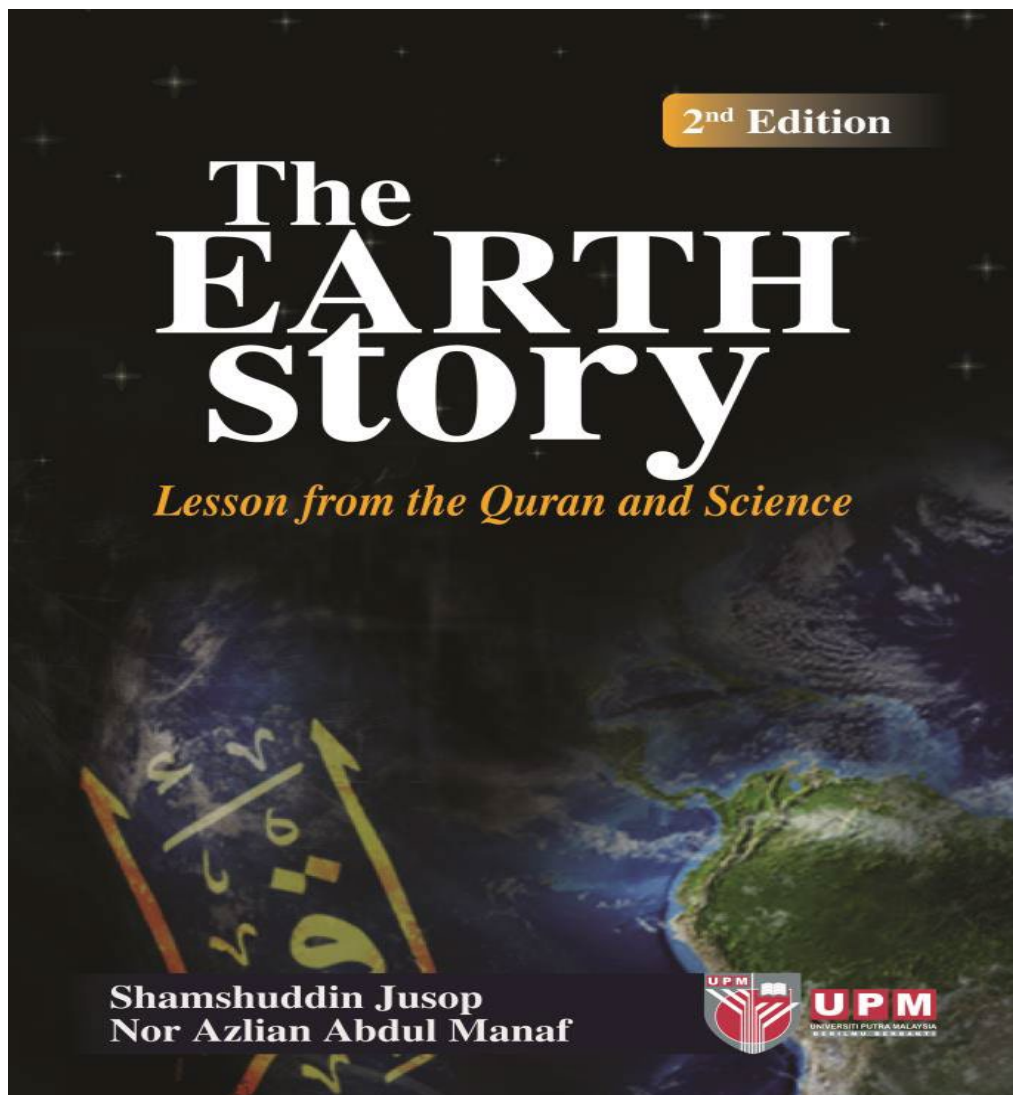
This picture is clear when we see how the painters of the Stone Age painted on the stone wall; the peasants of the Agricultural Age set up their landscape calendars; the philosophers in Greece before the emergence of the Western philosophers since Socrates talked about nature; the inhabitants of the Mauryan Empire era protected nature in India; scholars who ruled China during the Zhou Dynasty developed comprehensive and advanced cosmological sciences; and how Islamic teachers in Asia, Europe and Africa united both the mystic world (Alam-al-Ghaib) and real world (Alam-al-Shahood) as one integrated collection of knowledge.



All this evidence is pointing to a word in Malay that I learned when I was visiting Malaysia in early of this year, i.e. "alam" (world). This word could be further derived

to become “*pengalaman*” (experience). One of the most exciting experience I had ever experienced in Malaysia then was to discover a series of encyclopaedia book for children which encompasses all the knowledge I meant into a very beautiful dan interesting narrative!

More exhilarating when I received a book in English “*The Earth Story: Lesson from the Quran and Science*” written by a professor by the name of Shamsuddin Jusop. The book has aroused me because it tells a story of the birth of the universe, diversity of soils (Earth) dan human life by combining both scientific and spiritual knowledge as one (singularity).



Deep Integrity

However, rational answers are gradually replacing these mythical narrative in human understanding of the environment around them. This has led to the perfection of scientific methods, scientific research and the integration of knowledge across cultural, religious and ethnic boundaries. For me, this is a process of 'deep integrity'.

These modern developments see a new phenomenon in which efforts have been taken by people around the world to fight corruption in the social, governmental,

corporate, and even non-governmental arenas. For example, in 2011 the Prevention of Corruption Act came into force in the United States. The Act has introduced several reforms in the anti-corruption legal system in the United States, such as strengthening anti-corruption advocacy groups. In developing countries such as Malaysia and India anti-corruption movements are also beginning to be active at the national level, and even campaigns after campaigns have been launched to reinforce the values of integrity beyond national borders and to use almost all human languages in their campaigns for the sake of achieving a common goal - promoting a social honesty within ourselves and human society.

Sacrifice Brings Joy

This movement towards integrity reflects a human trend seeking for a wider and more possible approach to unite humanity. In essence, if all human sciences are considered and integrated with human thought and feeling, then this unity has also become a practice, for me, a form of deepest integration between humans and nature would take place.

This is the purpose of my sharing in this talk - to explore integrity in a new context that encompasses all the knowledge which we have given a name 'Big History'. I see Big History as an attempt to seek all possibilities which enable humanity to share experiences and work together as one to experience the world deeper. Yes, I agree. It's not easy to claim all this knowledge. However, for me this is a sacrifice that is sure to bring joy to the life of humanity and all existence!

