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**MALAYSIAN STUDIES ASSIGNMENT**

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**TOPIC**

**RELIGIONS AND VALUES AMONG MALAYSIAN CITIZENS**

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## **Introduction**

As a multiethnic country, Malaysia has a lot of diversity. This diversity can range from the customs, languages, and also its culture. One of the diversity Malaysia has is the religion. With the existence of multiple ethnics in Malaysia, it's only natural that diversity regarding religion took place in this country.

## **Religion in Malaysia**

As mentioned before, Malaysia has a lot of diversity in religion. It means that they are several different religions across ethnics in Malaysia. Although the religion can be different from one ethnic to another, there are still several shared customs and similarities.

There are several major religions in Malaysia. According to Malaysia Department of Statistics, currently (2019), those religions are Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and, Taoism. According to the same source, around 61 percent of the populations are Islam, just below 20 percent of population are Buddha, 9 percent are Christian, about 6 percent are Hindu, and only almost 1.5 percent are Confucianism, Taoism, and other Chinese religion. The rest of the population are either having other religion, unknown, or have no religion.

## **Islam**

In Malaysia, Islam is one of the oldest religions that exist. It is believed that the spread of Islam began in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century from Arabia to the eastern part of the world. Although, it is believed that way, the introduction of Islam in Malaysia usually recognized in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was done by traders from India, specifically by Indian Muslim traders. The spread of this religion within Malaysia itself was supported through the rulers and missionaries. The practice of trading and marriage also gave contribution to the spread of Islam in Malaysia. (T. W. Arnold)

One of the factors that helped the spread of Islam was The Malay Melaka Sultanate. The Malay Melaka Sultanate played an important part in spread of Islam in the past. During that time, this sultanate made Islam as their official religion. In the following decades, Islam was so widespread and deeply rooted to almost every region in Malaysia. (T. W. Arnold)

Nowadays, in Malaysia, Islam is the main religions; with more than half of its population is Islam. Now, Islam is the official religion in Malaysia. Quoting from Article 3 - The State Religion, "Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation", it is clearly stated that Islam is the official religion in Malaysia. However, other religions are also allowed to be practiced.

According to 2010 census, Islam in Malaysia is held by multiple ethnic groups, though the majority of population that holds Islam is the Malay ethnic group. The percentage of Malay Muslim in Malaysia is around 81 percent, while the Indian Muslim and Chinese Muslim are only 0.4 percent and 0.2 percent respectively.

Since the fact that Islam is the major religion in Malaysia, it's only natural that the practice of this religion can be easily seen and found in this country. One of the manifestations of this practice is mosque. A mosque is an ordinary scene in this country, as it can be seen almost in every place. A call for prayer, also known as adhan, can be heard five times a day. Another example is that government bodies are closed for two hours every Friday in midday so that Muslim workers can pray in mosques for Friday prayer. Some important events, days, and also celebration can be witnessed throughout the year, such as the month of Ramadhan, Eid al-Fitri, and also *Qurban* during Eid al-Adha. (Mardiana Nordin)

## **Buddhism**

“China Buddhism” in Malaysia almost does not exist as the religious system which is freedom in these days with its nature itself which is only founded in half of its temples and China Buddhism association.

Buddhism temples which are pure are not many. There is some of pure Mahayana Buddhism temples in Malaysia and these temples are mostly based on Holy Land tradition. For example, in Kinabalu City, Sabah, there is a temple which is quite big with Puh Toh Sze title. It is located in a down hill in Tuaran Street (*batu keenam*).

Most of suburban Buddhism temples in Malaysia do not have monk residents. However, many monks stay to manage the temples. Buddhism temples are built by Chinese to be the place of their worship.

Although there is some of monks in half of “buddhism temples”, a free agency for Chinese Buddhist believers is usually not found. Except, half of individuals which accuse that they are Chinese Buddhist believers which are pure.

There is Chinese Buddhism Believers Association in Malaysia. The main agency of this association is Malaixia Fojiao Zonghui which is built in April 1959 in Kek Lok Si, Pulau Pinang.

The goals of this Buddhist believers organization are to spread China Mahayana Buddhism, especially Buddhism teology. They hold Buddhism class and pick up the local monks and smotimes are foreign monks and scholar of Buddhism to give the lecture. Association Buddhist Believers and a little bit of China Mahayana Buddhist monks activity which concerned about Buddhist teaching have tried to take back the true Buddhism as Chinese religion which is freedom.

## **Christianity**

Prior to the Portuguese conquest, the presences of Christianity in Malay Archipelago can be traced back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that this happened because of the Arab Christian traders from Arabian Peninsula. However, the spread wasn't very widespread, not until the Portuguese came to Melaka to conquer it. (Hermen Shastri)

Because of the Portuguese conquest in 1511, Christianity began to spread in Malaysia, and the early Christians were Roman Catholics. After the Portuguese captured Melaka in 1641, the spread grew even faster. Although the spread had gone faster, it was still not as widespread as other religions. (Mardiana Nordin)

Even nowadays, Christianity is not really as widespread as other religions such as Islam and Buddhism. According to the 2010 census from Malaysia Department of Statistics, even though it's the third largest religion in Malaysia after Islam and Buddhism, the number of people who is a Christian is not really high, not even one tenth of Malaysia population. The number of people who is a Christian is just above 9 percent, which is quite small compare to the number of people who is a Muslim or a Buddhist.

According to the same census, most of the Christians in Malaysia are come from the indigenous people, or also known as the Bumiputera ethnic group. The percentage of those people is almost at 60 percent. Almost 27 percent of Christians in Malaysia come from the Chinese ethnic group. The number Indian ethnic who is also a Christian in Malaysia is only somewhere around 4 and a half percent. The rest of the numbers come from other ethnic group and non-citizen of Malaysia.

Despite the small numbers of Christians, building such as church, is not really uncommon in Malaysia, though it is much rarer in some states. Some Christian's festivals and celebration also exist in Malaysia. However, there are not many of them, usually the most common festivals and celebrations are only Easter and Christmas. (Mardiana Nordin)

## **Hinduism**

Hinduism is religion in Malaysia which came before Islam on 15th century, and this religion is the largest population after Islam, Buddhism and Christianity in Malaysia. Around 1.7 million Malaysians are Hindus and they make up a total of 6.3% of all of the people in Malaysia.

Hindu religion in Malaysia is divided into several big cities in Malaysia, especially in the city of Negri Sembilan (13.4%), Selangor (11.6%), Perak (10.9%) and the last being in the capital city is Kuala Lumpur (8.5 %) Hindu population.

Hinduism is minority religion people in Malaysia 6.3% from total of Malaysia they are ethnic India of whom almost 89% practicing Hinduism. Most of ethnic Indians they are coming from Tamils from the south India state of Tamil Nadu.

Malaysia Hinduism is diverse, with large urban temples dedicated to spesific deities, and smaller temples located on estates. The estates generally follow the tradition of the indian region from which the temples worshipper orginate.

Folk Hinduism is the most prevalent variety, including spritualism and worship of local goods. The estate generally follow the tradition of indian region from which the temples worshippers orginate. Many people follow the shaivite, or saivite, tradition, of shouthern india.

They worship in temples and pay reverence to an all supreme who is imminent and transcendent. In the city areas, temples are dedicated to a single god whereas in the village, the temples are home to multiple gods. Majority of these gods were also brought by immigrants. The temples follow saivite tradition from west India for the worship of Siva.



From a historical point of view, Indians played a significant contribution to religion in Malaysia. More than two thousand years ago, early Indian traders brought Hinduism and Buddhism to Malaysia and Islam some 1400 years later. Approximately the 13th century, Hinduism and Buddhism rose. Beginning 200 years ago, during the British colonial era, the number of Hindus spiked again.

## **Chinese Folk Religion**

Chinese folk religion refers to the traditional Chinese religion such as Taoism and Confucianism. There are not many sources that explain the first appearance of this religion in Malaysia. However, it is believed that the religion such as Taoism and Confucianism are brought by the Chinese settlers in Malaysia in the early time.

Nowadays, The Chinese folk religion have been adapted to urbanization, capital growth, nation-state formation to preserve his modern idea and modern lifestyle. The tradition of Chinese folk religion has changed a bit due to the flow of new culture from outsider which led to the deviation of the old culture and there was a new culture born from the chines folk religion itself. The modern of the Chinese folk itself is more interested in matters relating to modern idealism rather than something related to religion which for them is less interesting to study or apply to their modern life. With a life that is completely modern. the relationship between Chinese religion and modernity is always regarded as unidirectional causality, with modernity influencing changes in Chinese folk religion which affect the teachings of Chinese religion itself. So the teachings of Chinese folk religion itself have changed little from the past because of modern life today. But the number of people who adheres to this religion is in a small number. Because only

a certain person that would follow this religion. The number of people with this religion is dominated by the Chinese ethnic. And also the members of this religion come from other ethnics and the non-citizen of Malaysia. Even though the number is really small, buildings and worship places still exist. Buildings such as temples can still be found in Malaysia, though rare in number. Despite all those facts, some festivals and celebration exist, like the Chinese New Year, and The Moon Cake Festival.

## **Conclusion**

Malaysia is rich with its history about the ethnics, religions, and also cultures. This country has undergone through a lot of struggle to reach this point. Even though there are a lot of diversity, Malaysia appreciate the diversity it has. In matter of religion, the tolerance in Malaysia is also rather excellence. Despite the fact that the Islam is the dominant religion and also the official religion in Malaysia, other religions also exist without much of a problem. Almost most of Malaysia citizen respects and value different religion. Such manifestation can be seen by the coexistence of people with different religion and also various different places for pray or worship.

## Appendix

Picture of a masjid



Picture of a Buddhist temple



Picture of a pagoda



Picture of inside of the church in Kuala Lumpur



Picture of Muslim conducting its prayer





Picture of a Hindu temple



Several pictures of different religions conducting its prayer, from upper left to bottom right,  
Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu



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