# General Information About Malaysia

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## 1.1. HOW HAS MALAYSIAN HISTORY BEEN SHAPED?

Malaysia borders Thailand in the north and Singapore in the south and is divided into West and East Malaysia. West Malaysia consists of the Malay Peninsula and several small islands around it. Meanwhile, East Malaysia which is 400 miles from the mainland, includes the states of Sabah and Sarawak (Moore, 1975: 99). Malaysia was established in 1963 with the federation constitution; however, after a while, there was a change in its borders. Singapore, a part of Malaysia since its establishment, became an independent state by separating from Malaysia in 1965 (Andaya and Andaya, 1982: 1).

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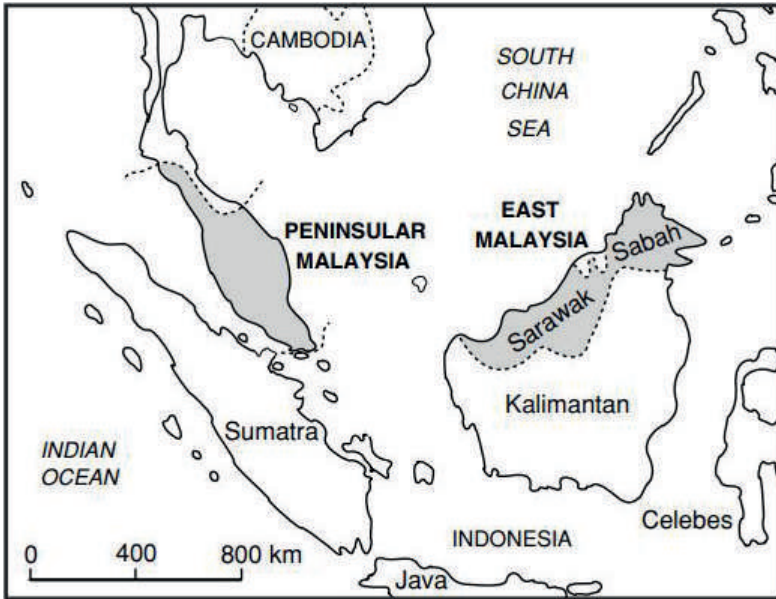
*Figure 1.1.: Map of Malaysia in 1965*

*Source: Barbara Watson Andaya, Leonard Y. Andaya. (1982). History of Malaysia. Macmillan Publishers Limited, p. 1.*

Malaysia is governed by the federal constitutional monarchy. However, what makes Malaysia different is that eight of its thirteen states are a sultanate. Although the history of these sultanates dates back to ancient times, there is no common understanding of history among them. For example, the northern sultanates of Kedah, Terengganu, and Kelantan remained under the rule of the Siamese Kingdom for centuries (13th century- 1909), while the southern sultanates of Johor, Pahang, and Perak were established after the fall of the Malacca Sultanate (1511). Thus, it is impossible to form a common history for the sultanates that still exists today. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the historical process to understand the current situation in Malaysia.

The Kingdom of Langkasuka was the first political structure established on the Malay Peninsula, which ruled a significant part

of Malaysia. Langkasuka was founded in the 2nd century in the north of the Malay Peninsula, and its border stretched from Kedah to Patani. The Langkasuka Kingdom had important ports such as Kedah and Patani. It is known that Langkasuka traded with China and India from these ports. In fact, it is mentioned in the sources that ambassadors from China reached the Kingdom of Langkasuka in the 6th century AD (Teeuw ve Wyat, 1970, 2). The Langkasuka legend continued until the 7th century. In the 7th century, the Sumatra-centered Srivijaya Kingdom dominated the entire Malay Peninsula including the Kingdom of Langkasuka. The Kingdom of Srivijaya was the only state that achieved political unity in the Malay Peninsula until the Malay Federation was established in 1895. The dominance of the Srivijaya Kingdom over the Malay Peninsula continued until the middle of the 13th century.

In the middle of the 13th century, the Thai people, who descended to the South due to the Mongols' expeditions to China, established their first state, the Sukhothai Kingdom, on the territory of present-day Thailand. The Sukhothai Kingdom and the Ayutthaya Kingdom, which were established after it in 1350, took part of the Malay Peninsula under its protection (Bladgen, 1906: 110). The dominance of the Siamese-Thai kingdoms over the northern sultanates of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu continued until 1909.

One of the important events in the political history of the Malay Peninsula was the establishment of the Sultanate of Malacca in 1390 by Prince Parameswara. The Sultanate of Malacca, which was established in the port city of Malacca that is one of the important routes of India-China maritime trade, has become one of the important economic and political centers in the region. The reign became Islamized at the beginning of the 15th century and greatly influenced the Islamization of the Malay people. The legend of the Sultanate of Malacca, which continued until the beginning of the 16th century, constitutes an important period in Malay political history. However, the capture of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511 and the foundation of a new state by

the River of Johor started a new era for the Malay Peninsula. Therefore, the Portuguese attack on Malacca caused significant changes in the south of the peninsula. The Portuguese who settled in Malacca started to play an active role in the politics and trade of the region by making commercial agreements with Siamese and other Malay sultanates. In addition, there were frequent wars between the Portuguese and the Johor Sultanate. However, in 1629, the Portuguese cooperated with the Johor Sultanate against the attacks of the Acehnese (Basset, 1976: 127).



*Figure 1.2. A Map of the Malay Peninsula*

*Source: Wright, Arnold. (1908) Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya, Londra: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, p. 1.*

In 1641 the Dutch, who took Malacca from the Portuguese with the support of the Johor, established a wide trade network around the Malay Peninsula. The Dutch not only monopolized the trade in the region but also largely prevented the Portuguese and British from being effective. The presence of the Dutch in Malacca continued until 1824. However, from the end of the 17th century, the dominance of the Dutch in the region decreased, and the British became the new power. The British leased Penang Island in 1786 and Singapore in 1819 to secure maritime trade between India and China. In addition, the British, who took over Malacca from the Dutch in 1824, established a strong dominance around the Malay Peninsula (Swettenham, 1948: 25).

After establishing sovereignty in Penang, Singapore, and Malacca, the British attempted to increase their influence over the Malay sultanates. During this period, British trade with the Malay sultanates increased exponentially every year. The British established a colonial administration in the Malay sultanates to secure this trade and prevent possible risks. The British attempted to take the Malay Peninsula under their dominance and had protection agreements with the Malay sultanates, which were in internal turmoil. The British first agreed with the Perak and Selangor sultanates, which were in political and economic problems in 1874 (Winsted, 1935: 241).

In the 1890s, the British made another attempt that changed the fate of the Malay Peninsula to a great extent. They gathered the Malay sultanates under one political roof and formed the Malay Federation. Founded in 1895, the Malay Federation significantly strengthened the British influence in the region.

The important articles of the treaty signed between the British and Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan in July 1895 are as follows;

Article 1: Pahang, Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, and chiefs under them came under the auspices of the British Government based on the agreement.

Article 2: The sultanates and chiefs mentioned above will administer their lands under the supervision of the British Government, in accordance with the law of federation.

Article 3: The Malay sultans or their chiefs do not have the right to rule any place other than their own territory.

Article 4: The sultanates mentioned above are obliged to pay the advisor appointed by the British Government for a suitable place and the amount of salary determined, and to comply with all their advice, except for religious matters concerning the Malay community (Belfiled, 1902: 2).

After the British dominated most of the Malay Peninsula, they attempted to bring the Malay sultanates, under the rule of the Siamese Kingdom in the north, to their protection. After many years of negotiations, the Bangkok Treaty was signed in 1909. According to this treaty, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu, which had been under the rule of the Siamese Kingdom for centuries, joined the Malay Federation. The Sultanate of Johor was the last sultanate to join the federation and accepted British domination in 1914 (Winstedt, 1935: 248).

British domination of the Malay Federation continued until the Japanese invasion on 8 December 1941. On February 15, 1942, the Japanese defeated the British forces in a short time and took control of the entire Malay Peninsula, including Singapore. During the Japanese occupation, which lasted for three years and eight months, the sultans were forced to support the Japanese administration. The sultans lost most of their privileges under the British administration, and this situation placed the consciousness of being a nation independent of the sultans among the Malays. Malays had the idea of being united around the elements of history, language, religion, nation and culture that connect them, independently from sultans (Pian, 2009: 130). Therefore, the Japanese accepted the defeat and withdrew from the Malay Peninsula after the atomic bombings led the Malays to gather around new leaders other than sultans.

Although the British tried to re-establish dominance over the Malays after the war, the Malays' demand for independence prevailed. Established in 1946, UMNO was the first organization to take the first step towards an independent Malaysia. The Malays' demands for independence yielded results, and Malaysia gained independence in 1957. Shortly after independence, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, under British rule, joined Malaysia. However, in 1965 Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent state.

## 1.2. HOW WAS GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE BEFORE AND AFTER INDEPENDENCE?

The administrative structure of the sultanates, which continued its existence for centuries in the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia, and other islands in the region, has undergone some changes in history, under the influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam from the first times, and some traditions have continued their existence unchanged despite centuries. The existing classes in the administrative structure also underwent some changes during this period. For example, priests (brahmans), who held an important position in Hinduism, lost their influence and became less respected in Buddhism. With the arrival of Islam in the region, it is seen that the classes in the administrative structure have changed again, and the brahmans, which are in the ruling class and hold the religious system, have completely disappeared (Wells, 2009, 257).

If the structure of the society in the Malay sultanates in the pre-British colonial period is examined, it is seen that the society consists of four classes. These classes were the sultan's family, the head of state, and the *orang kaya*, who advised the sultan and managed the trade in the country, people, and enslaved people. These classes expand in the form of a pyramid from top to bottom and reach the lowest layer. It should be noted here that these classes existing in the Malay sultanates are very different from the class privileges discussed in the West. While class differences in the West are based on economics, the formation of classes among Malays is mostly a result of Malay culture and tradition. Privileges enjoyed by the upper classes (e.g. the privilege of being rich) are given to them by Malay traditions (*Adat Melayu*) (Crawfurd, 1820: 37). The lower classes again accept their position according to the dominant belief of the society and, there was no conflict between classes.

### 1.2.1. Raja or Sultan

Malay rulers used the titles raja and sultan. The word raja is originally Indian and is taken from the word maharaja, which

means ruler. In the tradition of Buddhism, the term *dewaraja,* which implies the god-king of the rulers, was used. The king was seen not only as a ruler but also as a superhuman, godlike person. Again, the king was considered a bodhisattva, one who reached Nirvana. As the person who attained Nirvana, the king himself had a lofty duty to bring the people under his rule to nirvana. Therefore, the first Malay kings who converted to Islam used the title of *zill Allah fi al-ʿalam,* which means the shadow of Allah on earth. This perspective was very effective in the attitude of the Malay society towards the sultans (Burhanudin, 2017: 219-220).

The relationship of the Malay rulers with the people has been a topic of discussion for both pre-colonial and post-colonial western scholars. The first Western travellers and colonial officials to reach the region used the term "feudalism", comparing the relationship of the Malay sultans with their subjects in medieval Europe. While using the term feudalism, Western scholars divided society into two parts: the ruling class and the peasantry. Some see this approach of Western writers as an orientalist approach and criticize it. However, both Western writers and local scholars on Malay history and sociology agree that the ruling class dominates the people and that the people have no free space (Kheng, 1994: 246).

In the Muslim Malay state tradition, the sultan or raja received his authority to rule from the power called "*daulat",* which belonged only to him**.** The expression "*daulat"* here represents a kind of divine power that gives the sultan the authority to rule the state alone. Thanks to this "*daulat"* authority given to the Sultan, he could not be limited or questioned by any other person or institution (Bradley, 2010: 45).

Although some historians claim that Islam brought the belief of "respect for the just sultan and rebellion against the unjust" instead of the unquestioning obedience to the sultan in Malay culture, historical experience and sources show that the sultans continued their dominance over the people due to the sultans' desire to preserve their power (Mutalib, 1990: 12). The people,

on the other hand, regarded this dependence on the sultans as a tradition, saw themselves as the king's slave (hamba or patik) and accepted this obedience as a requirement of their culture. The king-centred society structure in the Malays sometimes has been an element that prevented the disappearance of sultanates. Because the sultan, who was exposed to any attack, could leave the city with his subjects, and settle in another place. The Malays expressed this situation with the sentence "*dimana raja, disitu kerajaan*", meaning "where the sultan is, there is the state" (Mutalib, 2000: 8,12).

According to Swettenham, in 1874, people in the Malay Peninsula consisted of the ruling class and the *rakyat*, and the *rakyat*, only did what the rulers told them (Swettenham, 1948: 141-142). According to Mutalib, Sultans' application of Islamic Sharia throughout the Malay sultanates, Islamic Sharia was applied symbolically or selectively. No administrative system applied the same laws to the subjects as the sultans and rulers, who constituted the highest part of the political hierarchy. The rulers were above the law; the Quran and other Islamic principles were there to support their rule (Mutalib, 2000: 19).

The Malay sultans were powerful and had absolute power over the people before the colonial states settled in the area. Malay sultans suffered a great loss of control with British domination. Sultans, who had no political power, continued only as representatives of Malay culture and Islam (Mutalib, 2000: 42).

### 1.2.2. Orang Kaya-Besar or Elites

*Orang besar*, which means "great, honorable person" in Malay, and *orang kaya*, which means "rich person", represent the elite class that holds the administration and economy in Malay sultanates. *Orang besar* is the name given to people who have blood ties with the sultan, and Orang kaya is the name given to people who usually represent the elite in charge of the state. In addition, people from *orang besar* were given titles such as "tuan", "tengku", "nik",

"wan", and people from orang kaya were given titles such as "dato", "dato seri" (Bemba, 2009: 19). The sultanates in and around the Malay Peninsula gained a high income from trade thanks to the port cities. This situation enabled the rise of the orang kaya (Reid, 1980: 248). Another reason why people working in the state administration also engaged in trade was that they did not receive a permanent salary from the state.

### 1.2.3. People or Merdeka

Although the Malay people were not exposed to the caste system as in India, there was still a class division between the people and the rulers. The common people and enslaved people could in no way mingle with the nobility. Classroom standards were strictly maintained. However, those commoners who were able to do great things could qualify for entry into the elite (Osman, 2000: XXXIII). The people engaged in agriculture were obliged to pay taxes from the product they obtained to the person they depended on and the sultan. In addition, local administrators had the authority to make the people do their work other than agriculture. There were works called Kera (Kerah) which the people had to do other than agriculture and daily work by the raja or local administrator. Construction works such as the construction of roads and bridges were the works of the people in cooperation, such as the repair of ships. Thus, the people generally lived in lower occupations such as agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. Due to the inability of the local people to engage in trade, sometimes foreigners could dominate the trade of the sultanates. This group, called the *free rakyat*, was generally composed of Chinese, Arabs, and Indians (Carolina, 2001: 12).

### 1.2.4. Slaves or Orang Hamba

Throughout Southeast Asia, slavery continued for centuries as an important part of both trade and social life. Three factors come to the forefront of the prevalence of slavery. The first factor; The existence of kingdoms depended on their slaves, as the tradition of

ruling people rather than the land represented power. The second factor; In Southeast Asia, where trade was very concentrated, slaves were a commodity rather than the cash that could be used at any time. Third, due to the lack of strong laws protecting merchants, merchants saw enslaved people as a safeguard that protected them.

In the port cities of the Malay Peninsula, where trade was intense, enslaved people were employed as porters. According to the information given by the sources, it was a good source of income for the enslavers as the prices of the enslaved people working in the port cities were quite high. Thus, the enslaved person was considered a valuable investment in many aspects (Reid, 1988: 130-131). Slavery in Malay society decreased and disappeared from the middle of the 19th century with the pressures of the British.

During the British colonial period, the Malay sultans lost their power in the administration and became the protectors of only the religion of Islam and Malay culture. This situation continued in this way until independence. With its independence, Malaysia adopted the parliamentary democracy model and handed over the administration of the country to the parliament. The sultans in the country, on the other hand, continued to remain as the head of the province and the protector of the religion of Islam in the provinces where they were located. Thus, the administration in the states where the sultans such as Kedah, Perak and Pahang are inherited. The governors of states such as Penang, Malacca, Sabah and Sarawak are appointed by the government (Brown, Siti Hawa, Wan Manan, 2004: 4).

### 1.3. HOW AND WHY DID ISLAMIZATION POLICIES START?

Islamization policies in Malaysia emerged after independence. However, there are two main reasons for the Malay administrators' tendency to Islamization policies. The first reason is the political and economic power struggle between Malay and Chinese-Indian immigrants whose status is not fully determined in the country. As mentioned before, the Chinese and Indians, who were brought temporarily to work in the mines, became a social and economic part of the country in the intervening period. However, sometimes there could be a struggle between the Malays and other races. For example, the conflict between the Malays and the Chinese in 1969 resulted in 177 deaths (Neo, 2011: 9-10).

Non-Muslims living as a minority in Malaysia undoubtedly constitute one of the main dynamics of the idea of political Islam in Malay society. The role of non-Muslims in Malay Muslims to create their own identity and see Islam as an indispensable part of this identity is substantial (Özay, 2013:108). On the other hand, the Chinese and Indians, who could not integrate into the Malay culture and Islam, are still educated in the schools they have established rather than the public schools. In addition, giving priority to the Malays in public leads other races to the private sector. Thus, struggle among Malay and other races has made Malays see Islam as an identity that they redefine themselves against another, rather than just a religion, from post-independence to the present day.

The second motivation that led the Malays to Islamization was the political strife among the rulers. UMNO, the country's most important and longest-standing political movement, is a party founded by liberal rulers who were educated in a western style. Opposite UMNO was PAS, founded by people who had studied at universities such as *al Azhar University* and were influenced by the thought movements in the Islamic world, especially the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt. The political struggle between these two parties has been the main motivation for the institutionalization of Islam in the country since its independence (Hashim and Hasan, 2018: 4).

The struggle between the two parties gained a new dimension in the 1970s. During that time, Islamic education to the public by university students and non-governmental organizations in the Malay peninsula gained momentum. ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia), the Malaysian Youth Movement, founded in 1971 by university students based on the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, has become one of the important symbols of political Islam in Malay society. The activities of ABIM among university students and its influence worried the liberal leaders, especially UMNO (Abbott, Jason P.; Sophie Gregorios Pippasb, 2000: 139).

ABIM, which spread rapidly shortly after its establishment, appealed to almost 60 per cent of university students in Malaysia in the early 1970s (Abbott, Jason P.; Sophie Gregorios-Pippasb, 2000:138). The Palestinian issue, which escalated in the 1970s, the Arab-Israeli war and the oil crisis also contributed to this process. By the 1980s, a new era started for UMNO and PAS in Malaysia. Mahathir Mohammed, who became the head of UMNO in this period, began to look for new solutions for economic development in the country; on the other hand, he was trying to break the public support of the opposition party, PAS.

Mahathir Mohammed, who was seen as a political genius, persuaded Anwar Ibrahim, who was then the leader of ABIM, to join UMNO's ranks. With Enver İbrahim joining the ranks of UMNO, political Islam started to take place among the policies of UMNO. However, UMNO would remain a secular party in general (Ufen, 2009: 321). The 1980s started a new era in terms of Islamization. In this period, especially the change made in education is important for the institutionalization of Islam in the country and its spread to the public. The difference in the secondary education curriculum, the establishment of the International

Islamic University and the increase in faculties providing Islamic education started a new era in terms of the institutionalization of Islam in Malay society.

Before the 1980s, western-style education was given in public schools in Malaysia, and religious subjects were left to classical madrasas. To eliminate this dilemma in education, the country had to make changes in education. In this context, scholars like Seyid Naqibu'l-Attas and Abdulhamid Ebu Suleyman contributed significantly to this process by pioneering the Islamization of knowledge (Ahmed, 2014: 48). Enver İbrahim's participation in UMNO accelerated the nationalization process of the Islamization policy. The reforms in education in the 1980s were followed by the reforms in the public sector in the 1990s. Among these reforms, regulations such as Islamic insurance and Islamic banking were put into practice (Osman, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman; Saleena Saleem, 2016: 2).

Another issue that Malay politicians discuss is the application of sharia rules. During the colonial period and after independence, judicial proceedings were carried out by civil courts established by the British. From its inception, PAS advocated the implementation of sharia courts instead of civil courts. This demand of the PAS party was met with a reaction from some circles in Malaysia, where half of the population is non-Muslim. In 1992, Mahathir Mohammed stated that he would not block the PAS Islam party's decision to implement sharia in Kelantan and Terengganu provinces. Although these two states took this decision later, they did not implement it (Poulin, 1993: 224).

Today, Malaysia has a judicial system in which civil courts and sharia courts are conducted together, although the debates on sharia law and the implementation of modern law continue. While the Sharia courts handle matters such as family, divorce and inheritance of Muslims, Muslims can also apply to civil courts for these issues. Cases of non-Muslims are handled by civil courts (Poulin, 1993: 229-230).

## 1.4. WHAT IS BUMIPUTERA AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE MALAYSIAN ECONOMY?

To understand the economic policies of Malaysia, it is necessary to understand the *Bumiputera* policy that has been implemented since the 1970s. The Malaysian government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 to support the Malays who were left behind in terms of economy during the British colonial period. This law, called the *bumiputera* policy, which means "the original owners of the land" in Malay, provided socio-economic privileges to Malays and some indigenous groups (Ibrahim, 2021). The *Bumiputera* law included articles such as providing economic support to Malay companies, granting special scholarships to Malay students, and establishing private universities for them.

Since its adoption, the Bumiputera policy has made great socio-economic gains for the Malays. It enabled the emergence of an elite class of Malay descent as an alternative to the Chinese, who had been in control of the country's trade since the colonial period. Although the Bumiputera law closed the economic gap between Malays, Chinese and Indians, it deepened the discrimination between them. However, this law, which is still in effect today, provides important privileges to citizens of Malay origin while causing Chinese and Indian citizens in the country to be perceived as second-class citizens. This situation, also described as Malay supremacy, constitutes one of the discussion issues about the importance of Malaysian domestic politics.

In the post-independence period, the Malay elites built their nation-state understanding on Malay supremacy and did not follow a policy toward integrating the Chinese and Indians, who comprise almost half of the country's population. This situation has led to the deepening of social segregation after independence. However, Mahathir Muhammed, who became the prime minister of Malaysia in 1981 and served as Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister, tried to put forward a new economic model while continuing his Bumiputera policy. The "2020 vision" introduced

by Mahathir Muhammed in 1991 aimed to make Malaysia one of the developed countries by 2020. Mahathir also used the concept of United Malaysia (Bangsa Malaysia), which aims to gather Malay, Chinese and Indian people under the same roof instead of Bumiputera, which causes ethnic struggle in Malaysia (Ishak, 2002: 99). Mahathir's Bangsa Malaysia policy reduced social struggle in Malaysia, but it never ended. The federation system in Malaysia and the policies of the opposition party, the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), have been the biggest obstacle for *Bangsa Malaysia*. In fact, PAS claims that the strengthening of the Chinese and Indians will harm the Islamic structure of Malaysia.

*Bangsa Malaysia* policy continues today with the rhetoric *Keluarga Malaysia,* which means "Malaysian Family". However, Ethnic struggle continues to some extent, although not as much as in the 1980s.

### 1.5. HOW CAN MALAYSIAN CULTURE BE DEFINED?

To understand the culture of Malaysia, it is necessary to consider the Malays, Chinese and Indians, who are the peoples that make up Malaysia, separately. Although the dominant culture in Malaysia is the Malay culture, it is impossible to understand Malaysia without explaining the Chinese and Indian cultures.

The unwritten rules that determine the customs and traditions of the Malay world are called *Adat Melayu*. Adat also determines the relationship between the people and the rulers, together with the tawhid and moral rules of the religion of Islam (Carolina, 2001: 13). Islam greatly influences the shaping of Malay customs and traditions. Perceptions of space, marriage, family, kinship, basic economic exchanges, and basic beliefs have been shaped greatly by Islam. Thanks to this change that Islam brought about in Malay society and the new *adat* culture it introduced, "being Malay" and "being Muslim" is almost the same meaning (Kling, 2000: 61).

Malays follow the sect of Imam Shafii and are very careful about performing the basic principles of Islam, such as prayer, zakat, pilgrimage and fasting. The prayer is performed either in small mosques called surau built in small settlements or large mosques built for Friday prayers. The Malay language is another element that unites the Malays and separates them from other groups in the country. The Malay language, which the Malays define as *Bahasa Melayu*, belongs to the Austronesian language group and is the official language of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Brunei Sultanate with different dialects.

The Chinese, who form the second ethnic group in Malaysia, have existed in the Malay Peninsula and Borneo Sultanate (Sabah, Sarawak) since the 15th century. The presence of the Chinese in Malaya has increased since the 17th century due to the political instability in China (Tarmizi, 2019: 16). However, the influx of Chinese immigrants to Malaya rose even more from the middle of the 19th century. First, the civil wars in China and the new tin

mines discovered in Malaya increased the migration of Chinese to today's Malaysia. During British rule (1874-1957), as the number of Chinese immigrants in Malaysia increased, the British gave the Chinese the freedom to trade, which made the Chinese wealthy.

In 1957, when Malaysia gained independence, the proportion of the Chinese population in the country was 37 per cent, but today this rate has decreased to 22.4 per cent. One of the important reasons for the decrease in the Chinese population rate was Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965. Although the Chinese in Malaysia live in almost all parts of the country, they mostly live in Penang, Malacca, Perak, Selangor and Johor states (Ibrahim and Zainab, 2014: 925). The Chinese maintain their cultural presence in Malaysia as much as they are influential in trade and politics. The Chinese, who can provide education in their own language, transfer both their language and culture to the next generations with the schools they have established throughout Malaysia. Indians occupy the third place in the country after the Malay and Chinese populations. The vast majority of Indians in Malaysia were brought during British rule (1874-1957). Indians comprise 6.8 per cent of Malaysia's total population and are of the Hindu faith. In addition, a large part of the Indian population speaks the Tamil language (Ling and Ling, 2016: 46). Majority of the Indian population in Malaysia lives in the states of Selangor, Perak and Johor. The Indians, like the Chinese, make great efforts to preserve their own culture. Indians are an indispensable element of Malaysian cuisine as they contribute to the cultural richness of Malaysia. In addition, temples such as Batu Caves in Selangor are among the most visited places by tourists in the country.

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