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UHE3182 MALAYSIAN STUDIES

CHAPTER 10 RELIGION AND BELIEF

by

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RELIGION AND BELIEF IN MALAYSIA



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COURSE OBJECTIVE

- Know the Islam as official religion of Malaysia
- Explain the other religion in Malaysia
- Discuss the religious freedom



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Introduction

- Malaysia is a multiracial country. Islam is constitutionally the country's official religion, with the freedom to practise other religions.
- The Shariah Law in Malaysia is only applicable to Muslims and is used to resolve conflicts relating to creed and family matters.
- Malaysian Muslims generally follow the Shafi'e school of thought.



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The Arrival of Islam in Malaysia

- Malaysia was a prime centre of trade and commerce since the 10th century.
- It is believed that Islam first arrived in Malaysia sometime between the 13th and the 14th century CE, via Arab and Indian-Muslim traders. At this time, the religion was embraced by only a select few.
- Islam became widespread in the region with the arrival and conversion of Parameswara, a Hindu prince and Singapore's last king, who had established the Sultanate of Melaka in the 15th century CE.
- During its heyday in the 15th century CE, Melaka became a renowned hub of Islamic studies. Islam continued to flourish in the peninsula during the 15th and the 16th century CE, which greatly influenced the Malay lifestyle and culture as can be seen until today.



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- The earliest evidence of the arrival of Islam in Malaysia was discovered in Terengganu, in the form of an ancient inscribed stone locally referred to as 'Batu Bersurat'. Dated 1303 CE, the stone tablet with Jawi (Romanised Arabic) script on it stands as proof that Islam had arrived in the east coast region of the peninsula long before Parameswara embraced Islam.
- Other evidence of the arrival of Islam in Malaysia include a 15th-century tomb and three inscribed pillars in Pengkalan Kempas, Negeri Sembilan, as well as intricately carved grave markers known locally as 'Batu Aceh', which can be found in most states in the peninsula. The stones' shapes and inscriptions provide important clues to the early history of Islam in the country.

(<http://www.itc.gov.my/tourists/discover-the-muslim-friendly-malaysia/islam-in-malaysia/>)



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Islam in Malaysian Constitution

- the Constitution provides that Islam is the religion of the country but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony (Article 3).
- The constitution grants freedom of religion. Freedom of religion is enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution.
- Article 11 provides that every person has the right to profess and to practice his or her religion and (subject to applicable laws restricting the propagation of other religions to Muslims) to propagate it.
- The king is generally seen as the defender of the faith in the country.



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ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

- Hari Raya Aidilfitri (Eid ul-Fitr) is an important festival celebrated by Malaysian Muslims.
- Muslim women generally wear the tudung (hijab or headscarf) over their heads. However, Malay women not wearing any headgear are not reprimanded or penalised.



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Syariah COURTS

- Parallel to the civil courts, there are Sharia courts which conduct legal matters related to Muslim family sphere. Legal issues like Muslim divorce and Muslim apostasy are conducted in the Syariah Courts. However, there are cases whereby apostasy cases are tried in the Federal Courts. Non-Muslims are not bound by Shariah.



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Other Religions

- Buddhism
- Kristian
- Hindu
- Singh



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Group Discussion

- Freedom of religion in your country (Arabic country)
- Malay belief
- Chinese belief
- Indian belief



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References

- Hasnah Hussiin, Mardiana Nordin, Malaysian Studies, 2013, Oxford Press Sdn. Bhd.



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