

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM IN MALAYSIA, ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHINESE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT:

In this article, the author examines the role of the Huaqiao on Malaysian society. The Chinese Huaqiao diaspora is the largest in the world. Its representatives live in 154 countries around the world.

Keywords: Huaqiao, diaspora, migration, Chinese phenomenon, policy of multiculturalism.

INTRODUCTION:

The end of the twentieth century saw the internationalization of democratic processes and the formation of new independent states. All this has contributed to the development of different cultures, languages, customs, and ways of life and the practice of different religions. Ethno-cultural ties of peoples determine the main course of world history. That is why we are interested in experience of South-East Asia on the example of Malaysia, and first of all, let us get acquainted with its geography.

MAIN BODY:

Malaysia is a state in South East Asia, consisting of two parts, divided by South China Sea: West Malaysia (traditional name Malaya) occupies the southern extremity of Malacca peninsular with adjacent islands, borders with Thailand in the north, also has maritime borders with Singapore and Indonesia.

East Malaysia (traditional name Sabah and Sarawak) occupies the northern part of the island of Kalimantan with adjacent islands,

borders Brunei to the north and Indonesia to the south, and also has a maritime border with the Philippines [1].

The geographical location of the country has facilitated a process whereby one ethnic group mixes with other ethnic groups. And also being at the centre of the most important trade routes, its cultural links with many nations have had a great influence on religious and cultural life, creating a distinctive way of life. In Malaysia, there are many examples of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the representatives of different nations and religions, their tolerance, peacefulness, commonwealth. At present, the population of Malaysia consists of over 180 ethnic groups, with the ethno-confessional structure of Malaysia (Malays are 48 per cent of the population, Chinese are 32 per cent, and Indians are 8.5 per cent)". "More than half of the population (52%) practise Islam. Other religions practiced in Malaysia include Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity and Sikhism. In addition, shamanism is practiced in East Malaysia" [2]. This diversity in beliefs has many supporters, and each side adheres to its own traditions, culturally passing them on to the next generation. In Malaysia's multi-ethnic society, one can see the connection between the Islamic, Christian and Buddhist religious communities. All the aforementioned representatives of various nations and nationalities live in peace and harmony. It is worth mentioning that the national policy of Malaysia is based on humanism and universal values. The Government of Malaysia attaches

particular importance to issues of religious tolerance. The legal basis for this policy has been enshrined in the Constitution of Malaysia. Malaysia's national policy in this area is based on inter alia, the following principles:

First, article 3 (para 1) of the Constitution of Malaysia [3], guarantees the freedom of religion, Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, and other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation, thus, guaranteeing the freedom of religion in the country.

Secondly, article 8 (para 1 and 2) of the Constitution of Malaysia [3] states that all citizens are equal before the law and enjoy equal protection of the law, as well as the protection of citizens from religious discrimination, which proves the existence of freedom of conscience and the absence of coercion in determining a citizen's attitude towards religion.

Thirdly, article 12 (para 3) of the Constitution of Malaysia [3] guarantees the non-interference in the religious practices of non-Muslim communities. Thus, it guarantees its citizens the protection of the state.

Based on the above paragraphs of the constitutional provision, all rights and freedoms apply equally to the members of all nations and nationalities, without exception.

An international and multi-faith society promotes a spirit of mutual respect and inter-ethnic tolerance in Malaysia.

According to a study by The Institute for Economics & Peace [6], Malaysia is considered to be a reasonably safe country in terms of the risk of terrorist acts occurring there, ranking it 91st in terms of the risk of terrorist threat. This is noteworthy as Malaysia's closest neighbours with whom it shares a border (Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia) are ranked 8th, 10th and 29th respectively [5].

The policy of multiculturalism, aimed at preserving and promoting cultural differences

in a given country and in the world as a whole, is one of the most important aspects of a modern multicultural society. Studying the specifics of culture and tolerance in societies with different historical traditions is one of the most important conditions for understanding the reason for the formation of different multicultural models. The specific features of multicultural models practised in a number of countries in the East have not been sufficiently highlighted in the scientific literature. Determining the impact of multicultural practices of Eastern countries in the modern world will help to better shape the main directions of development and perspectives of multiculturalism policy. Multiculturalism as an integral part of domestic policy ensures the existence of ethnic, racial, religious and cultural diversity and their values within a country. The policy of multiculturalism supports the development of multifaceted relations with countries that belong to different civilizations [6].

Malaysia, thanks to its progressive economic development, has now emerged as an important player in the international economic and politico-military arena.

The Chinese phenomenon in Southeast Asia is a well-known phenomenon that has attracted the attention of researchers. It is most prominent in Malaysia and Singapore.

These two countries are heavily influenced economically by the activities of Chinese natives, who have been living there for generations. Malaysia's political conditions put the Chinese diaspora in a rather difficult position and force them to take active steps in the economy. In Singapore, by contrast, political power is concentrated in the hands of Chinese natives, but the economic activity of the Huaqiao is no less strong there [7].

China, on the other hand, is seen by many analysts as a new superpower with

political interests and influence that extend far beyond its own borders.

As China's power grows, its foreign policy priorities are also changing, with Malaysia continuing to occupy a special place in its politics. The large Chinese diaspora (Huaqiao) living in Malaysia has a significant influence on the development of Sino-Malaysian relations in the economic and political fields and on promoting the Chinese culture and language in Malaysian society. Foreign Chinese in Malaysia are an integral part of the country's multi-ethnic society, but the predominance of ethnic identity, national language and distinctive Huaqiao culture in the Huaqiao environment today to a great extent complicates the already complicated process of forming a united Malaysian nation [8].

The main flow of emigrants from China to the Malacca Peninsula area occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, the English colonial authorities were actively developing the plantation economy, which also attracted workers from India, caused some urban growth and contributed to attracting an emigrant flow from China. This period, it may be recalled, was marked by great social upheaval in China and the country's economic crisis. The three main groups of Chinese who now constitute the Chinese diaspora in Malaysia are from the Chinese regions of Fujian, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. There has been no fusion of the huaqiao with the local population, and even today, with a common state language, the process is minimal. But neither has there been a die-off of a cultural tradition seemingly closed within itself. Now the descendants in the fourth, fifth generation still, feel their inseparable connection with the Chinese culture [7].

Moreover, the Chinese in the diaspora living in Malaysia are predominantly family and clan oriented. Within their community the Huaqiao communicate exclusively in their own

dialect of the Chinese language, and only when communicating with people from other Chinese provinces do they switch to the common Chinese language, which they also know at a very high level. At the same time the Malay language, which is a state language, is practically not used for communication within the Diaspora [8].

The leaders of various associations of overseas Chinese in Malaysia also play a significant role in expanding the political influence of the Malaysian Huaqiao. The Chinese Press Society, the Confederation of Chinese Associations in Sarawak state, the Federation of Overseas Chinese from Hainan, the Alumni Independent School Association of the Malaysian Chinese, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kuala Lumpur (Selangor state), etc. successfully operate in the country [9]. In particular, based on the Alumni School, alumni of overseas Chinese who graduated from local universities create a favorable socio-cultural environment for fellow freshmen, as well as facilitate the expedited passage of procedures with documents and other immigration formalities [10].

CONCLUSION:

In summary, the social and political stability achieved in Malaysia is the result of wise policies aimed at ensuring inter-ethnic peace and civil harmony in the country.

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