RELATION BETWEEN ISLAM AND MALAYSIAN POLITICS

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Abstract

Currently, Islam has developed rapidly and become a multicultural belief, a religious community covering many cultures around the world, including Malaysia. Islam was introduced into Malaysia around the 15th century and played an important role in political and cultural life here. During its seven centuries of ups and downs, Islam has had a great influence on spiritual and material life and become an indispensable element in Malaysian culture.

However, the dogmas of Islam, which actually encourage believers to be more active and try to increase their power, are propagated as a religion that goes against the development of history, associated with poverty and backwardness. Islam was ethnicized and politicized at the same time. In that context, in order to build an independent, prosperous country with a unified culture, Malaysia had to solve problems related to its ethnicity and religion. Especially in the current context, when Islam is the most prominent and complex issue in the region and the world, associated with all aspects of the political life of many countries, and Malaysia is not an exception.

Keywords*: Malaysia, Islam, politics, religion.*

1. Introduction

Today, the relation between religion and politics is considered a central issue in the history of modern Islam. It can be said that, there is no separation between religion and government in Muslim countries in general or Malaysia in particular and it is difficult to distinguish between canon law and national law.

As an official religion, Islam has become the way of life of the Malaysian Muslim community, becoming a determining factor in ethnic and national cultural identity. Thus, Islam not only changes the external structure of society but also changes the internal structure, that is, its spiritual value. Malaysians follow Islam, eat foods that are allowed by Islam, live according to the rhythms of Islam, dress in the style of Muslims and perform Islamic rituals. Islam has truly raised the national consciousness of Malaysians and created a new framework for their national identity.

This topic will contribute to clarify the process of Islam's introduction to Malaysia; The relationship between religious power and political power; The influence of Islam in Malaysian political life.

Some sources the author has used:

Islam in Malaysia (Pham Thi Vinh): Presents an overview of "Islam in Malaysia" and its influence on all social, cultural and political spheres of Malaysia.

Federation of Malaysia, cultural history and modern issues (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies): Islam in Malaysia was introduced to the basic features, the process of Islam infiltrating and affecting aspects such as culture and society. However, it has not gone deeper into the cultural and social aspects. It shows the influence of Islam on all aspects of Malaysia.

Through the above works, it shows that the issue of "Relation between Islam and Malaysian politics" has been studied from many different angles, but most of these works are still individual and not comprehensive.

In the current era, along with the general development of the world in general and Malaysia in particular, Islam is constantly changing and increasing its influence on countries around the world. But how much influence does Islam have on Malaysian politics? These are issues that need to be studied and clarified.

With that in mind, the author chooses the topic "Relation between Islam and Malaysian politics" to contribute to a better understanding of Islam and its effects on politics in Malaysia. It is a source of material of scientific and practical significance.

2. Methods

To solve the scientific problems posed by the topic, the author has used:

Historical method: to see the overall development of Islam in specific historical periods as well as its influence on Malaysia in general.

Logical method: to consider the relevant facts in the dialectical relationship of the development process, the process of historical perception, thereby finding out related issues.

3. Results

3.1. The introduction of Islam into Malaysia

Since the 9th century, Arab Muslim merchants have already known the land of Southeast Asia. Old Malaysian history mentioned merchant ships to the coasts of Sumatra, Riau Lingga and Pulau Tioman, but there was no record of organized trade there until the middle of the 10th century. Andaya claimed that: "The first evidence about the activities of Islam in Southeast Asia is the report of Marco Polo in 1292. Marco Polo's report is about the city of Perlak (or Ferlec) that followed Islam, in Marco Polo's travel diary, he recounted as follows: Ferlec was a kingdom located so far south of the South China Sea, the Sarrasins (Islam) came here so often that they converted the natives to believe in Muhammad, just only in the city and the people living in mountainous areas live primitive lives, cannibalize and worship natural spirits. (Marco Polo, 2008, p.255)

By the 13th century, an important event for global trade took place in the world: Mongolia, a newly emerging empire in Southeast Asia, destroyed the Arab Empire (1258),

occupied Asia, part of Europe, and cut off the way to trade spices from East to West [66] of Muslim Arab merchants. To save the situation, a new road was opened by the Indians, not the Arabs. This road begins in the East through India, the Strait of Aden, the Red Sea, the port of Alexandria and goes north. Because the king of Egypt opened the port of Alexandria, large ports such as Cambay, Surat and Diu in the Gujerat region (India) flourished. In addition, Europe in this period prospered, the demand for goods and the expanding market made Gujerat occupy a prominent position in the market of flavorings.

In the 13th - 15th centuries, Muslim merchants came to the Malaya archipelago - Indonesia to trade, settle, and marry natives, creating very favorable conditions for Muslim monks to invade into this land for evangelizing. The native aristocracy, long coveted for Muslim wealth, gladly welcomed, befriended and adopted their religion. However, not only merchants in Gujerat, but also merchants in Malabar, Coromandel coast, Bengal... also contributed to spreading Islam into island Southeast Asia. As a result, in the 13th - 15th centuries, some countries in Southeast Asia such as Pasai (Indonesia) became Muslim countries. Malaysia was then converted later, in the XIV - XV [67] centuries. In the early 15th century, the king of Melaka, Parameswara (1403-1424), converted to Islam, taking the Islamic name Iskandar Shah. From here, Melaka was not only the center of international trade but also the largest center of religious propagation at that time. Following Melaka's example, other states in the north Demak, Terengganu, Kelantan… through marriage and trade, gradually established good relations with Melaka. From businesses, Islam from Melaka went to Terengganu, Pattani, Kelantan, Borneo. The Melaka Sultans, who saw Islam as a sharp weapon to expand their territory and spread their religion, vowed to help the minor states to escape the Majapahit rule on the condition that they have to follow Melaka's Islam. Meanwhile, the title "Sultan" strongly attracted the aristocracy of small states to convert to Islam, creating favorable conditions for Islam to flourish. During more than a century from 1403 until the Portuguese invasion (1511), Melaka was a wealthy country, a dynamic international trading center and the largest Islamic center in Southeast Asia and since here, Islam spread to most of Western Malaysia and had a profound influence on the spiritual and social life of Malaysia.

After infiltrating Melayu, Islam quickly developed and occupied an important position in Malaysia, which was understandable, because the process of Islamization here had many advantages:

First, Islam came to Malaysia at a time when the Majapahit Hindu empire was in crisis and disintegration. At this time, trade in Southeast Asia was caught up in the whirlpool

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[66] *The route that Arab Muslim merchants opened before the 13th century was from the East through the Persian Gulf, the Levantine coast and then to Northern Europe, which was very busy at that time.*
[67] *It is written that, before Parameswara followed Islam, there was an earlier country in Malaysia that followed Islam, typically Kedah. According to the Kedah Chronicle, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the ninth king of Kedah, Ong Mahawangsa, converted to Islam and changed his name to Mudzaffar Shah I (1136-1179). Since then, there have been 27 Muslim kings ruling Kedah.*

of the international market vortex; The caste system of Hinduism is outdated, not suitable for the development needs of the market and society. The crisis of Hindu ideology has created an emptiness of belief, a big gap for Islam to enter and develop. Islam with the idea of freedom and equality, helps to liberate people from the harsh concepts of Hinduism and towards a large Muslim community.

Second, in Southeast Asia, at that time, there was an economic shift. From an early subsistence agrarian economy, it has now become an important center for spice trade, especially for developing Europe. Through the trade routes, Islam has gradually penetrated into Malaysia. The principles of equality and liberality of Islam are suitable for the people and aristocrats, so they have been warmly welcomed by them. In that context, Islam became the flag of the small states fighting against the Majapahit empire and gaining independence, typically Melaka. From a poor fishing village, Melaka has gradually risen to a powerful military country with great economic potential. It was the success of Melaka that encouraged the Majapahit countries to convert to Islam and participate in the international market.

Third, Islam came to Southeast Asia in peace, so it was suitable for local people's psychology, helping them easily integrate into this new religion. Tolerance and good adaptation to local beliefs reduced envy and hatred among indigenous people, making them easier to accept the new religion. In the Malaysian kingdoms, the Kings played an important role in spreading Islam in Malaysia. In Sejarah Melayu, the image of the king is considered the center of the kingdom, the subject for all subjects to be loyal and obedient. Without a king there would be no kingdom. If the king follows Islam, all the people will follow. A specific example in Melaka is that "the king, after converting to Islam, ordered his officials and subjects in Melaka, whether high or low, to become Muslims." (Milner, 1985, p.27). And another factor that also facilitates Islam to spread quickly to Southeast Asia is mysticism (Sufi). Many scholars believe that, when coming to India, Islam absorbed and transformed it into a feature of regional culture. When coming to Malaysia, Islam has a mixture of mystical elements that penetrate strongly into Malaysian residents while they are still heavily superstitious.

Fourth, the use of the Malay language made Islam spread faster on the peninsula. Before Islam came, this language was widely used by residents in communication and trade in the Malayu archipelago - Indonesia. When Islam entered, this language has become the national language widely used in political, economic and social aspects of Malaysia. And not only in Malaysia but in mainland Southeast Asia, Melayu is still spoken in religion in Southern Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

3.2. The Role of Islam in Malaysian Politics

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with about 1.57 billion followers, accounting for 23% of the total world population. In the current globalization context, Islam, like any other religion, is experiencing changes in political, cultural and social life to find ways to adapt to new circumstances.

3.2.1. Unity between religious power and political power in Malaysia

Today, the relationship between religion and politics is considered a central issue in the history of modern Islam. It can be said that in Muslim countries in general or in Malaysia in particular, there is no separation between religion and government and it is difficult to distinguish between canon law and national law. Islam has become the lifestyle of people in all aspects. Although it is an international religion and has a religious center in Mecca, Islam does not have a unified "church", no hierarchy. The religious power therefore does not lie within the "church" but is determined by the followers. Therefore, separating religion from politics is not easy in the case of Islam. Leaders are also missionaries, exerting government influence through mosques.

During the 1970s and 1980s, many political leaders were seen identifying their regime and themselves with Islam. The union between religious power and political power is one of the important features of the Muslim world. When looking at the future of Islam, many scholars believe that it is necessary to separate these two powers to break down all barriers and pave the way for Islam to develop. However, as Islam has spent thirteen centuries maintaining the unity of religious power and political power, the separation is a challenge for the Muslim world and the rest of the world, especially the West.

In Malaysia, the Malay Muslim community makes up half of the country's population, while the Chinese community doing business in cities accounts for about 30% of the population, the Christian community and semi-dwellers on the island of Borneo account for 11%, and Indian descent take up 9%. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country in which Islam has a special place in the political, cultural and social life of the country. The status of Islam is enhanced because it is the official religion of the Federation and also the religion of the indigenous Melayu community - the largest population, and throughout the history of Malaysia has always prevailed politically and legally. However, Malaysia not only has the Muslim Melayu community, but also has many communities following different religions and beliefs. Muslims account for over 60% of the population, but are concentrated mainly in the countryside, where the economy is weak and backward. Therefore, since independence, Malaysian leaders have been particularly interested in the ethnic community base of society and politics in a multi-ethnic country like Malaysia. They see the need to maintain the political dominance of the Muslim Melayu people, but also to find a way to reconcile with other communities to ensure political stability and security, to create a foundation for the country's construction and development. Therefore, they have classified ethnic and religious issues as "sensitive" issues that need proper attention.

In a multi-ethnic society, the complex relationship between ethnic groups is one of the factors that determine the political destiny of the country, especially when those ethnic community groups are aware that differences between them and other community groups is the difference in ethnicity, religion, language, socio-economic status...Malaysia is not an exception. Ethnic community groups in Malaysia have maintained their national character

and in fact have become opposing political forces, fighting for the economic, political and socio-cultural rights of the people. In this complex political context, the national spirit of the Melayu people has risen dramatically and has become a determining factor in the character of Malaysian politics.

Melayu nationalism appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Chinese and Indians flocked to Malaysia to do business and live, creating a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Malaysia. The policy "Divide and Rule" is intended to easily govern the natives at the same time. The complex context of Malaysian society is not only due to ethnic composition, but also due to differences in religion, customs, lifestyle, communication habits, rituals, and so on of different ethnic communities: Melayu, Chinese and Indian. The disparity in economic development level, socio-cultural difference and disparity in economic and political status of ethnic communities, in addition to the policy of "divide and rule" of colonialism made Malaysian communities not have the opportunity to stick together, but on the contrary, they also nurtured seeds of mutual hatred. Each ethnic community has its own parties that represent their community in the political arena. These are the Melayu Unified National Organization (UMNO) of the Melayu people, the Association of Overseas Chinese in Malaysia (MCA) of the Chinese and the Congress of Overseas Indians in Malaysia of the Indians. The conflict in community relations, especially between the two largest community groups, the Melayu community and the Chinese community, has in fact occupied all political, economic, and socio-cultural activities in the country.

Immigration has always been a major concern for the Melayu people. Nationalism against colonialism and the threat of immigrants, and especially the Chinese, made Melayu nationalism a silent but smoldering element in Malaysia society. During the colonial period, the national consciousness and the religious consciousness supported each other in the struggle to protect the national interests and also to protect Islam against the attack of colonialism and Christian thought. Islamists and Melayu nationalists stood side by side in the struggle for the country's independence. It was only in 1946, when the UMNO Party was born, that the relationship between Islam and the national consciousness of Melayu began to show signs of tension. The Melayu nationalists gained leadership in the struggle for national independence. They advocate building an independent, secular country while the Islamists advocate turning Malaysia into an Islamic country. However, in the race for political supremacy and the support of Melayu voters, nationalists still uphold the value of Islam and consider Islam as one of their top goals.

After Malaysia achieved political independence (1957), Islam did not occupy a prominent place in the political life of the country, although it was still respected by UMNO leaders. Islam is still used by UMNO to attract the votes of Melayu Islam in elections with the Islam PAS party. The Melayu nationalist leaders attempted to consolidate the traditional Melayu dominant position, seeking ways to elevate the Melayu to an equal and higher economic, cultural and educational status than other communities in the country. The

constitution recognizes the "special rights" of the Melayu people as indigenous communities. A series of economic policies of the government create conditions for the Melayu people to participate in industrial production, especially business, giving priority to Melayu children in vocational training and employment.

In educational policy, the Malaysian government also prioritizes education and scholarships for the Melayu people and other indigenous residents. The state is also interested in developing agriculture and rural areas, where the Melayu community resides and works. Melayu language became the national language, Islamic spiritual values were recognized as an important part of the national culture. However, the Muslim Melayu did not make up the majority in the country. Therefore, while pursuing the goal of nationalism, the Malaysian government cannot fail to respond to the demands of other communities. The Malaysian Constitution declares freedom of belief and prohibits racial discrimination on the basis of religion.

State economic policies encourage and facilitate the active participation of the Melayu people in business activities to enhance their economic status and achieve social justice, but not by sharing economic benefits of other ethnic groups (Chinese, Indian) for the Melayu people. Thus, UMNO somewhat softened its previous nationalist views.

At the end of the 60s of the twentieth century, the political situation in Malaysia was very complicated, especially the ethnic issue facing the risk of crisis. Relations between the Chinese and the Melayu are increasingly strained. Disagreements between the leaders of UMNO and the ruling Coalition, were long suppressed, now threaten to explode. Some Chinese politicians have raised their voices to claim the rights of the Chinese. Many people are still afraid that the Association of Malaysian Overseas Chinese is not able to protect their interests and put their hope in a number of newly established political parties, including the established Democratic Action Party (DAP). In 1966, the Malaysian People's Movement Party (Gerakan rakyat Malaysia) was born in April 1986, the Progressive People's Party (PPP) was established in Perak. In addition, there is the Labor Party (Parti Buruh) which has ties to the Communist Party of Malaya… These political parties also voiced opposition to UMNO's policy of prioritizing the Melayu people and demanding equality in education, whether the medium of instruction is Melayu, English, Chinese or Hindu. They proposed to build Malaysia on the principle that "Malaysia belongs to the Malaysian people". Meanwhile, the UMNO party faces many difficulties in running the country because of conflicts and divisions within the party's leadership. This division, together with the strained relations between ethnic groups in the country, led to the political crisis of 1969.

After the crisis, the Malaysian government took many measures to stabilize the situation and maintain the unity of the country, especially the policy of administrative reform and economic development. In July 1969, the National Unification Commission was established to draft the "National Ideology and New Socio-Economic Programs". The government sets out economic development strategies, including the New Economic Policy

(NEP) and political goals to ensure the rights of the Melayu people in the economic field, especially with employment opportunities and high positions in modern and developed economic sectors.

In parallel with the implementation of the New Economic Policy, the Malaysian Government carried out political reforms in the country, consolidated the dominant power of the UMNO leadership organization, implemented parliamentary democracy, and eliminated the imbalance. ethnic equality in some areas of national life and towards national unity through constitutional amendments, passed by the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) in February 1971.

The 1969 political crisis led to major changes in the Malaysian government's policy in favor of the Melayu community and created an opportunity for Islam to expand its influence. The Malaysian Government implemented the policy of "Islamizing" the country with two purposes.

First, strengthening the dominant position of the UMNO party, against the accusations of its strongest competitor, the PAS, attracted the political support of the Melayu Islam.

Second, strengthening the ability to manage Islamic activities in the country so that Malaysia, despite being a country with a large Muslim population, is still a progressive secular country. The government's pro-Islamic policy greatly enhanced the Muslim consciousness of the Melayu people and more than once they caused trouble for the Government in the implementation of its national policy.

Not only in domestic policy, in foreign policy, UMNO's government is increasingly leaning towards the Islamic world where in recent years Malaysia has been given a suitable place for itself, as an active member, wants to associate its name with the problems of the Islamic world *Islam* (Hussin Mitalib, 1980, tr.128). The Malaysian government has developed economic and commercial relations as well as political relations with Muslim countries, especially Arab countries. Economically, Malaysia reduces its exports to the West, increasing the proportion of trade with countries in the Middle East. Politically, Malaysia strongly supports the Palestine Liberation Front (PLO), affirming Malaysia's leading role in supporting Palestine against Israeli aggression.

Despite strongly supporting Muslim countries, the Government is also very sensitive to issues related to Malaysia's national interests and the country's situation. They fear the impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran on Malaysia's secular democracy. Malaysia's Islam-oriented foreign policy, in terms of religion, is understandable, because Malaysia's current Islamic movement cannot be separated from the development of world Islam, in other words, it is greatly influenced by major Islamic events in the world.

First, Islam in Malaysia was influenced by the international Islamic revival movement that began with the Arab-Israeli War in 197 and the oil crisis that followed, especially since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The above events contributed to

promoting the Islamic revival movement to develop as a political force in the international arena, strongly influencing the spirit of Islam in Malaysia.

Second, the spirit of Islamic revival in Malaysia was heated by the complicated internal situation of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, especially after the political crisis in 1969. The relationship between Islam and Melayu (Melayu people and Melayu identity) is a reciprocal relationship. When the national spirit of Melayu was high, Islam became the link of the Melayu community against other communities. Islam and its culture are considered by the Melayu people as their national cultural feature, the solution to all the problems of the country. Therefore, Islam was promoted day by day and occupied an increasingly important position in society. In the context of Malaysia in the 70s-80s, the Islamic revival movement, specifically the Dakwah movement, had a strong impact on the development of the political situation in the country. This movement put great pressure on the existence and development of Malaysian political parties, especially PAS and UMNO. This explains why from the 70s to the 80s, the Malaysian Government attached great importance to the role of Islam, introduced many favorable policies for Islam, and enhanced Islam's position in the political and social life in Malaysia. It was also Islam that made Malaysia change its foreign policy in favor of the Islamic world.

Looking back at the development history of Islam, we can affirm that Islam from its birth until now has always been political. According to the principles of Islam, if a place is the land of true Islam (Da-ul Islam), then the head of the religious community will have to be the one holding the secular power, especially political power. Therefore, we should not be surprised to see that Islam has a great influence on the political life of Malaysia, where Islam is the state religion, but the real power rests with a nationalist party (UMNO), while the head of the Muslim community is only the nominal head of the country with certain powers. The Muslim forces in Malaysia represented by the PAS party have always opposed the UMNO government for political supremacy, with the aim of turning Malaysia into an Islamic state in its own right, although ultimately PAS is also a nationalist party, protecting the interests of the ethnic Melayu Islam community. So in the context of Malaysia - a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country - Islam has always been a factor promoting more conflicts between ethnic communities. In fact, the Islamic revival movement strongly influenced the activities and political trends of the Malaysian Government, making Malaysia more and more inclined towards the Muslim world. In contrast, the domestic and foreign policies favoring Islam of the government of this country further enhanced the role and status of Islam, of the Melayu Islam community in all areas of Malaysian social life by the end of the 80s of the twentieth century.

For Malaysia, the role of Islam in politics and ideology was clearly shown. In the state power structure, the nine states of Malaysia, Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Kedah, Perak, Perlis, Selangor, Johor and Negeri Sembilan, were ruled by Muslim dynasties, headed by Sultanats. The states of Penang, Malacca, Sarawak and Sabah did not have any rulers, but

the Agongs still acted as heads of Islam in each district in the state.

3.2.2. Parties in Islamic politics in Malaysia

After gaining independence, the people of the Malay peninsula were grateful and believed in their policy for helping to break the domination of British colonial rule and lead Malaysia to independence. Due to the need to promote the country's development after independence, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) allied with other parties to form the United Malayan Front. The United Malaysian Front consists of 14 political parties: UMNO (United Malays National Organization), Democratic Action Party (Democratic Action Party), National Justice Party (Keadigan Party), party Islam Malaysia (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party), and the Spirit of 1946 Party. These Islamic parties represent the following wills and aspirations:

The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which represents the Malays, is the largest party. Traditionally, the party's President and First Vice-President serve as Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

The Democratic Action Party (DAP), whose members are mostly Chinese, has ties to Singapore's People's Action Party. It is the second largest opposition party, with representatives in parliament.

The Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which broke away from UMNO in 1951, is made up of radical Muslim Malays who now control the state of Kelantan.

The National Justice Party (KP) was founded by the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar in April 1999 to fight for Anwar's freedom.

Spirit of 1946, which broke away from UMNO in 1987 after a general election defeat, was led by Mr. Razaleigh, the former Finance Minister.

The UMNO party, the mainstay of the United Front of Malaysia, has ruled since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957.

In addition, in Malaysia, there are: Chinese Ma Association (MCA) - the second largest party, representing the Chinese bourgeoisie, the economic force in Malaysia; The Malayan Association (MIC) is the third largest party representing the Indian community in Malaysia.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

It can be said that Islam is increasingly occupying an important position in the spiritual life of the Melayu people and has a strong impact on domestic and foreign policy of the Malaysian government.

Islam in Malaysia has been influenced by the international Islamic revival movement that began with the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 and the oil crisis that followed, especially since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The above events contributed to promoting the Islamic revival movement to develop as a political force in the international arena, strongly

influencing the spirit of Islam in Malaysia.

Although not becoming the dominant religion in Malaysia, Islam has a special place in this country. Islam became the "way of life" for the Melayu and other Muslim indigenous populations.

The highlight of Malaysian political life is the relationship between Melayu nationalism and Islam represented by UMNO and PAS. Although they are fighting each other fiercely on the issue of Muslim Malaysia and the Melayu people, after all, the main purpose of these two parties is still to protect the interests of the Melayu people and the conflict between the two parties and the non-Melayu community is the key issue.

Ethnicity and religion are two sensitive issues, closely related to each other, especially when religion is considered a national cultural identity as in the case of Islam in Malaysia. By properly handling that complicated relationship, Malaysia avoids the development of Islamic separatism that countries in the region such as Thailand and the Philippines are facing.

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