

**MANAGEMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL  
DIFFERENCES IN ISLAMIC CIVILISATION: THE  
EXPERIENCES OF THE OTTOMAN SULTANATE  
(1839-1865) AND MALAYSIA (1957-1976)**

**BY**

**AHMED CAGRI INAN**

**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
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## ABSTRACT

With the advancement of transport and communication technology in the modern world, traditional distances and barriers have been virtually eliminated. In other words, the distance is no longer a major obstacle to transport and communication. As a result, different civilizations and cultures are increasingly intertwined. The European nation state model, which was extrapolated across the world in colonial and postcolonial governance, was premised on homogeneous national societies with unifying ethnic and linguistic features, but nowadays it is difficult to find a homogeneous society with a single civilization in the world; each society is composed of people of different civilizations. The fact that societies comprising different cultures and civilizations revealed the phenomenon of how these differences can be managed together. The Islamic civilization experienced an ethnically complex community structure much earlier than European states and modern civilization. The first Islamic state established by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in Medina consisted of individuals who had different ethnicities in terms of race, language, culture, and religion. Likewise, the states of the Umayyads, Abbasids and Al-Andulus had a community structure consisting of individuals with cosmopolitan social and cultural backgrounds, with notable coexistence between Arabs, Romans, Persians, Berbers, Jews, Vandals, Indians, Turks, Chinese, and others wherever these states encountered others. More recently, the Ottoman Sultanate developed the “Millet System” policy. The Ottoman Sultanate can be defined as the most developed state of its period in the management of social and cultural differences with this policy developed for the management of social and cultural differences in both the classical period and the modern (post-Tanzimat) period, which responded to the needs of the era at a certain level. In the same way, the population of Malaysia is composed of different individuals due to the migrations taken from the abroad during certain periods of history. With the independence of Malaysia in 1957, the policies developed for the management of the differences in the society became an important issue. The aim of this study is to examine the policies developed by the two states (the Ottoman Sultanate and Malaysia) in different periods and in different geographies to understand social and cultural differences and their management from an historical perspective.

## خلاصة البحث

أدى التقدم التقاني في مجال النقل والاتصالات إلى إزالة الحاجز التقليدية متمثلة في المسافات البعيدة، مما أدى إلى سرعة في اكتشاف الثقافات وتدخلها ببعضها في بعض، وقد حاول الغرب الاستعماري قديماً فرض نموذج الدولة الغربية على الدول التي استعمرها، ولا سيما الدول الإسلامية، فكانت خطته توحيد الجنسية واللغة لأبناء الدولة الواحدة، وهو ما لم يتحقق؛ إذ يصعب اليوم إيجاد دولة ليست مختلطة الأديان والأعراق، في حين أن الحضارة الإسلامية جَرَّبت البنية الاجتماعية المختلطة دينياً وعرقياً، ومنذ البداية كانت كذلك الدولة التي أنشأها النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في المدينة المنورة، وقد أسست للتعايش اللاحق في الدول الأموية والعباسية والأندلسية بما فيها من عناصر دينية وعرقية مختلفة، فكان المسلمون، واليهود، والنصارى - بطوائفهم - والعرب، والروم، والفرس، والترك، والهنود، والصين، والبربر؛ بحثيون جنباً إلى جنب، ولم تخرج عن هذه الحال الدولة العثمانية التي كانت في عصرها الذهبي أكبر دولة متقدمة في العالم من حيث إدارتها الفروقات الاجتماعية والثقافية وفق "النظام الملي" الذي طَرَّأَهُ، وكذلك اليوم مملكة ماليزيا التي يتَّأَلَّفُ مواطنوها من خليط ديني وعرقي إثر المحرّات التي انتلقت إليها على مِرْ العصور، وألزمت ماليزيا منذ استقلالها عام 1957 لتبُّعُ سياسات تُدِيرُ مجتمعها المختلط، ومن ثم؛ تَحْدُّفُ هذه الدراسة إلى اختبار السياسات التي طورتها الدولتان العثمانية وماليزيا لإدارة الفروقات الاجتماعية والثقافية بين المواطنين فيهما.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and Civilization.

.....  
Mohd Helmi bin Mohd Sobri  
Supervisor

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Fauziah Fathil  
Examiner

This dissertation was submitted to the Human Sciences in Department of History and Civilization and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and Civilization.

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Head, Department of History and Civilization.

This dissertation was submitted to the Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and Civilization.

.....  
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Dean, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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Signature .....

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The rapid development of communications, including the internet and modern transport, have revolutionised human life in a globalised world with networked societies. One effect of this has been to intensify exposure to other cultures, and all communities have become increasingly interrelated despite traditional geographical distance. For example, Chinese goods, American movies and sound of *adhan* can now reach the rest of the world. It is more essential than ever before to adopt and develop the policies of coexistence in the modern world.<sup>1</sup> Islamic civilization has been multicultural since its inception, and its ethos of social harmony has been reiterated by Muslim empires and modern states, as explored in this study with regard to the experiences of the Ottoman Sultanate and the modern state of Malaysia.

The social, political, legal and cultural structure that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) established in Medina constitutes the prime institutional example of peaceful coexistence. He, as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), lived together with Jews, Christians and polytheists who denied Islam and his prophethood, and even drafted the Charter of Medina, the first written constitution guaranteeing equal rights and responsibilities of Muslims and minorities, particularly Jews. The Charter entailed obligations, violation of which could (and did) result in punitive action to preserve the community, thus encouraging active citizenship rather than passive enjoyment and abuse of rights. The Medina model continued to be implemented in later Islamic states, and it is

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<sup>1</sup> Osman Bakar, “The Contemporary Need for Philosophy as a Major Source of Understanding of Pluralism,” in Baharudin Ahmad, (ed.) *Philosophy in the Age of Religious and Cultural Pluralism*. (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2011), 235-236.

impossible to understand the policies of Muslim states that emerged after the end of the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661 CE) without understanding the Medina system, which provided the blueprint for various adaptations in historical experiences of Muslim governance in numerous states following Islamic thought and institutionalism in their legal and political systems.<sup>2</sup>

The Umayyads and Abbasids broadly continued the religious, intellectual, legal and political model inherited by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) according to their own conditions. Hence, the peoples in conquered territories were given the freedom to preserve their own ethnic identities; their civilizations were not destroyed, nor was a monolithic Islamic cultural entity imposed on them.<sup>3</sup> While modern secular regimes and ideologies talk evasively and half-heartedly about ‘tolerance’, implying underlying antipathy, the classical Islamic states wholeheartedly embraced and loved other cultures, including those of North Africa, Iberia, the Levant, Mesopotamia, Iraq, Central Asia, and India. As the leading global civilization, the Arab-Islamic Empire of the Umayyads and the Abbasids eagerly studied and assimilated indigenous cultures, including ethnic (including religious) minorities in the political administration at the highest levels, and fostering a formidable body of science based on translations of Greek, Iranian and Indian works, achieving great distinction in state administration, budget management, medicine, engineering, and architecture. Their generous policies towards non-Arabs and non-Muslims, particularly scholars, brought the intellectual traditions of Muslim lands and their neighbours into a useful dialogue whereby traditional Islamic civilization reached its peak, surpassing the limitations of the

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<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World*, (Lahore: Ashraf Edition, 1981), 7-10.

<sup>3</sup> Levent Öztürk, “Erken Dönem İslam Toplumlarında Çok Kültürlü Yaşam: Emevi/Abbasî Örneği”, *İslam Medeniyetinde Bir Arada Yaşama Tecrübesi*, (Ankara: DIA, 2009), 133.

traditional Roman-Persian cold war and obliterating barriers to cultural interaction between the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia.<sup>4</sup>

The experience of al-Andalus under the Umayyad emirs was generally one of the most beautiful examples of coexistence that Islam produced. In the Iberian Peninsula, the three Abrahamic religions flourished under Muslim rule. Jews and Christians, People of the Book, were accorded particular status and rights due to their spiritual pedigree. Thus, a social order was built based on peace and harmony and the three civilizations lived together for almost eight centuries.<sup>5</sup> The Jews in particular benefited from their symbiosis with the Muslim community, and after Christian states began to intensify their pogroms and expulsions (beginning with the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290) many Jews sought and were granted refuge and protection in Islamic Spain, and after the Spanish Reconquista in the 15<sup>th</sup> century many more fled to the Muslim lands of North Africa and the Ottoman Sultanate.<sup>6</sup>

There is a widespread misconception that Islam exclusively gives minority rights to Jews and Christians as People of the Book and excludes the other religions, however there are clear historical examples of Islamic civilizations being open to all religions, most obviously the Mughal Empire (1526-1857) in India. Under Muslim governments in India (including the sultanates that predated the Mughals) the Hindus were generally accorded similar status to the People of the Book in most respects (e.g. fully in terms of civil rights, such as exemption from military service in exchange for the poll tax, and full autonomy in their legal affairs where these did not intersect with Muslim citizens, although Muslims could not intermarry with them, and their meat remained prohibited for Muslims to consume, unlike in the case of Jews and

<sup>4</sup> İrfan Aycan, “Müslüman Yönetimlerde Birarada Yaşama Tecrübeleri (Emevi Modeli),” in Ömer Turan, (ed.) *İslam ve Demokrasi*. (Ankara: DIA, 2005), 33-35.

<sup>5</sup> Mesut Özdemir, *Endüliş*, (İstanbul: İSAM, 2016), 185-209.

<sup>6</sup> İbrahim Kalın, *İslam ve Batı*, (İstanbul, İSAM, 2016), 89-90.

Christians).<sup>7</sup> In India, the fiqh of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence fully codified rules and regulations pertaining to an inclusive social system, without discrimination between non-Abrahamic polytheists and the People of the Book.<sup>8</sup>

With increasing emancipation in Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the traditional coexistence policies in Islamic states came under increasing scrutiny, and they are currently juxtaposed with Western concepts of natural rights and societal management. The Ottoman Millet System adopted both in the classical period and with some changes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is very important for the understanding of this issue. For example, in the Tanzimat Fermanı (Edict of Gülhane) and Islahat Fermanı (Edict of Reform), declared in 1839 and 1856 respectively, it became the Ottoman policy not to discriminate on the basis of religion, language, and race, and ensured that all citizens had rights such as the right to life, right of property, freedom of religion, and the inviolability of dignity, according to the foundations of Sharia. Such reform activities can be seen as some legislative efforts to promote the full equality of minorities,<sup>9</sup> but this modernisation in fact gradually eroded the traditional privileges of minorities in early modern Ottoman society and paved the way for the rise of Turkish nationalism in politics.

Through the Millet System, which the Ottoman Sultanate inherited from earlier Islamic states and systemized and applied in later periods, the Sultanate managed to survive in a wide geographical area spanning the Balkans and Asia Minor, parts of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and Mesopotamia and large swathes of Central Asia in the classical and modern period. In this respect, the religions, languages, and cultures of many different civilizations in the Ottoman society are still alive today.

<sup>7</sup> Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 356.

<sup>8</sup> Recep Şentürk, *Açık Medeniyet*, (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> İlber Ortaylı, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Millet”, in Ali Berkay, (ed.) *Osmanlı Düşünce Dünyası ve Tarih Yazımı*. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayımları, 2014), 147-149.

However, after the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate, rampant and vitriolic nationalism fuelled bitter social and political conflicts across former Ottoman realms.

Amid the general carnage of postcolonial Muslim-majority states, Malaysia has often been extolled for its pluralistic society and general inter-ethnic harmony. With a population of over 32 million,<sup>10</sup> Malaysia is a country that has developed significantly in recent years in a dynamic and vibrant economic and socio-cultural region. The country has a federal government and state government system. Malaysia is a wealthy country with a diverse cultural texture in terms of ethnic structure, religious beliefs, languages, and lifestyles. The main composite groups of the national population comprise Malays, Chinese, and ‘Indians’ (generally including people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan descent, who were historically categorised as Indians prior to 1947). The Chinese and Indians account for 23.2% and 8% of the population, respectively,<sup>11</sup> and they are mostly descended from immigrants who came to the country from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to work in various areas of the colonial economy during British colonial domination of Malaya.<sup>12</sup>

The legacy of British colonialism is most evident in the tripartite ethnic composition of Malay society and the common use of English by the Chinese and Indian communities. As an adjunct to the Colonial Government of India, the Malayan population was administratively divided by the British administration into Malay Muslim subjects of the autonomous Malay Sultans, and Chinese and Indian communities for whom Britain was mainly responsible, particularly in the Straits Settlements (including modern Singapore). As non-Muslims, the Chinese benefitted

<sup>10</sup> Department of Statistics, *Demographic Statistics Third Quarter (Q3) 2017, Malaysia*, <https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php> (accessed December 3, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Mohd Uzir bin Mahidin, *Current Population Estimates, Malaysia, 2016-2017*, <https://www.dosm.gov.my> (accessed November 21, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (London: Palgrave, 2017), 145-147.

from Western education in missionary schools and subsequently came to dominate trade and many professions in Malaya, while the original Indians were mainly Tamil-speaking labourers drafted as plantation workers, and their community subsequently came to be prominent in bureaucracy and various professions due to their skill in English. While the official language is Bahasa Malaysia, English is widely spoken and used as a lingua franca. Islam is the official state religion, with full rights for minorities. Most Indians are Hindus or Christians, while the Chinese ascribe to Buddhism, Christianity, and Taoism.<sup>13</sup> Being Malaysian in contemporary Malaysia is not related to genealogical or marriage history: someone who meets certain legal requirements is considered Malaysian. Therefore, whoever meets the conditions has the right to citizenship.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research explores the historical perspective of state policies in managing socio-cultural differences and coexistence in the Ottoman Sultanate and Malaysia. Although historically the country was named Malaysia after 1963,<sup>15</sup> this study covers the period 1957-1976 (ending with the term of Tun Abdul Razak as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia). The Ottoman Sultanate, which existed for over 600 years, was the centre of peace and harmony for communities with diverse religious and ethnic origins. The Millet System, which provided the legislative basis for the sustainability of this peaceful environment, is the subject of this study, from 1839 to 1865. The

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<sup>13</sup> Abdul Rahman Embong, “The Culture and Practise of Pluralism in Postcolonial Malaysia”, in Robert W. Hefner, (ed.) *The Politics of Multiculturalism Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 59.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph M. Fernando, *The Making of the Malayan Constitution*, (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2007), 208-209.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (London: Palgrave, 2017), 290.

transformation of the Ottoman State from the 19<sup>th</sup> century into a modern state provides a comparison with Malaysia on state policies of socio-cultural management. The purpose of this study is not to juxtapose traditional Islamic societies and modern potential organisation, but to explore continuity and differences between the application of social policies in past and present Islamic states.

In identifying pluralism and its relation to socio-cultural contexts, some questions arise concerning how to build a structure that protects pluralism among peoples with differing beliefs, histories, cultures, and responsibilities. Historical civilizations were based on the domination of states by particular ethnic groups (e.g. the Roman and Persian empires), while Islamic society was primarily based on faith (i.e. Muslim and non-Muslim spiritual affiliations). Islamic civilization was established on an ideological, social, legal, and political structure of co-existence by the Charter of Medina that accorded minority rights, and Islam itself specifically forbids ethnic favouritism.<sup>16</sup> The question arises of whether we can learn from past experiences to promote co-existence in genuinely equal and tolerant societies that do not premise their political configuration on national, ethnic assumptions. Another related question is whether there is a similarity between the main difference of the past pluralistic society system and present pluralistic society system in terms of identification of members, particularly minorities.

With the globalization process in the modern era, the world has faced numerous key developments: (1) In the modern world, the explosion of information about various civilizations and the primary sources of these civilizations is ubiquitous worldwide; (2) as a result of the development of travel facilities and opportunities,

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<sup>16</sup> The Charter of Medina is regarded as the first pluralist constitution of history. For detailed information, see Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World*, (Lahore: Ashraf Edition, 1981).

people of different civilizations can easily travel all over the world and have the opportunity to experience the beliefs and lifestyles of the others; (3) millions of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs settled in Europe, North America and Southeast Asia and formed multi-religious and multi-cultural cities around them, especially after the Second World War; and (4) the mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television, provide information about other people, as well as the recent dizzying developments in the field of communication by the addition of internet and email. All of these have made it necessary for people to establish relations based on mutual respect and understanding, because such relationships have become an obligation for the establishment of a peaceful world in which all people can live together by maintaining their differences.

Pluralistic paradigms maintain coexistence in a peaceful way around a common value by preserving the superiority of law, democracy, and human rights as well as differences are giving positive results in certain regions of the world such as in Malaysia and Canada. Nevertheless, arbitrary governments, dictatorships, violations of human rights, and assimilationist policies in many regions cause exploitation, oppression, war, conflict, and marginalization, such as in Myanmar and Syria. Malaysia stands out as a Muslim country in Southeast Asia where different cultures, religions, and languages are peacefully contained within national consciousness. The effort to understand the practice of pluralist society structure in Malaysia brings with it some questions. When was the historical formation of Malaysian multicultural society? What kind of problems have been encountered in this process and what kind of policies were developed in the solution of the problems? Is there any influence of the pre-independence period in the developed politics? The answers of these and similar questions will provide a better understanding of the society structure of

Malaysia and will give a different perspective to the solution of the problems of pluralistic societies in today's world.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

There are many criteria by which human beings differentiate themselves from each other, including ethnic differences (e.g. race, religion, and language), different historical experiences, and different cultural backgrounds. Apart from innate ethnic differences, there is a direct relationship between the formation of social and cultural differences and the fact that humans are reasonable creatures. The ability to reason has been a decisive factor in the progress of civilization. People's knowledge, experience, and achievements in socio-cultural life are the basic values that contribute to the formation of civilizations. All these values of humanity have a unique diversity and richness that precludes monotony or uniformity. From this point of view, what is called 'Islamic civilization' as a material, historical entity is the result of mutual contributions of Muslims and non-Muslims, including numerous 'ethnicities', in the fields of science, literature, art, aesthetics and architecture as well as organic communal life over many centuries within the historical process.

It is unquestionable that the basic elements of Islamic civilization are Islam and Muslim identity, which form the bedrock of Muslim perceptions regarding worldview and socio-cultural life, but the contributions of non-Muslim elements have always been acknowledged as an integral part of the social structures in which Muslims have lived. In this respect, the coexistence of different ethnic and cultural structures and traditions is very important in the progress of civilization. Although coexistence has played an important role in the emergence of rich cultural structures and civilization, it has led to a variety of problems throughout history. Sharing the

same or close geography with different ethnic, religious, political, or cultural groups, and living under the roof of the same political structure, have sometimes caused violence, hatred, and conflict between ethnicities. There are many reasons for these negative experiences, all of which fundamentally relate to fear and prejudice, which Islam militates against. The responses of modern nation states since the 19<sup>th</sup> century have mainly been to enforce majority attitudes and opinions aimed at assimilation and transformation, eliminating cultural differences rather than knowing, understanding and empathizing with others, thus precipitating conflicting approaches between different ethnic, cultural and religious structures in a cascade of conflicts throughout post-colonial (including Muslim-majority) countries in the modern world.

Currently, advanced communication and transportation technologies are the main factors that force the coexistence of different ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. Nevertheless, it appears that the conflicts between different identities, racial discourses and ethnocentrism are all increasing globally. Some questions arise in this case, such as how is it possible to find peace between differences or how differences be considered as a source of cultural wealth, rather than a means of conflict and separation? The answers to these and similar questions will provide a solution to the fundamental problems that we face today. It is an indisputable fact that historical experiences are guiding the solution of today's problems. Therefore, the objective of this research is the study of historical progress of socio-cultural management in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman State and in Malaysia.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In summary the following research questions will be addressed:

1. How the Ottoman Sultanate approach the socio-cultural differences that evolved from 1839 to 1865?
2. How did government approaches to socio-cultural differences in Malaysia change from 1957 to 1970?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the policies of the Ottoman Sultanate during Tanzimat period and Malaysian government with regard to the management of social and cultural differences?

## **1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Specifically, the aims of this study are:

1. To define Millet System in Ottoman Sultanate from 1839 to 1865.
2. To identify social harmony policies in Malaysia from 1957 to 1976.
3. To evaluate the link between the past and the present in terms of Islamic governance approaches and their relevance to social cohesion.

## **1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Ottoman Millet System and Malaysia's plural social structure have been topics of various theoretical and academic studies, which have generally emphasized the religious pluralism of these societies. It is a fact that the phenomenon of religion is an important factor in the formation of pluralistic society structures. On the other hand, in addition to religion, a common language, ethnicity, and education are essential elements of society in modern nation states, which have often led to ethnic conflict and domination by certain groups rather than social cohesion and harmony. The

review of the following articles and books informed the components of socio-cultural differences considered in this study.

Cheah Boon Kheng's *Malaysia The Making of a Nation*<sup>17</sup> is an essential source on this subject. The book consists of seven chapters focused on major events of the contemporary history of Malaysia in the 1945-2001. The author acknowledges the difficulties of writing contemporary history in the beginning of his book. The writer's approach is to study key developments in Malaysian politics and society from the perspective of elite leadership, ideology, ethnicity, and nationalism involved in the making of the Malaysian nation, or nation-state. In addition, this work studies society from below, considering the role of social movements among the working class and peasantry, as well as marginalized, subordinate groups. Cheah claims that the aim of the book was to look at two main themes or issues running through Malaysian politics and society in the context of nation building nation-building: (a) the "social contract" formulated as part of the "informal bargain" in the 1956 UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance Memorandum to the Reid Constitution and its extension later to the other communities in Sabah and Sarawak after the formation of Malaysia in 1963; and (b) Malay dominance or *ketuanan Melayu*, the major demand of Malay ethno-nationalism. Furthermore, this book focuses on how the four prime ministers handled these two issues in the context of power-sharing and nation building. For this study, chapter three of Cheah's book, which is related to the Tunku Abdul Rahman time period, is particularly relevant.

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<sup>17</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia The Making of a Nation*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004).

Anthony Milner and Helen Ting's *Race and Its Competing Paradigms: A Historical Review*<sup>18</sup> seeks answers to the following questions: Can Malaysian society and politics ever move beyond race-based paradigm? How then has the race paradigm become embedded, and in what ways has it been contested and defended? Is it possible to conceptualize Malaysians in terms other than "Malay", "Chinese" and "Indian"? This article explores Malaysia's nation building process under fifteen different titles chronologically. The authors give remarkable information on race issues and the race narratives for modern Malaysia. In the following sections they explain the major state policies in Malaysia, such as Rukun Negara. This article also provides a wide-ranging reference chapter.

Osman Bakar's *The Contemporary Need for Philosophy as a Major Source of Understanding of Pluralism*<sup>19</sup> is an enlightening article on the philosophical approaches of pluralism in Islamic thought. Although small in volume, Bakar's article is very detailed in its approaches to current problems of pluralism, emphasizing the importance of the need for a new pluralistic philosophy. The first part discusses how the Islamic and Western world have lost certain values in modernity and post-modernity, resulting in the exacerbation of racism, ethnic and religious chauvinism, prejudices, and hatred as the source of current problems in modern society, as manifested in Nazi racial persecution, Israel's expansionist policy in the Palestinian territories, and the Bosnian War in the 1990s. In the second part, Bakar explores ways to overcome these problems, drawing attention to two important thinkers of Islamic civilization, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. Moreover, the author cites examples from verses

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony Milner and Helen Ting, "Race and Its Competing Paradigms: A Historical Review," in Anthony Milner, Abdul Rahman Embong, Tham Siew Yean, (ed.) *Transforming Malaysia Dominant and Competing Paradigms*. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2014), 18-59.

<sup>19</sup> Osman Bakar, "The Contemporary Need for Philosophy as a Major Source of Understanding of Pluralism," in Baharudin Ahmad, (ed.) *Philosophy in the Age of Religious and Cultural Pluralism*. (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2011), 235-242.

of the Qur'an that emphasize ethnic and religious diversity to suggest finding unity among diversity. The last part outlines the objectives of Islamic philosophy on ethnic pluralism. While the article begins by diagnosing the problem of the Islamic world and the West as the same thing, his subsequent analysis only explores the former, without analysing the experiences of the latter.

Leon Comber's *13 May 1969: The Darkest Day in Malaysian History*<sup>20</sup> is an essential historical survey of Sino-Malay relations, leading up to the 13 May 1969 disturbance. At the beginning, the author describes the historical background of Sino-Malay relations, which basically includes the first Chinese immigration and Malays' place in society. Most importantly, the author defines the pros and cons of the Japanese occupation and British reoccupation on the relationships between the two communities. This book is particularly valuable to the researcher, since it provides in a clear, concise, and objective form the main scenario of Sino-Malay relations in Malaysia. Furthermore, it is essential for the researcher to be able to examine and analyse the 13 May incident regarding cause and effect relations. Despite its explanations, this book contains insufficient knowledge on the influence of the Sino-Malay relations on the Malay Constitution.

Mahathir Mohamad's autobiography, *A Doctor in the House: The Memoirs of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad*,<sup>21</sup> is a key work on Malaysia written by its fourth prime minister and the most significant figure in its postcolonial development. It is inherently subjective, being based on the author's own memories, as with memoir and diary literary genres, but given his first-hand and in-depth knowledge of the subjects he discusses, it is an invaluable resource. Mahathir mentions objectivity in his book as

<sup>20</sup> Leon Comber, *13 May 1969: The Darkest Day in Malaysian History*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *A Doctor in the House: The Memoirs of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad*, (Kuala Lumpur: MPH Publishing, 2016).

follows: “This is the story of Malaysia as I see it. This is also my story.”<sup>22</sup> The voluminous work of 62 chapters is not only related to the 22 years of the Mahathir era,<sup>23</sup> but has also a wide range of relevant information related to period from 1925 to the May 2008 general elections. This book is useful to understand events of the Mahathir’s era, but it is of limited value in analysing the pluralistic structure of Malaysian society.

Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya’s *A History of Malaysia*<sup>24</sup> is one of the most important books written in the area of Malay history and it brings great clarity to the subject. It begins with the history of the first people who settled in the region (during the Sri Vijaya period, c. 650–1377), including a large period covering the political and social issues of Malaysia in the 2000s. The book is mainly concerned with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The book is essentially practical, assimilating a factual narrative history based on both primary sources and regional studies. The authors claim that the issues emphasized in the book are still valid in today’s Malaysia. These issues can be gathered under the headings of immigration to Malaya, political struggles, and Malay identity. Each chapter of the book begins with a broad description of historical background of events and then highlights important events. In the final part of each section, the main points of the chapter are emphasized, and the reader is prepared for the next section. The book also offers important maps, index and a wide range of resources for more detailed readings to readers. Although this book gives valuable information about the early and current political history of Malaysia, it is insufficiently detailed (for the purposes of this study) on foreign migration to Malaya and foreign settlements in Malaya.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, x.

<sup>23</sup> Mahathir Mohamad served as Prime Minister in Malaysia from 16 July 1981 to 31 October 2003 and is the current incumbent since 10 May 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (London: Palgrave, 2017).

Rupert Emerson's *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*<sup>25</sup> compares the British style of colonial management in Malaya with the contemporaneous Dutch model in the Dutch East Indies. The author approaches the complex political, ethnic, and economic problems of Malaya with a historical descriptive method. The book is well organized, covering the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this book, the management methods of Straits Settlements, and the Federated and Unfederated British Malayan states are examined in detail. Both the Dutch administration and the British administration used direct and indirect colony management. Emerson describes the policy of direct colonial rule as one under which colonies were ruled under "European authority... within a European administrative framework" personally affecting all subjects, "through officials largely drawn from the local population but appointed from above." The basic principle of indirect rule, on the other hand, is that "colonial peoples can more conveniently be governed through the agency of their own traditional leaders operating within the traditional institutional framework, as modified to meet European needs and preconceptions." The author states that the British executives initially appointed officers only as advisers, but they subsequently assumed more direct and active roles in reforming local administrative affairs. Emerson states that the most important difference between the Dutch administration and the British administration is the direct rule method; British advisers were selected from British officers, while Dutch officers were selected from native people. The book also contains an index and two important maps. While this book sheds light on the study of the policies of the British era, it is lacking in coverage of Malaya's social structure and community management.

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<sup>25</sup> Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1979)

Victor Purcell's *The Chinese in Malaya*<sup>26</sup> comprises three chapters concerning Early History, Special Aspects of the Chinese in Malaya and Recent Developments. The author has a good background for this study, having served as a member of the Malayan Civil Service between 1921 and 1936, and later as a Chinese Affairs adviser in the British Military Administration. The book is one of the first studies arranged collectively in the study area. In the first chapter of the book, the author gives information about how Chinese communities developed in Malacca, Penang, Singapore, and other Malay States. The author, who elaborates on the arrival of the Chinese in the region, points out that intensive Chinese settlement through colonial migration fundamentally changed the historical dynamics of Malay life. In the second part of the book, the author investigates the religious and social problems, working conditions, and education of Chinese settlers in Malaya. The Chinese Secret Societies section offers valuable information about this topic. The section of Chinese Social Problems in Malaya and Chinese Labour and Immigration provide in-depth information on the Chinese migration to Malaya. In this chapter, Purcell examines the formation of Chinese Baba Community and the situation of the Chinese who migrated with their families in Malaya. In the last part of the book, the author gives information about the developments between 1939-1947. Purcell gives original information about the Chinese attitude towards the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation. In the book, there are also the figures of Baba language, population statistics and data showing Chinese schools, students, and teachers. This book is an important source for the study of the Chinese in Malay society. As understood from the title of the book, it focuses on the Chinese, and does not give much information on other components of Malayan society.

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<sup>26</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh and Abd Ghapa Harun's *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*<sup>27</sup> is an essential source for our study. Although this book is basically on the political life of Tun Abdul Razak, it gives broad information about the social structure of Malaysia. The book consists of 26 chapters and covers 54 years from the birth of Tun Abdul Razak until his death. The authors successfully described the political and social life of Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's second prime minister. In his book, the authors discuss the role of Abdul Razak in the construction of a new society and how he established a stable administration after the 13<sup>th</sup> May incident. The authors used the speeches made by Tun Abdul Razak and interviews were made with the politicians of the period as sources. Most of the sources of the book are primary sources and official reports used in the book are selected from the section classified as "secret". The language of the book is quite formal. This book addresses not only the researchers' interest in this field, but also everyone who is interested in Tun Abdul Razak's life. The book also contains original photos of Tun Abul Razak. This biography is an important source that sheds light on Abdul Razak's policies for our study. However, there is no information about the structure of the pre-independence society.

Ilber Ortaylı's *Osmanlı Barışı (Pax Ottomana)*<sup>28</sup> is composed of the various thematic articles published in different academic journals. In general, the book sheds light on the social and cultural aspects of the Ottoman State. The author discusses how the different religious and cultural identities in the Ottoman State lived together in a peaceful way. The author claims that although different religious and cultural identities (millets in Ottoman terminology) lived in different compartments, they lived

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<sup>27</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh and Abd Ghapa Harun, *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, (Bangi: UKM Press, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Barışı*, (İstanbul: Timas, 2007).

together in public spaces such as bazaars and markets. In addition, non-Muslims in the Ottoman administration held various governmental functions. Moreover, these officials knew the Turkish language, the official language of the state. Ortaylı makes interesting and valuable contributions in his book, which approaches non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire from a general perspective. However, it makes no clear distinction regarding the subject before and after the Tanzimat.

Önder Kaya's *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete*<sup>29</sup> covers the historical process from the *Tanzimat* edict to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. The author analyses the legal status and various problems of the three main non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman State, namely the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. After addressing the legal status of non-Muslims and the concept of *dhimmi* in Islamic law, the author discussed the conditions of non-Muslims in the period of the Anatolian Seljuks. The author examines the subject in both theoretical and practical framework. The basic social, economic, and legal characteristics of the classical *Millet* System in the Ottoman State were discussed in detail in the second chapter of the book. In the third chapter, the author analyzes the legal status, tax obligations, and educational activities of non-Muslims in the Ottoman State in detail, with the announcement of the Tanzimat Edict and the Reform Edict. Since the legal situation and problems of non-Muslims were experienced over a long historical process, some chapters of the book are discussed in more detail. This book is an important source for this study, especially concerning the millet System during the Tanzimat period.

Kemal H. Karpat's *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*<sup>30</sup> brings a new perspective on nationalism in the Ottoman

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<sup>29</sup> Önder Kaya, *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar*, (İstanbul: Kronik, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, (Leiden, Brill, 2002).

Sultanate as well as the countries that separated from it. Karpat describes the Ottoman heritage in detail in the political, social, economic, and cultural structures of the states emerging in the Middle East and Balkan after the Ottoman Sultanate. He also presents the Middle East and the Balkan nations in the process of nationhood and state-building, and the stages of national-state transformation within a socio-economic approach and comparative history with his extensive historical knowledge. Furthermore, Karpat clarifies the historical development of the notion of the Millet System and nationalism concepts, particularly in the late periods of the Ottoman Sultanate, citing reasons for the incompatibility between the post-Ottoman states and Ottoman society, paving the way for the clash of civilizations and national/ethnic wars.

Ali Güler's *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* (*The Minorities from the Ottoman Empire to Republic of Turkey*)<sup>31</sup> deals with the socio-economic conditions of non-Muslims in the later Ottoman Sultanate. In addition, the author focuses on the transition process of the non-Muslims from the Ottoman Sultanate to Republic of Turkey. The author gives special importance to the Treaty of Lausanne because of its fundamental role in determining the legal and political status of non-Muslim minorities under Anglo-French dominion of the Middle East. In this study, the Rums, Armenians and Jews were assessed among the 22 official non-Muslim elements of the Ottoman Sultanate. The Turkey Historical Development of the Millet System's current borders are considered as a geographical region. This study, which is made on the basis of the documents related to the issue in the Directorate Ottoman Archives, fills an important gap.

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<sup>31</sup> Ali Güler, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Azınlıklar* (*The Minorities from the Ottoman Empire to Republic of Turkey*), (Ankara, Berikan Yayınevi, 2009).

M. Macit Kenanoğlu's *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek (The Ottoman Millet System: Myth and Fact)*<sup>32</sup> contains important information and determinations on the Millet System which is a popular topic in Ottoman studies. In the introduction, the author identifies the place of non-Muslims in Islamic law (Sharia). The first part of the book covers institutional structures of non-Muslims. At the same time, the Millet System is analysed in detail as a practice developed for the management of non-Muslims in the Ottoman State. The author clarifies advantages and disadvantages of the system based on proponents and critiques of the model in light of archival studies. In the second part of the book, the administrative and legal authorities of the religious leaders of non-Muslims are examined on the basis of implementation. The author admits that there was some administrative and legal autonomy for non-Muslim religious leaders, but the use of these powers was often subject to the permission of the Ottoman State. The third part of Kenanoğlu's work covers the individual rights and freedoms of non-Muslims. In this section, under the heading of "Religion and Freedom of Conscience", important obligations are examined such as the repair and construction of the places of worship, protection, usage of religious symbols, arrangements for non-Muslim settlements, slave acquisitions, and clothing regulations. This book gives the opportunity to see almost all of the related literature and evaluate different opinions on the Millet System.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Case studies can be undertaken using quantitative or qualitative approaches, and cases may be individuals, institutions, groups, or environments. In all approaches, case

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<sup>32</sup> M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek (The Ottoman Millet System: Myth and Fact)*, (İstanbul: Klasik, 2004).

study research aims to reveal results for a particular case. The most important feature of a qualitative case study is to investigate the depth of one or more situations. In other words, the factors related to a case (environment, individuals, events, and processes etc.) are explored with a holistic approach and focus on how they affect the case. In addition, it is possible to study long-term situations if it is important to understand the changes and processes occurring in a case.

In this study, the policies imposed by governments in the management of socio-cultural differences were chosen as the subject of study. The policies set out in two different periods and two different geographical regions were determined and investigated. This study is based on secondary sources, comprising academic books and articles on the subject. The main themes of the related literature include multiculturalism, religious pluralism, ethnicity, identity, nationalism, and nation building in the particular contexts of the Ottoman Empire and Malaysia.

Literature was searched and accessed at various libraries in Malaysia, such as the IIUM Library, the National Library of Malaysia, and the University of Malaya Library. Since this research is dependent on critical analysis of secondary sources pertaining to research objectives concerning understanding peaceful ethnic coexistence, it offers valuable contributions to academia and policy.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE OTTOMAN MILLET SYSTEM (1839-1865)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

During its 600-year history dominating large swathes of West Asia, North Africa, and Europe, the administration and organisation of the Ottoman State was primarily based on religion, which determined the status of individuals in society. In legal terms, the Ottoman society consisted of two main groups: Muslims and non-Muslims. Each group identified by its religious and/or sectarian affiliation was assigned as a millet and was publicly named as such in official business, such as the Christian or Mosaic millets.<sup>1</sup> The notion of the millet stems from the Qur'an, in which it is cited in 15 verses with the meaning of religious affiliation.<sup>2</sup> The practice of the Millet System in the Ottoman State was thus theoretically based on the Qur'anic paradigm.<sup>3</sup>

The Ottoman social system changed in three different phases during the long period of time from the emergence to the collapse of the state. The first phase was a long period of growth and development, in which a constitutional framework developed, and the state established a permanent organization of the ethnic and religious communities within its sovereignty. This stage continued roughly from 1413 until 1839. In the second phase - the period 1839-1865 - the Ottoman government attempted the reorganization of religious-ethnic communities in response to the pressure of the European states and the internal disagreements. The final phase was the national transformation era covering the period from 1865 until the First World

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, V. I, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an, 2:120, 130, 135; 3:95; 4:125; 6:161; 7:88, 89; 12:37, 38; 14:13; 16:123; 18:20; 22:78; 38:7.

<sup>3</sup> M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmancı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, (İstanbul: Klasik, 2004), 33.

War. In this period especially, ethnic nationalism was developed and strengthened, and territorial states were established in former Ottoman lands.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter of the study we evaluate the state policies in managing the differences between 1839-1865 of the Ottoman State.

## 2.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MILLET SYSTEM

Non-Muslims in the Ottoman State were defined within the Millet System in terms of their rights under Sharia.<sup>5</sup> The Ottoman State classified Muslims as one millet and non-Muslims as different millets according to their beliefs or sects. Political, administrative, and social organizations were developed on the basis of this distinction. In the Ottoman State, Sharia set guidelines for many aspects of life, and this situation was also reflected in the status of non-Muslims, determined by the embezzlement institution of Sharia. When Muslims conquer a region inhabited by non-Muslims, they invite the inhabitants (*en masse*) to Islam three times; if they accept Islam, they immediately accrue all the rights that Muslims have. If they do not accept this, they are offered a treaty whereby they consent to Muslim rule and to abide by state laws (e.g. not supporting enemy invasions etc.), while maintaining the right to be governed by their own institutions in their internal affairs (e.g. rabbinical courts for Jews).

The most fundamental distinction of non-Muslim minorities (dhimmi) in Sharia is that financially solvent, able-bodied adult males are generally exempt from

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<sup>4</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “The Ottoman Ethnic and Confessional Legacy in the Middle East”, *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East*, ed. Milton J. Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 36.

<sup>5</sup> Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmalı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Tebaanın Yönetimi*, (İstanbul: Risale, 1996), 17. Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era”, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 611-612.

military service, in lieu of which they must pay a poll tax.<sup>6</sup> In exchange, the Muslim millet is duty-bound for the honour of the Prophet (ﷺ) to defend the religious freedom, lives, places of worship, and property of minorities. Within the historical experiences of Muslim states these general obligations were arranged in very detailed ways, especially in terms of *cizye* (personal tax) and *haraç* (land tax) taxes.<sup>7</sup> The Ottomans who (among Muslim states) ruled the largest non-Muslim population throughout history regularly determined and implemented the obligations of Sharia in some detail. This included elaborate provisions on distinctions of dress (contemporary with similar sumptuary laws in Europe), and restrictions on dhimmis' right to bear arms, ride horses, perform religious worship in public areas, levy tolls on roads and bridges, open new places of worship or repair old ones, or make their homes higher than Muslims etc.<sup>8</sup> These obligations were fully regulated in the legal system, within which dhimmis were granted rights well beyond those of religious minorities of other contemporary civilizations.

First of all, the fundamental rights of dhimmis were guaranteed, and it was a religious duty for Muslims to respect their rights and defend them to the death from foreign aggressors. Dhimmi status also enabled non-Muslims to continue their religions, property ownership, and livelihoods, without being taken as slaves or captives. The criminal provisions of Sharia are equally applied to Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition to all these, they had complete freedom in the issues related to their own communities which do not concern Muslims. Churches had jurisdiction over

<sup>6</sup> Gülnihal Bozkurt, “İslam Hukukunda Zimmilerin Hukuki Statüleri” *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, V.3, No. 1-4, (İzmir, 1987), 116-118. H.A.R Gibb, ????, Yavuz Ercan, “Türkiye’de XV. ve XVI. Yüzyıllarda Gayrimüslimlerin Hukuki, İctimai ve İktisadi Durumu” *Belleten*, V. XLVII, No. 188, (Ankara: 1983 October), 1125. If non-Muslims actually served in the armed forces or offered other services to the community they were historically exempted from this tax, following Rashidun precedents.

<sup>7</sup> Yavuz Ercan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Gayrimüslimlerin Ödedikleri Vergiler ve Bu Vergilerin Doğurduğu Sosyal Sonuçlar” *Belleten*, V. LV, No. 213, (Ankara: 1991, August), 371-374.

<sup>8</sup> Önder Kaya, *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar*, (İstanbul: Kronik, 2017), 23-26.

their own communities in terms of financial, administrative, and judicial matters. They also have the right to receive education with their own religion and language, to maintain religious organizations, to establish foundations, and to open hospitals and orphanages.<sup>9</sup>

The most important factor that multiplied the balance in this system was the autonomy recognized for non-Muslims. The Millet System was a colourful tapestry of autonomous communities under the Ottoman administration. The classical Ottoman society structure divided into millets based on the principles of religion formed the basis for policy on taxation, education, and social life. Decentralization and diversity are the basic pillars of this structure. In the distinction of millets, language and race-based ethnic indices were never considered. While Turks, Albanians, Bosnians, Arabs and Kurds formed a single predominant Muslim *millet*, Armenians were defined as Gregorians and Catholics, with the addition of Protestants during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs were recognized as the single millet under the roof of the Orthodox Church.<sup>10</sup>

The Millet System implemented by the Ottomans was above all dependent on a strong decentralization that prevented conflict between different religions and sects. The Ottomans developed and practiced the Millet System in a graceful manner and made it a foundation of a long-lived state. Autonomy served the life and development of different cultures without being subjected to pressure, and Ottoman domination was consensually accepted among non-Muslims. The Jews were the religious community that enjoyed the most benefit from this tolerance; subject to virulent oppression in Christian communities and countries, the Ottoman territories were regarded as a

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<sup>9</sup> Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Alman-İngiliz Belgelerinin ve Siyasi Gelişmelerinin Işığında Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)*, (Ankara: TTK, 1996), 14-29.

<sup>10</sup> Ercan 1127-1130.

salvation. The Jewish community has been an easy-to-manage community and the Ottoman rulers have even encouraged Jewish migration because of the scientific and technical skills the Jews possessed in addition to their Islamic duties.<sup>11</sup> The Jews settled in centres such as Istanbul, Bursa, Edirne, Salonica and Valona where trade was particularly intense.<sup>12</sup> The Sephardic Jews were highly conscious of the long-term historical largesse of the Ottoman State, such that when the the Russian Empire (which constituted itself as the Holy Roman Empire and the patron of Orthodox Christianity) declared war on the Ottomans in 1877 the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul, Moshe Halevi, expressed the religious duty of Jews to defend the Ottomans with military service:

“Since the moment when our people was attacked and persecuted like criminals in Spain, at a time when barbarism covered the face of the earth... when no one would take us in, and we were killed, drowned, and made... to wander from city to city. It was at this moment that the Ottoman government took us in and saved us from... death. Now our homeland needs us... the empire is in danger, its enemies want to weaken its power; they want to destroy its cities and resume the persecutions of Israel. Our great mother sheds tears of blood, but not for herself. She does so for us, [as our enemies] want to take us into captivity once more...”<sup>13</sup>

The largest community of the Ottoman Empire after the Muslims was the Orthodox Christians. As the Roman Empire disintegrated, Roman Christianity (i.e. Christianity as practiced in the Roman Empire) declined in its historical heartland of Anatolia and the Balkans, epitomised by the Great Schism (1054), and during the Crusades (1095-1291) in 1204 the Crusaders sacked Constantinople itself, destroying the finest remnants of ancient Greek and Roman art as well as Christian shrines

<sup>11</sup>Muharrem Gürkaynak, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Millet Sistemi ve Yahudi Milleti”, *SDU İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, V. 9, No. 2, (Isparta: 2003), 280.

<sup>12</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic*, (Hounds mills, Macmillan Press, 1991), 37-39.

<sup>13</sup> Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 35-36.

(including an assault on the Hagia Sophia) in an orgy of desecration and destruction. Having been invited by the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1091-1118) to defend Christendom from the Seljuqs, the Crusaders (i.e. the “Latins” of Western Europe, subject to the episcopacy of Rome) gradually usurped Roman (Byzantine) influence throughout the Middle East and persecuted the Orthodox Church. Consequently, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and subsequent toleration of Christianity breathed new life into the Orthodox community.

Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) himself saved the Orthodox Patriarchate, which was about to collapse and disintegrate, re-establishing the Patriarchy of Constantinople in Fener,<sup>14</sup> enhancing its authority over the Greek-Orthodox community and the Serbian and Bulgarian churches. However, Antakya and Alexandria were not under its jurisdiction,<sup>15</sup> and the Copts in Egypt, Melkites in Lebanon, Maronites, Syriac, and Chaldean churches were all in separate millets. Despite being Orthodox, the Church of Cyprus maintained its independence from the Patriarchy of Constantinople.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, under the religious, judicial, and financial control of Fener, Greek became the language of Christian worship throughout the Balkans and Anatolia, reinvigorating the administrative basis for Eastern Roman culture. Many civil servants were employed to carry out these tasks. The effective unit of the Fener Greek Patriarchate was the Synod Council, composed of high-ranking priests and metropolitans (bishops) governing spiritual and secular affairs.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Yavuz Ercan, “Fener ve Türk Ortodoks Patrikhanesi”, *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, V. 5, No. 8, (Ankara: 1967), 411.

<sup>15</sup> Şehabettin Tekindağ, “Osmanlı İdaresinde Patrik ve Patrikhane”, *Belgelerle Türk Tarih Dergisi*, No. 2, (1967, November), 54-55.

<sup>16</sup> İlber Ortaylı, “Ortodoks Kilisesi”, *Mülkiye Dergisi*, V. 24, No. 223, (2014), 106-107.

<sup>17</sup> Salim Gökçen, Fener Rum Patrikhanesi’nin Hukuki Statüsü ve Heybeliada Ruhban Okulu’nu Açtırma Girişimleri, *Atatürk Dergisi*, V. 5, No. 1, (2010, February), 187.

The Armenians were the second-largest minority in the Ottoman State after the Orthodox Christians. The Gregorian Armenians are the traditional church of East Anatolia, but the Armenians were not coherently organised in Ottoman administration until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they were not known as a religious community but as *Millet-i Sadika* (“Loyal People”).<sup>18</sup> Armenians living in the Ottoman State were similar to Turks in terms of traditions and customs, and almost all of them speak Turkish as their first language. The Armenians were enrolled into state service after Greek independence in 1832, partly due to the implications of a similar disaster in the Ottoman heartland.<sup>19</sup>

### **2.3 MILLET SYSTEM DURING TANZIMAT PERIOD (1839-1865)**

The *Tanzimat Fermani*, issued in 1839, is regarded as the beginning of the eponymous Tanzimat period in Ottoman history, marked by the modernization movement. This included the end of millet-based differences in legal status, designed to avert separatist activities fomented by the European colonial powers among non-Muslims in the Ottoman territories.<sup>20</sup> This included symbolic changes such as adopting Western military uniforms and restrictions on traditional dress. The *Islahat Fermani* issued in 1856 extended major developments in terms of the legal status of non-Muslims. The British, French, and Austrian ambassadors were involved in the process of preparation of the *Islahat Fermani*, and the issue of the reconstruction of the statues of the millets came to the fore. Commissions established for this purpose abolished the traditional millet system by establishing new regulations for the millets between 1862-65.

<sup>18</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Barışı*, (İstanbul: Timas, 2007), 59.

<sup>19</sup> Önder Kaya, *İmparatorlukta Cumhuriyete Azınlıklar*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era”, 634.

### 2.3.1 The Rescript of Tanzimat

Tanzimat was the period when Ottoman Sultanate attempted to reform and modernize its institutions, shaping the state and social structure in every area, from top to bottom.<sup>21</sup> The original edict, declared on 3 November 1839 by Sultan Mustafa Reşit Pasha on behalf of Sultan Abdülmecid in Gülhane, formed the basis of subsequent Turkish modernization efforts. Muhammad Ali Pasha faced problems in Egypt, and nationalist movements were rising in the Balkans with the desire for independence, fomented by European colonial states. During the declaration of the Tanzimat edict, the Sultan and all palace officials, scholars, state and military officers, ambassadors of foreign states, sheikhs and imams, as well as the leaders of the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish nations were present.<sup>22</sup>

Essentially, it is possible to collect the articles of Tanzimat under issues of Muslim and non-Muslim legal equality in terms of freedom of religion, honour, property, life and law; tax; education; and military service. The most controversial aspect of the Tanzimat edict was the question of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims. In fact, minorities had always enjoyed essentially similar rights to Muslims in personal matters (e.g. property ownership etc.), but this marked a watershed in the transition of the Ottoman State from a multi-ethnic confederation premised as a Caliphate (“Successor”) to the classical Islamic model and modern (i.e. “European”) race-based, mono-cultural nation states. Rising Turkish nationalism was based on the complaint that Turks were actively suppressed by the Millet System due to the preferment of minorities in trade and bureaucratic posts (e.g. Jews and Greeks), and even military service (the Janissaries), while other minorities were increasingly

<sup>21</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, (İstanbul: Kronik, 2017), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Yavuz Abadan, “Tanzimat Fermanının Tahlili”, in *Tanzimat Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Mehmet Seyitdanlioğlu and Halil İnalçık, (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2006), 43.

persuaded by the European powers that a bright future of “national” self-determination lay ahead of them, freed from the Ottoman yoke.<sup>23</sup>

It was understood under Tanzimat that non-Muslims would benefit equally from recognized rights as well as Muslims. With the edict, they were entitled to be present in all state authorities and have become equal to Muslims politically. In the Ottoman State, the dominant millet was based on the belief principle, and the Muslims were the ruling millet. As noted previously, among ordinary subjects, minorities had similar rights to Muslims, but the most senior government positions reflected Islamic supremacy. For instance, the career trajectory of Muhammad Ali Pasha (r. 1805-1848) from an Albanian tobacco trader’s son to Viceroy of Egypt would probably not be possible for a Jewish or Greek tobacco trader’s son. In addition, the Turkish element was always active in the administrative, military, and scientific fields, and although the Turkish factor was not explicitly taken into consideration in Tanzimat, its reinterpretation of the Millet System served to develop the ideology of “Ottomanism,” which was essentially a Turkish Empire on the model of the European empires, predicated on tentative equality equivalent to European states (where it should be noted universal emancipation and other indices of modern equality were still a distant fantasy). Tanzimat sought to bring together different groups and create a common “national” feeling; it was a policy of “integrity in diversity.”<sup>24</sup>

The principle of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims was more pertinent to formal Sharia issues. Tanzimat expanded the role of the state, including curtailing the powers of community organisations (e.g. religious minorities’

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Tanzimat was preceded by complex machinations by the Sultans to disband the elite Janissary corps of Balkan (i.e. East European) slaves who effectively dominated the state and held it hostage for sinecures and stipends (e.g. they deposed Sultan Selim III in 1807), preventing military modernisation until they were annihilated during the Auspicious Incident (1826). Following this the Sultans constructed a “national” army with a stronger Turkish presence.

<sup>24</sup> Bilal Eryilmaz, *Osmalı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Tebaanın Yönetimi*, 101.

autonomous courts) and establishing a national civil law system, including mixed commercial courts and mixed courts of first instance. The mixed commercial courts were established to resolve commercial disputes between foreigners and Ottoman citizens, while mixed courts of first instance were established to resolve murder cases between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman State. These courts, first opened in Istanbul, later spread to all major centres of the state. They promulgated the concept of trial-by-jury, and non-Muslims served as jury members in these courts in judgment over Muslims and non-Muslims alike.<sup>25</sup>

Another development that took place along with the Tanzimat was the change in the *cizye* (personal tax) collected from the non-Muslim subjects. In the early periods this tax was collected by an officer called *cizyedar*, and in practice this duty was delegated to non-Muslim millet leaders, to avoid corruption in the tax collection process and make collection easier for the taxpayers. Nevertheless, with this change, the desired result could not be obtained, and the old application was brought back.<sup>26</sup>

Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire founded their own schools and continued their education in their own language depending on their religious and cultural organizations. The schools governed by non-Muslims were largely autonomous and they could prepare a syllabus as they wished, with minimum supervision mechanisms for these schools. Indeed, the government did not directly deal with educational activities other than military schools until the Tanzimat and did not attempt to use education as a means of integrating Muslims and non-Muslims students. The use of education as an object of integration was mentioned in Tanzimat discourse, but practical efforts were quite late. The first state school that opened its doors to non-Muslim students was the Ottoman Medical School (*Mekteb-i Tibbiye-i Askeriye-i*

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<sup>25</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, V. 5, (Ankara: TTK, 2011), 178-179.

<sup>26</sup> ibid, 180-181.

*Şahane*) in 1841, which initially opened as a military school on 14 May 1839. In this school, managed by an Austrian, Professor Bernard, French was the medium of instruction, and some of the teachers were non-Muslim and European, and most importantly the “Ottomanism” policy had an important role in school enrolment of non-Muslim students. Non-Muslims initially hesitated to send their children to such schools because of religious incitement, and the Jews were particularly concerned about dietary observances in students’ food (after 1846 the Jews were willing to send a student to the Medical School when the State provided a kosher cook for them).<sup>27</sup> In the wake of Tanzimat, the Ottoman administration started to open various schools, particularly Ottoman Junior High Schools (*Rüşdiye*).

Arrangements in military service were another important issue that changed under Tanzimat. Military service was historically central to Turkishness, and the Turkish people initially came into the realm of Islam as soldiers of the Abbasid Caliphs. However, Ottoman military forces were traditionally cosmopolitan, and included numerous ethnic groups (notably Albanians), and native Turks even attempted to disguise their own children as Christians in order for them to be adopted into the elite Janissary corps. Following Tanzimat the Sultans attempted to form a European-style national standing army, but the traditional expectation endured that defence of the state was primarily an obligation for Muslims; more prosaically, steady employment and numerous privileges meant that Muslim nations of the Ottoman State had a vested interest in preserving their monopoly.

Non-Muslims were employed in non-combat and supportive roles in the armed forces prior to 1835, but in this year non-Muslims were given permission to serve on active duty; by 1845 there was a quota for the employment of 1,500 non-Muslims in

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<sup>27</sup> Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Millet Sistemi*, (İstanbul, Ağaç Yayıncılık, 1992), 77.

the navy.<sup>28</sup> Serving the nation in the armed forces necessarily entails normative emancipation and equality, including for non-Muslims, as in the Rashidun Caliphate, thus this was an important symbolic development in the Ottoman reforms.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3.2 Edict of Reform/Islahat Fermanı (1856)

Building on Tanzimat, one of the most important regulations on the management of Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman State was the Edict of Reform (*Islahat Fermanı*) of 1856, which enshrined the full administrative and legal equality of non-Muslims demanded by European states, and which from the Ottoman geopolitical perspective sought to hamper those enemies' efforts to foment nationalist separatism among Ottoman subjects. Foreign ambassadors consulted with commissioners of the Ottoman State, including Shaykh al-Islam Arif Efendi, to evaluate and formulate recommendations for the Edict, which was declared on 18 February 1856 and reported to the states participating in the Paris Congress convened after the Crimean War.<sup>30</sup>

The Edict of Reform was added as the ninth article of the Paris Treaty with the consent of the allied states (England, France, and the Ottoman State) at the Paris Congress on 30 March 1856. The article declared to foreign states a guarantee for non-Muslims and even the right to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman State.<sup>31</sup> Most of the provisions of the Edict were about the rights of non-Muslims, including the following articles:

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<sup>28</sup> Ufuk Gülsöy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Seriüveni*, (İstanbul: Simurg Yayınları, 2000), 39.  
<sup>29</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, V. 5, 184-185.

<sup>30</sup> The Crimean War was an Ottoman-Russian conflict between 4 October 1853 and 30 March 1856. Britain, France, and Piedmont-Sardinia joined the war on the Ottoman side, and it was essentially a battle by European states to keep Russia out of Europe and the Mediterranean. The war ended with the victory of the allied forces.

See Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, (Boston: Brill, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Millet Sistemi*, 63-64.

1. The privileges and immunities granted to non-Muslims since the era of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) would continue unchanged.
2. The patriarchal election procedure would be reformed, and the spiritual leaders such as the patriarch, bishop, and metropolitan would be granted lifetime appointments.
3. Non-Muslims affairs would be carried out by a parliament comprising spiritual leaders.
4. Any donations or dues to non-Muslim spiritual leaders would be completely abolished, and the state would pay a salary for them.
5. Non-Muslims would have free rights to open worship in their quarters.
6. All sects were equal to enjoy the freedom of religion.
7. Terms expressing that a class is downgraded by another class in terms of religion or language were to be removed.
8. The use of such terms by officials and the public would also be prohibited by law.
9. No one would be compelled to change religion.
10. The service of all Ottoman subjects, regardless of religion, would be accepted, including as civil servants of the State.
11. Everyone with legal capacity and qualifications would have the right to enter the military or public schools of the State, regardless of their religion.
12. Like Muslims, non-Muslims would have the right to serve in the military or to pay the exemption tax.
13. Cases involving special laws among non-Muslims would be heard by the patriarchs in the Spiritual Assembly.

14. The elections of Muslims and non-Muslims in provincial and provincial councils would be well organized.<sup>32</sup>

The Tanzimat Edict and Edict of Reform complement each other in terms of the rights of non-Muslims in the Ottoman State. Both edicts were prepared during hard times for the Ottoman State, exhausted by war with Russia and beset by internal factions and external enemies.<sup>33</sup> The Tanzimat Edict was prepared by Ottoman statesmen to manage internal dynamics creatively, for the benefit of the State, while the Edict of Reform was prepared together with foreign ambassadors because of external pressures. The principles of the Edict of Reform were decided between Âlî Pasha and the French and English ambassadors. The Tanzimat Edict was reported to foreign embassies only for their information, after its declaration. However, the mention of the Edict of Reform in the Paris Treaty signalled the Ottoman State's willingness to accede to the expectations of other states, which was bitterly resented at home. Mustafa Reşit Pasha, a statesman who played an important role in the preparation of the Tanzimat Edict, expressed that he was not against the idea of the continuation of reforms, but he considered the inclusion of the Edict in the Paris Treaty to be a great political indiscretion and it suggested the right of European states to criticise and intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman State. In addition, Mustafa Reşit Pasha argued that the broad rights granted to non-Muslims in this period were regulated without the reaction of Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

Among populist Muslim political movements and social conservatives there was great discomfort about the erosion of traditional differences and hierarchies in the Ottoman Empire, in its class structure as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims,

<sup>32</sup> Mehmet Seyitdanlioğlu and Halil İnalçık, *Tanzimat Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu* (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2006), 5.

<sup>33</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, V. 6, (Ankara: TTK, 2011), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlama*, (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1973), 191.

and foreign (i.e. Western) states were castigated as the main instigators of unwelcome reformist meddling.<sup>35</sup> Under the traditional Ottoman system symbolic manifestations of faith (e.g. dress codes) enforced differentiations between communities seeking to institute social order, but under reformism they became potential flashpoints of conflict (e.g. the chiming of church bells alongside the azan under the freedom of religion), and rumours spread of the potential for inter-communal conflict. Indeed, riots erupted in numerous cases, such as in Aleppo and Damascus in 1860, when the homes and businesses of non-Muslims were destroyed in clashes between mobs of different religions.<sup>36</sup> This provided a pretext for increasing attempts by the West to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman State, usually under the guise of protecting minorities, which undermined the perceived and actual authority of the regime in the eyes of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Consequently, the inclusion by the Ottoman State of special articles in the Paris Treaty pertaining to the rights of minorities did not avert Western intervention in internal affairs, rather it accelerated it.

In contrast to the expectations, there were intense reactions from many non-Muslims to the Edict of Reform. Some non-Muslim communities opposed the principle of equality; in particular, the Greeks (*Rums*) frequently expressed that they were willing to tolerate the supremacy of the Muslims but would never accept equalization with the Armenians and Jews.<sup>37</sup> In general, the Greeks (i.e. Orthodox Christians) were the most privileged class among non-Muslims in Ottoman society. For instance, senior civil service positions such as translator ships and voivode of Wallachia and Moldavia were conventionally allotted to candidates elected from

<sup>35</sup> Kemal Beydilli, “1839 Tanzimat ve 1856 Islahat Fermanları Hakkında”, *150. Yılında Tanzimat*, (İstanbul: Aydinlar Ocağı Yayınevi, 1990), 27.

<sup>36</sup> Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Alman-İngiliz Belgelerinin ve Siyasi Gelişmelerinin Işığında Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)*, 71.

<sup>37</sup> Ufuk Gülsoy, “Islahat Fermanı”, *DIA*, V. 19, (İstanbul: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 188.

among the Greeks. Thus, the Greeks participated in state administration to a certain extent. The Greek Patriarch was also present in front of other non-Muslim leaders in drafting the protocols of the Edict, but he did not approve of Orthodox equality with other non-Muslim communities, and the idea of Christian parity with the Jews was anathema.<sup>38</sup> In traditional Christian belief, the Jews actively invoked the curse of God on themselves in order to crucify Jesus,<sup>39</sup> and there was an upsurge in pogroms against the Jews during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Orthodox Christians, particularly in Russia.

Consequently, Edict of Reform was too far away from providing the practical interests targeted by the Ottoman State and it could not satisfy Muslims and non-Muslims within the empire, nor could Western states intervene in any positive way in Ottoman internal affairs.

### 2.3.3 The Affects of External Factors

The most important factor in the declaration of the Tanzimat Edict and Edict of Reform was the political issues to which the Ottoman State was exposed. After the French Revolution (1789), nationalistic nation states became the template of the future, and Germany was constructed on this principle in 1871, while multi-ethnic confederations such as the Habsburg and Ottoman empires entered what proved to be a terminal decline. Numerous interests were keen to benefit from the windfall of the collapse of the Ottoman State, particularly France, Britain, and Russia, all of whom sought to exacerbate internal problems and ethnic conflicts for their own benefit. As

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<sup>38</sup> Gülnihal Bozkurt, *Alman-İngiliz Belgelerinin ve Siyasi Gelişmelerinin Işığında Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 27: 25.

the Ottoman Empire became weakened both internally and externally, intervention in the internal affairs of foreign states was increasing commensurately.<sup>40</sup>

As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century non-Muslims, especially Christians, began to be increasingly influenced by the diplomatic and cultural appeal of Western states, predicated on denominational affiliations. The Protestants (mainly Armenians, as discussed below) were patronized by Britain, Germany, and the United States, while Catholics were generally protected by France and Austria, while the most important minority, the Greek Orthodox, were patronized by Russia.<sup>41</sup> This dovetailed into later colonial influence, with France patronising the Catholic interests in Cukurova, Lebanon, and Syria, while Britain alleged the interests of the few Protestants living in the Ottoman State to preserve her influence in the Middle East, Egypt, Arabia, and Iraq. Russia intensified its historical grievance to reclaim Constantinople and turned its attention to Orthodox and Gregorian Christians to increase its influence in the Turkish Straits and the Black Sea (and thus, by extension, its reach into the Mediterranean as a potential menace to the Suez Canal). Russia's demands for more rights and protectorate over Orthodox elements living in the Ottoman State fomented the Crimean War in 1853. The obvious geostrategic implications of Russian victory over the Ottomans would be calamitous for the economic interests of Britain and France, who subsequently rushed to the defence of their Turkish allies. Despite winning the Crimean War, the Treaty of Paris (1856) undermined the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> İsmail Eyyupoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Birinci Dünya Savaşına Kadar Osmanlı Devleti'nde Azınlık Problemi", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No. 11, (1999), 249.

<sup>41</sup> Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913)", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, ed. Mehmet Ö. Alkan, V. 1, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 96.

<sup>42</sup> Samim Akgönül, *Azınlık Türk Bağlamında Azınlık Kavramına Çapraz Bakışlar*, (İstanbul: BGST Yayınları, 2011), 116.

From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the nationalist movements became widespread, non-Muslims in the Ottoman State started some activities to emerge as nations. Many issues in addition to the intrinsic allure of the images of Western culture presented to these non-Muslims motivated their struggles for independence. They were enabled to form nationalist organisations due to direct funding or other forms of economic support from Western interests, including privileges granted by capitulations and the protective policies of Western states for minority traders. As a result, non-Muslims who shared economic privileges with European merchants emerged as a new class dominating international trade in the Ottoman State. State and private missionary activities were also associated with increasing interference in Ottoman internal affairs, although this proselytization made little headway with Muslims, Rums (i.e. Orthodox Christians), and Jews.<sup>43</sup>

However, the situation of the Armenians was markedly different in this regard. In 1702 there was a mass conversion of many Armenians to Catholicism, under the influence of Catholic priests who increased their work on the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire from 1668. In 1830, Sultan Mahmud II officially identified Armenian Catholics as a congregation at the behest of France, thus leading to the intervention of a Western state in the Ottoman internal affairs as well as creating an important development in the Millet System. Sultan Mahmud II forbade Armenian conversions from Catholicism to Gregorian Christianity and vice-versa. However, Protestant propaganda among the Armenians in the Ottoman territories was also effective from the establishment of American missions in 1828 and increasing

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<sup>43</sup> Ayşe Ozil, *Anadolu Rumları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Döneminde Millet Sistemini Yeniden Düşünmek*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2016), 80.

political influence on the part of Britain, which led to the recognition of Armenian Protestants in 1850.<sup>44</sup>

There was a political and cultural disconnection and even disagreement over the religious centre within the Armenian community; additionally, their population was dispersed geographically in very different regions in the Ottoman State, and their educational activities were of a very low level. Many sources agree that Turkish was the main spoken language among Armenians until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> At this juncture, missionary activities galvanised Armenian nationalism and united the disparate sects and groups in their national project. American missionaries opened in Istanbul and in Anatolia that led to revitalization of Armenian language and culture. These schools also taught languages such as English, Greek, Latin, and French. Trade-related parents were sending their children to these schools. The reconsideration of Armenian led to an increased interest in Armenian history, culture, and folklore, which formed the nucleus for the formation (or resurgence) of Armenian nationalism. Some independent Armenians efforts attempted to prevent missionary influence, such as the Gregorian community that established Getronagan High School in Galata in order to prevent talented and intelligent Armenian youths from going to American schools, primarily for missionary purposes. In these kinds of schools, the most effective instructors of the period taught, and some of the instructors were subsequently assigned as patriarchs in the Armenian community in the following years.

Considering these developments, it can be said that the Ottoman government was exposed to heavy pressure and imposition by European States with regard to non-Muslims subjects from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the separatist activities of non-Muslim

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<sup>44</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, (İstanbul: Timas, 2000), 119.

<sup>45</sup> Murat Gökhan Dalyan, *XIX. Yüzyılda Gelenekten Battı Kültürüne Geçişte Ermeni Yaşamı*, (Ankara: Öncü Kitap, 2011), 38.

minorities, the Millet System, which was not subject to any major change until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, entered into the process of dissolving. For this reason, the Ottoman State made important changes in the status of non-Muslims, but these new policies were not able to prevent the emergence of separatist activities in the following years.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

The Ottoman Empire, one of the greatest empires in world history, was a confederation that managed communities with different religions, races, and cultures under a single political sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> The religious communities ruled by the Ottoman State constituted a rich tapestry of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Europe, but keeping this highly complex and colourful composition together was a difficult task through collective supremacy under a long-term political framework. The Ottoman State managed socio-cultural differences with an ingenious grace and governed a complex geographical region for six centuries. The popular Western calumny that this administration was based on tyranny and fear denies historical facts. The Ottoman administration was based on a very advanced consensus and sophisticated management structure for the mentioned period.

Ottoman civilization spans the centuries from the end of the European Middle Ages to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the West, the late 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a watershed between a history of massive repression to relative enlightenment, embodied in humane policies such as the American Citizenship Declaration in 1776 and The Human and Citizens' Rights declared by the French Revolution in 1789. In the European feudal system, serfs were regarded as slaves, with no guarantee of fundamental rights, while slaves and free folk in the Ottoman Empire, including non-Muslims, were guaranteed certain

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<sup>46</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Osmalı Barıştı*, 23.

inalienable rights, and the relative freedom of women amazed travellers to the Orient such as Lady Mary Montagu; indeed the whole artistic movement of Turquerie in France and Britain during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was premised on those countries' pursuit of Ottoman freedoms in all aspects of life and an end to their own experiences of religious homogeneity and oppression.<sup>47</sup>

In this context, it can be more easily understood that the Ottoman Millet System was far ahead of the times when compared to the unjust and unlawful applications of the rest of the world. The Millet System established by the Ottoman State was not *equal*, but it was regarded by most people subject to it as *fair*, and in practical terms it was in many ways more conducive to respect for individual rights and opportunities than the modern economic system. It was a belief that gave people their social-political and legal status, and there was no nobility acquired from birth; slaves could live in great pomp and luxury, ruling vast regions. In this system, Muslims in general were the dominant millet, and they were to defend to the death non-Muslims' fundamental rights to freedom of religion, life, honour, and property, under the protection of the State. Thanks to this system developed by the Ottomans from classical Islamic formulations, people from various religions, sects, and races thrived for centuries within the framework of Islamic culture and civilization.

The reform movement, which started in 1839 with the Tanzimat, and which continued with the Islahat in 1856, was an effort to reinforce the ties of society between Muslims and non-Muslims. However, the reform movements were met with reaction from both Muslims and non-Muslims. Consequently, if the reforms were aimed at reuniting the dispersing Ottoman society, the implementation was totally contrary to this aim.

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<sup>47</sup> Merve Senem Arkan, "Lady Montagu and the Representation of The Oriental Women", *Journal of Academic and Social Science Studies*, No.35, (2015, July), 463-469.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **MANAGEMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN**

### **MALAYSIA (1957-1976)**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter explained the ways in which the Ottoman Government grappled with a complex tapestry of ethnic identities accumulated during centuries of religiously motivated governance in the quest to form a unified, inclusive, and homogenous state. The salient ethnic differences in Malaya arose due to mass migration under British colonial governance, predicated on maximum profit extraction from Malaya and from the migrants themselves. With minimal regard for the indigenous Malay States and peoples, the British transported people as they did plants (e.g. opium) to the Straits Settlements, and bequeathed mass populations of Indians and Chinese alongside the original Malays as a potentially dangerous socio-cultural milieu to be managed by the Malayan administration after independence. This chapter explores the historical background of the diverse societal structure of Malaya and the policies for the management of socio-cultural diversity in peace and harmony during the two post-independence prime ministers.

Malaysia consists of two separate sections divided by the South China Sea: Peninsular Malaysia (i.e. West Malaysia) and East Malaysia. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, before the Europeans arrived, the area known as the Peninsular Malaysia was under the control of assorted Malay Sultanates established at different times along the west coast, generally radiating from Melaka. Prior to that, the region was governed by the Majapahit Empire, which defeated the Sri Vijaya Empire in the

14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The Malay States were nominally independent, with British “Residents” being appointed to “advise” their courts from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and in practice they were subject to British colonial administration, which directly ruled the Straits Settlements to which most migrant labour was directed, particularly Singapore and Penang.

Naturally British colonial interests in the Malay States, which operated with the permission of the Sultans, could import labour, such as plantation labourers or clerks etc. Consequently, throughout the colonial period Malaysia had an undisputedly pluralist societal structure consisting of the Malays and the immigrant Chinese and Indians who were brought to the region *en masse* from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1930s. It should be noted that there were venerable and long-established “immigrant” communities wholly naturalised in the port cities around Malaya for centuries before this, notably the Peranakan Chinese community in Melaka and elsewhere, prior to the mass immigrant flows of the British colonial period. Melaka itself became a developed strategic commercial centre in trade between China and India from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and effectively indigenous Chinese and Indian trading communities emerged in the city.<sup>2</sup>

The organic way in which these various ethnic groups settled in the region was in ethnic quarters, although they were in communication with each other in public spaces and general life. Under the governance of the Melaka Sultanate, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Melaka became an important business centre for the Malay, Arab, Indian, Chinese, Javanese and Middle Eastern traders; it was essentially the hinge of trade between India in the West and China in the East, fulfilling the role later adopted by

<sup>1</sup> C. Mary Turnbull, *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei*, (Singapore: Graham Brash, 1981), 15-18.

<sup>2</sup> Wilfred Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya: A Historical Study*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), 64.

Singapore. The Melaka Sultanate continued to exist in the region for about a hundred years until the Portuguese occupation in 1511,<sup>3</sup> whereupon many locals fled to other regions of the Peninsula. Some sources claimed that the occupation of Melaka was facilitated by collaborators among the Indian and Chinese merchants, who were displeased with the way they were treated by the Malay Sultanate administration (possibly with regard to onerous taxation on the urban merchants to subsidise state activities in the rural hinterland).<sup>4</sup>

The Portuguese writer Tome Pires who came to the region through Portuguese invasion of Melaka states that Melaka was one of the centres of regional trade and in Melaka about 84 languages were spoken due to merchants from different parts of the world.<sup>5</sup> In addition to this, Duarte Barbosa described Melaka in 1518 as “the richest sea port with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and abundance of shipping and trade in the whole world.”<sup>6</sup> In 1641, the Dutch took over Melaka from the Portuguese, which they ruled until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when British domination ensued.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.2 BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD (1789-1957)**

Britain acquired its first foothold in the Malay Peninsula in 1786, with the lease of Penang Island to the British East India Company agent Francis Light from the Sultan of Kedah. Part of this agreement included a British guarantee of protection to the

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, (London: Palgrave, 2017), 39.

<sup>4</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 23-24.

<sup>5</sup> Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515, And the Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Rutter of A Voyage in Red Sea*, V. II, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 269.

<sup>6</sup> Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Capitalism*, (London, Frank Cass, 1977), 187.

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Gomes, “Peoples and Cultures”, in *The Shaping of Malaysia*, ed. Amarjit Kaur and Ian Metcalfe, (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 80.

Kedah Sultanate against attacks from the outside, which paved the way for military domination. The British were not primarily concerned with Penang or Kedah itself, rather they sought to galvanise their existing Indian trade with China, including by constructing a naval base to patrol the sea lands and accelerating lucrative opium trading by growing it in Penang and transporting it to China faster than from India.<sup>8</sup> The Anglo-Dutch Agreement of 1824 essentially awarded modern Indonesia to the Dutch East Indies Company and West Malaysia to the British East India Company (with no consultation of the local residents). In 1826, Penang, Melaka, and Singapore were amalgamated in the Straits Settlements, a British colony originally directed by the East India Company from Calcutta, then Penang followed by Singapore, until direct rule from the Colonial Office in London in 1867.<sup>9</sup>

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, internal conflicts began in Perak to control the tin mines. In the Malay States, Mining was typically operated by British colonial interests subject to agreements with the Sultans, and the incursion of Chinese immigrants brought to work in the tin mines often antagonised local Malays who were excluded from employment in such lucrative industries. Continual labour conflicts particularly among different Chinese groups and secret societies in the Straits Settlements brought the British trade into recession in the region by the 1870s, thus on January 20, 1874, the Pangkor Treaty was signed between Sir Andrew Clarke, the Governor General of the Straits Settlements, and Sultan Abdullah of Perak, to end the conflict.<sup>10</sup> This signed agreement was always basis for agreements to be made with

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<sup>8</sup> R. Bonney, "Francis Light and Penang", *MBRAS*, V. 38, No. 1, (July 1965), 135-136.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Tarling, *Imperialism in Southeast Asia: A Fleeting Passing Phase*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1979), 115.

other Malay Sultanates in later periods, and was the starting point of the British expansionist effect on these Sultanates.<sup>11</sup>

With the Treaty of Federation of 1895, Pahang, Selangor, Perak, and Negeri Sembilan were known as the Federated Malay States (FMS) were under the auspices of British Residents, who were appointed as advisers to their Malay Sultans. This enabled the British to essentially control trade unhindered, including with regard to managing Chinese and Indian labour and communal issues, while local Malay issues (particularly religion) were left to the Sultans.<sup>12</sup> The remaining five states (Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Johor) were known as the Unfederated Malay States (UFS), and later also accepted the Resident System.<sup>13</sup>

### **3.2.1 Chinese and Indian Immigration to Malaya**

The bringing of Chinese and Indians into the Peninsula led to a fundamental population change in Malayan society. Large-scale Chinese immigration began in about 1850. This migrant flow increased in direct proportion to the demand for tin in Europe and America. Consequently, the increase in the number of Chinese miners caused an increase in the number of tin mines. The British government encouraged the unlimited and large-scale Chinese immigration to Malaya to increase the economic output of the tin mines. Several laws were put in force in Malaya to protect Chinese workers and to work under safe conditions. For example, the Immigration Ordinance

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<sup>11</sup> Azmi Arifin, “Perak Disturbances 1871-75: British Colonialism, The Chinese Secret Societies and The Malay Rulers”, *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, V. 39, No. 1, (July 2012), 61-63.

<sup>12</sup> Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, 134; Joginder Singh Jessy, *History of South-East Asia 1824-1965*, (Malaysia: Penerbitan Darulaman, 1985), 290-292.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Olof Winstedt, *A History of Malaysia*, (Singapore: Marican&Sons, 1982), 236-238; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1955), 612; Frank Athelstane Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*, (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1948), 245-271.

of 1877 made it compulsory for Chinese workers to register their contracts.<sup>14</sup> However, most of the workers were working under difficult conditions and mistreatment by mine owners was commonplace.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the number of Chinese labourers working in mines in Perak's Larut Valley area doubled from 1850 to the early 1900s.<sup>16</sup>

The immigrant flow to Malaya in connection with the increase in demand for rubber increased again towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this direction, the British government allowed the Indian immigrants to come to Malaya from India (including Ceylon). Parallel to this, new areas for rubber production opened. The immigration of Indians to Malaya was planned and under the end-to-end control of the colonial administration, unlike Chinese immigration. Mass Indian immigration began in the 1880s and accelerated with the sudden increase in rubber demand in 1905, and reached its peak in 1938. Approximately 80% of Indian workers were unskilled, and almost all worked for the British colonial interests, mainly in plantation labour.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the Chinese and Indian immigrants, immigrants from the Dutch East Indies began to settle in large numbers in various parts of the Malay provinces (especially the west coast) from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, settling in dried marshland areas and beginning agricultural activity.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most important factors of the non-Malay immigration to Malaya was the expectation of high earnings for workers, while another was that the colonial

<sup>14</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, 197.

<sup>15</sup> Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, 85-86.

<sup>16</sup> Firdaus Abdullah, "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia: To Restructure Society, to Eradicate Poverty", *Ethnic Studies Report 15*, No. 2, (July 1997), 193; A. M. Pountney, *Review of the Census Operations and Results*, (London: Darling and Sons, 1911), 22.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Stenson, *Class, Race and Colonialism in West Malaysia: The Indian Case*, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 17; Kernal Singh Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of Their Immigration and Settlement (1789-1957)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91-92.

<sup>18</sup> Tunku Shamsul Bahrin, "The Pattern of Indonesian Migration and Settlement in Malaya", *Asian Studies*, V. 5, (August 1967), 239.

administration encouraged this massive migration. The result of the influx of Chinese and Indian immigrants, the percentage of the non-Malays showed a significant increase in Malaya's different parts, including the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States, under the British administration. In the Straits Settlements, the Malay population declined from 52% to 25% between 1871 and 1931, while the non-Malay population increased from 48% to 75% over the same period.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Malay population in FMS dropped from 56% to 37% in 1931, while at the same time the non-Malay population increased from 44% to 63%. Interestingly, until 1891, in the FMS, the non-Malay populations were the majority.<sup>20</sup> The tacit acceptance of the massive number of Chinese and Indian immigrants transforming the demographic profile of Malaya by the indigenous residents during the 19<sup>th</sup> century is testament to the toleration of the locals (and/ or their obedience to their Sultans), and contrasts strongly to the xenophobic hatred of foreigners we see in many less enlightened parts of the world nowadays.

Between 1891 and 1957 the non-Malay population as a whole palpably outnumbered the indigenous, original inhabitants, but for the most part these were single men without families. Indian labourers typically envisaged working in Malaya to save money for a few years then returning to their homeland to get married and begin a family. Qing China did not allow women to migrate overseas, partly to avoid human trafficking into prostitution, which became rife in ports throughout Asia, including in the Straits Settlements, but during the 20<sup>th</sup> century such restrictions were

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<sup>19</sup> Donald R. Snodgrass, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), 26.

<sup>20</sup> C. A. Vlieland, "The Population of the Malay Peninsula: A Study in Human Migration", *Geographical Review*, V. 24, No. 1, (January 1934), 65-66.

lifted.<sup>21</sup> The British colonial administration thought that the Chinese and Indian workers who came to the country would return to their countries once they had earned a certain income, but the free immigration policy for the Chinese continued until the Great Depression in 1930. At this juncture there were problems in the rubber industry and trade was slackening in general, and Malay leaders demanded that measures be taken to curb Chinese and Indian immigration flows to the country in 1930 at the Federal Council Meeting, due to the deterioration of the unemployment situation and the population imbalance. The disproportionate increase in the number of the non-Malay worker immigrant populations had serious consequences for subsequent ethnic relations in Malaya.<sup>22</sup>

### **3.2.2 Social Relations and Political Developments in the Colonial Period**

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-colonial ideas among Malays arose in specific regions of the Peninsula. For example, in 1875, two major uprisings took place, one led by Malay leaders in Perak that resulted in the death of British Resident, and the other led by Penghulu Dol Said in Melaka. In addition, different local revolts were led in Pahang by Dato Bahaman in 1891, in Kelantan by Tok Janggut in 1915, and in Terengganu by Hj Abdul Rahman in 1928 against the British government. These sporadic protests and uprisings were localised and uncoordinated, therefore they did not take the form of a national uprising.

The first national uprising against the British government took place at the end of the 1920s and was fomented by the declining material standards (i.e. economic backwardness and poverty) of the Malays. The first anti-colonial movements were

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<sup>21</sup> John G. Butcher, *The British in Malaya 1880-1941: The Social History of a European Community in Colonial South-East Asia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 17.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, 35-32.

initiated by Malay students who graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, but their political ideas and ideologies were not widely accepted by the Malays.<sup>23</sup> Later, in 1938, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) was established, drawing attention to the backwardness of Malays in the economic area and demanding independence for Malaya. The leaders of this movement, inflated with anti-colonial ideals and Marxist ideology, advised the Malays to gather against capitalism and colonialism.<sup>24</sup> They argued that the way to compete with the non-Malays in terms of economy was by promoting the Malays for modernization and raising their level of education. If the Malays did not improve in the specified criteria, it was stated that immigrant Chinese and Indians would take their place. However, this movement gained little popular support, as it did not find a response in the latently conservative and respectful Malay society, due to its anti-ruler and anti-elite ideas. It was unimaginable for the Malays to challenge Malay Feudalism during this period. Indirectly, however, the idea (and material fact) that the Malays were economically behind the migrant Chinese did take hold in society. In fact, although the KMM was not the first party to defend the Malay Union, it was important in awakening the masses to the perceived economic injustice in Malaya.

The first Chinese and Indian parties in Malaya were established not to defend the rights and interests of migrant non-Malays but to maintain links with the countries of origin of Chinese and Indian settlers. Until the late 1930s, the loyalties of Chinese and Indian immigrants were not in Malaya but in their home countries, and their residence in Malaya was implicitly understood to be temporary.<sup>25</sup> The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), for example, argued that the dual citizenship of the Chinese

<sup>23</sup> Wan Hashim Wan Teh, *Race Relations in Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 166.

<sup>24</sup> ibid, 177.

<sup>25</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 261.

in Malaya in May 1946, but that their realm of nationality should be only connected to China. The local-born Chinese known as *Baba* argued that they must have equal rights with the native Malays. Their ancestors were the Straits Chinese residing in the Straits Settlements, including the Chinese who settled in Melaka in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Their first leader was Tan Cheng Lock, who demanded that all races should have equal rights in Malaya; this Chinese demand for equality was met with a strong opposition from the Malays.<sup>26</sup>

It could not be said that the relations between the Malays and the Chinese were in complete harmony, even if they were not in conflict. Tension in relations between these two ethnic races increased in certain time periods, particularly after the Second World War. The Japanese occupation of Malaya (February 1942 to September 1945) had a marked impact on Malaya's political development that laid the foundations for the anti-colonial movement after the Second World War. The Japanese authorities were particularly astute in inciting indigenous inhabitants against migrant communities as well as European colonial powers, which laid the foundations for the politics of the Malay peasantry.<sup>27</sup>

The Chinese in Malaya were subjected to harsh interventions by the Japanese, since they were perceived to be in favour of China in the Sino-Japanese war and Britain in the context of Malaya. As a result, many Chinese supported anti-Japanese movements, including the Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). The Japanese set up paramilitary units consisting mostly of Malays to fight against the Chinese resistance; this was probably the first time Malays were formed into combat units and armed to support Japanese fighting force. The

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<sup>26</sup> Wan Hashim Wan Teh, *Race Relations in Malaysia*, 34.

<sup>27</sup> N. John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: Heineman Educational Books, 1980), 35.

MCP was supported by the British despite their anti-colonial or anti-British ideology (as with the Communist Party of China and the Soviet Union itself) due to the expediency of the war.

Japan was an important factor in increasing the ethnic tension between Chinese and the Malays during the occupation. The anti-Japanese MPAJA was created by the Chinese, while the paramilitary force under Japanese rule was formed by the Malays. The clash between the Malays and the Chinese reached its peak in the three-week time period after the surrender of the Japanese and the return of British. During this three-week period, MPAJA controlled some territories and had an opportunity to punish the Malays and some Chinese for collaborating with the Japanese.<sup>28</sup> One of those arrested by the Chinese was the UMNO founder, Dato Onn Jaafar. This caused a vehement protest between the Malays and the first serious, widespread ethnic violence and conflict in Malaya.

Turmoil that first began in Johor later spread throughout the region, including Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Pahang, and other states. The turmoil continued until the British return to the region. Even though turmoil did not turn into violent ethnic conflicts nationwide, the relationship between the Malays and the non-Malays, especially Chinese, were profoundly and adversely affected. This chaos caused a lack of confidence in the emerging national society.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Chinese rejected military service in the struggle against the communists during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), claiming that their dependence was based on family origins rather than on Malaya. The government's failure to win the support of the Chinese in the Emergency was anathema to national unity. The Chinese antipathy to serving in the armed forces for the nascent Malayan State was so intense that when mandatory

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<sup>28</sup> Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 52.

<sup>29</sup> Wan Hashim Wan Teh, *Race Relations in Malaysia*, 38.

military service was enacted in 1950, 10,000 Chinese returned to China to avoid the draft (many Indians also left).<sup>30</sup>

Developments of the post-World War II matured the political consciousness of the Malays and strengthened Malay nationalism. It was also gradually becoming clear that non-Malays, i.e. Chinese and Indian immigrants, would not return to their countries *en masse* and would in general remain in Malaya as permanent communities. The permanent settlement of non-Malays can be observed in birth rates, which among the Chinese and Indians rose from 21% and 12% in 1921 to 75% and 65% in 1957. When Malaya gained independence, three-quarters of the local Chinese population and two-thirds of the Indian population were born in Malaya.<sup>31</sup>

Another important development for the Malays was the British proposal of the “Malayan Union” plan, the main purpose of which was to merge all the Malay States and Straits Settlements under one rule, as directed by Whitehall. Thus, Malaya would be a direct colony of British, with purported equality for all races. According to the citizenship law, immigrant Chinese and Indians were entitled to obtain Malayan citizenship.<sup>32</sup> The Malays strongly opposed this plan, according to which they would comprise a community only in their social and cultural life rather than as a nation. As a result, 41 Malay associations united and formed the Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersekutu (United Malay National Organization/UMNO) against the Malayan Union plan. In this period, the most important factor driving the Malays was Malay nationalism. The pre-independence slogan *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live Malays!) also

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<sup>30</sup> Abdul Razak bin Dato Hussein, *The May 13 Tragedy: A Report*, (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 1969), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Hirschman, “The Making Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology”, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (Spring 1986), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Milner and Helen Ting, “Race and Its Competing Paradigms A Historical Review”, in *Transforming Malaysia Dominant and Competing Paradigms*, ed. Anthony Milner, Abdul Rahman Embong and Tham Siew Yean, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2014), 31.

continued to be used by UMNO during the post-independence period to reflect their ethnic concern in Malayan governance.<sup>33</sup> Conversely, the Chinese were very supportive of the Malayan Union plan, which accorded them citizenship rights. The Chinese were confident that the Malayan Union plan would succeed, and were trying to use their economic strength to break the Malay resistance.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the Chinese began to question the legitimacy of the role of the Sultans in the administration in their newspapers, observing that the Sultans did not represent the Chinese. Some Malays also questioned the position of the Sultans. For example, Dato 'Onn questioned some of the Sultans' activities and their support for the Malayan Union plan. The entrenched Malay opposition to the Malayan Union plan led to it being withdrawn in favour of the Federation of Malaya Agreement (1948), which was adopted, with the following main principles:

1. The restoration of the sovereignty of the Malay rulers as it was before the Second World War (under the protection of the British government).
2. Malaya was drawn out of direct colonial control; the indirect rule of the pre-war years was continued.
3. The British government continued to recognize the special position of the Malays as the indigenous people of Malaya, as in the pre-war years.
4. The British government took responsibility for defence and foreign policy.
5. The principle of *jus soli* with regard to citizenship of the non-Malays, as stipulated in the Malayan Union Constitution, was completely dropped.

Citizenship laws were however introduced for the first time, covering the whole country. This enabled non-Malays to apply for citizenship in the

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<sup>33</sup> Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 322.

Federation, though the qualifications required were stricter than those contained in the Malayan Union Constitution.<sup>35</sup>

It was more or less certain that the Chinese reaction to the Agreement of the Federation Malaya would not be positive, as the Chinese had supported the Malayan Union plan. A major strike was organized to show dissatisfaction with the new agreement by Chinese leader Tan Cheng Lock. It was also supported by the Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Malayan Trade Union, and the Malayan Communist Party.<sup>36</sup> However, in 1949, the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), founded by Tan Cheng Lock, formed an Alliance with UMNO and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) in the General Election of 1955, which became the strongest and largest coalition party in the country. Of the 1,280,000 people in the electoral roll of 1955, 85 per cent were Malay, 10 per cent Chinese, and the remaining 5 per cent Indian. The Alliance's success in the election increased the pressure for independence from the British. As a result, two years later, on August 31, 1957, the country gained independence.

The social contract between UMNO, MCA and MIC was reflected in the Constitution considering the status of each ethnic groups. According to this agreement, while the non-Malays could acquire citizenship, the Malays' special position would be accepted among society in perpetuity.<sup>37</sup> The consensus between the Alliances was manifest in Articles 89, 152, and 157 of the Constitution of the State. Article 89 contains the territories reserved for the Malays, Article 152 reports that Malay language is the national language of the country, which was enforced through

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<sup>35</sup> Wan Hashim Wan Teh, *Race Relations in Malaysia*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 327.

<sup>37</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia The Making of a Nation*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004), 37.

the National Language Policy.<sup>38</sup> Article 157 states that *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* was the guardian of the rights of the Malays and other indigenous peoples, and the protector of the fundamental rights of the non-Malays.<sup>39</sup>

It was not the first time that the privileges of the Malays were mentioned in the new constitution of the country as a condition. This was previously considered in the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC) of 1949-51, and the Reid Commission of 1956. Throughout the pre-independence period, non-Malays were immigrant workers, whether in the Straits Settlements under direct British rule, or in the Malay States. Independence paved the way for them to enjoy citizenship rights in the emerging nation.<sup>40</sup>

### **3.3 TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN: BAPA KEMERDEKAAN (FATHER OF INDEPENDENCE) PERIOD (1957-1970)**

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (known as “Tunku”) became Malaya’s first prime minister on August 31, 1957, and he continued to serve in this role until 1970.<sup>41</sup> He essentially had to invent his own role in the new country, and despite lacking any serious experience for such a complex and important role, he ultimately succeeded in being the *de facto* founder of Malaysia. Tunku demonstrated strong, decisive, and intelligent management that people anticipated from him. His political philosophy reflected the archetypal communal model of Malay society, seeking to build a house

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<sup>38</sup> Asmah Bt. Hj. Omar, *Language Planning for Unity and Efficiency: A Study of the Language Status and Corpus Planning Malaysia*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1979), 28.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph M. Fernando, *The Making of The Malayan Constitution*, (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2007), 164.

<sup>40</sup> K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and The Political Process in Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1915), 187-200.

<sup>41</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Contemporary Issues in Malaysian Politics*, (Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 1984), 1.

where everyone could live together. It was not an easy task to establish a country with a multiracial society structure and to continue its existence in harmony.

After the announcement of Malaya's independence, those who lived in this land did not have a previous nation or the heritage of centralism. This nation-building task was the most important issue. Independent and multiracial Malaysian citizens were supposed to be proud of being Malaysian, connected to the land they lived in, with common socio-cultural values. He was aware that the continuation of the nation required the gathering of immigrants under a single roof as Malaysian nation. It was clear that the members of this new nation had to establish a common socio-cultural identity, respect mutually different values, and have a sense of loyalty and belonging. According to Tunku, the acquisition of these values would lead to citizens with Malaysian consciousness and sensitivity.<sup>42</sup> Education, language and culture were the most important socio-cultural characteristics of Malaysians from the past to the present.

### **3.3.1 Education**

The foundations of the complex education system of Malaya were inherited from the colonial period. At the end of the First World War, there were three types of schools in Malaya. The first of these was the English-medium schools, providing education without racial discrimination among students, but they were urban-based and inaccessible to most rural dwellers (i.e. the majority of Malays). The second was Chinese schools, endowed by Chinese philanthropists. These schools generally promulgated the Chinese patriotism of the Kuomintang government. The last one was

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<sup>42</sup> Abdullah Ahmad, *Conversations with Tunku Abdul Rahman*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Edition, 2016), 37.

the Malay vernacular schools, which were preferred by most of the Malays who attended schools.<sup>43</sup>

In 1933, the colonial government decided to restrict educational spending and put the following practices into effect: increasing the prices of English-medium schools, cutting all provided aid to Chinese schools, and putting Malay education among the government's priorities. With this new application, English education became expensive, so the average Chinese parents could not send their children to these schools. Hence, they were headed for Chinese schools. This led to an increase in the number of students in Chinese schools. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party's victory over the Kuomintang in China changed the political order and cut Kuomintang support for education among the Chinese in Malaya, who could no longer go to China for education. This increased the need for more Chinese schools in Malaya itself. The colonial government took action in 1951 when Chinese schools were under government control, and the curriculum of these schools was determined according to Malaya's needs.

The Barnes Report (1951) emerged as the result of this effort of the government, and based on its recommendations the Education Ordinance (1952) was prepared, offering joint education for all Malayan community children.<sup>44</sup> In these schools, the language would be either English or Bahasa Melayu, according to the majority of the children attending the school, with the potential for the Director of Education to authorise Chinese or Tamil language education if there was sufficient demand. This new proposal was met with a fierce reaction from the Chinese community leaders, who argued that this new training program would affect Chinese

<sup>43</sup> Nik A. Hisham Ismail, *Nation Building: Education for Elites*, (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2011), 53.

<sup>44</sup> Tan Yao Sua and R. Santhiram, *Educational Issues in Multiethnic Malaysia*, (Selangor: SIRD, 2014), 14-17.

education and culture negatively.<sup>45</sup> Malay political factions on the other hand, demanded the supremacy of Bahasa Melayu as a single national language in Malaya.

When the Tunku and Alliance won the election in 1955, the educational status of the country was more or less as outlined by the Education Ordinance of 1952. It seemed clear that the newly elected government would deal with national education issues. Tunku wanted to work on a new educational policy by forming a committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education, Abdul Razak Hussein. The committee consisted of members of the parties that formed the Alliance. In this direction, there were 10 members from UMNO, 5 members from the MCA, and 1 member from the MIC. The meetings continued from September 1955 to April 1956. In May 1956 they produced the Razak Report, which was presented to the Federal Legislative Council and which became the new Education Ordinance in March 1957.

In summary, the Report proposed a national education based on “the uniformity of conditions and a common content of syllabuses.” This meant that all students would learn the same things about Malaya over the same syllabus. However, there was no suggestion that this training language should be a common language. Primarily, the Report was recommending two types of schools.<sup>46</sup> In the first type, the language of education would be Bahasa Melayu, and in the other type, medium of instruction would be English, Chinese or Tamil. In all national primary schools, English and Bahasa Melayu would be taught as compulsory courses. In addition, if the

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<sup>45</sup> J. K. P. Watson, “Cultural Pluralism, Education and National Identity in ASEAN Countries of Southeast Asia”, in *Education in Multicultural Societies*, ed. Trevor Corner, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 202.

<sup>46</sup> Yeok Kim Yew, *Education, National Identity, and National Integration: A Survey of Secondary School Students of Chinese Origin in Urban Peninsular Malaysia*, (Michigan: UMI, 1992), 116-117.

parents of 15 or more Chinese and Indian students demand education in their own language, these languages would be taught as elective courses.<sup>47</sup>

This new education system was put into practice with an extra motivation after independence. Between 1957 and 1960, the Alliance government's priority plan was to create a society that was integrated in harmony through education based on cultural traditions. Discussions on education and language among the parties that formed the Alliance government also opened agreed issues in the 1957 Constitution for debate. Members of the MCA and especially the United Chinese School's Association (UCSTA) were not happy with their plans to build a new generation with an integrated education system based on only the Malay language, culture, and traditions. In other words, members of the UCSTA and members of MCA who were against the new education system argued that all vernacular schools, including English-language ones, should continue as previously.<sup>48</sup>

Reactions to the new education system and language policy continued to increase, especially after the 1955 elections. On the other hand, Zainal Abidin bin Sultan Mydin, one of the Malay activists in UMNO, claimed that Bahasa Melayu should be accepted as national language, and national education should be structured accordingly. He saw national education and language as the primary tools to create a unified and integrated society. Tunku and the Alliance government argued that this process had to spread in time, so that it would not be exposed to extreme reactions. The Razak Report was updated in 1960 as the Rahman Talib Report.<sup>49</sup> The first of the measures taken by the Government in the field of education was to implement a

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<sup>47</sup> Tan Yao Sua and R. Santhiram, *Educational Issues in Multiethnic Malaysia*, 17-18.

<sup>48</sup> Tan Liok Ee, *Politics of Chinese Education in Malaya 1945-1961*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 167.

<sup>49</sup> Tan Yao Sua and R. Santhiram, *Educational Issues in Multiethnic Malaysia*, 25.

unified and national education plan and to introduce a single standard form to all curriculums without discrimination of any kind.

The Alliance government also attempted to develop modern, scientific, and technological perspectives in order to make the Malay language more widely used in higher education. In 1965 some major changes were made in the education policy, including the potential to use Bahasa Melayu as an alternative language to English in the Higher School Certificate and the Cambridge School Certificate exams.<sup>50</sup> After the May 13, 1969 incident, the use of Bahasa Melayu as an educational language in the education system began to be implemented with increased urgency.<sup>51</sup> From the beginning of 1970, when the Malay language became the instruction language for all Form One classes, English was put into the curriculum as a lesson. Tunku saw education as an important tool in creating empathy and harmony within a multiracial society. The Education Ordinance of 1956 and the Education Act of 1961 shaped the national education system that he wanted to create. These projects are undoubtedly important contributions that Tunku made to the nation-building process. These practices, which were carried out during Tunku's time, were subject to many criticisms, but also found many followers, many of whom were later included in the education system.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Carol Lynn Mitchell, *Language As An Instrument of National Policy: The Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka of Malaysia*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Fauziah Taib, "Implementing National Language Policy in Educational Institutions", in *Languages in the Malaysian Education System*, ed. Asmah Haji Omar, (London: Routledge, 2016), 36; Tan Yao Sua and R. Santhiram, *The Education of Ethnic Minorities: The Case of the Malaysian Chinese*, (Selangor: SIRD, 2010), 42.

<sup>52</sup> R. Santhiram, "Curriculum Materials for National Integration in Malaysia: Match or Mismatch?", *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, V. 17, No. 2, (1997), 10-11.

### 3.3.2 Language and Culture

The Malaya Constitution, in other words the social contract, accepted a common citizenship within a multiracial society. It also confirmed the Malays' special position and the citizenship of the non-Malays. This ensured that the existence of a new society in unity and harmony. The most obvious common bond among multiracial communities in the first years of independence was the English language. Naturally, it was used by the English colonial officers and administrators as the official language throughout the colonial period. For this reason, those who wanted to work in any official work had to know English language.<sup>53</sup>

For this reason, people gradually began to stop speaking in their own language. Despite being the mother tongue of most indigenous inhabitants, Bahasa Melayu had no official status or primacy in Malaya. No immigrant community that came to Malaya until the time of independence made any effort to learn about Malay language or culture. Consequently, all the efforts made to bring a new identity to the Malay language were faced with tough objections. In fact, the aims of both the MCA and the MIC were to equate or equalize the status of their mother tongue with the Malay language.<sup>54</sup> The common language issue in Malaya's multiracial society and the inequality between the non-Malays and the Malays were the most fundamental challenges to Tunku and his government.<sup>55</sup> Tunku, as the founding leader of the country, attached importance to education, language, and the socio-cultural practices of the Malays as the basis for a common national identity.

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<sup>53</sup> Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Palace, Political Party and Power: A Story of the Socio-Political Development of Malay Kingship*, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), 119-122.

<sup>54</sup> Yeok Kim Yew, *Education, National Identity, and National Integration: A Survey of Secondary School Students of Chinese Origin in Urban Peninsular Malaysia*, 118.

<sup>55</sup> Abd Rahim Abd Rashid, *Education and Nation Formation in Malaysia A Structural Analysis*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2002), 21.

Tunku also emphasised not only the Malay language as a national language, but also the protection of the Malay special privileges. In the post-independence period, the Alliance, led by Tunku, reached an agreement between the parties that the national language of the independent Malaya should be Bahasa Melayu. At this point, the society with a multiracial structure was taking a big step towards becoming a single nation.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Tunku strongly opposed the use of English, Chinese, and Tamil as official languages in the next decade after independence. According to Tunku, Bahasa Melayu did not only represent the special position of the Malays, rather it provided a common identity as a national language, to ensure that citizens felt belonging to the country within a multiracial community structure.<sup>57</sup>

The Constitution of 1957 specified that Malay was the national language, but recognised English as the second official language for a 10-year grace period following independence.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the sanction for the increased use of Bahasa Melayu as an official language increased rapidly from 1967, and this period was extended until 1973 in Sabah and Sarawak. The 10-year process adopted by the government was sufficient for the non-Malays to increase their skills at the Bahasa Melayu. With the National Language Act, Bahasa Melayu was enacted as the official language. However, the use of English as the official language was extended, particularly at the request of the MCA. This was met with reaction from Malay nationalists. The Act also shows that Tunku considered the role of English as the international language of science, but the request to continue to use English as a language of instruction in higher education met with resistance.

<sup>56</sup> Ooi Kee Beng, *The Reluctant Politician: Tun Dr. Ismail and His Time*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 82.

<sup>57</sup> J. K. P. Watson, “Cultural Pluralism, Nation Building and Educational Policies in Peninsular Malaysia”, in *Language Planning and Language Education*, ed. Chris Kennedy, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), 147.

<sup>58</sup> Abd Rahim Abd Rashid, *Education and Nation Formation in Malaysia A Structural Analysis*, 23.

The National Language Act apparently could not make any part of society happy. In fact, Tunku positively approached the non-Malays' concerns that they would forget their original culture because of education and language politics. For this reason, he never forcefully drove the issue of Bahasa Melayu as a priority in the nation-building process. He was also aware of the importance of English as an international language, and he urged all Malaysians to develop English proficiency, while learning Bahasa Melayu as a national language.

As a prince of Kedah, Tunku was a supporter of traditional Malayan culture, and etiquette was defined and implemented based on Malay tradition by the government. He personally organized the royal and state ceremonies and etiquette in accordance with the grandeur and splendour of the constitutional monarchy of Malaysia. Tunku also emphasised that the Agung had the highest position in the head and social hierarchy of the state. Although state officials tended to show more interest in the Prime Minister, the *de facto* executive, Tunku stated that in all protocols between the Prime Minister and the Sultan the latter was prioritised.

Tunku also oversaw the design of the official attire of cabinet ministers and protocol for officials, especially the national anthem, national flag, and national flower. He also showed a close interest in folk culture and the Malay language as a part of national identity. For example, in 1956, the first Malay cultural festival was held in Kuala Lumpur under the auspices of the government. In this festival, Malay cultural activities as well as Chinese and Indian dramas and dances were exhibited.<sup>59</sup> Lastly and most importantly, one of the efforts to make the Malay culture a common value during the Tunku prime ministry was the establishment of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1962, which would provide information on Malay

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<sup>59</sup> Mubin Sheppard, *Tunku His Life and Times: The Authorized Biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj*, (Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 1995), 135-136.

traditional music, drama and culture. Two years later, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport was set up to preserve and maintain the Malay cultural heritage.<sup>60</sup>

### **3.4 TUN ABDUL RAZAK HUSSEIN: BAPA PEMBANGUNAN (FATHER OF DEVELOPMENT) PERIOD (1970-1976)**

After the incident on May 13, 1969, the government attempted a number of necessary reforms aimed at ultimately ensuring unity by resolving the problems of ethnic inequality and conflict in the country. On September 23, 1970, Tun Abdul Razak, who created the new cabinet, stressed the importance of re-observing the policies created up to that time. During this process, the main aim was to ensure harmony between the political situation and social realities in the country are compatible with the policies that are being made and implemented. He felt that the bright future of the country in the political and economic context was due to the establishment of effective policies for the solution of the social and economic problems faced. His efforts in this context, open-minded attitude, and practicality enabled many different societies to contribute to the emerging politics. The major reforms in this period were Rukun Negara, the New Economic Policy, the National Cultural Policy, and the National Language and Education Policy. These reforms can also be seen as an effort to build a homogeneous nation. In this part of our work, the effects of these reforms on the achievement of national unity during Tun Abdul Razak's prime ministerial period are examined.

#### **3.4.1 Rukun Negara**

On July 1, 1969 Abdul Razak declared the establishment of the National Unity Department (Jabatan Perpaduan Negara, JPN). The JPN's field of operation was

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<sup>60</sup> Kobkua Suwannathat Pian, *Tunku An Odyssey of a Life Well-Lived and Well-Loved*, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2017), 164.

organizing government policies as well as conducting social and economic work. Additionally, the JPN was responsible for establishing management mechanisms to provide national associations, as well as presenting strategies and road maps to various government departments.<sup>61</sup> Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Shamsudin was appointed as the head of this department; Ghazali Shafie led the Operations Section, while Dr Agoes Salim was responsible for the research section, which consisted of two subsections.<sup>62</sup>

According to Abdul Razak, the establishment of the JPN had shown the effort of the new government to ensure the unity of the country. The new government needed to be able to produce open-minded and valid policies to ensure harmony between members of the society. Abdul Razak stated that if the government ignored social problems, they would become increasingly serious and more difficult to solve in future. Abdul Razak emphasized that state policies developed for ensuring social harmony in Malaysia must be designed in an open and clear direction and planned way. In addition, he stated that the national political stability of the country could not be achieved only by law and law enforcement. He pointed out that he would not be able to carry out the policies of the government without the people's loyalty and support.

Abdul Razak saw the incident on May 13, 1969 as a stumbling block in the nation building process. He argued that in the process of building this nation, it would not be enough to lift economic inequities alone, but to create a harmony in religion,

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<sup>61</sup> Carol Lynn Mitchell, *Language As An Instrument of National Policy: The Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka of Malaysia*, (Michigan: UMI, 1996), 53.

<sup>62</sup> Tun Ahmad Sarji, *My Recollections of Tun Abdul Razak*, (Selangor: MPH Publishing, 2016), 29.

language, ethnicity and cultural differences. The responsibility for the production of policies aimed at creating this national unity was given to the JPN by Abdul Razak.<sup>63</sup>

The work group created by the experts in the leadership of Dr Agoes Salim presented the draft of the document, Rukun Negara, which was successfully prepared, on January 27, 1970, to the National Unity Council (Majlis Perpaduan Negara, MPN). The committee formed to examine this document under Tun Tan Siew Sin's leadership presented the report to the MPN on 16<sup>th</sup> June. This document, called Rukun Negara, aimed to:

- Achieve stronger unity among communities.
- Preserve a democratic way of life.
- Form a just society so that the nations' prosperity could be enjoyed together equally and fairly.
- Form a liberal and tolerant society, especially with regard to different cultures.
- Create a society that is progressive in science and technology.<sup>64</sup>

In general, Rukun Negara stated that it aimed to build a union of people who embrace elements such as unity, justice, freedom, progressiveness, loyalty, kindness, piety, and loyalty. The desired association was not merely the coexistence of different races, but the elimination of economic and social differences among people. Justice is directly linked to the equitable distribution of the wealth of the country. The exploitation of each group in society by other groups should be prevented. Freedom comprised all individuals in society being able to express themselves, regardless of their origin, culture, and tradition. Differences in society are beneficial for the country

<sup>63</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, Muhammad Haji Salleh and Abd Ghapa Harun, *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, (Bangi: UKM Press, 2012), 280.

<sup>64</sup> Leon Comber, *13 May 1969 The Darkest Day in Malaysian History*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2012), 80.

and a source of national power. Loyalty refers here to the loyalty of the people to Yang di-Pertuan Agong. Every member of the society must comply with the Constitution, and the special rights it specifies. Justice in the country can only be achieved by the superiority of laws. Every member of society is equal, and their rights are protected. People with these basic rights must be respectful to each other.<sup>65</sup> In line with these aims, this document was promulgated for acceptance at every level of society. For these purposes, Rukun Negara adopts the following principles;

- Belief in God.
- Loyalty to Yang di-Pertuan Agong and country.
- The supremacy of the Constitution.
- The rule of law.
- Mutual respect and morality.<sup>66</sup>

Abdul Razak believed that Rukun Negara formed the basis of social harmony, providing a road map for the people and the government to provide national unity in the future. In this direction, Rukun Negara was proclaimed on August 31, 1970, the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, as a national ideology. The government intended Rukun Negara as the vision statement for a progressive and evolving society, rooted in tradition and respect while advancing in science and technology with ethical values. Rukun Negara sheds light on understanding the Constitution, as both were designed to reflect the interests of all sectors of society. The fundamental values in the Constitution have an important role in forming the links between the people and the government. Social harmony could only be realized by the respect and submission of the people to the Constitution and their dependence on it. According to Abdul Razak,

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<sup>65</sup> Gordon Means, *Malaysian Politics*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 401-402.

<sup>66</sup> Alis Puteh, *Language & Nation Building*, (Selangor: SIRD, 2006), 91.

the government must set clear and realistic targets in the process of ensuring social cohesion. In addition, the government should endeavour to achieve these goals sincerely and strongly.<sup>67</sup> In this regard, Abdul Razak put the Education and National Language Policy, the New Economic Policy, and the National Cultural Policy into practice for the bright future of Malaysia.

### **3.4.2 The National Education and National Language Policy**

Education is one of the key means by which community values, rules, and experiences are transferred to future generations. For this reason, Abdul Razak made serious efforts to implement the National Education Policy and the National Language Policy, both of which were not unfamiliar to him. In 1956, Abdul Razak served as Minister of Education in the first cabinet. At the Ministry of Education he managed the Committee that reviewed the Federation of Malaya's education system and subsequently produced the Razak Report of 1957 (*Laporan Razak 1957*), the major recommendations of which became laws under the Education Ordinance of 1957.<sup>68</sup>

The Razak Report became the strategic blueprint for the national education system of Malaya after independence. The planned rate of improvement in the education system would take place over a reasonable period of time, and this process could not take place independently of the competence and versatility of the students. One of the most important aims of the Razak Report was to provide unity and solidarity within the society. This report also emphasized the importance of using a single language to ensure cohesion. However, the Razak Report stated that English

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<sup>67</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud et al., *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, 283-284.

<sup>68</sup> Nik A. Hisham Ismail, *Nation Building: Education for Elites*, 60.

should also continue to be a compulsory subject in schools.<sup>69</sup> According to the report, the Malay Language (Bahasa Melayu) should be considered as a national language and at the same time should be a language of education. English, on the other hand, should continue to be valid in the community because of its importance in the areas of higher education, trade and international affairs.

In the 1960s, the government created the Rahman Talib Committee to re-evaluate the national education system, named after the Minister of Education. This Committee was responsible for re-observing and evaluating the principles in the Razak Report. In addition, the Rahman Talib Committee created some reports aimed at improving the curriculum. Important recommendations in these reports included free universal primary education, the use of the national language (i.e. Bahasa Melayu) as the primary education language, the emphasis of the national language system in the national education system, and the provision of vocational and technical education at the secondary school level. The Committee also recommended the provision of secondary education and funding by the national treasury, the adoption of two official languages (Bahasa Melayu and English) as the main languages of education, with other languages and literatures being taught as ancillary subjects.<sup>70</sup>

The Rahman Talib Committee Report was adopted by Parliament on August 12, 1960, and became law as the Education Act of 1961.<sup>71</sup> From 1962 onwards, it became compulsory to pass the national language test on the national level in Sijil Rendah Pelajaran examinations for the use of the national language as an educational language. In 1962, the government increased the number of teachers in national

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<sup>69</sup> Kua Kia Soong, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia: A Protean Saga*, (Selangor: Malaysian Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2008), 74-76.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*, 77-84.

<sup>71</sup> Zairina Othman, *Political Integration: A National Language for Malaysia*, (Michigan: UMI, 2001), 67.

secondary schools, as well as implementing policies that would increase the number of specialist teachers in primary schools in Malay. Since 1965, education in the national language became compulsory in all schools. However, this decision had to be postponed due to problems such as lack of adequate teachers and appropriate school books to be implemented throughout the country.

The government then established institutions such as the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and Teachers' Language Institute to overcome these problems. Ultimately, the National Education Policy was the basis for reforms in education until 1969. Since 1962, the national language became a compulsory subject in elementary school, although the languages of instruction continued to be English, Mandarin, or (less commonly) Tamil. Starting in 1968, the language of primary schools began to change to be Bahasa Melayu. At the same time, four courses including arts and crafts, physical education and hygiene, music, and local studies began to be taught in the national language. The decision taken in 1968 shows that all the courses in all public schools, except mathematics, science and English language courses, were to be in Bahasa Melayu.

These developments comprised a quiet revolution in the national education system, given a fillip by reforms after the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident with the aim of using education to promote community unity.<sup>72</sup> Mathematics and science courses began to be taught in Bahasa Melayu in pursuit of this goal, and it was decided that the language of education should be the national language in all public schools except for actual English language courses in 1970. Henceforth, according to the program, in 1972, the students of form one would learn arts and crafts, physical education, music, and civics lessons in the national language. In 1973, they would learn lessons in the

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<sup>72</sup> Alis Puteh, *Language & Nation Building*, 90.

national language except for Science, Mathematics and English Language if they were to start from form one. This meant that in 1977 the students who were going to the SPM examinations would have exams in the national language except for Science and Mathematics courses.<sup>73</sup> At the beginning of 1983 all courses including Mathematics and Science began to be taught in the national language.<sup>74</sup>

Since 1969, these changes in the education system had some effects in the country. The schools that offered English education in the country came to the closing stage. According to the advice in the Razak Report of 1956, all students from different ethnic backgrounds had to study under one roof and national language. Among the primary goals of the National Education Policy were to create an education system that would provide unity and integrity in society and to bring a progressive society on the basis of science and modern technology. It was indicated that this is one of the most important criteria in the provision of social welfare and harmony in the country. Although the National Education Policy was introduced in 1956, the implementation process lasted longer. However, in the period of the government of Abdul Razak, effective implementations were seen in the direction of this report.<sup>75</sup>

On September 21, 1970, Dato Abdul Rahman Yaakub, Minister of Education, stated that his Ministry had important responsibilities for the development of the country's education, including the effective implementation of the National Education Policy, the establishment of a National University of Malaysia (*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*), and the transformation of College Islam into a university.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Maya Khemlani David and Subramaniam Govindasamy, "The Construction of National Identity and Globalization in Multilingual Malaysia", in *Language Policy, Culture, and Identity in Asian Contexts*, ed. Amy B. M. Tsui and James W. Tollefson, (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 57.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Mead, *Malaysia's National Language Policy and the Legal System*, (Connecticut: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1988), 26.

<sup>75</sup> Shariff Ahmad, *Tun Razak Prince of Titiwangsa*, (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2001), 65-68.

<sup>76</sup> Carol Lynn Mitchell, *Language As An Instrument of National Policy: The Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka of Malaysia*, 59.

According to Dato Abdul Rahman Yaakub, the government was ready to implement the training plan, which had delayed for a certain period of time, more intensively. In addition, the Ministry was very determined to implement language policy in its departments. For example, in official correspondence, the use of the English language was lifted and all editorial works were translated into the national language. This practice was met with different reactions from different parts of the society. Although this change was welcomed by the Malays, it was met with a negative response by the non-Malays. Especially with the return of the language of education to the national language, many non-Malay children either went abroad to study or were directed to private schools not affected by the Education Policy. In 1970, the demand for private schools increased from 30% to 40%.<sup>77</sup>

After Hussein Onn took over as Minister of Education from Dato Abdul Rahman Yacob, the debate around the implementation of the Education Policy diminished somewhat. A group that wanted the policy to be quickly passed on and implemented criticized Hussein Onn for being slow in practice. On the other hand, Hussein Onn said that the changes had to be made on a constant basis, prudently and consciously. With change of education language from English to Bahasa Melayu in schools, the government intensified the introduction of teachers' new educational adaptation. 5,687 teachers from elementary schools and 10,856 teachers from middle schools attended the training process, costing about \$5 million. The main purpose of this educational training process was to improve the national language skills of teachers.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, all teacher-trained in colleges and teacher training centres began to offer intensive language knowledge and skills classes on the national

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<sup>77</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud et al., *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, 295.

<sup>78</sup> F. H. K. Wong, "Teacher Education", in *Readings in Malaysian Education*, ed. F. H. K. Wong, (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1977), 79.

language. By the end of 1971, all prospective teachers who had completed this training had the ability to teach all courses on the national language. Towards the end of 1971, the government continued its activities to teach science and mathematics lessons on national language.<sup>79</sup>

According to Hussein Onn, science, technology, and vocational training should also be given importance, despite the nation-building process and economic growth and development being the main points of the National Education Policy. Developments in education across the country aimed to: (1) strengthen the national education system to provide social unity, (2) remove education and economic inequality between rural and urban areas, and (3) progress through all levels of education by applying the National Education Policy. To ensure these objectives, the government allocated \$537.26 million to government education and training spending in the National Malaysian Plan, representing 7.7% of public expenditure, with a total expenditure of \$7,250 million. \$448 million of \$537.26 million for education and training costs were awarded to the Ministry of Education, while \$88.78 was shared among the training institutions MARA, Tunku Abdul Raman College, the National Productivity Centre and others.<sup>80</sup>

Significant developments were made in the curriculums of science and technology courses, which the government viewed as being of essential importance. New methods and practical training were developed specially to increase the interest of the students towards these lessons. Headmasters were supported to apply these changes to schools. In each school, four teachers were selected from standards 3, 4, 5, and 6 to learn innovations in their subjects. The Ministry also started activities for establishing centres in each state and district for mathematics and science activities. In

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<sup>79</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud et al., *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, 295.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, 296.

1972, the government established centres under the name of the Science Education Centre to provide improvements in the science and mathematics education. The government also opened extra training facilities for colleges and universities in the science and mathematics teacher training departments to meet schools' demands for science and mathematics teachers. The government also provided scholarship opportunities for students attending these courses. Under the Malaysian Plan, the government established 10 science and technical boarding schools and vocational schools. Similarly, the proportion of students in the science and arts departments in the schools were regulated.<sup>81</sup>

In 1971, 70% of the students were educated in arts, while the remaining 30% were trained in science. However, in the Malaysian Plan, 60% of the students in science department and 40% of students in arts department were employed to meet the human needs of the country. In addition to teaching the lessons of science and mathematics, the government also claimed to attach importance to English education for students, despite its aggressive policies against English medium, and despite criticism from grassroots Malay populists, the Ministry of Education opined that second language proficiency must be provided so that the country could advance in the science and technology field and compete with other countries in these fields. The government's determined attitude in implementing the National Education Policy caused some dissatisfaction among the non-Malays. For example, with this policy, in the SPM/ MCE examinations held in early 1972, the necessity of success in the Bahasa Melayu course caused many the non-Malays to fail in these exams.

When examinations were announced on March 19, 1973, the failure of most of the students at the English and Chinese stream schools, which had been highly

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<sup>81</sup> Kua Kia Soong, *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia: A Protean Saga*, 118-122.

successful in previous years, caused a great disaster. For example, the Cochrane English School in Kuala Lumpur was only 28.3% successful, while Bukit Bintang Boys' School showed a 30% passing success. St Michael Institutions, one of the best schools in Perak, achieved a success rate of only 17.4%, while in Penang, Michael Institutions and Chung Ling High School had a 26% success rate. These schools were 80% to 90% successful before the national language test was administered. According to the Ministry of Education, 21,061 students from 37,126 students who entered MCE examinations failed. Of the 21,061 unsuccessful students, 14,331 failed the Bahasa Melayu exam.

The high proportion of non-Malay students failing the exams increased the negative response of non-Malays to the National Education Policy. For example, the United School of Chinese Teachers' Association, United Chinese School Management and the MCA Education Bureau wrote an open letter to non-Malay families asking them to choose Chinese schools for the secondary education of their children after primary education in state primary schools. Datuk Hussein Onn specified that the government would not take any step back in the implementation of the populist policy, and he also claimed that the language of instruction would be Bahasa Melayu in all public schools by 1982. The government claimed it needed to implement national language policy in order to provide racial harmony and social unity. The non-Malays insisted on demanding amendments to the National Education Policy, but Prime Minister Abdul Razak pointed out that no changes would be made and noted that this policy was adopted by all parties 19 years ago.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud et al., *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, 299.

### 3.4.3 New Economic Policy

The NEP was announced in 1971 to reinforce national unity, one of its most important goals. This policy consisted of two different arrangements. The first aim was to reduce or completely eliminate poverty and increase job opportunities. The second aim was to remove the ethnic economic imbalances in Malaysian society. In general, the NEP can be described as an effort to rebuild society and to reduce or eliminate the interethnic conflict between ethnic Malay and ethnic Chinese Malaysians.<sup>83</sup> These two aims were interrelated. According to Abdul Razak, the achievement of NEP and Malaysian Plan goals was dependent on effective economic growth. After that, the government announced three important strategic objectives to clear poverty.

The first goal was to improve the economic conditions and living conditions of poor people and provide free access to many state facilities, such as health and education. The second target was to increase production and income levels in order to expand the capital among the poor and make it more efficient to use. This goal could only be achieved by installing modern techniques and better facilities. The ultimate goal was to increase capital mobility between sectors (i.e. from the low-output sector to the high-output sector). To achieve this aim, the government would facilitate participation in the modern sectors with support for education, training, economic and technical skills. The government pointed out that the NEP should be implemented in the context of the growing economy.

In the process of NEP implementation, the government endeavoured to include all communities in Malay society. In fact, each of the new policies has been prepared taking into account the interests of the constituents of society. In this direction, the NEP opened the way for all races to benefit from new opportunities provided by the

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<sup>83</sup> Jomo K. S., *The New Economic Policy and Interethnic Relations in Malaysia*, (Geneva: UNRISD, 2004), 1.

government. The government expected the NEP to contribute to national unity at the same time. For this reason, reforms made by the government on behalf of NEP should not be considered only in terms of growth and productivity. The successful implementation of the NEP was dependent on the skills and effectiveness of the new government staff.<sup>84</sup>

The second objective of the NEP - restructuring ethnic share of income and employment - was in fact associated with the elimination of poverty in rural areas, which was shown as the primary target. Outside urban areas, the vast Malaysian agricultural hinterland was inhabited mainly by low-income Malay farmers, thus addressing rural poverty simultaneously decreased ethnic income inequality.<sup>85</sup> The government's reforms to solve the economic strain of the Malays focused more on rice cultivating and land rehabilitation. The annual real growth rate of 4.4% in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries between 1970 and 1975 rapidly reduced poverty in rural areas.<sup>86</sup> This noteworthy achievement in the agricultural sector during the Second Malaysian Plan (1971-1975) resulted in a high-income increase, as well as a large number of both Malays and non-Malays going over the poverty line. In this period, the poverty rate among the people engaged in agriculture decreased from 68% to 63%.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud et al., *A Biography of Tun Abdul Razak Statesman and Patriot*, 306-311.

<sup>85</sup> Ragayah Haji Mat Zin, "The New Economic Policy and Poverty Education in Malaysia", in *The New Economic Policy in Malaysia*, ed. Edmund Terence Gomez and Johan Saravanamuttu, (Selangor: SIRD, 2013), 52.tt

<sup>86</sup> Fadil Azim Abbas, "Poverty Reduction Strategies in Malaysia, 1971-1995: Major Features", in *Rural Poverty, Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihood*, ed. Joseph Mullen, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 106.

<sup>87</sup> Kevin Young, *Growth and Equity in a Multiracial Society*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 224.

Table 3.1 Peninsular Malaysia: Ethnic Composition of Employment by Industry, 1970 (percentages)

Industry	Malays	Chinese	Indian
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	68	21	10
Mining	25	66	8
Manufacturing	29	65	5
Construction	22	72	6
Utilities	48	18	33
Transport & Communications	43	40	17
Commerce	24	65	11
Services	49	36	14

Source: Edmund Terence Gomez and JOMO K. S, *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage and Profits*, 20.

Many implementations of the NEP to realize the goal of restructuring income distribution among the society made a significant contribution to the economic development of the indigenous Malay community (Bumiputera). For example, NEP implementation stipulated share quotas for native partnership in foreign investments, leading to a 40% Bumiputera quota on all trading firms and industry.<sup>88</sup> A new business could only be active with at least 30% Bumiputera participation. Technical support was also provided for Bumiputera businesses, in addition to easy credit facilities. In addition, the government implemented some practices to increase Malays' property ownership in businesses. The main purpose of these implementations was to increase the Malays' property holdings of enterprises to 30% of the national wealth level by 1990.<sup>89</sup>

The positive outcomes of the NEP were evident in the rapid reduction of poverty in rural areas, as well as creating new jobs, increased income, and increased

<sup>88</sup> Michael Stenson, *Class, Race and Colonialism in West Malaysia: The Indian Case*, 48.

<sup>89</sup> Robert Klitgaard and Ruth Kathz, "Overcoming Ethnic Inequalities: Lessons from Malaysia", *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, V. 2, No. 3, 337.

quality of education and welfare in urban areas. However, there were still economic inequalities among the regions. For example, the rates of poverty in Kedah, Perak, Kelantan, Trengganu, Sabah, and Sarawak were still high. Another feature of the NEP was that it depended on a fast-growing economy. This could only be achieved by providing increased economic and employment opportunities to low-income and deprived groups. While ethnic Chinese, Indians, and other foreign investors were concerned that they would lose their income, the principle of “growth with equity” was adopted. The NEP stated that equality would be achieved through a growing economy and emphasized that no group would be deprived of the common wealth of the country.<sup>90</sup> As a result, the growth in the country’s economy caused an increase in real income without any ethnic conflict or violence. In fact, the Second Malaysian Plan (1971-75), which corresponded to the NEP, emphasized the principle of “more active participation and no disruptive distribution”. This led to the continuation of harmony and trust among the ethnic groups of the country.

#### **3.4.4 National Cultural Policy**

The concept of the National Cultural Policy (NCP) and its foundations were set out at the National Culture Congress in 1971 at the University of Malaya. The meeting date of the Congress was important, because it coincided with the period when the country improved the wounds of the May 13<sup>th</sup> incident.<sup>91</sup> In this process, the Malays were on their guard, because in the 1969 elections, which later led to clashes, the non-Malays questioned the constitutional position of the Malays. Subsequently, the Ministry of

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<sup>90</sup> Tun Ahmad Sarji, *My Recollections of Tun Abdul Razak*, 32.

<sup>91</sup> Carol Lynn Mitchell, *Language As An Instrument of National Policy: The Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka of Malaysia*, 56.

Culture, based on the recommendations of the Youth and Sports National Culture Congress, issued a statement stating the basis of the national culture:

1. That the principles of national cultural are the culture which is specific to the region.
2. Features from other relevant cultures should be absorbed to enrich national culture.
3. That Islam, as the official religion of Malaysia, must play a role in the establishment of national culture.

Despite the fact that a large majority of the Malays welcomed these policy guidelines, the non-Malays, especially Chinese, regarded this policy as a major threat to the multi-ethnic character of Malaysian society. In fact, this policy was interpreted by the non-Malays as an important step for assimilation and that their culture would be under the aegis of Malay and Islamic cultures and traditions. The non-Malays were openly opposed to this policy and found this policy unfair. For them, this policy would make no contribution to other ethnic groups who saw Malaysia as their home. Nevertheless, non-Malays wanted to consider their cultures, languages and religions as part of Malaysia, and to maintain the modern concept of citizenship. In this context, according to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the state guarantees that each citizen has the right to education in his own language and to live with freedom of belief and culture. In 1983, the Chinese Guilds and Associations declared four basic objections to the NCP:

1. The process of unilaterally allowing academics and politicians of an ethnic group to form politics with such deep and very broad conclusions under the supervision of the Government is inconsistent with the principle that the national cult should be developed through democratic consultation;

2. While emphasizing the importance of Islam and Malay culture, these principles reject the crucial role that the non-Malays cultures and religions should play. This is against the principle of equality and unhindered development of the cultures of all ethnic groups;
3. A liberal attitude that promotes the interaction and absorption of the non-Malay and other cultures with others presents a philosophy of cultural development that focuses largely on the Malay;
4. The tendency to use the power of the mind, to impose assimilation, is an unacceptable action for the non-Malays.<sup>92</sup>

The Chinese community advocated the idea that if a national culture was built in the country, all ethnic groups should be taken into consideration. In addition to national cultural issues, the paper discussed the Chinese language in Malaysia and the problems of education, literature, art, and religion. The Chinese and Indian communities in 1984 submitted declarations of concern with the NCP and the future of the non-Malay cultures, asking for a more free and inclusive National Culture program from the government. Four basic principles were proposed to form the basis of non-Malays' national culture:

1. The subtle elements in the culture of each ethnic community should form the basis of national cultures.
2. The basis for the creation of common cultural values is science, democracy, rule of law, and patriotism.

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<sup>92</sup> Joint memorandum on national culture submitted to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports by the major Chinese Organisations in Malaysia in 1983.

See Kua Kia Soong, *National Culture and Democracy*, (Petaling Jaya: Kersani Penerbit, 1985), 241-302.

3. Common cultural values should be expressed through the unique forms of each ethnic group and the multi-ethnic characteristics of Malaysian society.
4. The process of developing the national culture should be consistent with the provision of equality of all ethnic groups and the method of democratic consultation.<sup>93</sup>

The non-Malays argued that the purpose of the National Culture was to provide a way for the differences to coexist, rather than to simulate the differences. However, they argued that the government's tendency was to create a Malay-based NCP and to exclude people with other ethnic identities. The non-Malays emphasized that the National Cultural Policy's approach to cultural diversity should be based on three basic pillars of society that will have common values and belong entirely to Malaysia. In this respect, the non-Malays' point of view and the government approach were highly controversial on the NCP.

Although culture is defined as the whole of social, religious, moral, aesthetic, technical, and scientific qualities that are common to all spheres of society, this presents a number of challenges when it comes to Malaysia. Because the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians regard themselves as the heirs of Malay-Islam, Chinese, and Hindu culture, the existence of points of divergence, or even commonalities in these three different cultures can become sensitive issues in some cases. Beyond that, the intertwining of the Malay identity and Islam in Malaysia, a concept originally promulgated by the British colonial administration to avert having to deal with Malay issues, confuses non-Malays in distinguishing what is related to Islam and what is part

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<sup>93</sup> Memorandum on national culture submitted by the 10 Major Indian Associations of Malaysia to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in April 1984.

See Kua Kia Soong, *National Culture and Democracy*, (Petaling Jaya: Kersani Penerbit, 1985), 303-321.

of Malay culture (and nationalism), as well as conferring nationalist and ethnic associations on the world religion of Islam. For this reason, if Malay culture became the basis of the NCP, then Islam would be basis of the NCP for the non-Malays. They argued that the country would rapidly enter an Islamisation process with the NCP.

In this case they were strongly opposed to the NCP and the domination of a single ethnic group, because they wanted their own beliefs and principles. In addition, Malaysia's social structure is unique among other Southeast Asia countries, due to its much greater *proportion* of Chinese and Indian minorities. The Chinese have become influential in neighbouring societies over time due to assimilation through education, language, culture, and socio-economic policies, but they have never been free of ethnic tensions (often fomented by the very success of the Chinese).<sup>94</sup>

As a result, it is clear that ethnic identifications are problematic for Malaysian national culture and society. The implementation of policies developed by the government in the field of culture are more difficult and complicated compared to policies in education and economics. The most important reason for this is that cultural policy cannot be enforced or imposed. The repressive and intrusive approach to culture and cultural relations only leads to more negative consequences.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

One of the most important aims of economic, educational, political, or social policies introduced from independence in Malaysia is to provide social cohesion and harmony. Malaysia's political elite was aware that without national unity there would be no sustainable political stability and democracy. In this direction, Tunku, as the leader of the largest Malay party, UMNO, and the Alliance, the joint political representative of

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<sup>94</sup> Mohamed Mustafa Ishak, *The Politics of Bangsa Malaysia Nation-Building in a Multiethnic Society*, (Kedah: UUM Press, 2014), 130-131.

the three main ethnic groups, had to maintain a social balance between the Malay community and other communities living in the country. That is why Tunku's attitude towards the non-Malays communities was always open and responsive. He always appreciated the contributions of the non-Malays to the country in the following period of independence. Tunku was not bored and tired of reminding his people that Malaya was a multiracial and multicultural country at every opportunity. He stated that Malaysia belongs to all citizens, regardless of ethnicity and origins, and more importantly, that the continuation of the existence of the country depended on the unity and harmony in society. As a result, it can be said that during the prime ministry of Tunku, Malaysia experienced remarkable development in racial harmony and unity.

Tun Abdul Razak continued efforts to develop social cohesion with increased emphasis on building national unity through linguistic and cultural assimilation, with increasing Malay assertiveness at the expense of the non-Malay communities being promulgated under the guise of national cohesion. While cultural assimilation trends under the NCP exacerbated ethnic tensions, the NEP was highly effective in reducing rural poverty and promoting a larger measure of ethnic economic equality. Overall, this chapter has examined how state integrity and unity can be sustained through state policies, giving details and explanations to the issue.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

In the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim ethnic minorities, such as Greek Orthodox Christians, Armenians, and Jews, were accepted as independent communities and their autonomous status was granted after the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Fatih Sultan Mehmed gave the Romans (i.e. people of Byzantium) the status of a millet and also gave them the opportunity to implement their institutions, traditions, and laws under their community leaders. In this Millet System, non-Muslim communities were allowed to organize their religious, legal, and social lives. This kind of administration of non-Muslim communities, which consisted of a wide range of religions, sects, and races, can be regarded as a practical method for the state to govern in the interests of all, and a contemporary relevant and civilized practice in its own right in addition to being an expedited method given the absence of advanced communication and transportation facilities in history.

In the powerful periods of the state, this societal order was successfully manifested and reiterated, but the enemies of the Ottoman State naturally sought to weaken it and to disrupt the harmony of its society by seeking to manipulate and sabotage the Millet System, leveraging minorities against the Ottoman State in their own interests, seeking to incite non-Muslims against Muslims, and Arabs, Armenians, and Jews against Turks. Although the capitulations and agreements made by the Ottomans were not primarily related to non-Muslims *per se*, they clearly alluded to the issue of religious identity as an underlying problem. France leveraged the Eastern Catholics while Russia patronized the Orthodox Christians throughout the Ottoman

lands. The latter was a particularly serious geopolitical concern in Russia's quest for warm water ports and hegemony in the Black Sea and influence in the Mediterranean to increase its foreign policy power. Tsarist Russia saw itself as the holy continuation of the Roman Empire and the bastion of (Orthodox) Christianity and had historical dreams of recapturing Constantinople. While Britain and France were eager to dismember the Ottoman Empire and seize its territories for themselves, they were equally concerned to prevent Russia from beating them to the feast, thus they generally supported the Ottomans as a counterweight to Russia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before liquidating the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and its aftermath.

Over the long term, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and France pursued a balanced but fully committed policy to ensure their colonial domination of the whole of the Ottoman realms (a project which began with Napoleon in Egypt). Later, the Habsburgs (i.e. the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Germany joined this process following the Metternich policy. These great states progressively made great inroads among non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, leveraging religious freedom and toleration as a foothold to disseminate their education systems and advance their colonial goals. At critical junctures they supported non-Muslim groups by provoking their struggles for independence, and the non-Muslims were manipulated by these provocations. The Ottoman State lost control over its historical realms with successive events. In 1812 the Serbs, primordial enemies of the Turks and the shock troops of Orthodox Christianity, caused the first national uprising, gained their autonomy within their national borders. The Greek rebellion to form an independent Greek state was a more long-term and complex affair, influenced by the nationalist ideas of the French

Revolution and idealist professional revolutionaries from Europe. In 1829 Greek independence was recognized, and Serbia's autonomy was extended.

The European Revolutions of 1848 led to liberal and national uprisings in the Balkans. With the Paris Agreement of 1856, Wallachia and Moldavia became privileged and constitutional principalities, and with the Berlin Treaty the Ottoman Empire accepted Romania's full independence. Later, with the independence of Serbia and Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire lost its remaining outposts in the Balkans. The Bulgarians also established their own independent church according to their religion and sects.

Ottoman statesmen, who saw the danger of corruption and disintegration in all parts of the state, started reform movements in order to preserve the independence of the state and to extinguish the nationalist demands of non-Muslim groups. With the issued edicts, all state posts and ranks were opened to non-Muslims, who benefitted from increasingly extensive political and administrative rights. In addition, they were given the opportunity to develop themselves more in education and trade. However, they did not agree to cooperate with the internal affairs of the state.

There had been attempts to revitalize the Ottoman State since the failure of the Siege of Vienna in 1683, but the inability of the Sultans to impose order and reform over complex and powerful bureaucratic and military institutions (civil society organizations in modern parlance) frustrated such efforts prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Tanzimat Edict was the first step in the process of tangible change in Turkish political and administrative institutions. In addition, community life was officially affected by Western civilization in obvious ways. This process attempted to reconcile traditional Ottoman institutions and values with Western systems. Some innovations were introduced in terms of the laws governing citizens, the most significant of which

brought by the Tanzimat Edict itself was the formal equality of the millets in Ottoman society. In other words, this created the idea of Ottomanization as a nation-state style concept on the European model instead of the traditional cosmopolitanism of the pan-ethnic Ottoman Empire and its ethnic-based, religious Millet System. Tanzimat could not in itself achieve a comprehensive overhaul of Ottoman governance and life and unite the disintegrating Ottoman society, but it certainly reoriented the direction of “national” policy. It also caused some fragmentation among non-Muslim millets, such as the splintering of the Bulgarians from the Greek Orthodox Church.

The common character of the reform edicts was that they were the work of the statesmen who wanted to ensure the existence, unity and integrity of the Ottoman state. The aim was to strengthen the central authority and keep the Ottoman communities connected to the state, negating the hostile propaganda and oppression of European colonial powers. According to Ottoman statesman, the freedoms to be given to non-Muslims would decrease their nationalist and separatist ideas. With the Tanzimat Edict of 1839, the Sultan promised to all citizens certain rights and respect for them, regardless of their religions or sects. With the Reform Edict of 1856, the rights given in 1839 were reaffirmed, and the privileges of non-Muslims were extended.

In fact, these edicts took a major step towards the concept of the rule of law in modern terms, and doctrines of equality between individuals, immunity of human rights, and fundamental freedoms entered Ottoman law, within the context of Shariah (i.e. Ottoman civil law was predicated on compliance with Sharia). Nevertheless, the dilemma of some traditional aspects of Shariah and the new order clearly seeking to form a European-style nation state had some negative impacts on the Ottoman Empire, including in alienating the Ottoman elite (i.e. the Government and Military)

from grassroots Muslims, which led to increasing antipathy toward the Ottomans among some Arab peoples in particular. The ordinary people of the Ottoman world did not contribute to the reform movements; it was not the people who pushed the statesmen to issue these edicts, and most people – particularly the Muslim masses – did not understand the Sharia compliance and fundamentally Islamic ethos of many Ottoman reforms, seeing them as heretical and unwelcome foreign interventions; furthermore, it was not emphasised that many aspects of the reforms, particularly under the Reform Edict of 1856, extended the rights of many ordinary Muslims as well as non-Muslim subjects.

Additionally, the Ottomans' calculation that civil rights for non-Muslims would prevent further fragmentation of the Empire by deflating nationalist movements was wrong; non-Muslims involved with nationalist movements demanded independent states, not equal lifestyles, and even the ultimate abolition of religious-based distinctions and millets and the inclusion of all subjects as equal Ottoman citizens did not assuage the allure of nationalism for the peoples of the Ottoman lands, including the Turks themselves. The new system was a visionary one, but it could not formulate institutional effectiveness based on solid principles to replace the old system. Many non-Muslim millets had already been privileged in numerous ways due to their dhimmi status and historical experiences (e.g. the Jews of Baghdad and Salonika, and the Greek Orthodox Christian merchants), thus with full citizenship status they were perceived as privileged groups in the Ottoman Empire, antagonising the affronted Muslim masses, who claimed that the minorities retained their old privileges as well as being granted new ones, while they could also rely on the great states to sustain their rights.

On the one hand, the state pursued a policy of Ottomanization, while trying to keep the Millet System alive. The principle of equality of society was constantly undermined by the privileges granted to the non-Muslims. The idea of forming an Ottoman nation regardless of the differences of religion could never be adopted in practice. Ottoman rulers gave privileges to non-Muslims and tried to prevent them from demanding independence, but the privileges granted to the non-Muslims by the edicts counterproductively increased demands for independence. Eventually, the effort and support of Western countries evoked nationalism among the non-Muslims. It was a dream to gather Muslim and the non-Muslims who isolated from each other for centuries around the idea of Ottomanization.

Thus, reforms regulating the legal status of non-Muslims remained inconclusive. As mentioned previously, the non-Muslims obtained Ottoman citizenship with the issued edicts, but the result was the fact that they increasingly wanted national independence. Moreover, by organizing the legal status of non-Muslims, all efforts to promote the unity and integrity of the state were wasted. The contradictions of the Ottoman concessionary policy exacerbated the underlying tensions in society. The state could not make Muslims and non-Muslims happy, nor could they stop the oppression of the European states in this area. This trouble continued until the collapse of the state in the First World War.

If a country's society comes together from different ethnic elements, it is important to determine how these different elements are brought together and which issues are incompatible. Malaysia gained independence in 1957, with a society consisting of three main ethnic elements: Malays, Chinese, and Indians. While studying the historical development of Malaysia's socio-cultural management, the policies pursued by state executives provide important resources as a guide for us.

From this point of view, it is important to determine how the state administrators developed a policy while managing socio-cultural differences, and to consider whether they considered the interests of all ethnic groups or chose a single ethnic identity as the dominant element.

Undoubtedly, the period between 1945-1957, called the British de-colonization period, was very important in shaping Malaysia's social structure. In this period of time, it can be said that the foundations of the post-independence society were laid. For this reason, although we took the post-independence period as a study, our investigation would be incomplete without mentioning the pre-independence British period. As a matter of fact, Britain's most important contribution to Malaysia was to provide a unique societal structure. As the colonial power, Britain created its own new administration, eliminating all the privileges and structures of the Malay Sultanates. The economic policies of the British affected the traditional structure of the society negatively. Eventually, Britain had more authority and initiative in the administration, and the new form of governance of colonial power began to shape new society and new institutions. Newly built roads, harbours and railroads facilitated mass migrations; intense immigration to the region revealed the necessity of a common language and training program. In short, colonial power laid the foundations of the future multinational modern state.

Many European colonial powers followed two different methods while forming the pluralistic social structure in colonial states. One of these methods was to create a social structure consisting of a dominant ethnic group surrounded by various ethnic groups. The other method was to create an equal social structure in which no ethnic group was dominant in the society, which came together from different ethnic

groups. The first of these structures is reflected in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, while the other can be demonstrated with the example of Tanzania.<sup>1</sup>

With the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the return of British governance in Malaya, they opted to establish a society based on ethnic equality. The population ratio of Malaya shows that in 1945 the non-Malays (collectively) actually outnumbered the Malays, by 3 million to 2.2 million. Therefore, the British decided to transform Malaya into an equal ethnic structure, and they presented the Malayan Union plan, which offered equal citizenship for the members of the entire community, and the elimination of the past traditions of the Malay Sultanates.

With this plan, the Malays would no longer have special rights in Malaya as subjects of the Sultans (independent from British colonial oversight), and they became an equal citizen with non-Malays. Thus, Britain, with the Malayan Union plan, aimed to create a community structure of three different ethnic groups on the basis of an equal citizenship. However, faced with strong opposition from the Malays, the British had to give up the Malayan Union plan. The Federation Agreement (later the Constitution of Malaya, 1948) designated the Malays as the dominant ethnic group and endowed them with a number of privileges according to traditional British colonial governance in Malaya, as opposed to the radical equality envisioned by the Malayan Union plan.

The Federation of Malaya consisted of nine Malay Sultanates and two of the British Straits Settlements, Malacca and Penang. The Federation of Malaya Agreement, which was put into practice on 1 February 1948, was written in both English and Malay, at the same time as an agreement recognizing the superiority of the Malay Sultans and the traditional political culture. The Alliance composed of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, “Ethnicity in the Making of Malaysia”, in *Nation-Building Five Southeast Asian Histories*, ed. Wang Gungwu, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005), 97-98.

UMNO, MCA, and MIC also accepted same privileges granted to Malays by the British during the Reid Constitutional Commission, formed in 1956. The structure of the state was declared as a consociational democracy when Malaya gained independence in 1957. In other words, according to this system, the political superiority of the Malays was recognized, and multi-culturalism was adopted as the main policy of the state. This structure of the state was continued with the participation of Sabah and Sarawak after 1963. The period between 1957-1976, which is the centre of our study, is a period in which socio-cultural policies were laid down. During this time period, two different prime ministers' governments were witnessed. Although there were changes in some policies, it was obvious that in some areas, such as education and language policy, policies were continuous.

In the era of Tunku Abdul Rahman, the founding prime minister of Malaysia, inclusive and encompassing policies for the unity of country were widely accepted by Malayan society, appreciated by both Malays and non-Malays. The period of Tun Abdul Razak, the second prime minister of Malaysia, included more direct engagement with the nuances of socio-cultural management. For example, for the Malays, the practices of the NEP, the National Cultural Policy and the national language and education policy were defined as late policies to be implemented as soon as possible, not in customary "five year" or longer time periods. For the non-Malays, many of these policies were seen as being implemented to consolidate the socio-cultural politic superiority of the Malays. In short, although the implemented policies were not fully sustainable and pleasing to all segments of society, Malaysia did not have any substantive social problems between 1970-76.

The Ottoman Empire and Malaya were markedly different geographically and in their historical experiences and internal socio-cultural differences, but there are

some similarities as well as differences in their management of these issues. First of all, the pluralistic social structure of the Ottoman Empire was formed through conquests. With the expansion of the state into the Balkans, communities with different religious beliefs entered the state borders. Thus, Ottoman pluralistic society was formed. In Malaysia, the pluralistic society was formed as a result of migrant labour from the outside of the country in accordance with the policies of the British administration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the main factor that constituted the basis of ethnic differences in the Ottoman social structure was religion, both religious and racial/ cultural differences were instrumental in the case of Malaysia; put simply, there were more obvious differences between indigenous Malays and mass immigrant Chinese and Indian communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than there were between the myriad ethnic groups in the tapestry of Ottoman society (although this simplistic overview ignores complex phenomena such as the longstanding Indian communities in the Straits Settlements and the Peranakan Chinese).

In the Ottoman Empire there was no language unity in the society until the period of Tanzimat, then Ottoman Turkish started to be taught as a common language in the context of Ottomanization policy. Similarly, different languages are commonly spoken in Malaysia as first languages, including Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Tamil. However, Bahasa Melayu has been accepted as the official language for the purpose of ensuring community unity (also called “Bahasa Malaysia” to avoid the racial implications of “Melayu” and promulgate its use as a genuinely “national” language). From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the Ottoman Empire, the theoretical supremacy of Muslims in society was eliminated with edicts including the Tanzimat and Reform Edicts, as a result of which all members of the community were accepted as Ottoman citizens. In Malaysia, after independence, residents of Malaya were

accepted as Malaysian citizens regardless of ethnic or religious differences according to the new Constitution; consequently, by vastly different historical routes, the former Ottoman lands and Malaya have arrived at something approaching the Islamic vision of equality, in which status under civil law and ethnic identity itself is ultimately unimportant:

O mankind! Truly We created you from a male and a female, and We made you peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Surely the most noble of you before God are the most reverent of you. Truly God is Knowing, Aware. (Quran, 49:13)



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