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Historical Development of the Chinese Muslim Society in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the historical development of the Muslim Chinese society in Malaysia since the early relations between the Malay World and China to the present time. The objective of this study is to identify the early history of the Chinese arrival in the Malay World. Furthermore, it is a study of the background of the Chinese Muslim community and relations, such as trade and diplomatic ties, between the Chinese and the Malay World, particularly during the time of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca. This study also highlights the development of the Chinese community since migration during the British colonial days to date. Using the qualitative method, this study finds that the relation between China and the Malay World had existed before the birth of Christ. In addition to the local Chinese Muslim community, there are original Chinese Muslims from China, descendants of those who had settled in Malaysia for a long time, such as in Trengganu, Penang and Sabah. Besides that, there are also Chinese Muslims who come to Malaysia for social visits, educational or business purposes.

Key words: History, Chinese Muslim, Malaysia

Introduction

China and the Malay World have had a long history of close relations whether political, economic or social. Islamization of the society in the Malay World such as Malaysia and Indonesia is closely associated with the Muslim arrival from China. This was due to the earlier Islamic arrival in China than in the Malay World, that is, with the entourage of Sa’d b. Abi Waqqas in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907AD). In Malaysia, the existence of the Chinese Muslim community originally from China and the local Chinese Muslim have a unique history. Thus, this study looks at the historical development of this community from before the birth of Christ till the present time.

Early Relations between China and the Malay World:

Relations between these two worlds had already begun in the early years AD. Professor Liang Liji (2009) in his book ‘15th Century Relations between the Malaccan Empire and the Ming Dynasty’ states that the first records on the existence of this relation is written in an ancient Chinese historical book, Hou Han Shu which means ‘Later Literature of the Han Dynasty’, 116th Volume. In this book in the year Yong Jian, there was a diplomatic relationship between Ye Diao Bian (Deravarma, in Sanskrit language) and China. In this record, the King of Diao Bian had paid tribute to the Chinese Emperor and was rewarded with a seal with clamp and purple tapestry fabric. This relation is evidenced by the discovery of Chinese artefacts in Malaya such as carved stones which resemble the burial stone of a Han Dynasty warrior. In addition, there are carved ceramics of the ‘fourth year Chu Yuan’ and in the year 1936, a Dutch scholar, Orsey de Flines discovered ceramic prayer instruments manufactured during the Han Dynasty.

Further, according to Liji (2009), the relation between these two worlds was constrained by the less advanced shipping technology of that time. However, during the time of the Three Kingdoms (Samkok 220-280AD), the Wu Kingdom specifically, was able to build a ship 20 Zhang (65 meter) long with a load capacity of 1000 tonnes. According to Chinese scholars, these ships were called Po, a name shortened from a Malay word. The eastern Wu Kingdom had also sent two emissaries named Zhu Ying and Kang Tai to countries in...
South-east Asia. This is proven in two books written by these emissaries, that is, Fu Nan Yi Wu Zhi (Strange Things in Funan) and Wu Shi Wai Guo Zhuan (Stories of Foreign Countries in the time of the Wu Kingdom).

However, these two books disappeared during the Tang Dynasty, what remains are references in later history books, Tai Ping Yu and Shui Jing Zhu. These works clearly show the names of countries then existent in the Malay World, such as 1) the country Dan Dan (situated in Kelantan) is mentioned in two books, Liang Shu (Liang Dynasty Literature) volume 54 and Tong Dian (General Literature) volume 188, 2) the country Lang Ya Xiu (situated near Patani and Kedah) which is mentioned in Liang Shu (Liang Dynasty Literature), 3) the country of Dun Sun (Tenassarim in Myanmar) also in Liang Shu, 4) the country of Pan Pan (situated in the north of the Malay Peninsula, Segenting Kra East Coast) mentioned in Jiu Tang Shu (Early Literature of Tang Dynasty) volume 197 and Xing Tang Shu (New Literature of Tang Dynasty) volume 222.

Besides countries in Peninsular Malaysia, there were names of other countries in the Malay World such as Zhu Bo (Javadvipa or Java), Ma Wu Island (Bali or Ambon Island), Bei Lu Island (Beliton Island), Ju Yuan Island (Kalimantan) and Bo Tan (Sumatera). And all these countries were also receiving Hindu influence. During the time of the South and North Dynasties (420-589AD), relations continued, for example, during the time of Liu Song, Haratan (situated in Central Java) had eight times sent a mission to China. During the reign of the Shui Dynasty, there already existed official relations with Chi Tu Guo (Tanah Merah Country) situated in Peninsular Malaysia. Some scholars also mention this country as Kedah (Liji, 2009).

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907AD), there occurred a change in the administration of the country such as opening roads to other countries, improvement in means of transportation, particularly in shipping, facilitating foreign merchants to trade in China and giving support to Chinese scholars to pursue knowledge overseas. This open policy also witnessed the entry of Arab merchants who brought with them Muslim missionaries. The year 651AD during the Tang Dynasty is said to be the time of the official Islamic arrival in China (Chang, 1981).

During the Song Dynasty (960-1279AD), commercial relations were emphasised. This is evident from the appearance of an administraive office of port ‘Shi Po Si’ at Quanzhou, Mizhou at Shandong, Xiuzhou at Zhejiang, Shanghai and Jinyang at Jiangsu. Furthermore, the Song Dynasty rule also strengthened commercial relations by sending a mission to the Malay World and offered rewards for those who could attract more foreign merchants to trade in China. Such activities continued until the time of Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368AD).

Relations between the Ming Dynasty and the Malay Sultanate of Malacca:

Relations between the Malay Sultanate of Malacca and the Ming Dynasty had begun early in the 15th Century AD (Hing and Chee-Beng, 1999), during the time of the Ming Emperor, Cheng Zhu (1403-1424AD) in China and Parameswara in Malacca. According to Purcell’s opinion, China had sent an emissary named Yin Ching to Malacca in the year 1403AD. It was reported that the Ming Emperor had sent with the emissary gifts in the form of silk, silk apparel and yellow umbrella. The Emperor had also recognized Parameswara as the legitimate ruler of Malacca and Malacca as a protectorate, against external threats, especially by Siam. Then, the Sultanate of Malacca reciprocated by royal visits to China between the years 1405AD and 1407AD (Purcell, 1967).

According to Kong Yuanzhi (2010), the Chinese mission to Malacca in the years 1403AD and 1409AD were for the purpose of recognizing the sovereignty of Malacca in the name of the Chinese Emperor. In the year 1405AD, the Chinese Emperor had instructed Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho or Sampo Kong) to lead a navy fleet to South-east Asia, South Asia and West Asia for the purpose of goodwill. The voyage was made between the years 1405AD dan and 1433AD and covered the other places of the Malay World such as Champa, Java, Sumatra as well as India, Ceylon, Arabian Peninsula and East Africa (Hall, 1981). It was said to be a major expedition with as many as 100 to 200 ships and a total crew of between 27000 to 28000 persons. Admiral Zheng He had brought with him Muslim scholars to act as interpreters in the voyage. In this regard, the powerful image of a Muslim and Islamic influence in the Chinese administration showed by Admiral Zheng He had impressed and motivated Parameswara to approach Islam. Moreover, the Islamic Pasai kingdom in power then made Parameswara confortable with Islam (Sen, 2009).

Ma Huan related all the stories of the voyage in his book entitled Ying Ya Shen Lan which means (Beautiful Sceneries across the Seas). This great work is a strong proof of the existence of the Chinese Muslim community who came from China to the Malay World. Rosey Wang Ma (2003) stated that in Zheng He’s voyage, many among the crew were Muslim. Ma Huan also related in detail the life of the society then, particularly when they were welcomed by the local community on arrival. Among the quotations from poetry by Ma Huan in Liji (2009) which mean:

When the Emperor’s letter arrived,
There was thunderous joy and good cheer,
The king and the chief headmen,
Raced to welcome us.

In the year 1411AD, Parameswara with his entourage including his family and ministers numbering 450 people, visited China (Liji, 2009). Throughout the two months in China, they were all well treated by the hospitality of the Chinese Emperor. In addition, Parameswara was presented with gifts of a jade belt, honorary accessories, horse saddle, 100 tahil of gold, 500 tahil of silver and so on.

For the 500 years since relations started, there were Chinese Muslims among those who navigated to the Malay World. Even so, Purcell states that since the start of relations in 14th to early 16th Centuries AD, especially in Ma Huan’s records, they did not settle in Malacca. He only stated that the inhabitants of Malacca then were already Muslim (Mohammedans), their language, books and wedding celebrations were similar to the Javanese community. The statement regarding the Malay society and a number of Chinese who inhabited in Malacca then was pictured as follows:

_The Hai Yu or ‘News from the Ocean’, published in 1537, but like so many Chinese books probably referring to an earlier period, tells us that the cost of living in Malacca was high, about five times the cost of living in China, that’s fowls, dogs, geese and ducks were imported and that pork, a forbidden article of food to the native Mohammedans, was eaten by the Chinese ‘who live here’ (Purcell, 1967)._  

Furthermore, according to Yusuf Liu Baojun in the year 1770AD, a Chinese Muslim named Song Shilin had built a mosque called ‘Masjid Besar’ (Big Mosque) at Kampung Ulu, Malacca. Some of the building materials used for the mosque were imported from China and clearly had Chinese architectural influence. Besides that, the architecture of this mosque is said to have influenced the architecture of other mosques in Malacca at that time (Baojun, 2004).

**British Colonial Times:**

According to Yen Ching-Hwang, among the reasons for the migration of the Chinese community to Malaya was that most of them had high ambitions to develop their economy overseas even though in fact, Confucianism discourages them from migrating overseas. As is known, the Chinese community has always had the determination and desire to become richer and better. Further, overpopulation in China had caused many decide to migrate. This is apparent when we look at the population increase from 150,000,000 in the year 1700 to 430,000,000 in the year 1850, that is, tripled within half a century (Ching-Hwang, 1986).

This had caused shortage of land or space and increasing unemployment. The overpopulation also contributed to an imbalance in the demand and supply of daily necessities, more importantly in the shortage of basic food such as rice. Consequently, it led to the critical problem of inflation.

Besides, natural disasters and wars had worsened the situation of the Chinese people. For example, during Manchu rule, the province worst hit by calamities was Hu Pei, which had suffered drought 440 times, 1,036 floods and 5.5 natural disasters on the average annually. At the same time, the government’s attitude of inefficiency and indifference towards the problems of the people added to their sufferings. In the years 1877-8, as many as 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 Chinese were homeless and consequently died of starvation (Ching-Hwang, 1986).

In the year 1857, the Taiping revolt broke out in central and south China also causing mass migration (Abdul Manaf, 2001). In addition to the factors above, another problem which appeared was the exploitation of Chinese farmers by the landlord class who took the opportunity of charging exorbitant rates. Usually, the landlords would ask for 50% of the crops of each farmer, however, there were among them who demanded up to 60%. This lease condition was a burden on the farmers who struggled to maintain their farm produce. As a result, many among the farmers ended up being heavily indebted by being forced to borrow with interest to pay the high rental. The government could not fully contain this exploitation even though the lenders charged high interest rates. Moreover, many among the lenders themselves were from the landlord class, making them increasingly powerful in the society then.

At the end of the 18th and early 19th Centuries, the British’s total rule over the Straits Settlements, that is Penang Island in 1786, Singapore in 1819 and Malacca in 1824 from Dutch influence gave a golden opportunity for Chinese traders and labourers (Ching-Hwang, 1986). British policy enabled them to increase their wealth through trading and farming activities, especially with the opening of new areas by the British such as Lukut, Sungai Ujong, Kuala Lumpur, Larut, Johor Bahru dan and Muar. The rapid development of modern times with the Industrial Revolution which changed the European landscape also influenced economic activities in Malaya. It occurred when the British began to interfere in state affairs by forcing Malay Rulers, even to the extent of using armed threats, into signing free trade treaties which allowed Straits Settlements Chinese merchants or traders and Europeans to control supplies of tin ore and other natural resources (Jomo, 1988).

In order to meet increasing world demand, the British government was forced to take a large number of labourers from China and India. This was because Chinese and Indian labour were cheap and easy to recruit compared to local labour. Even though Malays have once been mining operators, the discovery of large amounts of tin in Perak drew many Chinese to operate and work there. According to Arudsothy in Jomo (1988), the rapid
arrival occurred at the end of the 1870-s following rapid mining activity with about four fifths of Chinese immigrants working in mines.

The mass arrival of Chinese was due to the demand for labour, however not all were labourers. Among them were also traders, artisans and those who brought capital (merchants, capitalists or employers). The process of migration or labour arrival was through the fare debt system also known as ‘pig business’. This system paid for the travel fare of labourers or Sinkheh (new migrants) to Malaya, and on arrival, they would be bonded with certain conditions such as working for employers for a certain period as a way for repayment of their fare. These labourers were frequently manipulated and oppressed through:
1. oppression which occurred when they were forced to work in bad conditions with no regard for their welfare,
2. kidnapping was committed in China to bring migrants to Malaya to meet the market need for labour.

As a result, the British made a study of the situation and effect of the labour migration process into Malaya and found a bad picture such as oppression and so on. Therefore, in the year 1877, the British legislated a Straits Settlement Law for the purpose of controlling labour. However, this law was seen as biased in favour of the employer or the broker himself instead of protecting labour (Jomo, 1988).

The Chinese Muslim Community from the 19th Century to the Present:

The Chinese Muslim community in Malaysia may be categorized into two types:
1. Chinese Muslim who originated from China and,
2. new Chinese converts or muallaf who embraced Islam through marriage with a Muslim or on their own free will. For example, a non-Muslim Chinese who marries a Malay is usually required to convert.

Mohammed Djinguiz in Ma (2003) states the population of the Chinese Muslim community at the end of the 19th and early 20th Centuries was estimated at 17,927 persons from a total Chinese population of 581,598 and total Muslim population in Malaya of 661,216 persons. Statistics for the year 2000 of the National Statistics Department of Malaysia showed that the Chinese Muslim community totalled 57,221, that is, constituting 1% of the Chinese population of 5,691,908. The state of Selangor has the most number of Chinese Muslims at 17,246, followed by Sabah, 8,589, Kuala Lumpur, 7,991 and Sarawak, 7,287 (National Statistics Department of Malaysia, 2000). However, the latest statistics in 2010 showed a population of 42,048 persons compared to the statistics of the year 2000. A similar decline is seen in the main states such as Selangor, 10,241, Sabah 9,591, Sarawak 4,037 and Kuala Lumpur 3,838 (National Statistics Department, 2010).

In this regard, Rosey Wang Ma (2003) raises two issues concerning the community. First, how many from them are descendants of Hui Hui? Second, how many from the local Chinese embraced Islam? Looking at the increase in a century, from 17,927 in the year 1901 to 57,221 in the year 2000, it has increased by about 40,000 persons. However, according to Ma, logically the number should have increased to between 90,000 to 100,000 persons in four or five generations. From the declining rate of increase, Ma draws two assumptions. First, that the Muslim Chinese migrants in Malaya had married non-Muslim Chinese women who did not convert, had lived within the majority non-Muslim Chinese community and finally left their Islamic practices such as had happened to the Kuok clan in Penang. Second, the Chinese Muslim who intermarried with the Muslim community, particularly the Malays, gradually lost their lineage and Chinese characteristics such as the Yunan families in Terengganu.

Another issue is that the statistics issued in the year 2010 shows a decline by 15,173 persons compared to the year 2000. This total is seen as contradicting the general claim which logically estimates a total between 70,000 to 100,000 persons. Besides, it also contradicts the total of Chinese converts increasing from year to year.

Table 1: of Islamic Conversion by Ethnic Group in the Years 1967-1975 in Peninsular Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity State</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>2085</td>
<td>3279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang Island</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>1054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>2341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4976</td>
<td>2502</td>
<td>3994</td>
<td>11472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Records: For Kuala Lumpur, the years recorded are from 1974–1975.
Source: (Abdullah and Muhamad Shukri, 2008).

Table 2: of Islamic Conversion of Chinese by State and Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang Island</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Record: - = no information for that year.
Source: (Abdullah and Muhamad Shukri, 2008).

From the tables above, in the years 1967-1975, the Chinese community represents the biggest group to convert to Islam, followed by the Indian community and others. Information in the years 2001 to 2004, shows a good increase in the number of Chinese converts. Both of the tables showed above do not represent the whole total of Chinese converts because the totals have not included numbers taken from several other organizations who also manage conversion in the country such as The Islamic Welfare Organisation of Malaysia or Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM) (Pegawai Dakwah Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia, 2011), Darul Fitrah and so on. This is because there are converts who do not want their conversion to be revealed for fear of opposition from families and the society. Nonetheless, it sufficiently reflects an increase in the number of Chinese converts from year to year. Hence, the writer views the latest relevant total of Chinese Muslim as between 60,000 to 100,000 according to estimates by some prominent Chinese Muslims (Seng, 2011).

The original Chinese Muslim from China:

Hui Hui Ethnic in Trengganu:

The Hui Hui community is among the 10 ethnic Muslim minorities in China. In terms of physique, language and cultural character, they resemble the Han Chinese more. Their women were believed to have intermarried Arab, Persian and Turkish traders, soldiers and envoys since even the 7th Century AD (Borde, 1946). According to an official study, the ethnic Hui Hui is the biggest ethnic group, 10 million out of 30 million Chinese Muslims in the whole of China. The other ethnic groups are Uighur, Tartar, Kazak, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajik, Bao’an and Dongxiang. Other than in Malaysia, the Hui Hui had also migrated to other countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Hong Kong, where many of them were traders, labourers or victims of exploitation in their search for a better life. Culturally, the combination between Islam and the Hui Hui customs and traditions is a unique lifestyle. Culturally, it can be seen in their language, food, clothings, head gear for males and females, their mosques, home cleanliness and honesty in commerce (Encyclopedia of Diasporas, 2004).

In Malaysia, the Hui Hui are also known as Yunan people. A study by Tan Chee-Beng in the year 1988 clearly showed that they were not originally from Yunan, but from Guangzhou. The Malay community in Terengganu called them Yunan people only to show that they were Chinese Muslim, similar to those whom they had heard of as original Chinese Muslim in Yunan. Still, this label became convenient for the Malay Muslim majority to distinguish between the identities of non-Muslim Chinese, the Chinese Muslim converts and the Chinese Muslim from China. Tan Chee-beng (1988) states:

The label ‘Orang Yunnan’ came to be used as a result of the settlers referring to the Yunnanese to explain their original Muslim status to the Malays that there were Muslims in Yunnan. Furthermore, most Chinese in Malaysia trace their origin to ancestors in Southearn China (Fujian and Guandong) so that the Chinese the Malays meet are not Muslims. In fact even among the Chinese Malaysians themselves, few know that there were Muslims in Fujian and Guandong so that the Chinese in Kuala Terengganu (mainly Hokkein) also regard the Hui Hui there as people who came from Yunnan. Thus, the label ‘Orang Yunnan’ has become a convenient label for the Hui Hui themselves whenever there is a need to explain their identity to both Malays and the non-Muslim Chinese.

The early history of this community is from the lineage of 6 family surnames, Dong, Li, Zhang, Liu, Fu and Xiao. Three of the early settlers were Pak Do, Pak Musa dan Pak Ali. They were also called Pak Do Yunan, Pak Musa Yunan and Pak Ali Yunan. According to sources, they started from Guangzhou, moved to Hong Kong, then to Singapore and finally decided to permanently settle in Terengganu, Malaysia. In Terengganu, they opened a Chinese medicine shop ‘Renji Tang’. Pak Ali’s Chinese name was Zhang Lianfu or Zhang Ruiqi, and he was a physician who came to Malaya during the rule of Sultan Zainal Abidin III from the year 1881 to 1918. There, he opened a medicine shop which was later inherited by his son, C.Y. Zhang.

According to history, at the end of the 19th Century, Pak Ali Yunan had married Hajah Halimah and followed his family to Palembang. In the year 1903, Pak Ali with his wife and their small child, Sa’diah, headed to Singapore in search of a livelihood. They were blessed with a male offspring but he died shortly and was
buried there near Jalan Sultan. According to the book, Warisan Keluarga ke Arah Silaturrahim recorded by Rosey Wang Ma (2003), all three of them finally decided to migrate and settle (Pak Ali, Pak Do and Pak Musa) in Terengganu.

Like Pak Ali, Pak Do also did business all his life in Terengganu. He once ran businesses dealing with tin ore, rice and selling books. His bookshop was named ‘Tok (Shop of) Abdullah Alyunani’ which was later taken over by his son-in-law. Pak Do also brought his wife and brother named Pak Daud or Lexian to Malaya. Pak Do and his wife then migrated to Mecca and died there, not long after the Second World War (Chee-Beng, 1988). Pak Daud then married Fatimah Qassim and sold a variety of merchandise at Kedai Payang Road. They then settled in Kampung Paya Keladi (Ma, 2003). The other early migrant was Pak Musa, or his original name Li Wuchu. He also ran a traditional Chinese medicine shop. His wife stayed behind in China and died there. In Terengganu, he married a local woman named Midah, and after her death, he married Kalsom. He died at the age of 84 on his way to China.

Mr. Liu or Haji Hassan was also known as ‘Sifu’ for his talent in cooking. He married Meriam and settled in Kampung Hangus at Padang Maziah. After Meriam’s death, he married Lijah Awang. He earned a living by working as a chef and also as an employee at Pak Do’s shop. Mr. Xiao or Muhammad Yusof Salleh (Pak Yusof), who came from Pak Do’s or Pak Lah’s family, arrived in Terengganu and opened a business in Kampung Daik. Then he moved to Pulau Kambing and married the daughter of Pak Daud. Besides this, records state that among the early settlers who came to Malaya were Mr. Fu Shouzi or Haji Ibrahim Muhammad (Pak Ibrahim) who came to Malaya with his grandmother and mother. Pak Ibrahim settled in Kampong Banggol, opened a shop in Kedai Payang, and later moved to Chabang Tiga. He was also the son-in-law of Pak Do (Pak Lah) (Ma, 2003).

According to Chee-Beng (1988), the Hui Hui community arrived early in the 20th Century. Mr. Liu (his Muslim name is Hassan) arrived 20 or 30 years before 1927, Mr. Fu Shouzi (Pak Ibrahim) in the 1930s and Mr. Xiao (Pak Yusof) in the year 1932. From the above statements, it can be deduced that this community first came to Malaya at the end of the 19th Century or about the year 1898.

The Koay Clan in Penang:

Among the early Chinese Muslim who live in Malaysia is Koay clan of Hui Hui descent in China. Similar to the Hui Hui in Trengganu, the Koay clan arrived at the end of the 19th Century. More uniquely, they stayed on a jetty which became their identity since 1960. This jetty is situated at the edge of Georgetown City, Penang Island which was founded by Francis Light pada in the year 1786. According to history, Penang Island was taken from the rule of Sultan Abdullah of Kedah by the 1786 Treaty between The British and Kedah. In the treaty, first, the British East India Company (SHTI) promised to defend Kedah against any attack by her enemies, second, the Company was not allowed to protect any of Kedah’s enemies and third, the Company was required to pay 30,000 Spanish Dollars annually as compensation. This jetty was built along the whole of Port Weld, where other clans also built their jetties, such as Lim, Tan, Chew, Lee, Mixed, Yeoh and Peng Aun (Bideau and Kilani, 2009).

The Koay clan is descended from I-Pen Khu-Se Tek-Kwan-Kong, also known as ‘Koay Tek Kwan’. During the Ming Dynasty in the year 1376, Koay T’ng Hui brought a group of Arab descendants to a village called ‘Pek Kee’ at Chuan Chew, Hui Aun. This community brought with them 30 chapters of the Quran and built a mosque there. They also said that they were descendants of a Muslim general of the Tang Dynasty.

At that moment, the situation became chaotic as a result of a rebellion against the Ming Dynasty. This was because the Hui Hui were supporters of the Ming Dynasty, so the religious leader of the Koay clan had to use an alternative way for the survival of the clan by issuing a fatwa that pork was permitted for their daily food. Hence the Hui Hui had to hide their Hui identity from the general public by doing several things not allowed by Islam such as eating pork. In addition, they also married the Han ethnic women (Huat, 2002).

When the emergency abated, they reverted to their Islamic daily life. However, because of the long wait for peace, the assimilation process had already taken place and many had fully become Han, such as practising the Han lifestyle of ancestral worship, Buddhism, Daoism and so on.

At the end of the 19th Century, due to the unstable political and economic condition, made worse by interference from the Manchu kingdom in Fujian province, they decided to migrate to areas in South-east Asia such as Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and others. In Penang, they faced problems with the Malay-Muslim environment such as communication, cultural differences, and the different shape of the mosque dome which made them feel isolated from the local Muslim society. Huat (2002) states:

‘The notice stated that since early times, the Koays have been Muslims. They have been steadfast in their prayer, and have not changed for generations... after China became a republic, many of their clan came to Southeast Asia and were scattered all over Singapore and Malaysia. However, due to the great differences in human relations and environment, they gradually departed from the Islamic teachings. However in the practice
of remembering their ancestors, they will strictly observe halal food (no pork). This shows that they are following the fatwa of the past, and that they have not forgotten their origin.’

The jetty listed as a UNESCO World Heritage was finally demolished in 2006 by the authorities in line with development plans for Penang Island. Even so, the efforts of the authority were frequently resisted by individuals and certain parties such as the late Haji Ibrahim Tien Ying Ma, Datuk Mustapha Ma and Tunku Datuk Dr. Ismail Jewa (The Star) as well as the NGOs involved such as Penang Heritage Trust, Malaysian Nature Society, Malaysian Travel and Trade Associations, Penang Tourist Guides Associations, Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association, Sahabat Alam Malaysia and so on.

Tianjing Hui Hui Ethnic in Sabah:

The Tianjing clan is also descended from the ethnic Hui Hui in the province Tianjing, China. They came and settled in Sabah early in the 20th Century to work as labourers in farms and railway service. There are four families out of 108 who were brought to Sabah. They are Wang, Li, Hong and Guo. This ethnic group managed to hold on to their Chinese characteristics because of the multiple ethnicity in Sabah, unlike in Peninsular Malaysia where Malays are the majority. In Sabah, there are more than eight ethnic groups who practise their own culture and language. The major ethnic group is the Kadazan-Dusun, followed by Runugs, Bajau, Malay, Murut and so on.

These days, there are Chinese Muslim from overseas such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and so on who come to Malaysia for business or educational purposes. For example, Yusuf Liu Baojun from China works as a lecturer in Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Similarly, sister Chuang Jung or Lo’ Lo’ from Taiwan came to Malaysia last October at the invitation of the Regional Islamic Da’wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pasific (RISEAP). Lo’ Lo’ is a student of Arabic language at the National University of in Chengchi, Taipei who came to Malaysia to further her knowledge in Islam, specifically in al-Quran recitation, prayer, fasting and haj. In addition, the mobility program or student exchange program between local and overseas universities also brings over Chinese Muslim students to Malaysia.

Even today the Chinese Muslim community is known for their success in the Chinese Muslim food restaurant business, specifically in the Klang Valley such as Kuala Lumpur, Ampang, Bukit Antarabangsa, Hulu Kelang, Bukit Beruntung, Klang, Shah Alam and so on. The response from the surrounding community, particularly the Muslims, enables the restaurants to develop rapidly. An obvious example is Hj Sharin Low Restaurant which has opened seven branches within a period of two years (Utusan Malaysia, 2011). Likewise with Mohd Abdullah Chan Restaurant which has eight branches and Haji Yusof Ong Restaurant which has two branches in Shah Alam.

In the field of preaching, there are a few well-known individuals such as Prof. Madya Dr. Ridhuan Tee, Ir. Dr. Hj. Muhammad Fuad Yeoh and Hj. Ann Wan Seng. Besides being permanently employed, they are active in delivering lectures through mass media such as television and radio programs, magazine, newspaper and so on.

The Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA):

MACMA or the Chinese Muslim Association of Malaysia was formed on 8 September 1994. The purpose is to represent the Chinese Muslim community in Malaysia. It also plays a role as a Muslim Non-Government Organisation (NGO), specifically to deal with problems faced by the Muslim Chinese and the whole of the Chinese community in Malaysia. Among its objectives are:
1. To provide Islamic knowledge and teachings.
2. To conduct and coordinate dakwah (preaching) activities.
3. To build up a Chinese Muslim Ummah (Community) in Malaysia.
4. To strengthen Muslim brotherhood.
5. To conduct studies, research, seminars and training in order to increase Islamic knowledge, especially for MACMA members.
6. To build and administer Islamic cultural centres.
7. To plan, coordinate and implement Islamic economic activities, fund and charity donations required for welfare and social activities (MACMA, 2011a).

Its vision is to endeavour to bring the Islamic ummah and the Chinese Muslim in particular to become the ‘Khayrun Ummah’ as stated in al-Quran in order to build the unity of a multiethnic society, to inculcate the spirit of volunteerism among its members, to improve the social and economic status as well as create a knowledgeable and educated society.

MACMA also has its own mission to promote the association and its members to the public. Besides that, it also tries to make a difference by educating society. Internally, MACMA makes efforts to contribute in material and spiritual terms besides acting as the communication link with the non-Muslim Chinese society. In terms of membership, MACMA is generally focused on the Chinese Muslim community, but membership is also open...
non-Chinese Muslims. In addition, it also encourages and invites new Muslim converts whether or not they are Chinese. Thus, there are two categories of membership, ordinary and associate members besides life membership (Awang, 2005).

Within 17 years of its formation, this association has managed to open branches in almost all states in the country. In Selangor, it is headed by Danial Hakim Boey, in Johore by Brother Johari Chang, in Kedah by Brother Ibrahim Lai, in Perak by Sister Noor Aznita Loh, in Pahang by Yg. Bhg. Dato’ Mukhlis Chua @ Chua Ching Kok, in Kelantan by Dato’ Hj. Anuar Tan Abdullah, in Sarawak by Hj. Mortadha Lau, in Ipoh by Dr. Hj. Fadzli Abdullah @ Cheah Kow Chye, in Labuan by Hj. Anuar Tan Abdullah and in Lahad Datu by Hj. Azlan Tsen (MACMA, 2011b).

In addition to preaching, MACMA also conducts activities such as giving assistance to the Chinese Muslim whether in terms of advisory services or material things, provision of Islamic classes, holding discussions with MACMA members and publishing MACMA bulletins including articles and news concerning its activities. Class studies for improving Chinese Muslim understanding of Islam are held in certain places such as the MACMA headquarters, International Islamic University Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Sri Kembangan and other places. Among the subjects taught are understanding of Islam, al-Quran dan Hadith, Arabic language, Aqidah, Tauhid and Fardhu Ain, conducted in Malay and Mandarin languages.

MACMA simultaneously emphasises on preserving their Chinese identity, thus some activities such as forums or lectures are conducted in Mandarin. This indirectly strengthens the Chinese characteristics of their members. Jaffary Awang lists down activities which have the purpose of maintaining their identity, among which are:
1. maintaining diplomatic ties with Muslim societies in China,
2. cultivate Chinese community practices/Qigong tradition,
3. translation activity,
4. building mosques with Chinese - style architecture and
5. holding dialogue programs and comparative religion forums and interfaith dialogues (Awang, 2005).

Conclusion:

This study finds that the relationship between Malaya and China had started way back before AD, in the time of the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD) by the discovery of artefacts such as ceramic prayer instruments and earthenware. This relation was later halted until the Ming Dynasty resumed it. This was witnessed by the diplomatic mission sent by the Chinese Emperor, led by Admiral Cheng Ho or Zheng He to the Sultan of Malacca. Beginning with the arrival of this emissary, the Sultan of Malacca reciprocated with a royal visit to China. The closeness of this relation is clearly shown by repeated visits to China. More importantly, the arrival of Admiral Cheng Ho to Malaya was also the start of early relation with Chinese Muslim in Malaya. However, Purcell states that this arrival was not in the nature of settlement.

At the end of the 19th Century AD, Chinese migration en masse to Malaya is seen as continuing this relation. The settlement of the Chinese community reflects the presence of the Chinese Muslim community (Hui) who arrived and built their settlements such as in Terengganu, Penang and Sabah. In the meantime, in line with the Muslim majority and Islam as the official religion of Malaysia, the number of ethnic Chinese who embrace Islam (new converts) continues to increase. The state with the most number of Chinese Muslims is Selangor, followed by Sabah, Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak. However, the life of this community differs from other Muslim ethnic groups, because they are seen as culturally different from the Malay Muslim majority. On the contrary, the Non-Muslim ethnic Chinese view them as having ‘become Malays’ and abandoning their Chinese tradition as well as denying their origin. For the Malays, Chinese Muslims will only be considered as ‘Muslim’ if they adopt the Malay culture and lifestyle. This situation has them ‘sandwiched in-between’ and presents a challenge in living in pluralistic Malaysia. However, despite being a minority group, their presence has an impact on society and the nation.

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