

# Similarities between iranian and malaysian culture religion essay



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In this document some similarities between Iranian and Malaysian culture have been illustrated. Since both Iran and Malaysia are Muslim countries, there are many similarities between Iranian and Malaysian culture.

For example I start with the Malaysian and Iranian universities. All of the universities in Iran are Islamic universities while there are a few none Islamic universities in Malaysia. There is a mosque in all Iranian universities which is located at the center of the university. Recently Iranian Islamic government has decided to separate males and females in the universities in which some universities only register males and other universities only register females. I don't think separating males and females in the university be a good idea because in this situation boys and girls won't be able to see each other and choose their future partner but in Malaysian universities boys and girls have the opportunity to make friend to each other and select their future partner.

There are 3 different type of mosques in Malaysia namely Vernacular Mosques, Colonial Mosques, Modern Mosques. The third model is very similar to Iranian mosques and the following is a brief description of Modern Mosques in Malaysia:

Many local architects were involved in the design of new mosques in Malaysia since independence. The architectural styles of the modern mosques have changed gradually in parallel with the development in structural advances, construction methods, contemporary designs of mosques as well as increased local interests toward Islamic architecture. With the advent of science and technology, modern mosques are constructed in a larger scale to accommodate the increasing number of

Friday congregations. Concrete, bricks, steel, stone and marble are commonly used in the construction of modern mosques. Onion-shaped or top-shaped domes, tall minarets and high ceilings are common features found in the modern mosques. The modern mosques usually incorporate well-designed landscape elements including plants, water features, patterned pavements, garden lightings and signages.

#### The Putra Mosque in the early morning

The architectural styles of the modern mosque can be classified into two categories. The first category is the modern styles which emphasise the advancement in building technology and engineering. For example, the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur has a minaret of 245 feet in height and an umbrella-like roof. The mosque was constructed of reinforced concrete faced with Italian marble. Its main prayer hall can accommodate more than 3, 000 people for prayer at one time whilst its surrounding galleries, topped with numerous small domes, can hold an additional of 5, 000 people. The mosque also has a number of rooms used for various functions such as a library, offices, royal guest rooms, Imam's room and store rooms.

The second category of modern mosque is the Islamic influences which incorporate the styles of many mosques found in Islamic countries including Turkey, the Middle East and Northern Africa. For instance, the design and colour of the Sultan Abdul Aziz Mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor was reflective of the infamous Ottoman mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. The mosque has four high minarets at the four corners of the building surrounded by well-kept landscape. Another example is the white-colour Ibai Mosque at Kuala

Terengganu which was built on water and its architecture bears a resemblance to the Northern African mosque. Examples of modern mosques with modern structures are Sultan Ahmad I Mosque, Kuantan, Pahang (1964), National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur (1965), State Mosque, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan (1967), State Mosque, Kangar, Perlis (1972), Sultan Idris Shah II Mosque, Ipoh, Perak (1978), State Mosque, Penang (1980) and KLCC Mosque, Kuala Lumpur (1998). Examples of modern mosques with Islamic influence are Al-Malik Khalid Mosque, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang (1975), Sultan Abdul Aziz Mosque, Shah Alam, Selangor (1989) and Ibai Mosque of Kampung Cendering, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu (1994).

## **2-2 Iran**

From Cordoba to Delhi, from Sarajevo to the Niger, the mosque (masjid in Persian and Arabic) or house of prayer is the outstanding symbol of Islam, the focus of worship, and contemplation, the meeting place of man with man, and of man with God. Its forms are more varied and its uses more widespread than those of the Christian cathedral or church. While primarily a place of worship, it is also an assembly hall, often a religious college, sometimes a court of justice, even, to some extent, a poor man's club.

The majority of Iranian mosques conform, in whole or in part, to a plan that in Iran must be regarded as the norm. It consists of an open central court, sometimes large enough to be planted with trees or flowers, with a large portal or ivan, on the side facing towards Mecca, which leads into a domed sanctuary.

On the other three sides of the court there are arcades and altars and in the center of each side another, though smaller, ivan. To the left and right of the sanctuary there may be arcaded halls, and in addition balconies (often reserved for the use of women worshippers) from which a view of the mihrab can be obtained. In the grander mosques the south ivan, leading into the sanctuary, and sometimes also the north ivan, which is frequently the main entrance to the mosque.

### **Minarets:**

The earliest minarets were square, at least in their lower stories, but few of these survive in Iran today. The round minaret originated in north-east Iran and was built of brick, tapering towards the summit. Until at least the thirteenth century, minarets were almost invariably single and placed in the north corner of the mosque. Since the fifteenth century minarets have generally been covered with mosaic or colored tiles, in the taste of the period. In general, Iran, compared with, say, Turkey; is markedly deficient in minarets. Only at Esfahan do they occupy a prominent place in the landscape.

### **Shrines:**

Nearly every town in Iran has its quota of shrines, and the village or wayside shrines are a recurring feature of the Iranian landscape. In general they are modest, circular, four-sided or octagonal buildings, surmounted by a cone or dome. Many have charm but no great architectural merit; the famous shrines, rambling structures which have received additions from generations of the devout, are among the most splendid, and in some cases the most

opulent, buildings in Iran. The lesser shrines, unlike the mosques, have a distinct regional character.

### **Tombs:**

Secular tombs fall into two clearly marked architectural categories -the domed mausoleum and the tomb tower. The former has certain affinities with the larger shrine. It is frequently octagonal rising through squinches and galleries into a circular dome. It is built for show, inside and out. meant to be visited. the last resting place of a chieftain who may have had no claim to sainthood, but expected to be duly revered when he was dead. Tomb towers, which are mainly confined to northern Iran. were conceived in a different spirit. They were gaunt, remote, solitary resting places, not meant to be frequented by admirers in generations to come.

### **Palaces:**

There are substantial remains of Achaemenian and Sassanian palaces, impressive both in size and in detail, some of which, as at Persepolis, have been almost miraculously preserved; but when all is said they are ruins. Of Seljuk and Mongol royal residences, however, all trace has disappeared. It is only from Safavid times that royal houses have survived intact, and even then the crop is disappointing. For practical purposes, Safavid palaces are confined to Esfahan.

**Bridges:** More essential for the maintenance of communications than caravansaries, the building of bridges, which were both sturdy and a pleasure to the eye, continued until recently.

Well-constructed hump-backed bridges of ancient dates are to be found in many parts of the country -the outstanding examples of which you will see at Esfahan: the Allah Verdi Khan (1629) and the Khaju (1660). These two mighty structures are among the most impressive monuments in Esfahan, and are two of the most remarkable bridges in the world, of their kind, and still in service.

## **MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND KINSHIP**

### **3-1 Malaysia**

Since both Iran and Malaysia are Muslim countries, marriage in both countries are influence by Islam therefore there are many similarities between these two countries. The following shows the marriage in the Malaysian style and then marriage in the Iranian style will be illustrated after that.

Marriage. Even with significant changes in marriage practices, weddings reveal the sharp differences in Malaysian society. There are two ways to marry: registering the union with the government; and joining in marriage before a religious authority. Christian Malaysians may marry Buddhists or Hindus answering only to their families and beliefs; Muslim Malaysians who marry non-Muslims risk government sanction unless their partner converts to Islam. Marriage practices emphasize Malaysia's separate ethnic customs. Indians and Chinese undertake divination rites in search of compatibility and auspicious dates, while Malays have elaborate gift exchanges. Malay wedding feasts are often held in the home, and feature a large banquet with several dishes eaten over rice prepared in oil (to say one is going to eat oiled

rice means that a wedding is imminent). Many Chinese weddings feature a multiple-course meal in a restaurant or public hall, and most Indian ceremonies include intricate rituals. Since married partners join families as well as individuals, the meeting between prospective in-laws is crucial to the success of the union. For most Malaysians marriage is a crucial step toward adulthood. Although the average age for marriage continues to increase, being single into one's thirties generates concern for families and individuals alike. The social importance of the institution makes interethnic marriage an issue of considerable stress.

**Domestic Unit.** Malaysian households have undergone a tremendous transformation following the changes in the economy. The shift from agricultural commodities to industrial production has made it difficult for extended families to live together. Yet as family mobility expands, as a result of modern schedules, efforts to maintain kin ties also increase. Improved telecommunications keep distant kin in contact, as does the efficient transportation network. A dramatic example of this occurs on the major holidays when millions return to hometowns for kin reunions.

**Inheritance.** The critical issue of inheritance is land. With the importance Malays place on land ownership, it is rarely viewed as a commodity for sale, and the numerous empty houses that dot the Malaysian landscape are testament to their absentee-owners unwillingness to sell. Gold is also a valuable inheritance; Malaysians from all groups readily turn extra cash into gold as a form of insurance for the future.



Kin Groups. The crucial kin distinctions in Malaysian culture are between ethnic groups, which tend to limit intermarriage. Among the majority of Malays, kin groups are more horizontal than vertical, meaning that siblings are more important than ancestors. Those considered Malay make appropriate marriage partners; non-Malays do not. These distinctions are somewhat flexible, however, and those that embrace Islam and follow Malay customs are admitted as potential Malay marriage partners. Greater flexibility in kinship practices also appears among immigrant groups amid the fresh possibilities created by diasporic life. A striking example is the Baba community, Chinese who immigrated prior to British rule and intermarried with locals, developing their own hybrid language and cultural style. These dynamics point to the varied kinship arrangements possible between the different ethnic communities in Malaysian society.

### **3-2 Iran**

Marriage. In Iran women control marriages for their children, and much intrigue in domestic life revolves around marital matters. A mother is typically on the lookout for good marriage prospects at all times. Even if a mother is diffident about marriage brokering, she is obliged to “clear the path” for a marriage proposal. She does this by letting her counterpart in the other family know that a proposal is forthcoming, or would be welcome. She then must confer with her husband, who makes the formal proposal in a social meeting between the two families. This kind of background work is essential, because once the children are married, the two families virtually merge, and have extensive rights and obligations vis-à-vis each other that

are close to a sacred duty. It is therefore extremely important that the families be certain that they are compatible before the marriage takes place.

Marriage within the family is a common strategy, and a young man of marriageable age has an absolute right of first refusal for his father's brother's daughter-his patrilateral parallel cousin. The advantages for the families in this kind of marriage are great. They already know each other and are tied into the same social networks. Moreover, such a marriage serves to consolidate wealth from the grandparents' generation for the family.

Matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are also common, and exceed parallel-cousin marriages in urban areas, due perhaps to the wife's stronger influence in family affairs in cities.

Although inbreeding would seem to be a potential problem, the historical preference for marriage within the family continues, waning somewhat in urban settings where other considerations such as profession and education play a role in the choice of a spouse. In 1968, 25 percent of urban marriages, 31 percent of rural marriages, and 51 percent of tribal marriages were reported as endogamous. These percentages appear to have increased somewhat following the Revolution.

In Iran today a love match with someone outside of the family is clearly not at all impossible, but even in such cases, except in the most westernized families, the family visitation and negotiation must be observed. Traditional marriages involve a formal contract drawn up by a cleric. In the contract a series of payments are specified. The bride brings a dowry to the marriage usually consisting of household goods and her own clothing. A specified

amount is written into the contract as payment for the woman in the event of divorce. The wife after marriage belongs to her husband's household and may have difficulty visiting her relatives if her husband does not approve. Nevertheless, she retains her own name, and may hold property in her own right, separate from her husband.

The wedding celebration is held after the signing of the contract. It is really a prelude to the consummation of the marriage, which takes place typically at the end of the evening, or, in rural areas, at the end of several days' celebration. In many areas of Iran it is still important that the bride be virginal, and the bedsheets are carefully inspected to ensure this. A wise mother gives her daughter a vial of chicken blood " just in case." The new couple may live with their relatives for a time until they can set up their own household. This is more common in rural than in urban areas.

Iran is an Islamic nation, and polygyny is allowed. It is not widely practiced, however, because Iranian officials in this century have followed the Islamic prescription that a man taking two wives must treat them with absolute equality. Women in polygynous marriages hold their husbands to this and will seek legal relief if they feel they are disadvantaged. Statistics are difficult to ascertain, but one recent study claims that only 1 percent of all marriages are polygynous.

Divorce is less common in Iran than in the West. Families prefer to stay together even under difficult circumstances, since it is extremely difficult to disentangle the close network of interrelationships between the two extended families of the marriage pair. One recent study claims that the

divorce rate is 10 percent in Iran. For Iranians moving to the United States the rate is 66 percent, suggesting that cultural forces tend to keep couples from separating.

Children of a marriage belong to the father. After a divorce, men assume custody of boys over three years and girls over seven. Women have been known to renounce their divorce payment in exchange for custody of their children. There is no impediment to remarriage with another partner for either men or women.

Domestic Unit. In traditional Iranian rural society the “ dinner cloth” often defines the minimal family. Many branches of an extended family may live in rooms in the same compound. However, they may not all eat together on a daily basis. Sons and their wives and children are often working for their parents in anticipation of a birthright in the form of land or animals. When they receive this, they will leave and form their own separate household. In the meantime they live in their parents’ compound, but have separate eating and sleeping arrangements. Even after they leave their parents’ home, members of extended families have widespread rights to hospitality in the homes of even their most distant relations. Indeed, family members generally carry out most of their socializing with each other.

Inheritance. Inheritance generally follows rules prescribed by Islamic law. Male children inherit full shares of their father’s estate, wives and daughters half-shares. An individual may make a religious bequest of specific goods or property that are then administered by the ministry of waqfs.

Kin Groups. The patriarch is the oldest male of the family. He demands respect from other family members and often has a strong role in the future of young relatives. In particular it is common for members of an extended family to spread themselves out in terms of professions and influence. Some will go into government, others into the military, perhaps others join the clergy, and some may even become anti-government oppositionists. Families will attempt to marry their children into powerful families as much for their own sake as for the son or daughter. The general aim for the family is to extend its influence into as many spheres as possible. As younger members mature, older members of the family are expected to help them with jobs, introductions, and financial support. This is not considered corrupt or nepotistic, but is seen rather as one of the benefits of family membership.