

Culture and religion in malaysia

Religion



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Malaysia is a multicultural society, with Malays, Chinese and Indians living side by side. The Malays are the largest community. They are Muslims and speak Bahasa. Malays mainly control the political power in Malaysia. The Chinese comprise about a third of the population. They are Buddhists and Taoists, speak Hokkein, Hakka and Cantonese, and are dominant in the business community. The Indians account for about 10% of the population. They are mainly Hindu Tamils from southern India. They speak Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi, and live mainly in the larger towns on the west coast of the peninsula.

Eurasians and indigenous tribes make up the remaining population. Iban of Sarawak is the main indigenous tribe of Malaysia. They number around 3, 95, 000. They are largely longhouse dwellers and live along the Rejang and Baram rivers. The Bidayuh (107, 000) are concentrated on Sarawak's Skrang River. The Orang Asli (80, 000) live in small scattered groups in Peninsular Malaysia. The tribals were mainly nomadic agriculturists but gradually they are being absorbed in the modern Malaysian society.

The traditional architectural style of Malaysia is the long-house, found particularly along the rivers of Sarawak. Families live together (though they have their own private space) in one long building, raised on stilts, sharing the open verandah which runs the whole length of the building. Also raised on stilts are the wooden houses in other parts of rural Malaysia. These stilt-houses are around two meters above the ground to protect against floods and wild animals, while providing extra ventilation and also shelter for the family's domestic animals.

The style of the houses varies from region to region, the most famous being the saddle-shaped roofs, which rise up into what are known as " buffalo horns". A third style of home common in Malaysia is the Chinese " shop-house" where the ground floor is a shop, with the family living above. Malaysian music is heavily influenced by Chinese and Islamic forms. The music is based largely around the gendang (drum), but includes percussion instruments (some made of shells), flutes, trumpets and gongs.

The country has a strong tradition of dance and dance dramas. Some of them are of Thai, Indian and Portuguese origin. Other artistic forms include wayang kulit (shadow-puppets), silat (a stylised martial art) and crafts such as batik, weaving and silver and brasswork. Religion: More than half of the population (52%) follows Islam. Other religions followed in Malaysia are Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Sikhism. In addition Shamanism is practiced in East Malaysia.