

The Global Iranian Community in Malaysia: Cultural and Human Traffic between the Two Countries

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Place of fieldwork: Malaysia

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- Research background

My research interest is in the foreign relations of Iran and the global network of the Iranian foreign community. When these topics have been discussed, there has been a focus on Iran's relations with the Middle East or with Western countries. Even though Southeast Asia has a large number of Muslims, Iran's relations with Southeast Asia have been rarely discussed. In understanding the Islamic world, we cannot ignore such relations. Islam has been established as the state religion in Malaysia, as in Iran. By discussing relations between Malaysia and Iran, we can understand not only the foreign relations between these two Islamic countries but also the Islamic world.

- Research purpose and aim

In this study, I researched the global network of the Iranian community in the Malaysian context as well as relations between Iran and Malaysia. The purpose and aim is to reveal the actual situation and to obtain information that can help us to understand relations between the two countries. Thus, I collected information on Iranians in Malaysia, their actual situation, and relations between the two countries through fieldwork, interviews, buying books, and so on.

- Fieldwork results and achievements

I stayed in Kuala Lumpur. Through interviews, I obtained information in regard to aforementioned topics. Surprisingly, an anti-Shia (anti-Iran) NGO exists in Malaysia. It may be considered that differences in Islamic sect sometimes hinder relations between the two countries. However, many Iranians live in a place called Ampang Point. Some Iranians have come to Malaysia in order to learn about Islamic economics. Moreover, I found old Iranian (Persian) Qurans in the Islamic art museum and was able to see Iranian-style mosque art in the Putra Mosque in Putrajaya. I was able to confirm the cultural and human traffic between the two countries.

- Implications and impacts pertaining to future research

Through fieldwork and interviews, it was possible to obtain a variety of information and resources pertinent to my research interests. Malaysia is a Sunni state and Iran is a Shia state; this is a potential obstacle to future relations. However, the two countries have absorbed each other's cultures. I discovered a relationship based on Islamic solidarity. This perception will help me to improve my study.



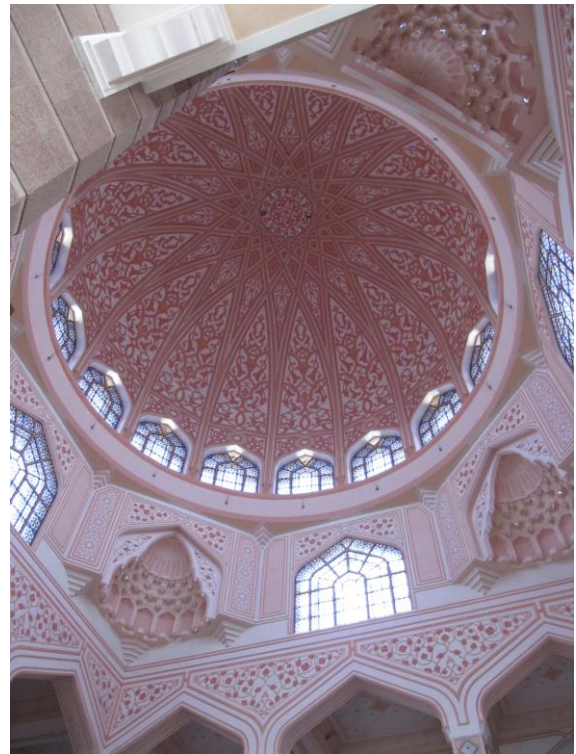
International Symposium at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). I was able to conduct interviews at the symposium.



Old Qurans from various Islamic countries at the Islamic Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur.



The Putra Mosque, Putrajaya.



A mosque interior in the Iranian style.