



The Practice of Islam in Malaysia and Albania: A Comparative Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that dictate the similarities and distinctions between the practised Islam in modern Malaysia and Albania. First, it examines the introduction and embracing of Islam by both populations. Second, it analyses multiple factors that have shaped the lives of Muslims in both countries, namely, geopolitical, regional, ideological and their present political system. Third, it explores the impact of these factors on how Muslims in both countries practice Islam in modern days. Through an in-depth examination of historical documents, legislation, mainstream media, and political and public discourse, the study finds that Islam was willingly accepted in both countries, despite the differing methods of introduction. The prolonged presence of the foreign powers in both countries had opposite political intentions, and as such had an opposite impact on the Muslim lives. This study concludes that, from an Islamic perspective, it is clear that Islam is more present in Malaysia today because the sovereignty of Malay Sultanates and the role of the Sultan as the Shadow of Allah on Earth were preserved throughout the historical challenges. Malaysia retained a legal framework that upheld Islam and Shari'ah Law as the foundation of its legal system. In contrast, the World Wars and the communist regime violated Albania's freedom of faith by replacing Islamic law with civil law, significantly reducing Islam's presence among Muslims in modern Albania.

1. Introduction

Malaysia has received positive recognition from governments and international organisations worldwide for its stability, interfaith harmony, and economic development as a country with a predominantly Muslim population. On the other hand, despite the fact that the majority of Albania's population identifies as Muslim, it is hardly regarded as a Muslim nation, primarily because of the secular administration that currently governs the country. However, Albanian Muslims are attempting to revive their religious identity despite the indifference of the secular government, whose primary concern is the integration of Albania with the European Union (EU) and global Islamophobia pressure, which views Islam as a fundamentalist and regressive ideology.

To understand the current situation of both countries, it is essential to examine the historical events they have experienced and the long-term impact these events have had on each country. Based on the preceding discussion, this essay will address the following question: How was the last revelation of Allah the Almighty, or more precisely Islam being introduced and accepted in both countries? How is the settlement of Europeans in Malaya different from the five centuries of Ottoman Empire authority in Albania? How did the political developments in both countries influence Muslim lives today? The answers to these questions will be founded on qualitative research, particularly Historical research methods based on primary and secondary sources related to the religion of Islam in both Malaysia and Albania.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on engagement with existing literature on the social history of Malaysia and Albania, particularly regarding Islam. The qualitative method involves answering specific questions related to the topic, enabling the researcher to gain a clear understanding of how geopolitical and ideological factors have influenced Muslims in both countries. The comparative historical approach will be used to gather and analyse historical events and legislation through qualitative techniques, utilising both primary and secondary sources.

3. The Beginning: Introduction of Islam to the Early Malay World (Nusantara)

According to Anwar at al. (2013), Malays, as the 'sons of the soil', originated from the Nusantara region, which, positioned in the Equatorial Belt, most likely bore the very first human beings on planet Earth. This is evident due to the fact that during Pleistocene and Holocene periods, this region experienced a thinner layer of ice compared to the rest of planet Earth, which obviously was the first to melt and create the right conditions for life. Malays, as the sons of the land, are one of the oldest populations in Oceania based on archaeological findings of ancient primates and fossils too. According to Anwar

et al. (2013), the first administrative institutions of the ancestors of the sons of the soil are recorded as early as the third century. They list the evidence of historians as follows:

This could be proved by the 3rd century B.C. Indian ancient texts Ramayana and Vayu Purana which had recorded an entity called 'Malayadvipa' in Nusantara. There are other evidence that supported this argumentation. The second century A.D. Ptolemy's Greek text Geography also recorded the entity called Malayu-kulon. Later, the 672/692 A.D. I-Tsing's (Yijing) account had also recorded the existence of the Malay political establishment called 'Melayu-Srivijaya' (I-Tsing 1896, trans. by Takakusu). This kingdom was later succeeded by the fifteenth-century Melaka Sultanate. (Anwar et al., 2013)

The first Malay political establishment of the Sultanate of Malacca was founded by Parameswara, who married the daughter of the ruler of Pasai (Acheh) in 1414. He converted to Islam and was succeeded by his descendants, who extended their influence over neighbouring regions, including Sumatran states, as well as the northern peninsula, comprising Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Pahang, and Kedah. The fact that the political establishment of the Sultanate of Malacca was founded and ruled by Malays and continued for more than 15 centuries serves as greater proof of the sovereignty of Malays over the land as the sons of the soil (Anwar et al., 2013).

Islam, which means submission to the One True God, has been sent as guidance to humanity ever since Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, descended to Earth. Throughout history, humanity has been blessed with prophets and Messengers of Allah who have guided them on the right path. Allah the Almighty declares in Surah al- Fatir:

Verily! We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. And there never was a nation but a warner had passed among them (Qur'an 35:24)

Based on this verse, the natives of Malaya were undoubtedly exposed to Allah's revelations before the thirteenth century, when traders from India, Arabia, and even China brought the teachings of the Qur'an, the final revelation of Allah to the Malay Archipelago. According to Hassan B. Ahmed Muhallabi, a well-established port named Kalah or Klang on the west coast of Sumatra flourished from Persian and Indian trades at the end of the 10th century (Fatimi, 1983). In addition, in the book *Preaching of Islam*, Arlond (1913) explains that Ibn Batuta, on his journey to Sumatra in the 14th century, described how merchants from Deccan, who acted as an intermediary between India and Malay land, had established trading ports along the west coast, bringing the new religion of Islam with them. The northern Sumatra Sultanates accepted the last revelation of Allah the Almighty at the end of the 13th century, and the Malacca Sultanate realised the political and economic benefits of accepting Islam in the 15th century. (Anwar et al., 2013).

4. The Malay World During the 17th- 20th Centuries (The Establishment and Consolidation Phase)

While the French and English battled for dominance in Europe, their rivalries extended to the archipelago, where they vied for additional territories and control of trade routes in the Straits of Malacca from the 17th to the 20th centuries. The European presence in the Malay world was initiated as early as the 16th century, with the fall of the Malaka Sultanate to Portuguese authorities in 1511 (Aljunied, 2011). They created hardship in the region by attacking Muslim trade and territory, instating the *cartaz* (a shipping and trading permission) system for shipping in their "sphere of influence" and raising the Cross in an Islamised region. They were fulfilling the obligation imposed upon them by the decree of Pope Alexander VI (Mitrasing, 2014). Portuguese control of the Strait of Malacca spice trade and their anti-Islamic presence in Muslim lands were strongly opposed by the Aceh Darul Salam (established in 1500), who called for *jihad* against the infidels and even asked for military support from the Khalifah of the Muslims of that time. These events are stated by Mitrasing as:

In 1565, the sultan of Aceh, Alau'd-din Ri'ayat Shah Al Kahar (ruled 1537–1571), who was the sixteenth century's relentless pursuer of the Portuguese, sent an official mission to Constantinople to appeal for assistance from the Ottoman emperor in his struggle against the Portuguese. A fleet assembled from different corners of the empire arrived in the Straits in 1567; however, the combined large Muslim armada was not able to wrest Malacca from the Portuguese. An Islamic effort in 1509 to rescue Diu on India's west coast from the hands of the Portuguese also failed (Mitrasing, 2014).

5. The Sovereignty of Malacca During British Presence in the Peninsula

To answer the question of whether the British Empire colonised Malacca, we need to investigate the impact of the British on jeopardising the political and legal systems of the Sultanates and, as such, the sovereignty of Malacca itself. Referring to sovereignty as the authority and supreme power in the decision-making process and to freely rule on the land, Hussain (2021) states:

Generally, sovereignty refers to the concept of supreme authority that determines the legal principles in a political entity and legislation, i.e. the concept of the supreme power which could not be stripped by any internal or external power; to carry out political decisions, to enact and enforce laws based on the characteristics of its sovereignty within its territorial jurisdiction (Hussain, 2021).

When British forces established themselves in Malacca, they found a well-constructed political system that recognised the Sultan as the main ruler and Khalifah of Allah on Earth. It was well established among Muslim Malays that Islam is a way of life that involves complete submission to the will of Allah, and, as such, encompasses all fields of life on individual and social levels. As a result, according to Husain (2021), the political system of Malacca was deeply grounded in Islamic Shari'ah, which resulted in the formulation of a written constitution, Hukum Kanun Malaka (Canon of Melacca), in 1425, during the rule of Sultan Muhammad Shah (1424-1444), according to which the Sultan is the legitimate ruler on land and is considered Khalifah, or the

representative of Allah on Earth, Malacca is an Islamic Empire that dominated the Malayan peninsula, and regulated trade interrelations through the Law of the Sea, which served as the foundation for International Maritime Law today.

According to Hukum Kanun Malacca, the Malay Sultans are considered khalifah, or the shade of Allah on Earth (zilalullah fil ard). Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Husain, the founder of Watanic jurisprudence posits that Sultan had undisputed authority on land and ruled according to Shari'ah law:

The concept of the shadow of Allah SWT was not only spoken but expressly enshrined in the traditional constitutions in Tanah Melayu in the form of written laws such as Hukum Kanun Melaka, and to prevent evil. Without the power of government, it is impossible for us to fulfil that obligation. Likewise, other obligations such as jihad, upholding justice, doing hajj, establishing Friday prayers, celebrating the great days of Islam, helping the persecuted, upholding hudud and others. All of these things cannot be accomplished without the existence of power and the rule of Islam. Thus, it is narrated that the sultan is the shadow of God on the earth (Husain, 2021).

Despite the fact that Malaccan Malay Sultanate whose governance was based on Islamic Shari'ah, was dissolved in 17th century, the principal of Sultan as Khalifah on land was maintained in the "Laws of Johor, the Laws of Pahang, the Laws of Kedah, and Sungai Ujung's Laws" (Husain, 2021), which extended to the time of British presence in the region until independence in 1957. The East India Company, established by British trading powers in India, sought to grasp the Straits of Malacca. Light, who had a good relationship with the Sultan of Kedah, started the first approach.

In 1786, he came to an agreement with the Sultan of Kedah to settle the East India Company in Penang in return for an annual payment of 6,000 Spanish dollars. "The extension of British control was a gradual process and continued to 1914" In 1795, the British captured Malacca from the Dutch, and their conflicts were brought to an end with the Treaty of London in 1824, which declared the Malay Peninsula under the influence of the British. According to Shennan, (2015), four Malay Settlements that were under the influence of the British were unified to create the Straits of Settlement with "the status of presidency" and were placed under the authority of the Governor of Perak, or Sultan of Perak (1826-1830) (Shennan, 2015).

The fact that The Straits of Settlement was under the governance of the Sultan of Perak is evidence that the British did not have political authority over the region; rather, it was the Malay Sultans who had the legitimate political and legal authority in their Sultanates and were acknowledged as independent sovereigns by the British powers.

In addition, according to the Pangkor Treaty (1874), signed by the Malay Sultans, the British appointed a Resident (British political representative) who was to be consulted by the Sultans on matters other than customs (adat) and religious matters (Islam), which remained under the Sultans' area of jurisdiction. The British representative's role was to assist with administration, focusing primarily on solving the conflicts caused by Chinese emigrants who had come to Malay land to work in the East India Company's tin and gold mines and who, in return, had established secret societies, and were creating conflicts with the Malay community. The British representative had no authority over the Malay Sultans or Malays religion and costumes but was there as a compensation for the services they were providing to the Malay community in crushing the uprisings of the Chinese immigrants through British authoritarian judicial force and by establishing a government agency called the Chinese Protectorate (Shennan, 2015). The British did not intend to force their political authority on the Sultans and the Malays but instead, recognised the Sultans as the political authority on land who enjoyed all the rights to govern their subjects (Husain, 2022). The British representative was in no way a ruler of Malay states, which serves as another proof of the sovereignty of Malay Sultanates, as stated by Husain:

....an imposed advice for the sake of safety and mutual benefits, should not be regarded as colonisation even though there were elements of 'indirect rule'. This is because the British intervention in Perak was subjected to the Pangkor Treaty 1874, and the Pangkor Treaty 1874 itself was subjected to the Constitution of Perak. In short, although the Sultan of Perak was required to act upon the Resident's advice, however, the principal obligation of the Resident was to provide advice, and not to rule (Husain, 2021).

Another significant proof of the sovereignty of the Malay Sultanates during the time of British presence in Malaya is the fact that, in 1948, the Malay rulers agreed to form the Federation of Malaya Agreement, which included Johore, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu including all dependencies. Under the Federation of Malaya in 1948, the Malay Sultans maintained their authority as khalifah on land and had the authority over their subjects, as pointed out Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Husain:

The sovereignty of the Malay Rulers placed upon themselves the constitutional responsibilities to safeguard the sanctity of Islam and their position under Malay custom as a caliph, as well as the manifestation of their position thereunder to protect the local elements such as Malay custom, Malay language, Jawi writing, the special position of the Malays, and legitimate interests of non-Malays being their subjects (Husain, 2021).

The Federation of Malaya in 1948, declared in its jurisdiction that Sultans maintained their authority as Khalifah on Land, which indicates and confirms one more time that Sultan

served as Khalifah on Land prior to 1948, which is the time when the British were present in the region. Reminding ourselves of the functions of Khalifa as decision makers pertaining to all fields of life that concerned their subjects, we come to conclusion that Malacca's sovereignty was not jeopardised in any way or form.

The very fact that the rulers came together to create the Federation indicates the independence and sovereignty of the rulers of these states. The Federation of Malaya Agreement, signed by the representative of the British Queen, Sir Donald Charles MacGillivray, in 1957, was a "legal process for the self-government of Malaya named Persukutuan Tanah Melayu" paving the road to establishing the Federal Constitution of Malaya in 1957 (Husain, 2022).

From the Watanic Jurisprudence perspective, studying the constitutional provisions Husain (2022), states that the Federal Constitution of 1957 is a continuum legal framework of the Federation of Agreements of Malaya of 1948. "Article 181(1) of the Federal Constitution, the oath of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong under the Fourth Schedule, and other constitutional provisions envisage the reception of the continuum legal framework" (Husain, 2022).

181. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the sovereignty, prerogatives, powers and jurisdiction of the Rulers and the prerogatives, powers and jurisdiction of the Ruling Chiefs of Negeri Sembilan within their respective territories as hitherto had and enjoyed shall remain unaffected.

We ibni Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia do hereby swear: Wallahi;

Wabillahi; Watallahi; and by virtue of that oath do solemnly and truly declare that We shall justly and faithfully perform (carry out) our duties in the administration of Malaysia in accordance with its laws and Constitution which have been promulgated or which may be promulgated from time to time in the future. Further We do solemnly and truly declare that We shall at all time protect the Religion of Islam and uphold the rules of law and order in the Country.

As stipulated in the provisions of the constitution, the Rulers powers and jurisdiction, or, in other words, the sovereignty of the Malay states and the role of Sultans as the Supreme ruler and Khalifah of Allah on land, existed before the Federal Constitution of 1957 which refers one more time to the time of the British presence in Malay land. On the other hand, the Federal Constitution of 1957 was a process that had been initiated and undertaken by the Sultans of the nine states themselves since 1946. Had they not had sovereignty over their Sultanates and had they not been recognised as the Shade of Allah on Earth, they would not have had the legal and political authority to create the Federal Constitution, which was recognised by the British themselves and other countries in the international arena.

In addition, the absence of significant resistance to the British presence in Malacca is further evidence that the presence of the British was not perceived by the indigenous Malay population as an act of aggression or colonisation. As discussed earlier, the British found a well-established Muslim community of the sons of the soil who had taken Islam as their way of life and its principles as regulators of their affairs. Under these principles, the land belongs to Allah, and according to Maqasid al Shari'ah human beings have the right to freedom and dignity. These principles were enough for the Malays to call for Jihad against the British, had they perceived them as oppressors of their freedom to rule on their land, practise their religion, and live with dignity.

Based on the above discussion, we can conclude that the British presence on Malacca was not colonialist in nature but rather a presence that was regulated throughout their presence by treaties signed by the sovereign Malay Sultans.

6. Introduction of Albanians to Islam

In the eighth century, Europe was compelled to adopt Christianity. In his book *Islamization of Albanians in the Middle Ages: The Primary Sources and the Predicament of Modern History*, Kopanski describes the Christianisation of Europeans as "a very violent process, involving the extermination of 'heathens'" (Kopanski, 1997). On the other hand, in 1319, Albanians from Tivar (in the north) to Durrës (in the south) revolted against violence and coercion to convert to Orthodox Christianity. "Albania remained a battlefield between two powerful Christian theocracies" (Kopanski, 1997), specifically the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholics. In 1337, in response to the aggression of Eastern Orthodox monarchs, the Byzantine Emperor Andronicos III asked the Muslim Ottoman Turks of the emirate of Aydin for assistance. Umur Beg dispatched his forces to Macedonia and liberated Thessaly and Epirus, resulting in the inevitable fall of the Serbian kingship of Dushan. The feudals of Arberia were still threatened by the Serbs in the north and the feudal of Zeta in the east, so they had no choice but to seek the protection of the Muslim Turks, who, as a result, established a military garrison in Yanina on the Arberia coast's southern tip. The Byzantine Emperor officially acknowledged the Muslim Turks' military presence in the Balkans in the late eighth century (Kopanski, 1997).

In the coming years, the Ottomans were very active in the land of Arber, present-day Albania, as they were invited to intervene in resolving conflicts between feudal families by sending peacekeeping troops, which at times became militarily involved in resolving civil conflicts and established themselves in the land. The military presence of the Muslim army was perceived as a threat by some Albanian feudal lords, who collaborated with the Vatican and surrendered the western coast of Albania to them (Kopanski, 1997).

George Kastrioti, leader of the Arvaniti clan, fought Muslims with Hungarians and Venetians, who supplied weapons, explosives, and gold. Seen as Europe's saviour against Muslim expansion, by 1571 Muslims controlled all of Albania, leading to a period of peace and prosperity. In Istanbul, Muslim youth received Islamic education and military training. Thirty Albanian Grand Viziers ruled in Istanbul, and a large number of Muslim Albanians were appointed to leadership positions in North Africa (Kopanski, 1997).

The Turkish Sultans' most tremendous success was that the Muslim army did not have nor implement a plan to force civilians to convert to Islam. Turkish military Sufi soldiers preached Naqshbandiyyah and Qadiriyyah sects, leading many Muslims to embrace and pass on Sufism to future generations. In 1432, there were no more than 800 Muslim Turks living in Albania, the majority of whom were nobles, preaching dervishes (sufis), and imams of mosques (Kopanski, 1997).

7. Albanian Muslims during the World Wars

European powers like Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria exploited the political vacuum after the Ottoman Empire withdrew from Albania around 1900s. Meanwhile, Muslim nationalist Ahmed Zogu took measures to isolate his government and Muslim community from the Ottoman Caliphate. Sunni

Albanians rebelled against Orthodox Christian dominance in the government and aimed to reunite with the Ottoman Caliphate. When Austro-Hungary invaded Albania during World War I, they supported secular nationalists and reformists, reducing Ottoman influence. Even after their departure, they influenced Ahmed Zogu's reforms, aiming to create a distinct Albanian Islam separate from the Istanbul Caliphate, which he saw as harmful to Albania's development. Government officials considered themselves more Western than Muslim. The ulama of Albania, particularly in Shkodra, opposed replacing Shariah law with a civil code. These ulama were soon replaced by modernist scholars in the Muslim Community of Albania (MCA) (Jazexhi, 2018).

During the Second World War, spanning from 1939 to 1944, Albania endured two separate invasions: one by Italian forces and another by German forces. Instead of uniting Muslims in Albania to oppose invasions, the MCA leader sided with the aggressors, portraying them as saviours in the fight against the British and calling for a holy war. However, Albanian imams and ulama mobilised the people and nationalists against Italians and Germans. This stance of the MCA was criticised and regarded as a betrayal by Albanian imams and ulama. Throughout their tenure, Islam was characterised as a backwards and destructive force that needed to be eradicated in Albania (Jazexhi, 2018).

8. Islam in Albania during the Communist Regime

The Muslim community in Albania endured its most arduous period during the era of the communist regime. Mirroring policies adopted by the Soviet Union and the Chinese

Communist Party, the communist government that emerged in Albania after the Second World War and the Civil War, actively promoted atheism among Albanian Muslims. Under the totalitarian rule of Enver Hoxha, "the sole undisputed leader of Albania" during 1944–1985 (Janz, 1996), possession of religious literature or preaching Islam could result in sentences ranging from three to ten years of imprisonment. Under this law, many Muslim scholars were imprisoned, and some were even accused of collaboration with the enemy of the ruling party and were executed (Finngeir, 1989).

The persecution campaigns against Muslims reached their peak in November 1967, when legislation was amended under the Decree. No. 4337, to exclude religion as a legal right for citizens, proudly declaring Albania the "first atheist state in the world". (Finngeir, 1989)

Believing that the atheism framework was the only path to a 'brighter future' for their nation, the constitution was once again amended, and in 1976, Article 37 was adopted, stating that "the state does not recognise any religion". As such, between 1967 and 1990, Albania was officially declared an atheist state, and practising any religion was prohibited (Jazexhi, 2018).

9. Muslims in Albania in Post-Communism

Enver Hoxha's death in 1985, together with major events in Europe in 1989 such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union's dissolution, along with revolutions against communist regimes in neighbouring Eastern European countries, Western pressures, and rising domestic demands, signalled the decline of Albania's communist regime. These factors provided the perfect opportunity for Ramiz Alia (1985-1990), Enver Hoxha's successor, to liberalise his position towards religion. The constitution was amended in 1990 and once more in 1991 to exclude Article 35 (Constitution, 1976) and replace it with the freedom of religion in Albania, lifting bans on religious practice (Abazi, 2023). Albania opened its borders to Middle Eastern Islamic NGOS, which funded the building of mosques and madrasas, distributed copies of the Qur'an, and launched scholarship programs for young Muslim students. During this period, Islam experienced a resurgence, and nearly every Muslim city and town in the country saw the erection of new mosques (Jazexhi, 2018).

On the other hand, Catholic and Orthodox missionaries in the nation intensified their propaganda efforts in response to the backing they received from the Vatican, several European countries, and even the United States of America. These attempts were bolstered by the backing of the new head of the government, Fatos Nano, who was an ex-communist with an orthodox background. The majority of the ministries and members of the parliament also came from this background. Because of the fear of being labelled as a Muslim country or, even worse, an Arab Muslim country, the Albanian government instituted severe de-Islamisation reforms after the events of September 11, 2001, which took place in the United States. Undoubtedly, the secular government of Albania and the MCA are exerting a great deal of effort to monopolise Islam in Albania and to present it in a manner that is congruent with the goals they have set for themselves to appease Western audiences (Jazexhi, 2018).

10. Analysis of Historical Events in both Countries from an Islamic Perspective

It is fascinating to note that both Malay and Albanians willingly accepted Islam because both nations saw it as the best way of life, which offered them peace in the region and protection from external and internal conflict threats. Despite the fact that traders introduced Islam to the Malay people while Turkish knights, invited as peace troops in the area and viewed as heroes of peace, introduced Islam to the Albanians, both approaches were successful in gradually integrating Islam into the local faith and culture.

Looking closely at the factors that historical events in Malay land, the British presence in particular, and the settlement of the Ottoman Empire for more than five centuries in Albania, we can argue that these denominations were totally opposite in intention, nature, and strategies they employed. The European presence in Malaya resulted from the rivalry between European powers in their quest for new territories, with ambitions to control the trade of the Malacca Straits and utilise the land's resources, including rubber plantations, gold, and tin mining. They brought Chinese, Indian, Persian, and Arab immigrants to control the resources of the land and dominated the trade of the area through the East India Companies. However, when discussing the

presence of British power in Malacca and later in Malaya, it is essential to clarify that they did not dismantle the political and legal systems of the Malay Sultanates; instead, their presence was legitimised and regulated through signed treaties with the Sultans themselves.

On the other hand, Muslim Turkish troops were invited to the Albanian land in the 14th century by the Byzantine Emperor and the local feudal lords to end the war between the Orthodox and Christian Churches on the land. During their stay, the Turkish troops did not utilise the country's resources. Albanian soldiers were highly respected in the Ottoman Army and were given positions of leadership in the courts of the Sultan and in the areas they controlled.

It is safe to conclude that the impact of the Ottoman Empire on Albanians was greater than that of the British presence on Malays, as Albanians adopted the religion of Islam and integrated it into their culture, morals, and values. In contrast, British presence did not change or affect the religion of the indigenous Malays. It did not jeopardise the legitimate authority of the Sultan as the Shadow of Allah on Land. They accepted that Islam is the religion of the native Malays and did not interfere in the religious or cultural *adat* of the Malay population. This is due to the initial agreements the British authorities had signed with the Sultans, according to which they were not to interfere with the Sultans' authority in regulating the religious affairs of their subjects.

To answer the question of how invasions affected Islam in the discussed countries, we must first comprehend that occupying forces violate the sovereignty of the country they occupy, strip the rulers of their authority, and use strategies to kneel the rulers and the masses at the same time. This policy was implemented in Albania under the occupation of Hungary, Austria, Italy, and Germany, during which the Albanian legal system proceeded within a dichotomous legal framework that completely altered the Islamic legal system established by the Ottoman Empire. This system had established the Islamic Shari'ah as the legitimate law of Muslim-populated areas. In order to achieve its goal of subjugating the occupied nation, the occupiers pursued in their politics the marginalisation and devaluation of the nation's religion, culture, morals, and values, regarding them as inferior to their own. This was accomplished by imposing civil law rather than Shari'ah law, and by minimising Islamic education and the function of ulama. This happened due to the fact that European occupiers could not tolerate the presence of a Muslim country so close to them, as they viewed it as an affront to their presence and religion.

A second reason was that an Islamic Albania reminded them of their defeats at the hands of the Ottoman Empire, whose territories extended deep into Europe. The latter served as a religious motive for Portuguese and Dutch forces, who attempted to impose Christianity on the Malay population, as evidenced by the construction of churches and the opening of missionary schools. However, these efforts were ultimately deemed unsuccessful. The Portuguese and Dutch imperialists are considered occupying forces because they invaded Malacca by force of arms and were met with resistance from the locals, led by the Sultan of Malacca, who was eventually forced to flee the city. They completely stripped off the sovereignty of Malacca, evident in the fact that they forced the Sultan of Malacca into exile and changed the administration system to suit their occupying ambitions.

However, it is evident that the British presence was not one of occupation or colonisation, but instead was based on mutual agreements and mutual benefits. They did not interfere in the religious identity of indigenous Malays nor the role of Sultans as the Shade of Allah on Land who ruled throughout their presence according to Shariah, the Islamic Law derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Because the sovereignty of the Sultanates was not stripped off from the Malay rulers, from a legislative perspective, Malaysia's legal system proceeded through a continuum legal framework that is based on the Islamic framework established in the 15th century and continues to be strongly present today as stipulated in Article

3 of the Federal Constitution. This explains the strong presence of Islam in Malaysia today as compared to Islam in Albania, in which the occupying forces and later the communist system completely eradicated it from the political and legal system of the country, leaving little room for the Albanians to practice it freely. The severe impact of these factors is reflected in the decreased ratios of the Muslim population who in census of 1923 Muslim Sunni population was "approximately 68.5%, 20.5% Orthodox and 10.5% Catholic (Albanian Census, 1923) while in 2024, "45.9% of respondents declared themselves as Sunni Muslims, 8.4% as Catholic Christians, 7.2% as Orthodox Christians, 4.8% as Bektashis, 3.5% as atheists, etc." (Albanian Census, 2024). Even though the majority of the population identifies as Muslim, leaving behind Catholics and Orthodox, the proportion is not reflected in any of the significant endeavours of the country, even less so in the political arena, jurisdiction, or governance.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, both Albania and Malaysia willingly accepted the last revelation of Allah the Almighty. They accepted Islam as they saw it as a means of unity, protection, peace, and a decent life. Political actors, occupying forces, and even domestic nationalist movements all sought to downplay or eradicate Islam in Albania. The reality, however, is that Islam revives and maintains a strong presence even in the darkest times, such as during communism in Albania, when religion was illegal and practising Muslims were imprisoned and even killed. Examining the two countries from an Islamic perspective, it is evident that Islam, as the religion of Allah on Earth, is more prevalent in Malaysia today because the sovereignty of Malay Sultanates and the role of the Sultan as the Shadow of Allah on Earth were preserved. The political and juridical framework of Malays had a continuum legal framework that ensured the presence of Islam as the legitimate religion of Malays and Sharia Law as the foundation of present legal system, whereas, Albania's occupying forces during of the First and the Second world war and even more so, the communist regime violated the sovereignty of Albania and intentionally replaced the Islamic law with civil law through a dichotomy legal framework which in return significantly reduced the presence of Islam in Albanian today.

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