Original scientific paper

Reasons for Assimilation: Focus on the Indian Muslims in Kuching, Malaysia

Maya Khamiani David, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaya
Caesar Deane, UTM Samarahan, Malaya

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Abstract

According to Lassimbang and Miller (1990), people react negatively if they feel they are being subsumed into a larger group on an unequal basis, but they may readily shed their identity for a larger group identity if it is in their best interests. The aims of this study are to investigate if the Indian Muslim community in Kuching, Sarawak wants to be part of the Malay community and to determine the reasons for such assimilation. To understand reasons for such assimilation and for the adoption of a Malay identity open-ended interviews were conducted with thirty Indian Muslims from various socio-economic groups and eight Malay respondents in Kuching. Does Malay identity act as scaffolding for the Indian Muslims in Kuching which in turn creates the basis for social, economic and political attainment? Assimilation for the Indian Muslims in Kuching with the local Malay community has occurred to some part because of mixed marriages with local Malay women and also because of a shared religion i.e. Islam. The ethnic boundaries of the Indian Muslims are permeable and they want to be identified as Malays.

Keywords

Kuching; assimilation; identity; Indian Muslims

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