CHAPTER TWO

MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA

The slogan “Malaysia, Truly Asia” is commonly heard across the world as part of a large and expensive advertising campaign sponsored by the Malaysian government. It is an attempt to attract foreign visitors to this country of 22 million people which boasts of a highly diverse ethnic and religious composition. 51 percent of the population is Malay, all of whom are Muslim. Chinese make up 26 percent of the population; most of whom are Buddhists combining Taoist and Confucian practices while a small number identify as Christian. Indians comprise 7 percent of the population of who most is Hindu with a small minority of Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Various ethnic groups, such as different indigenous groups mostly situated in the Borneo region, and Eurasians and migrant workers, most of whom are Indonesians, make up the remaining 16 percent of the population.

Despite the Muslim majority, Malaysia is not an Islamic state. Instead, Malaysia is considered to be a “Malay dominated plural society” and the freedom of practicing other religions is granted to everyone. This conception of Malay hegemonic rule is a result of the political bargaining between the major ethnic political groups of Malaysia, UMNO (United Malays National Organization), MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) and MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) during the formation of post-colonial Malaysia (at that time called Malaya) in 1957. As a result of the bargaining, non-Malay ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indians were granted citizenship and their legitimate interests (economic rights), their rights of citizenship…and residence as well as their freedom to preserve, practice and propagate their religion, culture and language were recognized.

In return, Malays retained their major symbols of their nation, that is, their sultans, their special position, their language (as the official language), and their religion (Islam as their religion)”. In addition, special rights were granted to protect the Malays. This is enshrined in the controversial and often quoted Article 153 in the constitution of Malaysia. According to this article, those who “profess the religion of Islam, habitually speak the Malay language, and conform to Malay customs” are entitled for special reservation of quotas in three specific areas: public services,
education, and business licenses, without harming the rights of other ethnic groups. Thus it is important to emphasize that Malaysia is founded "not on individual rights but on what political theorists have come to refer to as 'ethnically differentiated citizenship'" (Hefner 2001, p.29). To properly analyze the pluralism of the Malaysian society an in-depth understanding of the major minority communities is necessary. Thereby this chapter seeks to probe the historical and cultural roots and status of major minority cultural communities.

2.1. Indian community in Malaysia:

"Hindu traders from India had been travelling to Southeast Asian countries from very early times, and the Malayan peninsula served as a trade centre" (Winsted, R.1948:103-104). In southern Kedah and province Wellesley regions of Malay, earliest evidence of Indian presence were found. The inscriptions found there are in Indian scripts. It is believed that till that time with the influence of Buddhism, the Hindu prejudice against crossing the seas were lessened. It is widely believed that in the Malay Peninsula the Indian influence was largely due to the Indian merchants. Srivijaya Empire was largely a maritime power. From this time we find evidence of Indian merchant communities living in Malay Peninsula. However their contact with the indigenous societies was minimal.

"Indian cultural influence spread into Malayan states and affected political and social institutions through the direct agency of the Indian traders and settlements or from the other Indianized centers in Southeast Asia." (Arsaratnam 1970:5). The Hindu influences over the Malay culture were in the form of institution of kingship, Sanskrit language, law and court ceremonies etc.

"With the decline of Hindu shipping and mercantile activity and the expansion of Islamic political and economic power in India, the number of Hindu traders coming to Malay declined, giving place to the more powerful and better equipped Muslim merchants of Bengal, Golconda, coromandal and Gujarat (Arsaratam 1970 :6). Now, another religious and cultural influence entered Malay in the form of Islam. Although the source of the religious influence was same, but the content and nature were different. Gradually the Islamic influence spread over all Southeast Asia and this led
to a general islamization. But “the political significance of the early Hindu intercourse with Malay however, was erased by Muslim ascendancy” (Mahajani 1960:95).

The Muslim merchants played an important role in Malaysian politics and society of that period. “The close commercial and political connections with Malacca resulted in the founding of an Indian settlement there. A suburb of the city called kampong kling was occupied by Indians who were employed as officials, teachers, petty traders, goldsmiths and craftsman” (Arsartnam 1970:45). Gradually the Indian element became an integral part of the populace of Malacca. And this somehow continues even during the Portuguese and Dutch control of the Straits. Hence the Indian Muslims grew to be major shippers of the archipelago.

However, the increase of European trade caused the Muslims to gradually lose out to the larger resources and centralized administration of the Europeans- first the Portuguese, and then the Dutch and English East India Company. Indian commercial activity further slumped with the decline of the Mughal power and governmental machinery, greatly affected by the debasement of the coinage and division of the empire in to small states.

The conquest of India and Malay by the British rang the death bell of the Indian maritime enterprises in the eastern seas. The Indian merchants lost their spice and textile trade and their principal markets and sources of supply. As a result, Indian influence declined in Malay and Indians ceased to be of any importance in terms of political consequences until the early decades of the present century.

“Despite the great antiquity of the Indian overseas migration to Malay and the debt of Malay culture to ancient India, there were seldom large number of Indians in Malay in the pre-British period” (Sandhu 1993:151-153). In the British period the demand of manpower for the production of cash crops was the primary factor in migration from India to Malay. Thereby the Indian immigrants of modern times were predominantly labourers. They were brought to Malay in conditions in India and encouraged by political and economic changes. In the initial decades of the 19th century there was no coordinated migration. However more or less the system of indentured labour was followed throughout the century.
“Under the indentured system, a prospective employer of labour placed an order with a recruiting agent based in India for the supply of a stipulated number of labourers. The recruiting agent thereupon sent his subordinate contact man into the villages, and picked the required number of men. These men on signing a contract, were said to be under indentured to the employer for a period of five years. This meant they did not have the right to change their employer or their employment” (Arsaratnam 1970: 11).

This system was exploited by the employers to get the labourers work for longer periods than their original contracts. Largely sugar plantation benefited from ‘indentured system’. Later during the last quarter of the 19th century another system of labour recruitment evolved. This was called Kangany. The literal meaning of Kangany in Tamil is supervisor or overseer. “This was the method of recruiting through a kangany, a person who was himself an immigrant working on the plantation as a foreman, and even as a labourer of some influence and standing. The employer will send him to India provided with money, to go to his village and recruit labourers among his own people” (Arsaratnam 1970 : 16). The kangany system provided the labour force primarily to the coffee and rubber plantation sector.

Britishers acquired the Penang Island in 1786 and by 1909 they were in actual control of the whole of Malay. In the period they facilitated the movement of labour for sugar, coffee and especially rubber plantation. “Among the people of the Indian subcontinent, the south Indian peasant particularly the untouchable or lower caste madrasi was considered the most satisfactory type of labourer, especially for light, simple and repetitive tasks. He was malleable, worked well under supervision and was easily manageable. He had fewer qualms or religious susceptibilities; acclimatization to Malayan condition was comparatively easier for him as south India was not totally different from Malay climate”(Sandu 1993: 156).

According to the 1931 census of madras state over a third of the emigrants belong to the untouchable castes of the parraiyan, chakkiliyan, palan and a conglomerate depressed caste called adi – dravida. The others consisted of vellan, koundan, ambalakaran, kallan and Vanniyan (Census of India, 1931 vol.xiv, Madras, part1). “An important point that needs to be made on the composition of the Indian plantation labour force is that it was predominantly male. Part of the explanation for
this trend lies in the cultural traditions of the Indians. But the ideology of a colonial regime – that a women’s role was largely reproduction one - also played a part in this development. This was reflected in the sexual division on the plantation and a differential wage scale, with a women paid lower wages than men.”(Kaur Amarjit 1970: 73-102).

Before the voluminous immigration of the labour in 1880s, the foundations of Indian settlement were laid in the three British settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore by the wide variety of people who had established permanent domicile thereby the middle of the 19th century. To Penang and province Wellesley people came to work in the harbor and in sugar, pepper and gambier plantations. By 1870s the Indian population of Malay had increased to over 30,000, the majority of them living in Penang and province Wellesley. With the extension of British control over the west Malayan states from the 1870s, and the expansion of commercial agriculture from that time, the Indian population both of the straits settlement and of the protected Malay states grew rapidly. By 1891 it stood at over 75,000 and by 1901 it had grown to around 120,000.

The First World War (1914-1918) affected the growth of the Indian population. Expansion in rubber was temporarily halted because of a shortage of capital. However the heaviest blow to Indian immigration came from the great depression. The Second World War and the Japanese occupation of the Malay followed soon after. In the census taken soon after the war in 1947, the cumulative result of these factors is seen. The Indian population for the first time showed an absolute decline from the earlier census. A population that had stood at 620,000 in 1931 dropped to 599,000 in 1947.

Though labourers were by far the most numerous immigrants before the war, there were also significant numbers engaged in commercial pursuits, and in professional and clerical employment. Malayalese from the native state of Travancore and Cochin and from the Malabar districts of the Madras state were among the first to come in large numbers. “As for the north Indians by far the most numerous among them are Punjabis. In 1947 they numbered 30,592 or more than 72% of the total north Indian population of Malay”(Sandhu 1993:159). The phenomenal commercial growth
brought in north Indian businessmen from established business communities such as Parses, Sindhis, Marwaris, Gujratis and Baniyas.

In the post WWII period there was a palpable concern among the educated Malays about the Chinese and Indian immigrants occupying their jobs. Eventually this was one of the first issues around which Malay nationalist opinion began to form itself. In the mean time the Indian inflow in post war years were more heterogeneous than before. A number of north Indians came in particular during and after the partition of India, when Punjabis and Bengalis emigrated to Malay.

2.1a. Statistics of Indian population

In the period after 1947, Indian population settled down to a neutral and internally – ordained growth, of the cities of Malay, Penang and Kuala Lumpur are those that have the highest number of Indian habitants. Today apart from these cities, Ipoh and clang also have fair number of Indians. Situated in the heart of plantation country, they have absorbed the overspill from the plantations. The same factor apply to other towns favoured by Indians, such as seremban, Telok Anson, JohoreBaharu, Port Dickson, Batu Gajah and some others.

It is clear that Indians though forming an overall minority of 7-11% over a period of five decades are not physically submerged in the Malay society. “Their manners of migration and settlelement have ensured for them certain areas of Indian dominance, or at least of a substantial Indian presence. This was easy enough to arrange in plantations, where they were housed in especially constructed quarters grouped together in a division of an estate” (Arsartnam1970: 45).

According to “urban poverty and social work report” by the yayasan stratgik social (Urban poverty and social work: issues and lessons – the YSS experience by YSS, Kualalumpur)-

There are major demographic changes in Malaysia and these have direct impact on the Indian community in Malaysia. According to the 2000 census, the urban population has increased to 62.0% from 50.7% in 1991. In the Indian community, some 79.7% are living in urban centers with only 20.3% in rural areas.
Although at the national level Indians comprise only 7.7% of the population or 1,680,132 persons.

There are five states with a high density of Indian population. These are Selangore (14.6%), Perak (13%), Kuala Lumpur (11.4%), Penang (10.6%) and Negri Sembilan (16%). Indians are also the second most urbanized community in Malaysia. At the district level there are 23 districts and the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur where the Indian population is more than 20,000. This is listed in the table below. The six districts with the most number of Indians are Petaling (166,542), Klang (129,408), Johore Bharu (109,864), Kinta (104,471), Ulu Langat (96,598), and Kuala Lumpur (51,517). In Kuala Lumpur there are 146,621 Indians.

It is interesting to note that 84.4% (or 1,417,284 of 1,680,132 persons) of the Indian community resides in these 24 areas of Malaysia.

Population of Indians in different states of Malaysia

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>179,876</td>
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<td>Kedah</td>
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<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>3,683</td>
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<td>Malacca</td>
<td>39,866</td>
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<td>Negri Sembilan</td>
<td>132,754</td>
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<td>Pahang</td>
<td>61,352</td>
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<td>Perak</td>
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<td>Perlis</td>
<td>2,610</td>
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<td>Pulau Pinang</td>
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<td>Kuala Selangor</td>
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<td>Ulu Selangor</td>
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<td>Negri Sembilan</td>
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<td>Seremban</td>
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<td>Penang</td>
<td>S.P.Tengah</td>
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(Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000)
(Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000)

2.1b. Indian community, Hinduism and culture

Hinduism has been recreated as a significant minority religion in Malaysia (Raghvan argues that Hinduism has been recreated in Malaysia. He points out that Hinduism existed in Malay well before the arrival of Islam) (Raghvan 1954) as an outcome of the waves of Indian migration which followed the British colonization of Malay. The transplantation and historical evolution of Malay/Malaysian Hinduism has occurred in the absence of those traditional sources of authority – firstly the religious centers of learning and the monastic orders (maths) which had provided a system of scriptural hermeneutics and exegesis, and secondly an influential Brahman or dominant orthodox castes – which had such a marked impact upon Hindu structures,
belief system, mythology and patterns of worship in south India. (Ackerman, Susan and Lee Raymond 1998: 91) thus the new arrivals in the estates and workplaces of Malay had no recognized authoritative points of reference and initially tended to automatically reproduce remembered practices and mores of the Hinduism of their own regions. Since the majority of Indian immigrants were indentured and later Kangany recruited labourers, the deities worshipped and the rituals associated with that worship revolved around the sub communal norms of behavior and caste variations of the village origin. Over time these practices were in some cases reinforced, in other modified, in many more supplemented, by other regional and caste influences introduced to the estates, workplaces and cities of Malay (Jain 1970:276). “Broadly two types of Hindu religious institutions were established. There were more numerous shrines of modest proportions devoted to the village deities of popular Hinduism. In this category came almost all temples in estates, and the shrines built near the vicinity of labour lines in cities and towns. Then there were the large temples dedicated to the universal God and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. These were generally more elaborate structures, built with contributions from the professional and commercial classes, and managed by communities among them.”(Arsaratnam 1970 :163). It is estimated that today there are approximately 17,000 big and small Hindu temples in Malaysia. The number of temples reflects the multiplicity of practices within Hinduism in Malaysia.

2.1c. Major festivals

A description of some of the important Hindu festivals celebrated by Malaysian Hindus will give a comprehensive idea of the living character of Hindu Religious practices.

i) Thaipusam: Easily the most popular festival is “Thai Poosam” occurring on the day in the Tamil month of Thai (January- February) when the asterism ‘poosam’ is on the ascendant (Arsartnam 1970:168). Thaipusam appears to have emerged early in the colonial era as the most widely observed popular festival, both Penang and Batu caves clearly identified as prominent pilgrimage centers. Murugan/ Subramanian were widely worshipped on the estates and centers commemorating Thaipusam attracted thousands of devotees from many miles around. By the 1930s Thaipusam was widely established as the most important Hindu festival
and its preeminence has continued into the modern era. “In Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur has become almost a national seat for the celebrations of the Thaipusam. The venue of the Kuala Lumpur celebrations is a picturesque shrine situated right inside the cave that lies many feet above the ground, and can only be approached through a steep climb. This place known as batu caves, is about eight miles from the city, and a chariot procession carrying the image of the deity to and from the place adds to the colour and gaiety of the festival. Crowds from all over the country throng to the cave, including people of all classes and groups, and an intense religious feeling and emotion is exhibited” (Arsaratnam 1970: 169). It is above all a day of penance, on which all kinds of vows are fulfilled. A 42.7 meter high statue of Lord Murugan was built at Batu caves and was unveiled in January 2006.

ii) Deepavali- Deepavali is a cross section Hindu festival. Over a period of time this has been established as major Hindu festival. In Malaysia the government gives a public holiday on the Deepavali day. In Malaysia, Deepavali has been observed more of a generalist triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness. However the spiritual angle of the festival has been diluted and it has become a day of feasting and merry making.

iii) Thaipongal – Thaipongal is a traditional Tamil harvest festival held over the first two days of the month of Thai (mid January). On the first morning the worship is performed and rice is ceremonially cooked with sugar and milk in a pot, timed to boil over the rim of the pot at sunrise. The ground outside the house is carefully decorated. The second day is given over to the decoration and honouring of animals. This festival is more popular in estates than in towns.

iv) Innumerable other Hindu festivals are celebrated, some as temple festivals, others as domestic ones. Particular temples have achieved a reputation as venues for specific celebrations of particular festivals. Some of these festivals and places specializing in them are: Chittirai Paruvam, (Thandoguthapani temple, Telak Anson), Vinayak Chaturthi (Selva
vinayakar Kovil, Seremban) Navarshiri (Kulalumpur), Karthikai theepam (Thandayuthapani temple, Muar), Panguni Uttiram (thandayuthapani Temple, Kualalumpur), Mariamman Thiruvilu (all estates temples), Masi Maham (Sannasimalai Andavarkavil) and the Hindu new year” (Arsartnam 1970:170).

v) There are some important practices (although inhuman) which define the characteristics of Hinduism in Malaysia. There are ritual slaughters of buffaloes, goats etc, fire walking, Kavadi bearing and so on. Over a period of time many reform movements grew up to reform the popular religion and bring Hinduism in line with the scriptural Hinduism. The role of many reform movements and organizations is very critical in this area. For example the Ramakrishna mission has played a very important role in this direction. In recent times these organizations do provide a fresh air to the Malaysian Hinduism.

2.1d. Caste in Malay Hindu Society:

The indentured workforce in Malay was drawn from landless laborers and those disposed by agricultural reforms within the Madras presidency, and consisted overwhelmingly of the adi dravidar castes. Kangany recruitment resulted in major changes in the overall composition of the Indian workforce. The reputation of the kangany as a member of a clean caste and a man who promised to guarantee the welfare of those he recruited, led to a significant increase in the number of labourers who were prepared to relocate to the estates and workplaces of Malay. While approximately one third of the Kangany migrants originated from among the adi dravidar castes of paraiyar, Chakkiliyar and Palliar, others were drawn from the entire range of non- Brahmin castes. Major caste groupings include Velar, Goundar, Ambalakkar, Kallar and Vanniyar (Arsarstnam, 1970:17).

The absence of a strong brahmanical model on the estates and more generally within the social and cultural fabric of the Malayan Hindu community ( Jain 1975) has had a profound impact upon the evolution and organization of inter-caste dynamics in Malaysia. The recreation of known hierarchical ranking was complicated by the ambiguities of regional caste variations within Tamilnadu, which were now
introduced into Malayan estates and workplaces. Caste distinctions among Indians in Malay gradually became more muted as the Indian workforce became more settled within Malay. The slow easing of caste relations were undoubtedly assisted by the fact that within the plantation and workplace context ‘jati’ had no operational significance either as a term or as a concept. (Wiebe and Marriappan 1978: 69-70)

The traditional model of social organizations, structured in to a carefully graduated ranking and revolving around the fundamental divisions of Brahman, non- Brahman and adi- Dravidian castes was replaced in Malay with two broader essentially generic groupings. While clean castes identified themselves as ‘Tamilar’, adi dravidar jatis were known as ‘paraiyar’. This basic division which emerged within the late Kangany era, continues to remain valid within Malaysia. Moreover despite the considerable erosion of caste identities, it remains a persistent and resilient source of social identification for many Hindus.

2.1.e. Other religions followed by Indian community in Malaysia

Sikhism remains a prominent religion practiced by the Malaysian Indians. The Sikhs in Malaysia generally belong to the Punjab province of India. The majority of them are concentrated in to some major cities of Malaysia. There are some Sikh temples (Gurudwara) in kualalumpur and other major cities of Malaysia. “In these temples Sikh worship is carried on with the help of Gurus who are generally brought over from Punjab. The Sikh missionary society periodically sends lecturers and teachers to Malaysia. The main Sikh festivals such as the birth and death anniversary of guru Nanakdev and guru Govind singh and Vaishki and the Sikh new year are celebrated in the temples. Sikhs have shown strong adherence to traditional customs, such as growing their hair long and wearing traditional turban” (Arsartnam 1970:175).

Christianity is prevalent amongst the Tamil people in many denominations. Christianity has been in Tamilakkam since the times of St. Thomas, an apostle of Christ. “Though a tiny minority among Indians, their influence has been great because of their relative affluence and education” (Arsaratnam1970: 176). In Malaysia most of the Christians are Methodists, Pentecostal, Lutheran, bretheren and catholic. Amongst the Malayalee community the Catholicism holds strong ground. Islam is the religion of roughly 10% of the Malaysian Indians with a population of roughly 200,000. As we noted earlier, that as early as in the 18th century the Indian Muslim traders were
travelling to Malay. “Among Indian Muslims who have been settled for several
generations there, is a distinct tendency to merge with the Malay Muslims, a trend
hastened by the natural desire to partake in Malay privileges, but more recent
migrants self consciously maintain their identity through old separate religious
institutions. Language is a factor that helps in this separatism from Malay Muslims.
The north Indian Muslims would like to continue to use urdu for intercourse among
themselves and the south Indians Tamil and Malayalam. Politically they identify with
the Indians and work through the Malayan Indian congress” (Arsartnam 1970:176).

2.2. Indigenous people in Malaysia

The census of Malaysia 2000(The department of statistics, Government of
Malaysia,) identifies the indigenous people under the rubric of bumiputera. However
under this term, the Malays are prominent, and it is only for the constitutional and
legal purposes that all the indigenous people are put under the category of bumiputera.
The Malaysian census do differentiates between Malays and other bumiputeras under
the broad term of bumiputera. The 2000 census puts the total number of other
bumiputera or the indigenous people of Malaysia at 2,567,758 that is
approximately11.73% of the total population of Malaysia. In the appendix (one) of the
2000 census a list of their bumiputera is given. The list covers following groups of
people-
1. Negrito
2. Senoi
3. proto Malay
4. Dusun
5. Kadazan
6. Kwijau
7. Bajau
8. Iranun
9. Murut(Sabah)
10. Orang sungel
11. Sulu/Suluk
12. Bisaya(Sabah/Sarawak)
13. Rungus
14. Sino Native

52
15. Kandayan (Sabah/Sarawak)
16. Tidong
17. Tambanuo
18. Idahan
19. Dumpas
20. Mangkaak
21. Monokok
22. marangang
23. Paitan
24. Rumanau
25. Lotud
26. Cocos islanders
27. Other Bumiputera (Sabah)
28. Iban/Dayak laut
29. Bidayuh
30. Melanau
31. Kenyah
32. Lun Bawang/Murut (Sarawak)
33. Penan
34. Kajang
35. Kelabit
36. Other Bumiputera (Sarawak)

Bumiputera literally meaning “son of the soil” is an official definition created primarily to facilitate the implementation of Malaysia’s New Economic Policy (NEP), which was introduced in 1970s. The special privilege and position accorded to the Malays in peninsular Malaysia, as Bumiputera was extended to all native groups in Sabah and Sarawak. However we can differentiate between indigenous people of peninsular Malaysia and natives of Malaysian parts of Borneo, which is divided into Sabah and Sarawak states. However this is in itself a very diverse group comprising a very broad range of ethnic groups, which has different culture, language and way of life. But for the purpose of study, the following terms are use to collectively describe the indigenous groups in the different areas of Malaysia:-
i) Orang Asli: Orang Asli (OA) translates as "original people" or "first people", is used for the indigenous minority people of peninsular Malaysia.

ii) Anak Negri, which translates in to "son of the state" or "native" is used for the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak. In Sarawak, indigenous people are also collectively referred to as "Dayaks" or "Orang Ulu". In the federal constitution of Malaysia, the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak are referred to as "natives".

2.2 a. Orang Asli

"The Orang Asli (original people) is the indigenous minority peoples of peninsular Malaysia. They are the descendants of the early inhabitants of the peninsula before the establishment of the Malayan kingdoms" (Nicholas 2005: 315-329). Anthropologists and administrators have traditionally regarded the Orang Asli as constituting the three main groups which is themselves comprise several distinct tribes or subgroups. The main groups are the Negrito (semang), the senois and the aboriginal Malay. Each group is further divided into six subgroups. So, there are at least 95 subgroups, each with their own distinct language and culture. "The orang asli speaks Austro Asiatic language belonging to the Mon-khmer family. The early ancestors of the Orang Asli probably migrated from the north (Burma, Yunnan, Cambodia) through Thailand to the Malay peninsula as early as ten thousand years ago" (Signe 1995).

The OA has equally varied occupation and ways of life. The Orang Laut, Orang Selatar and Nah -neri, for example live close to the coast are mainly fishermen. Some Temuan, Jakun and Semai people have taken to permanent agriculture and now manage their own rubber, oil palm and cocoa farms. About 40% of the Orang Asli population- including Semai temiar, she wong, jah hut, semelai, and semoq beri- however, live close to, or within forested areas. Here they engage in swiddening (hill rice cultivation) and do some hunting and gathering. These communities also trade in petai, durian, rattan and resin to earn cash incomes. A very small number especially among the negrito (e.g jehai and lanoh) are still semi- nomadic, preferring to take advantage of the seasonal bounties of the forest. A fair number also live in urban areas
and are engaged in both waged and salaried jobs, and there are several professionals among them today.

The legal position of the Orang Asli is unsatisfactory. The colonial 1939 enactment, the first attempt at a legal definition, described an aborigine as "a person whose parents were members of an aboriginal tribe and including a descendent through a male line" (Rachagan 1990: 106). The 1954 ordinance extends the definition; [the aborigine] speaks an aboriginal language, follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and includes a descendent through male of such a person" (Rachagan 1990: 101). Also included were the children of "any union between an aborigine female and a male of any race and persons of any race who were adopted by an aborigine as an infant" (Rachagan 1990:102). While the term aborigine is used in the constitution of 1957 to distinguish the Orang Asli from the other (arguably) indigenous people of the peninsula, namely the Malays, the constitution does not further define them either by tribal names or characteristics. Malays by contrast, are defined by reference to Islam, Malay language, customs, residence and lineage.

To a large extent, the Orang Asli remained in relative isolation during the colonial period (1640s-1940s) and led autonomous self sufficient lives primarily because the colonialist regarded them as people of no political or economic importance. Even "the Malays regarded the aborigines as wild creatures, more akin to the animals of the jungle than a human being, and as such, legitimate object for the hunt and enslavement" (Endicott 1983). Therefore the contacts were minimal at most. However the period of emergency (1948-1960) brought the Orang Asli back into the mainstream of Malaysian political scene. For the communist guerrillas these people became an important source of their food supply. Recognizing the importance of the Orang Asli and other aborigines a department of the aborigines was established in 1950(later renamed the department of aborigines).

The government tried to resettle them so that it can control them easily. However this policy lost its value and was abandoned in 1953. "Following independence, the new Malaysia government continued to administer the aboriginal population separately from the dominant population of the country: Malays, Chinese and Indians. The official name for them became Orang Asli supplanting the variety of
terms previously used, most of which had derogatory connotations. Consequently, the department for aborigine affairs was established (Jabatan Orang Asli or JoA)” (Signe 1995).

Due to rapid deforestation the Orang Asli are losing their traditional settlements. Hence they increasingly come in contact with other ethnic groups. This relationship is exploitative in nature. The affects of administration by JoA has raised divergent views among scholars. Some scholars argue that putting a veil and separating them from mainstream might be detrimental. It is seen that the JoA officials regard Orang Asli as the “client population”. Nicholas ( Nicholas 2006) has tried to analyze the position of Orang Asli after many government policies.

Nicholas argued that in 1999 81.4% of Orang Asli lived below poverty line and among them 49.9% were very poor (compared to 2.5% nationally). “Other indicators also point to the poor quality of life that the Orang Asli experience. For example, only 47.5 % of Orang Asli households had some form of piped water either indoors or outdoors, with 3.9% depending on rivers, streams and wells for their water needs. The availability of toilet facilities as a basic amenity was lacking in 43.7%of the Orang Asli housing units compared to only 3% at the peninsular Malaysian level.” (Department of Statistics: 1997:47).

While there has been some improvement in the levels of education attained among the Orang Asli, education levels still lag far behind those achieved by other communities. Almost half of the Orang Asli is illiterate, while the remainder (38.5%) has mainly primarily education. Only 177 Orang Asli have achieved tertiary education, and this figure is not expected to increase markedly in the near future in view of the meritocracy policy in place by the government” ( Nicholas 2006).

Even in terms of health indicators, Orang Asli are far behind the other communities. Tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, cholera, typhoid, measles and whooping cough are some very common curable diseases affecting Orang Asli. According to Colin Nicholas (ibid) the crude death rates and infant mortality rates for the Orang Asli also do not compare well with the national statistics. Orang Asli generally recorded a much higher infant mortality rate (median = 51.7 deaths per 1000 infants)
than the general population (median= 16.3). Similarly, the crude death rate for the Orang Asli (median=10.4) was double than of the national population (median=5.2). Accordingly their life expectancy at birth (estimated at 52 years for females and 54 years for males) was also significantly lower than that for the national population(68 years for females and 72 years for males).

The Orang Asli’s attachment to their traditional lands cannot be overemphasized. Most Orang Asli still maintains a close physical cultural and spiritual relationship with the environment. Increasingly, however Orang Asli is beginning to see the ownership of their lands as an essential prerequisite for their material and economic upliftment. Under present Malaysian laws, the greatest title that the Orang Asli can have to their land is one of tenant-at- will – an undisguised allusion to the e government’s perception that all Orang Asli lands unconditionally belong to the state. However provisions are made for the gazeting of the Orang Asli reserves, although such administrative actions do not accord the Orang Asli with any ownership rights over such lands.

2.2 a.i. Political participation and the leadership of Orang Asli

To a large degree, the Malay claim to political dominance is based on their indignity. While they may stake their claim as the indigenes of their land, the Orang Asli however do not enjoy the accompanying political clout. On the contrary, two of the prime ministers have gone onboard to officially deny any possibility of the Orang Asli getting that status.

There was no doubt that the Malays were the indigenous peoples of this land because the original inhabitants did not have any form of civilization compared with the Malays....and instead lived like primitives in mountains and thick jungle.”(Tunku Abdul Rehman, The Satr,6.11.1986).

“The Malays are the original and indigenous people of Malaysia and the only people who can claim Malay as their one and only country...the Orang melayu or Malays have always been the definitive people of the Malay Peninsula. The aborigines were never accorded any such recognition nor did they claim such
recognition...Above all, at no time did they outnumber the Malays” (Mahathir 1981:73).

Save for an Orang Asli senator, who is appointed by the government (and in the case of at least two past senators, the choice had been opposite to what Orang Asli wanted) the Orang Asli are not represented in any political position, be it at state or federal level. Thus, unlike the other bumiputera groups (for example in Sarawak where even a minority bumiputera can hold much of the state in his sway), the Orang Asli do not enjoy this ‘right’.

Among the more settled and established Orang Asli communities, especially the aboriginal Malay groups in the south, village leadership was structured collectively to ensure that the community interest prevailed. The norm was to delegate most decision-making pertaining to the adat (tradition and customs) and the security of the community to a council of (male) elders called the Lembang Adat.

However in most Orang Asli communities, there was traditionally no leadership structure of any sort. It was anathema to the subsistence egalitarianism that these communities practiced. These Orang Asli, while valuing their individual autonomy, never doubted the truthfulness of indigenous spirituality— their faith in it was manifested in unquestioning observance of the myriad of taboos and rules governing community living as well as in internalized values ensuring conformity, control, consensus, and co-existence. Needless to say, individual gain or self-interest was not a trait held in high regard.

However the increasing involvement of the state in Orang Asli lives brought more formalized leadership structures to their communities. At times, the state has accepted traditional leadership system such as the lembang adat. But in case where this proved detrimental to its motives, the state has accorded recognition to acquiescent individuals.

This pattern of state involvement can be explained simply— the appropriation and control of Orang Asli land and resources is important for both economic and political reasons. Rather than use of outright force or political might, the state finds it
both prudent and expedient to incorporate individuals who can give legitimacy to its motives and actions. The key weapon at its disposal is its ability to ascribe, or withdraw, political representativity to indigenous individuals.

Somewhere along the way, indigenous knowledge and indigenous system were sidelined and in the process traditional elders – the Orang Asli intellectual or leaders – were silenced or compromised as well. It has been said that a society without a functioning group of intellectuals is deprived of a certain level of consciousness and insight into vital problems. Such a group is needed to define the indigenous response to new values and paradigms that ultimately seek to eliminate unique traditional cultures. Thus, to lack intellectuals in the community is to lack leadership in determining goals and directions and in finding solutions.

2.2. b. Indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak

Borneo is a large island in Southeast Asia that comprises Malaysia, Indonesia and the sultanate of Brunei. The Malaysian part comprises the northern coastal land is divided in to the state of Sabah and Sarawak. The tiny nation of Brunei is wedged between these two Malaysian states. The total population of Borneo is roughly 16 million people of whom 12 million reside in Indonesia (Kalimantan) and 4 million reside in Sabah and Sarawak.

According to the Borneo project data (Borneo project by Earth institute, Berkely) the history of human habitation in Borneo is over 50,000 years old. It is believed that around four thousand years ago the Porto Malay arrived via the Malay Peninsula and populated the western Malay Archipelago, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Porto Malay were the ancestors to Borneo’s diverse people today known as Dayaks, and each Dayak society developed in adaptation to its particular environment. Coastal Dayaks relied on fishing as their economic base, while their neighbours in interior Borneo relied heavily on swidden(shifting pole) agriculture and hunting and gathering. While self sufficient, the communities interacted through trade, war intermarriages and head-hunting.

The arrival of Islam led to the establishment of Muslim kingdoms along the Borneo’s coast, the largest of which was the sultanate of Brunei. By the end of 1600s
The sultan of Borneo controlled most of Borneo's west coast. Coastal Islamic sultanates of Malay ethnicity gained power through maritime commerce and imposed a system of economic oppression on the Dayaks.

The arrival of Portuguese and Spanish traders, followed by the Dutch in the early 1600s and the British in 1665, signified the beginning of European intervention in Borneo. Intent on creating a trade monopoly, the European powers wrested control from Islamic sultanate and established presence in the region. In the 1800s, the Dutch and the British emerged predominant, with the former establishing a presence in the southern part of the island (Kalimantan) and the later establishing protectorates in Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei on the north coast. Dutch and the British expansion were epitomized by violent warfare against the Dayaks and oppression of Chinese settlers who had migrated to work in mines.

The Japanese occupation of Borneo during WWII was also marked by brutality and violence. Rapid industrial development in 1946 with the return of Sarawak and Sabah to British colonial rule and the introduction of modern machinery allowed the penetration into interior Borneo. New chainsaw and tractor equipment made exploitation of this previously inaccessible region possible, and the first mechanical logging commenced in 1947. Industrial logging intensified further after Sarawak and Sabah broke free from the British and joined the federation in 1963.

According to the Malaysian census 2000 (Population and Housing census, Malaysia 200, Department of Statistics, kualalumpur, Malaysia) the total population of Sabah is 2,603,485 and that of Sarawak is 2,071,056. According to the census the population distribution in Sabah is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Bumiputera</td>
<td>1,601,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malays</td>
<td>303,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadazan dusun</td>
<td>479,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bajau</td>
<td>343,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murut</td>
<td>84,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bumiputera</td>
<td>390,058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Sabah there are 39 different ethnic communities estimated. We can put these many groups under some broad classifications. The Dusunic group of people comprises of Dusun, coastal Kadazan, Kimaragang, Eastern/labuk, Kadazan, Lotud, Kuijau, Totana, Tengara, Bisaya, Rungus Amn duppas. The paitanic group of people comprises of Tambanua, upper Kinabatangan, Sinabu, lobbu/ Rumanau, Sungai, Lingkabau. The Murutic group of people comprises of kolod/okolo, Gana, Kalabakan, Sebankung, Srudung, Tagal/sumabu, Baukan, Nabay and Timuyon. The other communities are Bajau, Suluk/tausung, Sinonative, Bonggi, Illanun, Bengkhaka/mangkaak, Malayic(coocos, kedayan), Tidung, Dayak, Lundeyeh, Bugi and Idaan. In Sarawak there are 28 groups listed officially, however there are atleast 37 known groups and subgroups. The important among them are Iban, Bidayuh, Melunau, kenyah, Ukit, Penan, Sekapan, Lahanan, Lun bawang, Kelabit, Barawan and Punan bah (Nicholas 1996).

2.2. b. I. Culture of Sabah and Sarawak

Malay is the national language spoken across ethnicities, although the spoken dialect of Malay differs much in inflection and intonation from the west Malaysian version, having more similarity in pronunciation to the Indonesian. English, Chinese
mandarin as well as the Chinese dialects of Haakka and Cantonese is widely understood. In addition, kadazan- Dusun, Bajau, Murut and other minor races also have distinct ethnic languages. Sabah also has their own unique Sabahan slangs for many words in Malay.

It is widely noted that even the largest groups, Muruts, Bajaus and kadazan-Dusuns differ in many respects. The largest indigenous group of kadazan Dusun are prolific rice producers, but many have gone into other commercial market outside their traditional field. They are also known for their colorful customs, including that those involve female priestesses named ‘bobohizan’. Their most famous festival is the harvest festival or ‘tadau ka’amtan’, which celebrates a season of good rice harvest. The Bajau are known for their many skills, from farming rice to rearing water buffaloes and making boats to riding horses. They are established mostly in Sabah coastlines, near the sea which is the central part of their culture. Traditionally they are nomadic sea-fearing people, with pockets of their race scattered in other countries across Southeast Asia.

The Muruts are found deep in northern Borneo, renowned for their hunting skills using spears, blow pipes and poisoned darts. They used to practice head hunting but have renounced it for a life of agriculture. Today many cultivate hill paddy and tapioca, with some fishing and hunting in between. The most notable difference among various ethnic groups are their dialects, religions and customs and way of life which include their traditional costumes.

“The use of traditional costumes can be seen from two periods of time, that is the classical and the modern period” (Bamer, Andrew Graey and Kings 1995.) In the classical period traditional costumes were worn during rituals, wedding as well as daily wear. In modern times traditional costumes are worn at special occasions like wedding and traditional functions.

Most ethnic groups in Sabah use black as the dominant colour of their traditional costumes. The use of black stems from the belief that black is a godly colour and represents power that will protect the user from the bad spirits. Other
beliefs state that the use of black is synonymous with the way of life and natural conditions at that particular time.

2.2.b .ii.Land, legal status, identity and marginalization

One of the highest percentages of poor households in the country is found in Sabah despite the fact that this is one of the richest states in the federation in terms of natural resources. The 1995 statistics from the economic planning unit (Government of Sabah 1995) Sabah cited the poverty rate in Sabah at 22.6% compared with 8.9% for the national population. This means that 76,400 people from all districts live below poverty line. The majority of the poor are in rural areas where they live as subsistence farmers, although more are to be found in urban squatter communities. About 70% live in the rural areas, most of whom are indigenous peoples (Chou and Benjamin 2002). Even in terms of educational achievements Sabah fares very bad. The centralization of education, complete control of mass media, and the introduction of oppressive laws have also served to destroy peoples control over their own cultural tradition. Similarly continuous efforts by various religious bodies to convert people from what is seen as pagan beliefs have also undermined indigenous beliefs and tradition. The introduction of the village development and security committee to act as the eyes and ears of the government discourages people’s freedom of expression.

Land:

From the times of British colonial administration the land laws has underwent major changes, but all these have further tightened the control of land in the hands of the government of the day and further benefitted the elites including the native elites. Haphazard policies, intended to maximize exploitation of local resources, had socio economic elements to improve the standard of living of the indigenous people, but were overtaken by commercialization.

Traditionally the concept of land use and ownership was based on a land adat system which was developed by indigenous people over many generations (Nicholas, 1996:160) The real problem began with the series of land laws which were adapted from Indian acts and ordinances of the straits settlement and imposed by the British north Borneo company in1881. The sanctity of land was gone as it can be bought and sold devoid of any spirituality and life.
The sections in the Sabah land ordinance, 1930 which deal with native land have been amended several times in a move by the government to develop such land commercially through diversification of land use. Now, all land is owned by the state and claims to ownership have to be registered and approved by the state (Yusof 1999: 35). This control by the state is in contrast with the traditional system of control from within the community. The communal system of land use and ownership has been overtaken by the capitalist system of complete state control over land ownership, and individual ownership by lease or title. Although some protection for native customary rights (NCR) has been provided for in the land ordinance of Sabah, these were found to be inadequate and seldom adhered to.

Currently the indigenous community is facing the gradual loss of their lands. The government reserves the land for plantation logging, reservations and industries without apparent regard to the procedures set out by the authorities themselves. It has been seen that very often native communities are not aware that their customary lands has been included in the reserve until the logging companies come to log the area.

Wary of the unconcern by the government towards their loss of land to large plantation and logging activities, some of the communities have organized themselves to protest and erected blockade, to stop logging companies from extracting timber in their areas. Nevertheless, many natives are also facing conflicts as they are drawn into the consumerist and individualist onslaught of the dominant culture.

2.3. CHINESE IN MALAYSIA

Since 414, when Fa Hsian, the intrepid Buddhist monk and pilgrim, stayed in java for five months on his way back to china after a stay of fifteen years in India, the Chinese have continued to visit the Nan yang( southeast Asia) in increasing numbers. The early Chinese visitors were Buddhist monks and it is not until the fourteenth century that Chinese records begin to refer to visits by traders. One of these was Wang Ta –Yuan who, in 1349, mentions Tumasik, or old Singapore (Purcell 1967:16).
The first significant Chinese settlements on the islands of Malay Archipelago date from as early as the 13th century. At San-fo-tsi, in the neighborhood of Palembang in Sumatra, there were several thousand Chinese, and it was one of the important ports of call for junks from China and ships from India (Simoniya 1961: 10).

Nevertheless, perhaps the best known early contacts with Malay occurred during the early Ming dynasty, when the Chinese eunuch admiral Cheng Ho visited Malacca several times in the first half of the fifteenth century, and his name is still commemorated there, in its deified form as Sam Po Kong (Wang Gungwu 1959:12). One of his secretaries Fein sin, writing in 1436, reported that there were some people of Chinese descent living in that area (Purcell 1967:19). Which seems quite likely as it is customary to date the history of Chinese settlements’ in Malaysia after the establishment of Malacca sultanate circa 1400 (Purcell 1967: 16).

Malacca was certainly the first and certainly the largest of any Chinese settlement in peninsular Malay, although there were long established communities of Chinese traders living usually in the Malay rulers’ villages situated at the river mouth, where the Malay chiefs could control the riverine trade and impose a tax on it. Some of these were permanently settled communities the founders of which had married Malayan women, and their offspring’s formed the nucleus of what afterwards during the nineteenth century became known as the “strait Chinese” or babas (Sadaka 1970:21). The main centers of the babas were Malacca and Penang. They did not regard themselves as merely temporary immigrants in search of a living but settled in the country. Many of them did not speak Chinese at all but only Malay, although they adhered to a Chinese way of life which was influenced by Malay and other local customs.

The network of Chinese traders grew. There were a thousand Chinese families settled in Johor and other places in the early eighteenth century. It was estimated that half the population of Kuala Terengganu in 1720 were Chinese. The Chinese in Johor and Terengganu were mainly pepper cultivators and in the later state they carried out gold mining. The Terengganu Chinese owned junks and carried out overseas trade with Siam, Cambodia, Tongkins and sambas in Borneo (Suryadinata 1961).
In Perak Chinese miners worked in tin since at least the eighteenth century, and they played an important role in the development of tin mining in Selangor in the 1780s. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants began to move into the western peninsula Malay states following the discovery of tin deposits in Malacca(linggi), perak(Larut) and selangor(klang). The owners of the mines were Malay chiefs but much of the finance were provided by Chinese and western entrepreneurs in the Straits Settlements, in particular Singapore and Penang. Although the direct employers of Chinese labour were invariably Chinese lessees or contractors, the Chinese labourers were called in by the Malay chiefs (Ryan 1971:123). This was the beginning of a flood of Chinese immigration which was eventually to change the racial composition of the country. Before 1850, for instance there were reported to be only three Chinese in Larut but by 1862 there were 20,000 to 25,000 and by 1877 about 40,000. (Blythe, 1969:44) At this time it should be noted that there were only 150,000 Malays in the whole of Malay (Ryan 1971:119).

In 1907, it was estimated that there were 229,778 Chinese engaged in tin-mining in the Federated Malay States of Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Pahang. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese formed 65% of the population of Selangor, this is twice the Malay population, and 46% of the population of Perak, where they were equal in numbers to the Malays (Sadaka 1970:329).

The Chinese were also active in many other sectors of the economy. For instance, they cultivated spices, pepper and gambier at Penang, province Wellesley and Singapore. Nutmegs and cloves, planted by Chinese, remained an important crop of Penang and provinces Wellesley until around 1860, when the plantations were destroyed by disease. (Blythe 1947:67-68). When the pepper plantation cultivated by Chinese planters in Singapore became exhausted in around 1835 and 1840, the planters concerned over into Johor.

The cultivation of sugarcane was carried out by Chinese in province Wellesley. Tapioca was yet another crop which was planted successfully by Chinese in the Malacca area until it was replaced by the more profitable rubber in the 1890s. Chinese labourers were employed, to, in clearing the jungle, building roads, and more
important, with their strong commercial instincts and knowledge of the use of money, they took over the position of retailers and small shopkeepers.

Although virtually none of the Chinese who immigrated to Malay brought with Malay some wealth, some of them prospered and came to fill every rung of economic and social life. In a sense, they formed a complete and separate economic community in Malay ranging from labourers to a middleclass of shopkeepers, merchants, tradesmen and middlemen, to a smaller group of capitalists who fought their way to head business enterprises of immense complexity, banks, insurance companies, sharing companies, tin mines and rubber (Emerson 1964).

With each successive wave of immigration of Chinese male labourers came from south china- very few Chinese women came until the second decade of the twentieth century- although their average length of stay in Malay was not more than seven years (Joyce 1961:48). Almost of them had the intention of saving a modest amount sufficient to purchase land in their ancestral village and returning to China, some did decide to stay and make Malay their permanent home.

There were several factors which encouraged emigration from south china on an increased scale during the second part of the nineteenth century. There was great unrest in south China which was the centre of disturbances caused by the Taiping uprising (1850-64). Neither food nor employment opportunities were able to keep pace with the increase in population. To many Chinese the Malay states were new frontiers offering opportunities of economic advancement which were not available in china itself, with the attraction of being able to earn higher wages than could be earned in china, as well as the chance, if one were frugal, of saving money which could be remitted back to relatives in China (Campbell 1923: xii). Additionally, compared with china itself, and other parts of Southeast Asia, there was at least an acceptable modicum of law and order, and it was known that the British administration ensured the enforcement of private property rights.

In spite of their large numbers, or perhaps because of them, as they preferred to keep together wherever possible in large family and clan groups, the Chinese remained aloof from the Malay community and lived completely separated social and
economic lives. There was the spatial element too. The Chinese tended to congregate in the urban settlements whereas the Malays traditionally lived in their kampongs (villages) around the lower reaches of the major rivers. In the large urban settlements china town grew up in the business centers and the Malays built their houses in the outskirts (Khoo kay 1973:11). The Chinese represented, apart from the baba community an alien element in Malay. They spoke their own language which hardly any non Chinese spoke in Malay at that time, and followed their own distinctive way of life and customs. They tended therefore, to be segregated in their own sector of the towns, and in their own kongsis (labourers lines) on tin mines and rubber estate (Blythe 1947:111-113). This separation was, in fact tacitly encouraged by the British, and in the old town plans prepared by the British architects and engineers of that period, provision was invariably made for a clearly demarcated sector of each town to be reserved as the Chinese quarter, as indeed similar areas were reserved for Indians and Arabs and as well as Europeans.

It should be noted that this segregation did not represent any “divide and rule” policy on the part of the British, as it antedated the British arrival. It was simply that the different racial groups, from at least the time of Malacca sultanate, preferred to live in their own area, where they could feel at ease among their own people, and would not encounter problems on account of language, food, customs and religion. Administration was made simpler, too, by the practice of appointing a captain, or headmen, for each group who was responsible to the authorities for the conduct of the person under his supervision.

Population of ethnic Chinese in different states of Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population of Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>916,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>241,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kelantan</td>
<td>49,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melaka</td>
<td>178,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negri Sembilan</td>
<td>211,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>218,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>643,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>20,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pualu Pinang</td>
<td>588,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>262,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>537,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>1,230,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>24,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>560,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labuan</td>
<td>9,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,691,908</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000)

2.3.a. Diversity among ethnic Chinese in Malaysia

Chinese immigrants were by no means a homogenous group, though most of them came from southern provinces. They were divided by dialect, regional, occupational and other factors (Suryadinata 2000). In the period of 1840 to 1930 the Chinese labourers who migrated to Malay came from the southern Chinese province of Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan and Guanxi. In these immigrants majority were from Guanxi, Fujian and Guangdong. Till today these descendents remain their identity of place of origin by their language affinity. Hokkein from the districts around Xiamen in Fujian, Cantonese from throughout Guangdong and eastern Guanxi, and Hakka mainly from northern Guangdong comprised the majority, teochiu came from the Shantou formerly in Fujian, now in Guangdong, and Hainanese from Hainan, Smaller numbers of Hok Chiu Hokchai and Henghua came from districts around Fuzhou in Fujian; Kwongsai from Ganxi; and Wenzhou Chinese from near
Wenzhou in Zhejiang (prucell:1967:6). The sub ethnic groups settled in varying combinations and proportions in Southeast Asia. For instance, Hokkein, Cantonese, Hakka and Teochiu in Indonesia; Teochiu, Hakka and Hainese in Thailand. The Chinese were a widely scattered lot. More than 90% lived in the western sea coast of the Malacca peninsula, particularly in Perak, Negri Sembilan, Selangore and Johore. Their concentration was exceptionally intense in economically well developed areas. They were found in large numbers in urban centres of Penang(56.1%) Perak(42.5%) and Selangore(46.5%).

To understand the diversity of ethnic Chinese population an illustration of the ‘Baba’ community is very important. Peranakan, Baba-Nyonya (Hokkien: Bā-bā Niú-liá) are terms used for the descendants of the very early Chinese immigrants to the Nusantara region, including both the British Straits Settlements of Malaya and the Dutch-controlled island of Java among other places, who have partially adopted Malay customs in an effort (chronological adaptation) to be assimilated into the local communities. Therefore, baba is an indigenous ethnic label and baba are one category of peranakan Chinese in Malaysia. These perankan Chinese are those Chinese whose culture has been acculturated by local Malay culture in various ways. It should be emphasized here that female baba is called a ‘nyonya’. However, the babas also use the label baba as an ethnic label which includes both male and female baba. It has commonly been argued those babas are descendents of Chinese men who married Malay women. There is a historical basis to this argument, but as Clammer (Clammer 1980:126) has pointed out, one should not reduce the social phenomenon to the biological fact of ‘mixed blood’. Intermarriages between Chinese immigrants and the women of the Malay archipelago was important to the development of perankann culture and society only during the earlier period of this development. The baba today are baba by virtue of their culture and self identification, and not because they are of mixed blood. Baba thus emerged as a special category of people under the British rule. ( Khoo Jo 1998). They were also the first people who readily sent their children to English schools. The English education gave the baba much advantage in working with the British in achieving their own social and economic success.

The language of the Peranakans, Baba Malay (Bahasa Melayu Baba), is a dialect of the Malay language (Bahasa Melayu), which contains many Hokkien
words. It is a dying language, and its contemporary use is mainly limited to members of the older generation. English has now replaced Baba as the main language spoken at home amongst the younger generation (Joo Ee 1998).

The baba culture features which are most easily observed by outsiders are features which show significant acculturation, and this reinforces the stereotype that baba are like Malays. Two overt features of baba culture which are widely known to be Malay like are dress and food habits. The aspects of baba culture which is most different from Chinese culture but most similar to Malay culture is the baba Malay dialect. Yet baba Malay is different from other Malay dialects. Therefore, Peranakans were partially assimilated into the Malay culture (especially in food, dress, and language), while retaining some Chinese traditions (religion, name, and ethnic identity), thereby creating a fusion culture of their own. For instance, from their Malay influence, a unique "Nyonya" cuisine has developed using the spices of Malay cuisine (examples are Chicken Kapitan, a dry chicken curry, and Inchi Kabin, a Nyonya version of fried chicken). The women (Nyonyas) have taken to wearing the baju kebaya (a Malay dress, seen most notably as the uniform of Malaysia and Singapore Airlines' female flight attendants), and beaded slippers called Kasut Manek. Traditionally these exquisitely-crafted footwear's were typically hand-made, and worn by Nonyas. Making kasut maneks required much patience, as in the past they are strung, beaded and sewn onto canvas with tiny facetted glass beads from Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic). In modern times, glass beads from Japan are preferred. Traditional kasut manek design often have European floral subjects, with colours influenced by the hues of Peranakan porcelain and batik sarongs. They were made onto flats or bedroom slippers. But from the 1930s, modern shapes became popular and heels were added.

Proposals of marriage were made by a gift of a "pinangan", a 2-tiered lacquered basket to the intended bride's parents brought by a go-between person who will speak on behalf of the suitor. However, most of the Peranakans are not Muslim, and have retained the traditions of ancestor worship of the Chinese; though some converted to Christianity. The wedding ceremony of the Peranakan is largely based on Chinese tradition, and is one of the most colorful and fascinating wedding ceremonies in Malaysia and Singapore. At weddings, the Dondang Sayang, a form of extempore
rhyming song in Malay, sung and danced by guests at the wedding party was a highlight. Someone would start on a romantic theme which will be carried on by others, each taking the floor in turn slowly dancing in slow gyrations as they sang. It required quick wit and repartee and often gave rise to laughter and applause when a particularly clever phrase was sung. The melodic accents of the Baba-Nonya and their quaint turns of phrase lend to the charm of this performance.

Peranakan culture is disappearing. Without colonial British support for their perceived racial neutrality, government policies in both countries following independence from the British have resulted in the assimilation of Peranakans back into mainstream Chinese culture. In Singapore, the Peranakans are classified as ethnically Chinese, so they receive formal instruction in Mandarin Chinese as a second language (in accordance with the "Mother Tongue Policy") instead of Malay. In Malaysia, the standardization of Malay as Bahasa Melayu — required for all ethnic groups — has led to a disappearance of the unique characteristics of Baba Malay.

2.3.b.Major Chinese Festivals:

i. Chinese New Year: Chinese New Year is the first day of the year according to the Chinese lunar calendar. Generally it falls in the month of January or February. Before the old year ends it is custom for Chinese to spring clean or even paint their houses. Actual celebration starts before the day of the New Year, where family members gather for a reunion dinner. Many Chinese Malaysian will travel back to their hometown or family homes for this day. The reunion dinner is the major celebration and gathering for the family — a once a year affair for many who have children working out of town. Many Taoists and Buddhists Chinese will go to the temple to pray for blessing for a good year.

ii. Chap Goh Meh (in the Hokkien dialect) is the last day of the Chinese Spring festival or New Year celebrations or 15th day of the Chinese lunar calendar. Chinese normally celebrate by having a grand dinner and Buddhists and Taoist Chinese mark the day with offerings and prayers. In the old, single girls will throw tangerines into the sea - a belief that that will bring them a good spouse.
iii. Festival of heavenly God or Jade Emperor: This festival starts on the early morning of the 9th day of the Chinese lunar calendar (after midnight of the 8th day). It is the most important spring festival for the Hokkiens (mainly descendents from Fujian province, China), a celebration which is celebrated widely by the Buddhist and Taoists Chinese in Malaysia. The celebration marks the birthday of the Jade Emperor or Guardian or Heavenly God, who lives in the centre of the universe. In Penang, this festival is celebrated with in a grand scale, and can be observed at the Clan Jetties, near the ferry terminal. The height of celebration starts near midnight on the 8th day of the Chinese lunar calendar. Prayers and offering are made to the god in front of the homes of many Chinese in the country. Houses are usually brightly lit on this night. There are usually fireworks on a feast after the prayers.

iv. Festival of the Nine Emperor Gods (according to lunar calendar - Sept/Oct): This festival falls on the ninth day of the ninth moon in the Chinese lunar calendar. The Nine Emperor Gods are spiritual mediums believed to dwell in the stars in heaven. On the eve of the ninth moon, temples of the Deities hold a ceremony to welcome the gods. The rituals during the festival acts as a channel between celestial beings and humans for the salvation and protection of mankind. The Gods are believed to travel through the waterways so processions are held from temples to the seashore or river. The celebration lasts for 9 days. Many devotees throng to the temples to offer prayers and follow a vegetarian diet during this period. On the 9th day ends usually with a fire-walking ritual. In Penang temples are crowded and streets are lined with stalls selling praying items of vegetarian food.

V. Chang Festival (according to lunar calendar - June/July): This festival marks the death of a Chinese poet and scholar Qu Yuan who drowned in 296 BC in Hunan province in China. When people heard of his disappearance, they scoured the river in boats to rescue him, beating their drums to scare off the fishes from nibbling at his body. Unable to find his body, they made glutinous rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves and
threw them into the river in the hope that the fishes would eat these dumplings instead of his remains. This day falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. To commemorate the occasion, boats were decorated with dragon heads on their bows. The tradition of making dumplings (called 'chang') is celebrated by the Chinese community in Malaysia with the offering of the dumplings to the gods. The festival is celebrated in Penang annually with an international dragon boat competition which is immensely popular and attracts participants from all over the world.

vi. Cheng Beng (April) : This event falls on the third month of the lunar calendar and usually coincides with April. It is the Chinese equivalent of All Souls’ Day. During this month, the Chinese will visit the cemeteries to clean the ancestral graves and make offerings to the spirits of their departed loved ones.

2.3.c Religion and belief system:

The 2000 Malaysian census classified Malaysians by religion as follows, Islam 60.4%, Christians 9.1%, Hindus 6.3%, Buddhists 19.2%, Confucians/Taoists 2.6%, tribal religion 0.8%, Others 0.4%, No religion 0.8%, Unknown 0.3%.(Department of Statistics 2001). It can be interpreted that Buddhists and Taoists are of Chinese descents. Although in recent times many Chinese do follow the Christianity too. However the predominant majority of the Chinese population follow what some scholars say ‘Chinese religion’ (Tan che Beng 1983). Unlike Islam and Christianity, Chinese religion is part and parcel of Chinese way of life, a Chinese tradition inherited from the ancient past. Chinese religion involves the worship of Chinese deities of Taoist and Buddhist origins, nature spirits and the ancestors.

A syncretic nature of Chinese religion is seen in its material and social manifestations. For example, Chinese temple reflects Taoist, Buddhist and other Chinese religious traditions. The Chinese Malaysians do not have a definite term for their traditional religion. The fact that do not have is not surprising, for the religion is diffused in to various aspects of Chinese culture, and is confined to those Malaysians of Chinese descents. Chinese Malaysians refer to their religion in their own languages.
and dialects as equivalent to the mandarin Chinese term bai shen or bai fo. The former means worshiping deities and is more general, referring to the worship of any kind of deity within the Chinese religious system, including those of Buddhist origin. The later literally means worshiping Buddha’s or bodhisattvas.

There are a number of pure Chinese Mahayana Buddhist temples in Malaysia and they are largely based on the pure land tradition. For example, in Kota Kinbalau, Sabah, there is a fairly large temple of this tradition called Poh Toh Sze. But the pure Buddhist temples are few in number. There are, however, many temples which house a large number of both Buddhist and non Buddhist deities, but whose patron deity or deities are of Buddhist origin. Clearly, Hoon Teng in Malacca is a good example of this kind of temple. A few monks and nuns live in the temples but they are neither preacher of Buddhist doctrines nor do they represent a particular Buddhist school, although their religious practices are derived from certain traditions. Most marginal Buddhist temples in Malaysia do not have a resident monk, but it is fairly common to find a temple of this nature managed by a resident nun.

There are many Chinese Buddhist associations in Malaysia. Their central body, Malaixiya Fojiao Zonghui was formed in April 1959 at kek Lok Si, Penang. It has more than three hundred institutional members representing more than 100,000 individual members in 1980s (Huang Yinwen 1982:197). There are also young Buddhist associations. Their central body the young Buddhist association of Malaysia was established in 1970. The activities of the Buddhist association and the young Buddhist association as well as those few Chinese Mahayana Buddhists monks may be seen as attempts to bring back ‘real’ Buddhism as an independent religion of Chinese. Chinese religions have so far met the needs of early immigrants and the present generation of Chinese Malaysians, but with higher education and more modern influences there is a trend for young Chinese Malaysians to seek a religion which has a more coherent system of theology. In this light Chinese Buddhism in Malaysia has a future. The Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia has learned from Christianity about church organization and missionary activities, and has successfully attracted many young people, especially high school and college students.
A detailed analysis of the minority cultures of Malaysia indicates that, there is not only diversity of groups but also diversity among groups. As every umbrella ethnic group accommodates many sub groups with some common features. The historical evolution of Malaysia as a plural society is closely linked to identity formation of various cultural groups. In case of Chinese and Indians, although, their historical roots lie overseas but living for a century or more in Malay has produced a blend of culture. And this truly forms a part of Malaysian culture. The beauty of a true multicultural society lies in the fact that it provides equitable space for every group in the society.
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