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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTI-ETHNIC AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Malaysia has its own uniqueness with its population consists of multiple races and religions. The presence of this multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is caused by various factors that related to human life such as jobs security, national policy and so on. This article will attempt to examine the factors of the Malaysia's demographic changes and development which will cover three phases i.e. the Pre-colonial period, the Colonial period and Post-colonial period. It also discusses the historical facts of a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious society in Malaysia. In order to examine the subject matter, library research has been conducted to seek the data needed. Numerous historical literature related to this study have been reviewed. This study shows that the development of multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Malaysia was caused by several factors such as migration and colonization. These factors triggered demographic changes in Malaysia's population which can still be noticed as one of the unique features of the state until today.

Keywords: Malaysia's Society, Multi-ethnic, Multi-religion, migration, colonization

Introduction

Malaysia has come into contact with many civilisations during its history. The geographic facts of Malaysia combine with its natural resources to give it special importance as an ideal place for traders and travellers from Africa to China.[1] Besides trading and commercial activities, they may well have introduced to local inhabitants i.e., the Malays their beliefs and knowledge of religion and of political systems. As a result, closely linked to this commercial contact, the interchange of ideas and information, including culture and religious practices has, either has directly or indirectly, an impact on both the in-comers and on the indigenous population.[2] Therefore, the Malays absorbed much of their early culture and religion most especially, according to some scholars, from Hinduism. The effects of these complex non-Muslim belief systems will be expanded upon briefly below.

Pre-Colonial Malaysia

In Malaysia's religious pre-history,[3] animism is believed to have been the first belief system embraced by Proto-Malays[4] and Deutero-Malays,[5] the people indigenous to Malaysia. This belief emerged in the Malay Peninsula and archipelago through migration by Palaeolithic[6] and Neolithic[7] animists from the mainland of Asia to the Malay Peninsula.[8] The principle characteristic of this sort of belief-system is a very close attachment to natural objects, natural phenomena, and to the idea that the universe itself is possessed of a soul, and that affected their everyday lives,[9] later manifestations produced a diversity of deities or supernatural spirit. For instance, the Sakai and Jakun (some of the aborigines) believed in the existence of a linkage between mankind and the spirits, which

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[1] N.J. Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore; a History from Earliest Times to 1966*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 40-41; Barbara Watson Andaya & Leonard Y.Andaya (1982), *A History of Malaysia*, Hampshire: MacMillan Publishers, pp. 10-14.
[2] Andaya and Y.Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 10.
[3] Andaya and Y.Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, pp. 8-9. Exactly early Malaysian prehistory is a subject for debate because available sources have to date provided only tantalizing glimpses of Malaysia's distant past.
[4] Today according to N.J. Ryan they are called as Semang and Jakun. But other others researcher mentioned they are 'Melayu Asli' or Jakun only and Semang including Orang Asli.
[5] Basically they are Mongoloid. See Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore*, p.6.According to Tate that the great majority of the peoples of Island South-East Asia including Malaysia generally agreed that the peoples of the archipelago are all of the same basic Mongoloid. However, there are other races mainly aboriginal whom non-Mongoliod in small amount. D.J.M. Tate (1971), *The Making of Modern South-East Asia,* Vol. 1, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 27.
[6] The term refers to the second part of the Stone Age beginning about 750,000 to 500,000 years BC and lasting until the end of the last ice age about 85,000 years BC.
[7] Latest part of the Stone Age begun about 10,000 BC in the Middle East.
[8] Susan E. Ackerman & Raymond L.M. Lee (1988), *Heaven in Transition : Non-Muslim Religious Innovation and Ethnic Identity in Malaysia*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 11-12.
[9] Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia*, p. 6.

needed a middle man known as the shaman to organise a form of demon worship[10] with the intention of avoiding any negative consequences. Perhaps their belief is reflected in their pattern of habitation, since they mainly "dwelt in forest, mountain or isolated Island with semi-nomadic lifestyle".[11]

The belief systems described above has, in the present, a predominant following amongst indigenous groups in Sabah, Sarawak, as well as in the Orang Asli communities in the Peninsula. These people are, constitutionally, termed 'Aborigine'[12] and 'Natives of Sabah and Sarawak'[13] and would be grouped as 'indigenous' (together with the Malays themselves) and classified as '*Bumiputera*' (sons of the soil).[14] The basic beliefs and traditions of these groups may result from believing in supernatural being which can affect, either positively or negatively, human daily life. Thus, they generally believe that peoples' lives are closely integrated within many aspects of the world around them, such as plants, animals and spirits. To communicate between humans and the spirit world, intermediaries, such shamans and healers were needed.[15] In the 2000 Census, with regard to religious affiliations, under the other *Bumiputeras*' category, we see that the tribal or folk religion accounts for 95% of all of those identified by the government as belonging in this religious category, with 186,400 of total 195,300 adherents.[16]

Further, the development of religion in Malaysia (between 5th and 14th centuries) took place in new forms. In these periods, established kingdoms such as Kedah, Sarawak, Perak and Kelantan were influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, which had a great impact on the Malaysian culture up to 14th century.[17] Travelling Indian traders (together with travelling Hindu priests) then settled in parts of both mainland and archipelago, where they are presumed to have been important factors in changing culture and religion, as well as polity. These traders and priests thus, brought with them the Indian concepts of religion, Sivaism ideas of royalty, Buddhism, government and the arts,[18] later producing a process of 'Indianization'. In this way, it continued over many centuries, due to the synthesis of the Indian influences and indigenous ideas.[19] However, meanwhile, the Islamic influences had spread through the Malay Archipelago in around 10th Century, the 'Indianization process' having physically stopped[20] but spiritually having had a profound impact on Malay cultures as well as on belief.[21]

The coming of Islam to the Malay Archipelago largely replaced the local inhabitants' belief in polytheism with a monotheistic religion. However, this change took place in a peaceful way in which *da'i* (preachers) and Muslim traders[22] either from India or South Arabia played an active role in the preaching of Islam. The preachers who were mainly sufis[23] spent much time persuading rulers to convert to Islam. In this way, it attracted the common people seeking to follow the rulers' example by converting to the new faith.[24] As a result, according to Marco Polo's account, in 1292, the Perlak Kingdom at the Northern tip of Sumatra had been converted to Islam[25] but Islam made very little further progress until the foundation of Malacca at the beginning of 15th Century.[26] It perhaps began when, along with Parameswara, the king of Malacca converted to Islam from Hinduism. Since then Malacca gradually emerged as a vital centre for the development of Islam in the area, as the main centre of

[10] Laurence E. Browne (1936), *Christianity and the Malays*, London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, pp. 15-6.
[11] Craig A. Lockard (1995), "Integrating Southeast Asia into the Framework of World History: The Period before 1500," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 29, no. 1, p. 13.
[12] The term is used to refer the aborigine in Peninsula Malaysia. See the Article 160 (2) of Federal Constitution of Malaysia.
[13] Under Article 161 (7) FCM states that "natives" is referring in the case of Sarawak are races called the Bukitans, Bisayahs, Dusuns, Sea Dayaks, Land Dayaks, Kadayans, Kalabits, Kayans, Kenyahs (including Sabups and Sipengs), Kajangs (including Sekapans, Kejamans, Lahanans, Punans, Tanjongs and Kanowits), Lugats, Lisums, Malays, Melanos, Muruts, Penans, Sians, Tagals, Tabuns and Ukits. However in the case of Sabah, under Clause of Article 161 (6) (b) only states a race indigenous to Sabah without specified and identified their races.
[14] Nation History, Early Settlement., from Malaysian National Library http://sejarahmalaysia.pnm.my/ [accessed 26 January 2008].
[15] Juli Edo & Joseph Fung Jee Vui (2005), "Indigenous Beliefs Systems," in M. Kamal Hassan and Ghazali Basri (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Religions and Beliefs*, Singapore: Archipelago Press, pp. 124-127.
[16] See Table 2.2 Distribution of Citizen Population by Religion and Ethnic Group, 2000.
[17] Latifah Khan (1963), Indians in Malaya;1900-1945, Master's thesis, University of Hong Kong, pp. 52-53.
[18] Ibid.,p.52.
[19] Lockard, "Integrating Southeast Asia into the Framework of World History," pp. 7-35.
[20] Exactly date is still discussed amongst the scholars. However the earliest date is referred to the Muslim gravestone dated 290H/ 902 AD in Kedah with Islamic name in Arabic writing. See Mohammad Redzuan Othman (2005), *Islam Dan Masyarakat Melayu; Peranan Dan Pengaruh Timur Tengah*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, p. 9.
[21] Victor Purcell (1965), *Malaysia*, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 22; Sadayandy Batumalai (1996), *Islamic Resurgence and Islamization in Malaysia: A Malaysian Christian Response*, Ipoh: St. John's Church Anglican, p. 24.
[22] Alain-Gérard Marsot, "Political Islam in Asia: A Case Study," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 524, no. 1, p. 159.
[23] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1967), *Some Aspects of Sufism as Understood and Practised among the Malays*, Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute.
[24] Othman, *Islam Dan Masyarakat Melayu*, pp. 10-11.
[25] D. G. E. Hall (1955), *A History of Southeast Asia*, London: MacMillan & Co., p. 176.
[26] D. G. E Hall (1960), "Looking at Southeast Asian History," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 249-50.

Islamic culture and as an important entrepôt in South-East Asia.[27] People in Brunei[28] and Northern Java, for instance, embraced Islam at least partially through their trading connections with Malacca.[29]

Under Muzafar Shah's reign (1446 to 1456), Islam became established as the official religion[30] and Malacca developed its own unique style of law, described in a written document known as *Hukum Kanun Melaka* (The canons of the Malacca Malays).[31] The document regulated matters concerning people-state relationships in the form of a mixture of customary and Islamic law.[32] It also introduced Islamic terms in relation to non-Muslims' religious identity such as *kafir zimmi* (*Dhimmi*), *kafir harbi* (*Harbi*), *kafir mu'ahid (Muʿahid), kafir Yahudi (Jews), kafir Nasrani(Nasara)* and *Kafir Majusi (Majus)* to regulate criminal law in the Malacca Empire.[33] These terms seems to indicate that the category of non-Muslims has been identified based on classical Muslim jurists. It also could be argued that Islamic treatment upon the other religions might be applied here. Thus, the process of Islamisation transformed Malacca, through the values of religion, politics, culture, literature and script[34] to some extent it also influence their attitude of tolerance towards other religions.[35] One aspect of its influence can be observed through the interchangeability of religious and ethnic identity in the modern legal definitions of Malay, as later embodied in today's Article 160 of Federal Constitution of Malaysia (hereafter FCM).[36]

According to Pires' account, thousands of foreign traders came from Cairo, Turkey, Aden, Persia, East Africa, Armenia, India[37] (to some extant) China, Japan, Burma and Java[38] and settled in Malacca. According to authority, such as Hashim[39] stated that more than 84 different languages were spoken by its inhabitants but that the Malay language became the *lingua franca,* and this may be symbolic of the pluralistic society that existed in Malacca at that time. A few of these communities, such as Chinese (known *Baba* and *Nyonyas*) and Indian (Chitty)[40] decided to settle and make Malacca their permanent home. They freely assimilated into the dominant Malay society, by absorbing local culture and food, but without converting to Islam,[41] directly showing that religious freedom was practiced here.

Under the Colonial Powers

The invasion of the European powers, which began with the Portuguese and their conquest of Malacca in 1511, was always likely to affect the Malay socially and politically. The Portuguese succeeded in conquering the small garrison of Malacca's city and of its port,[42] which was the centre of Malaccan Empire's territory. At that time, Malacca had a total population 190,000 and over 100,000 soldiers[43] compared to the Portuguese's' less than 2000

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[27] Hall, *Southeast Asia*, pp.180-185.
[28] Sarawak and most of Sabah were the part of Sultanate of Brunei ruler.
[29] Richard Allen (1968), *Malaysia: Prospect and Retrospect*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 20.
[30] Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia*, p. 22.
[31] According to Hashim, under Sultan Muzaffar Shah the Malacca Legal Codes or Malacca Law Digests was written. Before him, laws were in verbal tradition as royal commands. This is proved through i- the *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) state that he '…commanded that laws be laid down so that there should be no more distinction between custom and the rules of his ministers'. ii- Article 44.4 of the Codes itself supported the Sejarah Melayu's statement in which recognised that Sultan Muzaffar Shah did compile the laws which he had inherited from the time of his father, Sultan Muhammad Shah. See Muhammad Yusoff Hashim (1992), *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca: A Study of Various Aspects of Malacca in the 15th and 16th Centuries in Malaysian History*, D.J. Muzaffar Tate (trans.), Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 156.
[32] The law contains includes regulation of marriage, contract and criminal. This law at that time however could not be understood as the understanding of law in modern sense. A detailed study of mixture elements Custom and Islam in the Malay laws and its text can be found in Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, pp. 156-66; Mohamad Jajuli A. Rahman (1995), *The Malay Law Text*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka; Liaw Yock Fang (1976), *Undang-Undang Melaka*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
[33] The terms are spelt in Malay language and in bracket is Arabic translation.
[34] Batumalai, *Islamic Resurgence*, pp. 25-27; Moshe Yegar (1979), *Islam and Islamic Institutions in British Malaya: Policies and Implementation*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, p. 7.
[35] See how Islam influence local behaviour in Wan Norhasniah Wan Husin (2011), "Budi-Islam; Its Role in the Construction of Malay Identity in Malaysia," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 1, no. 12.
[36] 'Malay' means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore …. See also some comments from Batumalai, *Islamic Resurgence*, pp. 26-27.
[37] Luis Filipe Thomaz (1993), "The Malay Sultanate of Melaka in Southeast Asia," in Anthony Reid (ed.), *The Early Modern Era:Trade, Power, and Belief*, New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 80-82; K.N. Chaudhuri (1985), *Trade and Civilisation in Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 110.
[38] Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, pp. 187-91.
[39] Ibid., p. 209.
[40] The Chineses are known as Baba and Nyonyas or Peranakan Cina. For the Indians are known as Hindu *Peranakan ofMelaka* or Chitty .These two communities are still existing in Malacca today. They practice Malay custom, speak Malay language but they did not embrace Islam. See Ravichandran Moorthy (2009), "The Evolution of the Chitty Community of Melaka," *Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, Vol. 36.
[41] Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, pp. 236-244; Azmah Abdul Manaf (2001), *Sejarah Sosial Masyarakat Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications & Distrubators, p. 17.
[42] See Robbie B.H. Goh (2005), *Christianity in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 47; Muhd.Yusof Ibrahim (1996), "Kemerosotan Melaka," in Zainal Abidin Abdul Wahid et al. (eds.), *Malaysia: Warisan Dan Perkembangan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 84.
[43] Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, p. 209.

fighting men.[44] Winstedt suggest that discipline and much more powerful guns were key factors that led the Portuguese to defeat the Malaccans.[45] However internal problems, such as weak leaders and the over reliance on foreign (mainly Javanese) mercenaries, who retreated from battle might also would have made the Portuguese victory considerably easier.[46] Moreover, non-Muslims merchants, consisting of Indians, Javanese and Chinese, did not support the Sultan in his fight against the Portuguese, instead betraying him, as was case with the Keling and Chettiar communities. Driven by their economic aims and personal interests, they gave the Portuguese much useful and important information about Malacca.[47] Thus, this combination of inside and outside factors led to Malacca being colonised by the Portuguese and ruled by them for 130 years.

The Portuguese introduced new regulations and religion, replacing the local '*Hukum Kanun Melaka*' and Islam with their own laws and religion.[48] They also brought together a community consisting of those of European ethnicity, who were of the Catholic faith. Christians came in large number to the Malay Archipelago at this time, with eight Catholic chaplains under the flagship of the 'Military Crusading Order of Christ' being sent to the region.[49] They spread Christianity successfully amongst the resident Chinese, some local Muslims and many Indian Hindu traders.[50] For example Father Alexandre de Rhodes and other priests baptized 2000 people during his nine month visit to Malacca in 1622, before his onward journey to China.[51] During the 130 years occupation of Malacca by the Portuguese, the Catholic community had grown to 20,000 adherents, with 19 churches and chapels,[52] evidence of the success of their efforts to preach and spread Christianity.

Besides the Christian community, a Jewish community also grew up in Malacca, with their own synagogues and local rabbis. However, the exact number of their adherents is uncertain, and a few of them were reported as actually being Christian by Father Francis Xavier.[53] However, the number of Jews in Malaya seems not to have been significant. For example, only three Jewish families were settled in Penang in 1969[54] and their existence was invisible to the Malaysian census because of their small number.[55]

In 1641, the Dutch took over Malacca from the Portuguese after a siege of 165 days.[56] The Dutch introduced Protestantism as the official religion, which was a different denomination from the Portuguese's Catholicism. But the arrival of the Dutch did not lead to a significant alteration in terms of ethnicity. For instance, censuses taken in 1680, 1687 and 1688 showed that the population of the city of Malacca had a variety of ethnicities, namely Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (hereafter VOC) servants and their families, Dutch Burghers, Portuguese-Eurasians, Malays(Javanese and Bugis), Chinese, Kelings and Moors and slaves (Company slaves, slaves owned by Company officials and private slaves owned by Malays, Chinese, Kelings and Moors) but that the total inhabitants number not reach at 6000 people.[57] As a result, we can presume that the pluralist society that existed in Malacca may well be the same as that under the previous regime (the Portuguese) but with the addition of another group of European ethnicity, namely the Dutch.

[44] Ibrahim, "Kemerosotan Melaka," p. 81; Richard Winstedt (1969), *Malaya and Its History*, 7.ed., London: Hutchinson University Library, p. 41.
[45] Winstedt, *Malaya and Its History*, p. 41.
[46] Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, pp. 244-52; Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia*, pp. 39-41.
[47] Hashim, *The Malay Sultanate of Malacca*, p. 252.
[48] The Portuguese in Malacca were servants of the king who appoint the Captain or Governor which the high authority in this area. The Captain was advised by a council consisting of the Chief Justice, the Mayor and the Bishop may represent the Portuguese influence in combination of laws and religion. See.Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia*, pp. 46-7.
[49] E.Chia & J.Tan (2003), "The Catholic Church in Malaysia," in Berard L. (ed.), Marthaler *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Detroit: Thomson/Gale, pp. 35-36; Felix George Lee (1963), *The Catholic Church in Malaya*, Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, pp. 35-36.
[50] Lee, *The Catholic*.
[51] Arnold T. Wilson (1926), "History of the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in China and Other Kingdoms of the East," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies University of London*, Vol. 4, no. 1, p. 48.
[52] Ackerman & Lee, *Heaven in Transition*, p. 27.
[53] Walter J. Fischel (1950), "New Sources for the History of the Jewish Diaspora in Asia in the 16th Century," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 396-399.
[54] Misha Louvish (2007), "Malaysia," in Fred Skolnik (ed.), *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Detroit: Thomson Gale, p. 427.
[55] See, the Malaysian Censuses 1980, 1992 and 2000 only states six items with specific name of religion (Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism/Taoism/Others, Hinduism, Christianity, and Tribal/Folk Religions) and added two items in general term (Others and No Religious/Unknown).
[56] Engel Sluiter (1942), "Dutch Maritime Power and the Colonial Status Quo, 1585-1641," *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 11, no. 1, p. 41.
[57] Hussin suggests that the fluctuation affect to small population in Malacca perhaps because of governor social policy. For more detail information see in Chapter six Population Growth in Melaka and Penang 1780-1830 Nordin Hussin (2007), *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka: Dutch Melaka and English Penang, 1780-1830*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph, Singapore: Nias Press.

By the time of the arrival of the British in Malaya,[58] these states were a home for multiplicities groups, dominated by the Malays. Ryan states clearly that "until the middle years of the 19th century the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula were almost all of the Malay race".[59] This demographic pattern of society nevertheless changed after the British occupied Malaya. It especially occurred in the second half of the 19th century[60] when large-scale immigration, mainly of labourers, came to western and southern parts of the Malay Peninsula.[61]

The economic exploitation by the British, in light of the development of capitalism is, perhaps, the vital factor in leading to rising numbers of migrant labour and, as a result, the simultaneous development of a much more heterogonous society. The two primary economic activities, namely tin mining and commercial agriculture, created a great demand for labour to fulfil an export-oriented economy, based predominantly on the production of tin and rubber.[62] Later, thousands of Asian people[63] notably Chinese[64] and Indian[65] migrated to Malaya. The Malay (branded by the colonial administration as 'lazy natives')[66] on the other hand became concentrated in the traditional economy, particularly in rice production, as government sought to minimise the loss of foreign exchange and to curb the involvement of Malay peasants in the capitalist economy.[67]

The trans-national immigrants had a tendency to remain in the colony that they had been carried to initially,[68] consequently producing a physical separation from other ethnic groups. In addition, they were brought in groups to work on the European-owned estates, notably Indian or with Chinese in the mining zones and on Chinese owned plantations for those of Chinese ethnicity.[69] They were concentrated mainly around the West Coast of the Malayan States,[70] a fact of demography which is still reflected in the ethnic and cultural makeup of Malaysia today.

The Indian labourers, for instance, were usually recruited in groups, and lived on the estates in Malaya, which later contributed to the preservation of their own culture and religion,[71] which differed from that of the local residents and from those of other immigrants. The general trend of separation also took place in case of the Chinese, who mainly dwelt in the tin mining areas and plantations. In certain areas, such as the Larut Valley, their population had sharply increased from only three people before 1850 to 40,000 by the end of 1871.[72] This type of influx of immigrants would lead to residential segregation by the various ethnic groups. Thus, it would generate little scope for interethnic mingling.

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[58] The first British's territory in Malaya dates from 1786 through the East India Company which obtain the Island of Penang from Kedah ruler. Later Singapore was acquired by Stamford Raffles followed by Malacca 1824. See C.D Cowan (1961), *Nineteenth Century Malaya; the Origins of British Political Control*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

[59] Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaysia*, p. 119.

[60] At that time, (especially 1870 to 1929) the development of Malayan economic growth in progress based of the export of rubber and tin. See W.G. Huff (2002), "Boom-or-Bust Commodities and Industrialization in Pre-World War Ii Malaya," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 62, no. 4.

[61] Khoo Kay Kim (2009), "The Emergence of Plural Communities in the Malay Peninsula before 1874," in *Multiethnic Malaysia; Past, Present and Future*, Petaling Jaya: MiDAS & SIRD, p. 14-15; Firdaus Abdullah (1997), "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia: To Restructure Society, to Eradicate Poverty," *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol. XV, no. 2 p.193.

[62] See Tan Siew Peng (1976), The Chinese in Peninsular Malaysia: A Study of Race Relations in Plural Society, Doctorol thesis, University of Warwick, pp. 7-11; P.J. Marshall (1996), "The Diaspora of the Africans and the Asians," in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 286-287.

[63] In fact, Chinese and Indian had settled in Malaya earlier since pre colonialism especially for commercial purpose but in small quantity.

[64] Chinese came to work mostly in tin mines and rubber cultivation. See Leonard Unger (1944), "The Chinese in Southeast Asia," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 34, no. 2, p. 207-208.

[65] Indians work predominantly in rubber estates and also have in small numbers of other occupational like civil service and businessmen. See Rajeswary Ampalavanar (1981), *The Indian Minority and Political Change in Malaya: 1945-1957*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-2.

[66] Other brands were 'indolent, ignorant, shiftless and irrational'. These brands however were refuted by Syed Husin Alatas (1977) in his book, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, London: Frank Class. This negative image of the Malay according to him was product of the ninetheen century and asserts that was a function in the exploitation complex of colonial times with capitalist spirit. See further analysis particular in Chapter 2 under title Islam, Feudalism and Exploitation in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Malaya in Norhashimah Mohd Yasin (1996), *Islamisation/Malaynisation: A Study on the Role of Islamic Law in the Economic Development of Malaysia: 1969-1993*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, pp. 45-112.

[67] Ibid., p. 103. At that time, the agricultural policy in Malaya was inspired by capitalist spirit as well as. Yasin quoted Lim finding conclude that this policy aims:

i- to encourage the increase of peasant food production for consumption by growing labour force engaged in the cash economy, thereby minimising the loss of foreign exchange in payment for rice imports;

ii- to preserve export-oriented cash-crop cultivation for capitalist interests.

[68] Marshall, "The Diaspora of the Africans and the Asians," p. 287; C.A. Vlieland (1934), "The Population of Malay Peninsula: A Study in Human Migration," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 61-78.

[69] Kim, "The Emergence of Plural Communities," p. 21.

[70] These states were Johore, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Selangor, Perak and Penang.

[71] Interesting to note, Indians who dwelt in Malaya, were diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion. In religious preferrence, most of them were Hindu but there were significant number of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and others. See Khan, "Indians in Malaya," pp. 189 & 282.

[72] Abdullah, "Affirmative Action Policy in Malaysia," p. 193.

Furthermore, the British policy of encouraging labour immigrants from different civilisations in large numbers could be expected to produce diversity in socio-demography in Malaya. As a result, the immigrants represented a profound change in the demographic composition of the region.[73] In certain years, the population of Malays obviously decreased in percentage terms. For instance, the percentage of Malays was reduced from 58.6% in 1911 to 54% in 1921 and then dropped more slightly to 49.2% by 1931, as shown in Table 1. Thus, for the first time in 1931, the Malay (18,635,700) were outnumbered in their country by non-Malays (19,241,810). Further, the percentage continued to decrease to 42.4% in 1937, as reported by Winstedt[74] in ratio; there were 2.35 non-Malay to 1 Malay.

The percentage of Malays, however, increased gradually afterwards, to 49.5% and 49.8% in 1947 and 1957 respectively. The trend steadily grew after independence to, in 1970 (53.1%), 1980 (56.0%) and 1984 (56.2%) being Malays, a slight majority compared to the total combination of other races. Thus, the pattern pre and post-independence seems to suggest that controlling immigration regulation[75] and the Second World War have led to the achievement of a more or less demographically stable plural society, where immigrants who want work on, or to be citizens of, Malaysia should follow some regulations.

The Chinese, the second largest racial group in Malaysia in terms of numbers, grew rapidly from 29.4% in 1921 to 38.4% at 1947, before declining to around 33% to 37% in the period 1957 to 1984, as demonstrated in Table 1. The Indian percentage seems to fluctuate, from around 10% to 15% during the period between 1911 and 1984. But in the period 1911 to 1931, their percentages grew by 5% from 10.2% to 15.1%, a considerably bigger rate of growth than that of the Chinese (4.3%) in the same period. Overall these periods (1911 to 1931) witnessed a population growth increase of some 567 640, or a rate of 2.2 % per year (1921) to 881 067 or a rate of 2.7% per year (1931), mainly due to a net surplus of migration in order to better serve an increase in production as demanded by economic growth.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Population by Race 1911-1984[76]

Total & Year / Race	**2,339 051 (1911)**	**2,906, 691 (1921)**	**3,787, 758 (1931)**	**4,908, 086 (1947)**	**6.278, 758 (1957)**	**8.809, 577 (1970)**	**11.426, 613 (1980)**	**12,643, 000 (1984)**
Malays	58.6%	54.0%	49.2%	49.5%	49.8%	53.1%	56.0%	56.2%
Chinese	29.6%	29.4%	33.9%	38.4%	37.2%	35.5%	33.4%	33.0%
Indians	10.2%	15.1%	15.1%	10.8%	11.1%	10.6%	10.0%	10.1%
Others	1.6%	1.5%	1.8%	1.3%	1.9%	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%

Besides immigration policy, the British Indian Office used the Malay Peninsular as a place of banishment for certain categories of offences committed, before inaugurating its policy of removal to the Andaman Islands on 8 May 1873. Amongst those criminals sent to Malaya were two Sikhs (Nihal Singh and Kharak Singh) in 1840s, who may have been the first Sikhs to come to Malaya.[77] This indirectly contributed to the plural society, but on a small-scale *vis a vis* the economic factors.

In 1941, Japanese armies occupied Malaya and Singapore after fighting against the British for 69 days.[78] In the early period of the occupation, the Japanese promoted an Asian identity through their 'Asia is One' slogan, consisting of a concept of Asian unity and pan-Asian nationalism under Japanese leadership, but at the same time, they offered guarantees of welfare for all inhabitants, including citizens of enemy nations in Malaya.[79] Despite the offer, however, they soon launched repressive campaign against 'anti-Japanese elements' (mainly within the Chinese community) in many parts of the country, and pursued policy of discrimination on ethnic grounds, which

[73] Carolina López C. (2001), "The British Presence in the Malay World: A Meeting of Civilizational Traditions," *SARI: International Journal of Malay World Studies*, Vol. 19, p. 22.

[74] This report base on the estimated Asiatic population of Malaya at the end of 1937 by Winstedt. See Richard Winstedt (1943), "Malaya," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 226, no. 1, p. 97.

[75] The British introduced type of immigration law for the first was the Chinese Immigration Ordinance 1877. However it main purpose was to protect them from serious ill-treatment and exploitation. Later there were several ordinances with regard to immigrant issues. Such ordinance perhaps important was the Aliens Ordinance 1933 that it has been passed to regulate the entry of non-British subject mainly Chinese, to register and control alien residents in Malaya. But the Indian were not affected. This Ordinance later was replaced with more comprehensive Immigration Ordinance 1953 that restricted permanent entry upon foreigners. See Saw Swee-Hock (2007), *The Population of Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 12-17.

[76] Adopted from Saw Swee-Hock (2007), *The Population of Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 50 & 65.

[77] Kernial Singh Sandhu (2006), "Sikhs in Malaysia: A Society in Transition," in A Mani & K. S. Sandhu (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 559-60.

[78] On 8 December 1941 the Japanese Forces landed in southern Thailand and northern Malaya. By the end of January, they had captured Johore then following with Singapore on 15 February 1942.

[79] Paul K. Kratoska (1988), *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya 1941- 1945*, London: C.Hurst & Company, p. 92.

created tension amongst different ethnic groups in the long term. The Chinese were, perhaps, the main victims, with what Keng describes as the occupier's "racialist inclinations' manifested itself in the massacre of thousands of Chinese immediately after the conquest of Singapore". He also claims that the Japanese continued the pre-war British 'pro-Malay' policy. This policy seemed to treat Malays differently to other ethnicities, most notably the Chinese.[80] Generally all ethnicities, including Malays, were the victims of very brutal treatment, regardless of their ethnic origin, with the "mass killings, extortionate donations, torture, forced labour, severe food shortages"[81] justified as being necessary instruments of military government in wartime.

Thus, it could be said that the period of colonial in Malaya, and especially that of the British, led to the growth of a plural society and then directly produced diversity in every dimension of life, including in the religious aspect. The diversity was indirectly created through the liberal policy by the government in parallel with, as Furnivall describes, the development of similar plural societies in Burma and Indonesia. All of these have different races, such as European, Chinese, Indian and native. However, each lived in groups, separated, as Furnivall states, by "its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways".[82] At an individual level as well very little interaction took place, mostly confined to buying and selling activities between them. Therefore, Furnivall rightly concludes that, in a plural society with multi-ethnic communities there are:

> Living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere there is a division of labour along racial lines. Natives, Chinese, Indians and Europeans all have different functions, and within each major group subsections have particular occupations.[83]

The words 'separately', 'division', 'different' and 'have particular' would be argued as a strong indication of diversity, contributing to the creation of a plural society in the Malaysian context. The outcome of colonial policy, as Furnivall observed, above therefore, was used, rightly, as the basis of Ting Chew Pehs' analysis, in the context of Malaya, which can be summed up in four points:

i- the separation of the various communities with little social contact;
ii- the differing positions of the various communities in terms of political and economic power with the British dominating both spheres;
iii- separate educational systems which produced students with different outlook and orientations; and
iv- the submergence of inter-communal conflict due largely to the presence of the colonial power as an arbitrator.[84]

These points seem to point towards the British regime's failure to create or achieve a policy of integration amongst its subject ethnic groups. The implications of this attitude would later create problems for racial relations in Malaysia.

Post Colonialism

The legacy of colonialism; in terms of religious adherence, continues to have implications in Malaysian society today. Thus, after independence, Malaysia's plural society (having its roots in the history of immigration over the previous centuries) solidified permanently into a variety of ethnic communities[85] directly or indirectly producing plurality in terms of religion in this country.

To illustrate this legacy, Table 2 below, shows that all major ethnicities which existed prior to independence[86] still represent a significant number of people, and significant proportions of the total population, led by Malays (11,680,400), then Chinese (5,691,900), Indian (1,680,100) other non-Malay Bumiputeras (2,567,800) and 'others'[87] (269,700).

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[80] Cheah Boon Kheng (2003), *Red Star over Malaya; Resistance & Social Conflict During and after the Japanese Occupation, 1941- 1946*, 3rd ed., Singapore: Singapore University Press. See for detail in Part 1; the Roots of Conflict.
[81] See for detail in Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation*, pp. 33-44; Kheng, *Red Star*.
[82] Quoted from Ting Chew Peh, *The Chinese,* p. 30.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid. See in his thesis under title the Structure of the Malayan Society during the Colonial Era. pp. 1-34.
[85] Charles Hirschman (1980), "Demographic Trends in Peninsular Malaysia, 1947-75," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 6, no. 1, p. 110.
[86] See Table 1 and 2 to compare the trend of population within period 1911 to 2010. It seems to indicate that the post-colonialism population is significantly influenced over period of the colonialism.
[87] His term encompass minority races such as Eurasians, Arabs, Japanese or Europeans. By Law, the constitution of Malaysia provides some procedures for applying Malaysian citizenship. Under the Part 3 Articles 14 to 22 (but several articles have been repealed) state that the way how to be Malaysian citizenship; i) by operation of law, ii) by registration iii) by naturalism iv) by incorporation of territory. For aliens who immigrate into Malaysia and wish to become the Malaysian citizen, normally using the procedure two (registration) or three (naturalism).

It is interesting to note that ethnic identities in the Malaysian context are closely correlated with certain religions.[88] For example, the Malays are Muslim (100%), the Chinese affiliate to Buddhism (76%) and the Indians mostly follow Hinduism (84.1%). In the case of Malays, Islam is recognised under the Malaysian Constitution Article 160(2)[89] as a part of the definition of Malay (along with language and customs) which legally means that they must profess the Islamic faith.

Other ethnic groups, (especially Chinese and Indian) however are not identified by this combination of religion and culture, but are classified based on their ethnic origin. Therefore, they perhaps are not rigidly defined as the Malays in terms of religion, but have full rights to profess other religions besides their ancestral religion, without legal restriction. Therefore, amongst the Chinese next to Buddhism, there are those who follow Taoism/others (10.8%), Christianity (9.5%) and Islam (1%). The Indians also follow the same trend, a minority practising Christianity (7.8%), Islam (4.1%) and Buddhism (1.2%) followed by other religions (2.0%), but with a majority remaining with Hinduism (84.1%).

The other non-Malay *Bumiputeras* communities show different polarities from the three ethnicities above, with Christianity (49.7%) having predominance, followed by Islam (40.8%).

Table 2. Distribution of Citizen Population by Religion and Ethnic Group, 2010[90]

Ethnic / Religion	Malays	Other Bumiputeras	Chinese	Indians	Others	Total
Number ('000)						
Islam	11,680.4 (100%)	932.0 (40.8)	57.2 (1%)	69.0 (4.1%)	174.8 (64.8%)	12,913.4 (60.4%)
Buddhism	-	21.6 (0.8%)	4,325.0 (76%)	20.1 (1.2%)	52.4 (19.4%)	4,419.0 (19.2%)
Hinduism	-	2.2 (0.1%)	16.1 (0.3%)	1,412.7 (84.1%)	2.3 [2.6%]	1,433.3 (6.3%)
Christianity	-	1,275.0 (49.7%)	539.6 (9.5%)	130.4 (7.8%)	35.5 (13.2%)	1,980.4 (9.1%)
Confucianism/ Taoism/ Others	-	189.5 (7.4%)	612.6 (10.8%)	2.1 (0.01%)	1.4 (0.5%)	610.7 (2.6%)
Others	-	35.6 (1.4%)	12.2 (0.2%)	35.6 (2.1%)	1.0 (0.4%)	84.5 (0.4%)
No Religion	-	93.8 (3.7%)	88.9 (1.6%)	0.8 (0.1%)	1.3 (0.5%)	184.7 (0.8%)
Unknown	-	18.2 (0.7%)	39.5 (0.7%)	9.3 (0.6)	1.7 (0.6%)	68.6 (0.3%)
Total	11,680.4	2,567.8	5,691.9	1,680.1	269.7	21,889.9

In numerical terms, Islam forms almost half of the religious composition of the population, to which the Malays alone contributing 90.5% of the ethnic groups, while Buddhism consists of 98% of those of Chinese ethnicity and the Indians constituting 98.5% of Hindus.[91] These patterns of religious adherents' identify based on ethnicity may indicate that the strong division amongst them in religious aspects is, partly at least, caused by the colonialist historical legacy as shown above.

In terms of Christianity, there is a slightly variant differentiation, with this population consisting in the main of other non-Malay Bumiputeras, which form 49.7% or 1,275,000 of the adherents to this faith. This outcome as rightly described by Swee-Hock, who said that "the Christian missionaries were fairly successful in persuading the predominantly rural indigenous peoples to forsake their folk religion for Christianity".[92] Christianity as well represents a significant number of other ethnicities, consisting of 539,600 (9.5%) Chinese followed by 130,400

[88] Saw Swee-Hock (2007), *The Population of Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 75.
[89] Malays means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and (a) was before Merdeka Day born in the Federation or in Singapore or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation or in Singapore, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or in Singapore; or (b) is the issue of such a person.
[90] Adopted and Modified with removing item Non-Citizens. Saw Swee-Hock (2015), *The Population of Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 72
[91] See Table 2. These outcomes are formulated through (number of ethnicities ÷ Total religious adherents x 100).
[92] Saw Swee-Hock (2007), *The Population of Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 80.

(7.8%) Indian then 35,500 (13.2%) others. The influence of Christianity in both ethnicities was mainly as a result of the establishment of English-medium mission schools in Malaya in Nineteenth Century, intended to transmit Christian values to the non-European population.[93] On the other hand, government did not encourage the propagation of non-Islamic religions amongst the Malay ethnicity, which, it could be argued, was why Christians shifted their focus to non-Malays.

The structure of the development of multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities in Malaysia into its present pattern was primarily determined during the period of colonialism, notably by the British. Factors such as immigration policy, economic goals and the nature of the colonial administration under the British are, it is argued, what would lead in large part to the existence of plural society in Malaysia in the present day, with the ethnic composition today mostly reflecting the pattern before independence.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the establishment of multi-ethnic and multi-religious society in Malaysia is attributed to two factors i.e., naturally and colonization. The natural factor covers the original inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula that consisted of aborigines from various tribes such as Sakai, Jakun, Proto who practice animism belief. After the period of indigenous people who practiced this animism belief, there was an indianization period that resulted from the migration of Indian traders to the Malay Archipelago which brought with them Hinduism and Buddhism beliefs. This indianization period ends with the arrival of Islam which is also brought through the process of migration by Muslim traders either from India or South Arabia. The natural factor that includes indigenous people and migration occurs in a safe environment without involving bloodshed. The second factor is through colonization by Western powers. It started with the conquest of Melaka by Portuguese in 1511, followed by Netherland in 1641, and then followed by British. The colonization by these western powers has brought new belief to the Malay Archipelago which is Christianity. This occupation especially during the British era has changed demographics of the population especially in the Malay Peninsula when the British brought in the Chinese and Indians to work as laborers. After the independence of Malaya in 1957, these immigrants i.e. Chinese and Indians have been granted a status of citizen and it was lasting until nowadays.

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[93] Raymond L.M Lee & Susan E Ackerman (1997), *Sacred Tensions; Modernity and Religious Tranformation in Malaysia*, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, p. 17-18.

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