The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications

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In Peninsular Malaysia,[1] the conventional ethnic divisions are "Malay," "Chinese," "Indian," and "Other." At first glance, this classification seems to represent the popular conception of "race" (the everyday term) as well as the "official" definition. According to the Malaysian constitution, a Malay is a person who was born locally, habitually speaks Malay, follows Malay custom, and professes Islam (Mohammed Suffian bin Hashim 1976:291). The Chinese and Indian communities are supposed to consist of the descendants of immigrants from China and the Indian subcontinent. "Other" is a catchall category for the small number of Eurasians, Thais, Europeans, and other persons who do not fit into the three major categories.

In plural societies, ethnic boundaries, and even the meaning of ethnicity, are often ambiguous. Malaysia is no exception. Even a casual look reveals considerable heterogeneity within ethnic categories as well as vague boundaries between them. The Indian population encompasses Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Christians and is also differentiated by a variety of Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan mother tongues. The Chinese population is similarly crosscut by religion and language. A minority of Malaysian-Chinese, known as Peranakan or Baba Chinese, have adopted much of Malay culture, including language, dress, and cuisine (Clammer 1980; Tan 1982, 1983). Conversion to Islam and the adoption of Malay language and custom typically allow a person of any ancestry to be considered a Malay (Nagata 1974; Mohd. Aris Hj. Othman 1983). The problem of defining children of interethnic marriages (or children adopted across ethnic lines) is another challenge to a formal definition.

In contrast to the conceptual problem of defining ethnicity, measuring it in population censuses and in other official or semiofficial inquiries is relatively routine. There is no need to "invent" a classification; there is typically a precedent to follow.

[1] Peninsular Malaysia, formerly Malaya, consists of eleven states plus the Federal Territory (the site of the capital city of Kuala Lumpur) of Malaysia on the mainland of Southeast Asia. The other two states, Sabah and Sarawak, on the island of Borneo, were joined with Malaya (which had been an independent nation since 1957) in 1963 to form Malaysia (see Map 1). Singapore was initially part of Malaysia but left the federation in 1965. In 1980 Peninsular Malaysia had a population of 11.4 million, approximately 83 percent of the total population of Malaysia (Department of Statistics 1983, 2:1). The present study does not include Sabah and Sarawak, whose ethnic composition and historical evolution are quite distinct from Peninsular Malaysia. In this paper, I use the terms Malaysia, Peninsular Malaysia, and Malaya interchangeably to refer to the area presently known as Peninsular Malaysia.

BURMA   100   110   120
    THAILAND   LAOS   South China
ANDAMAN   Sea
SEA   Bangkok
                KAMPUCHEA
                Phnom   Manila
-10   Penh   VIETNAM
        GULF OF
        THAILAND   Ho Chi Minh
                             City   SULU
Strait of   SEA   10
Malacca   PHILIPPINES

                    MALAYSIA
        Kuala   Brunei   Sabah
        Lumpur Peninsular
                Malaysia   CELEBES
                                                              SEA
-0   Singapore   Sarawak

        Sumatra   0-

                            INDONESIA
                                         JAVA
Indian Ocean   Jakarta   SEA
-10   Java   10-

        -.--International boundary

        ★   National capital
                                         N
        0   100 200   400 MILES
        0 100 200   400 KILOMETERS

                100   110   120

Map 1. Contemporary Malaysia and Peninsular Malaysia
SOURCE: Based on Bunge 1984:xxii.

In spite of the vagueness of meaning and the permeable boundaries of ethnicity, popular perceptions are usually sufficient to sort most of the population into standard classifications. There is undoubtedly considerable measurement error, reflecting both the arbitrary nature of the ethnic classification and the uncertainty of ethnic identity for persons who straddle ethnic boundaries. Even with these limitations, the measurement of ethnicity in population censuses yields a rather unique resource for the study of the meaning of ethnicity, namely, the classifications themselves.

The classification of ethnicity in a census may be arbitrary, but it is not accidental. The selection of some categories but not others and the criteria used to differentiate among them tells us something quite important about the nature of ethnic relations in a society (Peterson 1969). Tracing the evolution of an ethnic classification is an exercise in the sociology of knowledge; it informs us of changes in ethnicity as seen through "official" eyes. In this article I will analyze the development of ethnic classifications in the censuses of colonial Malaya from their "invention" in 1871 to the end of the colonial era in 1957 and then through the post-Independence era (1957–80). Changes in the measurement of ethnicity have reflected shifts in ideology and the political economy across the past century.

The Concept of Ethnicity

At a given point in most societies, ethnic divisions appear fixed and clear-cut. Yet a historical or comparative perspective reveals that ethnic boundaries are often fluid and can be based on a variety of criteria (Barth 1969; Keyes 1976). Physical and cultural markers that are used to differentiate one population from another can be ambiguous; they are subject to change across generations. For ethnic groups to persist, such markers must be reinforced by social arrangements and practices that solidify group identity and heighten divisions between groups.

Among the many dimensions that may serve to define or to reinforce ethnicity in a plural society are cultural characteristics such as language, dress, and cuisine. In some cases, these variations are associated with differences in skin color, stature, or other aspects of physical appearance. Although some analysts attach great theoretical importance to the distinction between cultural and physiological attributes (labeled as ethnic and racial, respectively), both characteristics can possess major or minor social significance. Almost all persons with some African ancestry are considered black in the United States, with only two categories—white and black—in the racial classification. Throughout most of Latin America, however, skin color is viewed as a continuum and considered along with economic and cultural criteria in the social hierarchy (Harris 1964; Morner 1970). In many "racial" societies the degree of intra-group variation in the physical features used to define races exceeds intergroup differences.

The most important question is whether such markers are aligned with other ideological, social, and economic divisions in society (Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Horowitz 1985). For instance, religion and language can be especially strong factors in maintaining divisions that reinforce cultural definitions of ethnicity. Nonetheless, even these measures of primordial ties are subject to change. For example, within a few generations after the end of Dutch rule in Malacca (early nineteenth century), the Dutch (Protestant) Eurasian community had converted to Catholicism and been absorbed into the larger Portuguese Eurasian population (Chan 1983:267). Even though most Malaysian Chinese have retained their mother tongue, there are many

examples of Chinese settlements' adopting the Malay language as their own (Gosling 1964; Winzler 1972). In another instance, on the fringe of a large but isolated Chinese settlement in Kelantan, a number of nearby Malay villagers learned to speak Hakka to interact with their Chinese neighbors (Carstens 1980).

From a long-term historical perspective, the ways in which ethnic populations are defined and structured depend, in large measure, on the degree of differences among the populations, the nature of their contact, and their relative positions in the political and economic order (Frazier 1957; Hirschman 1984; Lieberson 1961; van den Berghe 1967, 1981). Although there is no single or dominant paradigm that guides all research on the course of ethnic relations (Hirschman 1980, 1983; Yinger 1985), almost every theory, from Marxist to pluralist, points to the importance of political and economic structures in the creation and maintenance of ethnic inequality and ideology (Keyes 1981). Dominant groups may "create" ethnic ideologies to justify political power or economic exploitation (Cox 1948) and use ethnic criteria to restrict competition for privileged positions (Baltzell 1964). Other class theories suggest that relatively well-off segments of the working class may use ethnic ideologies to restrict immigration or create caste barriers in employment (Bonacich 1972).

Over the decades from the beginning of colonial rule in the nineteenth century to Independence in the mid-twentieth, how did the measurement and meaning of ethnicity change in Peninsular Malaysia? And how were changes in the definition and measurement of ethnicity related to shifts in the political economy? These questions are the subject of the following analysis.

A Brief Overview of Ethnic Contact

The Malaysian peninsula has historically been a major crossroads of Asia. The straits between Sumatra and the peninsula was a sea-lane for traffic between the orbits of China and India. As both long-distance and intraregional commerce developed, coastal ports and towns grew to service and profit from the trade (Reid 1980). This was not a continuous process but rose and fell as regional polities expanded or contracted. Surely, these early settlements and towns were ethnically diverse, although we have little firm information on their ethnic composition or interethnic relations. Historians have recorded the extensive population movements throughout the maritime world of Southeast Asia (Andaya and Andaya 1982). The ease of migration throughout the archipelago and the lack of boundaries (until fairly recent times) facilitated the exchange of peoples within Southeast Asia. Various populations from the Achinese in North Sumatra to the Bugis of Sulawesi played influential roles in the political and economic development of the peninsula. There is also evidence of extensive contact with India and China that lasted more than a thousand years (Lamb 1964; Purcell [1948] 1967).

The 1840s and 1850s marked the beginning of a decisive demographic and economic break with the past. The expansion of trade, especially as the industrial revolution took hold in the West, stimulated a quantum leap in economic activity and labor migration. The demand for tin was the initial factor, but subsequent commerce forays in agriculture (coffee, sugar, etc.) also required larger amounts of cheap labor for the growing export sector (Jackson 1968; Khoo 1972; Wong 1965). Malaya was sparsely settled and labor in short supply. Malay peasants were understandably reluctant to enter into the almost slavelike conditions of employment in the early mines and plantations. Other Asian peoples had fewer options and were induced to come

to Malaya as contract laborers. The largest flow was from China, but migrants also came by the hundreds of thousands from India and the islands of the Indonesian archipelago (Jackson 1962; Saw 1963). Around the turn of the twentieth century the rubber boom began, expanding further the influx of laborers, especially from India. The consolidation of British colonial rule toward the end of the nineteenth century led to formal mechanisms to recruit overseas labor for the expanding export sectors (Blythe 1947; Sandhu 1969).

In the twentieth century it became clear that the plural society was not a temporary phenomenon (Andaya and Andaya 1982:chap. 5). Most immigrants probably did return to their homelands, but a sizable number settled down and began to consider Malaya their home. The problem of obtaining cheap labor for the mining and plantation sectors had been solved, but with the unintended consequence of creating a multiethnic society. Under the mantle of colonial rule (and Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945), there were the stirrings of ethnic antagonism (Cheah 1981; Khoo 1981). But the full dilemma of forming a national identity from such a heterogeneous population became evident with the changes in political structure in the post–World War II era. With the move toward self-governance, questions of Malayan (later Malaysian) citizenship, educational policy, and political loyalty gave rise to intense discussion and controversy, often leading to widening ethnic divisions (Ratnam 1965; Snodgrass 1980).

The Censuses of Malaya and Malaysia

The evolution of census taking in Malaya is closely tied to the expansion of the British colonial administration. The first modern census, in 1871, covered the Straits Settlements, the only area under direct colonial rule. The Straits Settlements included Penang, Malacca, and Singapore (Map 2). Essentially, these three areas consisted of port cities with their hinterlands. Population censuses of the Straits Settlements were continued in 1881, 1891, 1901, and 1911. As the British "forward movement" extended the imperial mantle over the Malay states of the peninsula, census taking followed in its wake. In 1891 individual censuses of Selangor, Perak, Sungei Ujong (part of contemporary Negeri Sembilan), and Pahang were taken and then repeated as the unified census of the Federated Malay States in 1901 and 1911.[2] Separate censuses were also conducted in several of the Unfederated Malay States in 1911. Beginning in 1921 a single census for all of British Malaya (Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States) was conducted—a practice continued in 1931 and 1947. On the eve of Independence, in 1957, a census of the Federation of Malaya (excluding Singapore) was taken. Then in 1970 and 1980 Malaysia-wide censuses (Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak) were taken. I will examine ethnic classifications from all of the censuses of the colonial era (excluding the 1891 censuses of Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Sungei Ujong and the censuses of the Unfederated Malay States in 1911), plus those for Peninsular Malaysia in 1970 and 1980.

Most informative are the early censuses, when colonial officials had to formulate a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive ethnic categories to classify the population. There were no precedents from earlier reports to follow; modern census taking was

[2] I have not been able to locate copies of the 1891 censuses of the separate Malay States. For a comprehensive review of Malaysian (Malayan) census data, see Sidhu and Jones 1981:Appendix.
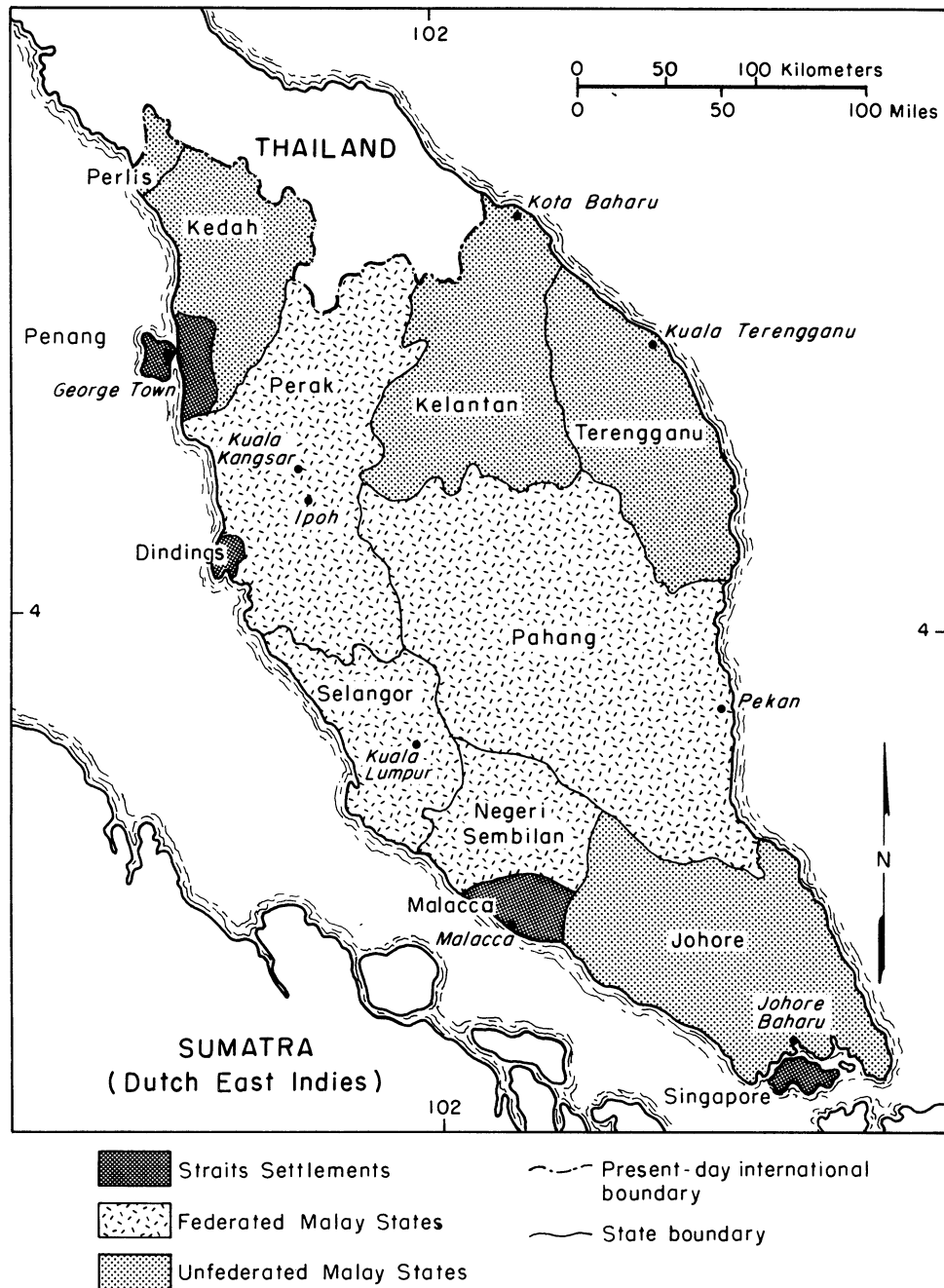
Map 2. Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia) Under British Colonialism
SOURCE: Based on Bunge 1984:34.

essentially a nineteenth-century phenomenon, and the first censuses in colonial India and other Asian colonies also began about 1870 or later (Population Research Center 1966). The categories of the classification had to be "invented" from experience and common knowledge.[3] Unfortunately, there is almost no discussion of census definitions or the mechanics of classification in the earliest censuses. The 1871 and 1881 censuses of the Straits Settlements contain only tabular information, with no discussion of the rationale behind the classifications. It was not until the 1891 census of the Straits Settlements that a report of census administration and a commentary on the results were included in the published report.

Appendix A shows the classifications of ethnicity in the censuses of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States from 1871 to 1911. In putting these classifications together, I have followed the exact headings, category spellings, and order of categories found in the original sources. The one exception is that it was sometimes necessary to pull material together from several tables in the same census report. Frequently, the detailed ethnic tabulations were reported in tables that were separate from the lists of major categories. All of the subcategories are included here with the exception of the specific national groups of the European population. Typically, twenty or more specific European nationalities were separately listed. (The specific number of European subcategories is reported.) Appendix B shows ethnic classifications as they were reported in the population censuses from 1921 to 1980. The original census formats of category headings, spelling, and order are also followed exactly in these lists.

The Changing Contents of Census Ethnic Classifications

My first task is to describe the major features of the ethnic classifications and the changes in the censuses of the last century. Then I will consider the views of the authors of census reports on their measurement of ethnicity. In the concluding section, I will offer an interpretation of the evolution of the measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia.

Table headings reveal something about the perception of the phenomenon under inquiry. The early censuses of the Straits Settlements gave only a general title such as "Return of the Population," followed by a geographical area—Straits Settlements—and the year. In 1881 and 1891, the term "nationalities," which appeared frequently in discussions of early censuses, was used to head the column of ethnic classifications. The word "race" first appeared in the 1891 census, in an appendix containing instructions to enumerators (Merewether 1892). The author of the 1901 census of the Federated Malay States advised that "before printing the next set of census forms, the word 'nationality' should be changed for that of 'race' whenever it occurs. It is a wider and more exhaustive expression than 'nationality' and gives rise to no such ambiguous questions in classifying people" (Hare 1902:71). The transition to the term "race" was complete by 1911.

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[3] I could not find any evidence of established precedents or specific directions to the early census takers in colonial Malaya on how to collect ethnic data. The nineteenth-century population censuses of Great Britain do not contain tabulations by "race." In the standard reference on colonial censuses, Kuczynski (1937:15) notes the problem of the noncomparability of census classifications by race across the colonies. He reports that the British colonial authorities tried to maintain uniform census questionnaires for all the colonies, but local officials did not conform.

Although the definition of race remained uncertain, the term itself stuck. Race was the official label for the next several censuses. In a very self-conscious break with precedent, the author of the 1947 census report coined the word "community," "to connote group members all of which are bound together by a community of interest, that is to say by common ties of language, religion, custom, allegiance" (Del Tufo 1949:71). The term "community" was dropped with the 1957 census when "race" was again used, but the 1970 census returned to the use of the "community," as a more neutral term. To emphasize the shift in terminology the 1970 census report stated, "A complete break was made in 1970 when respondents were asked the question: 'To what community do you belong?' No reference to 'race' was made in any of the documentation" (Department of Statistics 1977, 1:287). The importance of this shift is also observable in the Malay language version of the census question: "Apakah komuniti anda?" (Department of Statistics 1977, 1:52). Rather than use the common equivalent of race, *bangsa* (which could be translated as "race" or "nationality"), a new Malay word, *komuniti*, was coined.

The 1980 census documented an even further shift to neutrality, sensitivity, and awareness of the issue with the following question: "To what ethnic group, community, or dialect group do you belong?" (in the Malay language questionnaire, "Apakah kumpulan keturunan, komuniti atau loghet anda?"). In a sense, there has been circular movement from the use of the relatively neutral "nationality" to the use of "race" as a pseudobiological concept, back to the more neutral "community" and "ethnicity."

There have also been important shifts in the classifications over the years. The 1871 classification was a rather simple one compared to those of later years. It simply listed three Western peoples at the top (Europeans and Americans, Armenians, Jews), and then Eurasians, followed by an alphabetical list of twenty-three populations ranging from Abyssinians to Singhalese. The 1881 classification was a modest expansion of this basic list, with the inclusion of Chinese dialect groups (labeled tribes) the major change. Beginning in the 1891 census of the Straits Settlements, the specific ethnic categories were sorted under major headings of "Europeans," "Eurasians," "Chinese," "Malays and Other Natives of the Archipelago," "Tamils and Other Natives of India," and "Other Nationalities." The 1901 census classifications of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States were very similar and closely followed the precedent of the 1891 census. The one significant difference was the first use of "race" in the headings of the 1901 census of the Federated Malay States.

The classifications of ethnicity in the two 1911 censuses were quite different. The 1911 Straits Settlements census listed ethnic categories in strict alphabetical order, with Europeans in their correct alphabetical position (not at the top of the list as in previous censuses). In addition, the Chinese and Indian populations were divided by country of birthplace (locally or in their home country) rather than by linguistic or dialect group. The 1911 Federated Malay States census was more conventional in the content and order of its "racial" classification.

Several general observations can be made about the ethnic classifications in the early censuses of the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. First is the different treatment of European population statistics. In all censuses except that of the Straits Settlements in 1911, Europeans were put at the top of the list and subclassified in obsessive detail, in spite of their relatively trivial demographic size.[4]

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[4] The subdivisions of the major European categories are nationality groups or specific country-of-origin populations (for example, English, Irish, Welsh, Australian, American, Italian). There is no evidence of an effort to specify "racial" distinctions among the European population.

The detailed ethnic classifications appear to reflect a fair amount of ad hoc selection. For instance, very small groups that must have been well known to the European community, such as Jews and Jawi Pekans (Jawi Peranakan),[5] were listed in the early censuses, but some fairly important groups of Sumatran origin appeared only several censuses later.

The 1891 Straits Settlements census was the first to develop a systematic classification of major ethnic categories. Perhaps most important, the kinship of the broad array of Malay peoples in Southeast Asia—despite differences in language and religion—appears to have been officially recognized. Note, however, that Siamese and Arabs were classified as "Others," while Aborigines, Dyaks, and Manilamen (presumably Filipinos) were placed under the category of "Malays and Other Natives of the Archipelago."

The 1921 census (Appendix B), which began the series of unified censuses of colonial Malaya, reflected the example of the racially conscious 1911 Federated Malay States census, not that of the 1911 Straits Settlements census (which ordered all groups alphabetically). From 1921 to 1980 the major categories of the ethnic classification were generally the same except for the changing position of Europeans and Eurasians in the postwar era. In 1921 and 1931, Europeans (with an exhaustive list of twenty or more subcategories) and Eurasians continued to lead the list of "races" in the published census tabulations. By 1947, Europeans and Eurasians were moved down to between "Indians" and "Others" but were kept as major categories. Finally, in 1957 when the census was processed and published by the newly independent government, Europeans and Eurasians were classified as subcategories under "Others"—a practice continued in 1970 and 1980.

From 1931 to 1957, "Malaysian" was used as an inclusive category for Malays and peoples from Borneo and Indonesia. The formation of the political union of Malaysia in 1963 gave a new meaning to "Malaysian" as a citizen of the country, regardless of ethnic origin. In the 1970 and 1980 censuses, Malay was the inclusive major category as well as a subcategory for those of local (Peninsular) origins. The list of subcategories under the Malay (Malaysian) category has changed considerably over the years. In the censuses before Independence, especially in 1931 and 1947, the list of "Indonesian" groups was very extensive. In the 1957 and subsequent post-Independence censuses, the single inclusive category "Indonesian" was used to include all peoples from the Indonesian archipelago.

The position of the aborigine population changed significantly over the decades. "Aborigines" (or "Aborigines of the Peninsula") was used from 1881 to the 1911 census of the Straits Settlements. Aborigines were generally included under the "Malay" category. From the 1911 census of the Federated Malay States to the 1931 census, the derogatory "Sakai" was used. In 1947 and 1957, "Aborigine" was brought back, and specific aborigine communities were listed. This practice continued in 1970 and 1980 with frequent reference to the "Orang Asli" (literally, "original peoples"). Throughout this period, aborigines were generally considered part of the larger Malay ethnic category. This decision probably reflected the precedent of earlier censuses and the view that aborigines are "indigenous people." Although some critics believe that the placement of aborigines under the Malay category reflects a political motive, the number of aborigines is too few to affect the relative ethnic demographic balance.

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[5] Roff (1967:48–49) explains that the Jawi Peranakan community includes the descendants of intermarriages between Indian Muslim traders and Malays in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Jawi Peranakans spoke Malay as their first language and were frequently employed by the British as clerks, translators, and interpreters.

The classification of the Chinese population by dialect group (labeled as tribes through 1947) changed relatively little, although the number of subcategories (and sometimes the romanized spelling) underwent a few minor modifications over the decades. One exception was the 1911 census of the Straits Settlements, which only divided Chinese into "Straits-Born" and "China-Born." "Straits-Born" had also been included as a Chinese subcategory in the 1891 and 1901 censuses, at a time when local birth probably meant identity with the "Baba Chinese" or "Straits Chinese" cultural group (Clammer 1980). This very significant distinction was not maintained in subsequent censuses.

The identification of the Indian population and its many nationality and linguistic subcommunities continually plagued colonial census takers. There was wide variation in the number of categories and the classification of Indian communities in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial censuses. The sheer diversity of the Indian population and popular misconceptions about it may have made a standard classification difficult to achieve. Some census authors report that "Bengali" was incorrectly understood by many to refer to Sikhs or any northern Indian. The pejorative "Klings" appeared only in the 1871 census. Only in the 1947 and 1980 censuses was the important Sikh community specifically identified (Sikhs were probably included in the "Punjabi" category in other censuses). The classification of Indian Muslims and those of Ceylonese origin (Sri Lankans) has clearly been varied and inconsistent over the years.

Official Reflections on the Measurement of Race and Community

As census taking became more routinized in colonial Malaya, the published reports became thicker, as the author (generally a high-ranking civil servant who was appointed superintendent of the census) wrote more about census practices and offered interpretations of the data. Although the intent was to provide an objective account of demographic and social characteristics, the text was heavily flavored by the established wisdom of the era. One issue that involved extensive discussion and reflective thinking was the measurement of "race."

Most census commentary on ethnicity reflected the major concerns of obtaining consistent answers from respondents and arranging the various groups under major headings. Among all the census reports, the most thorough discussion of the meaning of "race" and the problem of measurement was by C. A. Vlieland (1932:73–74), the author of the 1931 census. His words are worth quoting at length:

> The term "Race" is used, for the purposes of a Malayan census, in a peculiar sense, which requires explanation. The information, which it is desired to obtain from the results of enquiries under this heading, is of importance for a variety of purposes, and the word "Race" is used, for lack of a more appropriate term, to cover a complex set of ideas of which race, in the strict or scientific sense, is only one small element. It would be of little use to the administrator or the merchant to attempt a classification of the population by race in the ethnographic sense, to say nothing of the fact that any such tentative classification would be highly controversial. An attempt at classification by "nationality," or, more exactly, by national status or political allegiance, would be almost equally open to controversy, and of little, if any, greater practical value. It is, in fact, impossible to define the sense in which the term "Race" is used for census purposes; it is, in reality, a judicious blend, for practical ends, of the ideas of geographic and ethnographic origin, political allegiance, and racial and social affinities and sympathies. The difficulty of achieving anything like a sci-

entific or logically consistent classification is enhanced by the fact that most Oriental peoples have themselves no clear conception of race, and commonly regard religion as the most important, if not the determinant, element. The Malay, for instance, habitually regards adherence to Islam in much the same light as a European regards a racial distinction, and will speak of a Muhammadan Indian and a Hindu (even if the two are of precisely similar origin), as though the distinction between them were similar in nature and magnitude to that between a Frenchman and a German. Again, the term "Jawi-Pekan," which to the European implies a mixture of Indian and Malay blood, is frequently applied to an Indian who has in fact no Malayan blood in his veins, but is a Muhammadan who has settled and married in Malaya. The confusion of ideas has even affected current English usage of terms, and the European will frequently use the name "Sikh," instead of "Punjabi" (since the majority of Punjabis he knows of profess the Sikh religion).

  In default of anything resembling a definition of the term "Race" as used in this report, perhaps the best way of conveying its meaning in a few words is to say that, in asking the question of an individual "What is your race?" the census authority is trying to obtain an answer of the same nature as we expect when we ask in ordinary non-technical conversation "What is that man?"—assuming that the context makes it clear that we are not enquiring as to his occupation. In such circumstances, we should be surprised, and possibly annoyed, to be told that a Madras Indian was British or Dravidian, when we wanted to know whether he was a Tamil or a Telugu; yet either of these answers might well be correct. We should be more shocked to receive the information that a given white man was Teuto-Erse, when we wanted to know whether he was in fact an American, and not a Canadian, Australian or Englishman.

The concern of Vlieland, the astute superintendent of the 1931 census of British Malaya, was the accurate and reliable measurement of race—an objective that he realized was rather problematic. The problem is that he (and others in the colonial era) could not define "race" except in terms of the popular images held by Europeans. It is not that Asians lacked criteria for social differentiation but that they tended to use criteria that differed from European perceptions. In the concluding section of this paper, I will attempt to develop the implications of the social construction of a racial classification and racial thinking.

Faced with the problem that "race" could not be defined in any consistent sense, census officials eventually recognized that the only possible measurement strategy was to classify individuals according to the respondent's own subjective identity. Although this procedure raised problems if census takers thought that respondents did not share their vision of racial classification, the process of self-identification was eventually seen in a positive light. The official acceptance of subjective ethnic identity for the census was made easier by the recognition that European racial meanings had gradually become part of popular thought. But subjectively defined census classifications also had to include some degree of local perceptions of ethnic divisions. For example, the author of the 1947 census report acknowledged the necessity of self-identification by instructing census enumerators: " 'Race' is used in the sense in which it is understood by the man in the street. . . . In . . . border line cases . . . put down the name of the community which accepts the-individual and to which he claims to belong. . . . Thus a Chinese convert to Islam who describes himself as 'Melayu' [Malay] is to all intents and purposes a member of the Malay community" (Del Tufo 1949:71).

In the post-Independence period, the census authorities were more sensitive to controversy over ethnic definitions and the potential political implications of the relative demographic balance among the ethnic communities. As noted earlier, the

word "race" was dropped entirely and "community" and "ethnicity" were adopted as the official census terms.

Self-identification—in continuity with prior practice—was clearly the only logical method to use. The importance of avoiding any influence from the census enumerators is made quite explicit in the directions for the measurement of community in the 1970 census:

> In classifying the population by *community*, the criteria taken was as to how an individual identifies himself or herself. It was a subjective identification by the respondent of his community identification. Enumerators were told to record the name of the community to which an individual claimed he belonged. For persons of "mixed" parentage, the respondents were encouraged to make a choice by asking them to consider from which community they took their language, religion, customs, etc., and to which of their parents' communities they considered as belonging. If this failed to elicit a response an individual was enumerated as belonging to his father's community. (Department of Statistics 1977, 1:289)

Although observers may believe that census data on ethnicity in Malaysia are official—in the sense that they conform to government policy or constitutional criteria—the reality is much more fuzzy. Census data show ethnic identity as people perceive themselves. In spite of the problem of reliability, there is really no alternative.

Interpretation

At the advent of census taking in 1871, the British colonial presence was limited to the Straits Settlements: Singapore, Malacca, and Penang. Although the British had been in Singapore for fifty years and in Penang for eighty-five, they were still relatively unfamiliar with the peoples of Southeast Asia, including the adjacent Malay peninsula. An 1879 visitor remarked, "The Gold Chersonese [Peninsular Malaysia] is still somewhat of a *terra incognita*; there is no point on its mainland at which European steamers call, and the usual conception of it is a vast and malarious equatorial jungle sparsely peopled by a race of semi-civilized and treacherous Mohammedans" (Bird [1883] 1967:1). In fact, there was a considerable volume of trade contacts between the peninsula and the Straits Settlements (Wong 1960), and free movements of people as well, but these activities were probably beyond the ken of all but a few in the colonial administration. For the most part, the British imperial orbit, politically and socially, was confined to the Straits Settlements.

The situation changed, in almost revolutionary fashion, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth. Pushed by the prospects of enormous economic gain, the colonial administration, using chicanery, brute force, and bribery in measured portions, took effective control of the entire peninsula in the years following 1874 (Cowan 1961; Parkinson 1960; Swettenham [1906] 1955). A major consequence was a much more intensive involvement of colonial officials with Asian peoples. The political and economic world of the Malay peninsula was transformed. The Malay peasantry was left to fend for itself and the Malay aristocracy was pensioned off, while the British assumed almost all significant administrative positions. Chinese and Indian labor were imported in huge quantities to work in the greatly expanded export sectors of mining and plantation agriculture. Initially, Chinese entrepreneurs from the Straits Settlements fostered the development of the economy, but gradually European interests, with the assistance of the colonial government, came to dominate the economic landscape. After the pioneering work of

imperial intervention, the European community, both in the government and private sectors, settled in and began to live as a very wealthy governing class (Butcher 1979b). As the British community grew in numbers and the presence of European women became more common, there was less and less social intercourse between Europeans and Asians. Asians were employees and servants of Europeans, but rarely friends (Stockwell 1982). Colonial rule really ended with the Japanese occupation during World War II, although the British did return for twelve shaky years of rule beginning in 1945. But colonial society was not to be revived, because the forces of nationalism and the changed international environment brought about a peaceful transition to independence in 1957.

What was it about the conceptions of ethnicity or racial ideology of this era that is reflected in the census classifications from 1871 onward? First, the social distinctions recorded in official government inquiries were the product of a high-ranking administrative elite. Census administrators probably sought advice from their superiors and colleagues in government service, but when clear direction was not available, they followed their own instincts—that is, the attitudes of their own social and economic class.

At first glance, there does not appear to be any particular rationale behind the collection of ethnic categories in the earliest censuses of the Straits Settlements. The inclusion of certain groups and the exclusion of others may have been a product of the general ignorance of Asian peoples on the part of the European administrators of the times. There were several published "scholarly" treatises on the peoples and "races" of Southeast Asia (Crawfurd 1820; Wallace 1983, first published in 1869), but there is nothing to suggest external influence on the construction of the census classifications. Except for the priority of European peoples, there was no conceptual order. It was not until the 1891 Straits Settlements census that we see the major organizing principle of subsequent censuses—the use of "Malay," "Chinese," and "Indian" as major categories. I contend that this formulation and other attributes of the census classifications were not the inevitable solution to a complex ethnographic maze but rather a particular construction of European taste. My interpretation is based on a close examination of the patterns and anomalies in some of the ethnic classifications. This examination of census categories is linked to changes in Europeans' racial beliefs and their imperial role.

Although there is a broad kinship among Malay-speaking Muslims of the peninsula, Sumatra, and Borneo, the Malay census classification of 1891 and later was cast much more broadly. Not only were non-Malay language groups such as the Bugis and the Javanese included, but so were non-Muslim groups such as the Aborigines, the Dyaks, and the "Manilamen." Other Muslim groups such as the Arabs were put under "Other Nationalities," along with non-Muslim Southeast Asians such as the Siamese and the Annamese. I suspect that the growing tide of Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian immigrants to the Straits Settlements and the peninsula in the last decades of the nineteenth century heightened European awareness of the immense, almost bewildering variations among Asian peoples. These differences were evident in language, culture, and religion—the most obvious criteria and the most likely barriers to social intercourse. But to the European community, another principle gave conceptual order to the complex mosaic of Asian peoples—the idea of "race."

Recall that the initial label of "nationality" used by census administrators was replaced by "race" around the turn of the twentieth century. Race was not a new word at the time; it was a term widely used by writers to describe different peoples, including those in Southeast Asia (Cameron 1965, originally published 1865; Craw-

furd 1820). But the meaning of the term began to change in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Banton 1983:chap. 3). The traditional meaning of race was probably similar to that of nationality—a group sharing a common ancestry, perhaps with some differences in physical appearance and culture.[6] What was different in the late nineteenth century was the popularization of a "scientific" theory of racial differences—racism or "social Darwinism" (Gould 1981; Jones 1980:chap. 8; Stepan 1982).

The new theory of race was founded on the idea that peoples were different not only in appearance and culture but also in inherent capacities or potential. According to this perspective, societal differences in technological advancement were measures in the evolutionary march toward civilization. As the home of this theory, European civilization was considered to be the most advanced, and all other races were thought to be behind. Some groups might eventually make it up the ladder of progress, but other peoples were destined to remain "primitive." The Darwinian theory of the natural selection of the species was universally applied to the races of mankind (Harris 1968). The idea of the innate superiority of one's own group was, of course, not entirely new. Social Darwinism, however, took ethnocentrism as its base and elevated natural superiority to a much grander vision. Not only did social Darwinism have the legitimacy of science (or pseudoscience), but it also coincided with an era of world dominance by northwestern European states. Racism provided a rationale for the "white man's burden" of leading, ruling, or conquering peoples at "lower evolutionary stages" throughout the world. This ideology fitted well with the British need to justify its empire (Curtin 1960; Hirschman 1986; Horsman 1976; Huttenback 1976:13–25; Rich 1986).

The influence of European ideology on the concepts and categories of population censuses—particularly in the colonial era—was not unique to Malaya. Although I have not made an intensive study, a brief look at the censuses of India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals a similar preoccupation with race, particularly in regard to caste classification (India, Census Commissioner 1893:chap. 5; Risley and Gait 1903:chap. 11). The important point is that modern racism is not a prehistorical residue; it was a "new" theory that accompanied the rise of European technological superiority and expansion.

From this perspective, the universal colonial practice (except in the 1911 Straits Settlements census) of putting Europeans at the top of the list in the census listing, with an exhaustive subclassification, can be more clearly understood. It was a marker of the status differential between the ruling whites and subordinate Asians that had to be observed in all realms—from participation in social clubs to the presentation of demographic statistics. It is not surprising that the transition to political independence after World War II was the period in which the European position in the

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[6] The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) published in 1933 gives the following as one of the definitions of race: "The fact or condition of belonging to a particular people or ethnical stock; the qualities, etc. resulting from this." This definition is illustrated with a quotation from *The Spectator* of January 25, 1890: "They are separated by language, by degree of civilization, and by the indefinable aggregate of inherent differences which we call 'race' " (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1933, 8:87). The growing divergence of the meaning of "race" from "nationality" is illustrated with the *OED* definition of the word "nation": "An exten- sive aggregate of persons so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a political state and occupying a definite territory. In early examples, the racial idea is usually stronger than the political, in recent use, the notion of political unity and independence is more prominent" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1933, 7:30). In the 1982 supplement to the *OED*, the author observes that "there is no generally accepted classification or terminology" for race (Burchfield 1982, 3:997).

census classification was moved to a lower level and was finally assigned a simple subcategory under "Others." The statistical hierarchy of "races" recorded the shift in political power.

The European idea of race is evident in other aspects of the census classifications. As we saw earlier, the author of the 1931 census report noted that Asians thought religion more important than race. Yet it was only during the colonial era that Jews were listed as a subcategory under the racial classification. Anti-Semitism and the image of Jews as a race were well established among the middle and upper classes of Victorian England. Jews and Armenians were listed just below Europeans in the "unorganized" ethnic classifications of 1871 and 1881. When the classification was reorganized in 1891, however, Jews and Armenians were placed under "Others," near the bottom of the list.

Another noteworthy change was the loss of the "Straits-Born" subcategory under the Chinese classification. There was an immense gap between the social worlds of the acculturated, long-settled Chinese communities of Singapore, Malacca, and Penang (the Straits Settlements) and the wave of Chinese immigrants pouring into Malaya in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Was this significant social distinction deleted because it could not be classified as a racial category?

The shift from "nationality" to "race" also coincided with changes in the political economy and social world around the turn of the twentieth century. John Butcher (1979a) notes that the relaxed social relations in Kuala Lumpur between wealthy Chinese and British administrators in the later years of the nineteenth century began to tighten in the early years of the twentieth. At first, the complete dependence of the British administration on taxes derived from Chinese economic activities created a status equality of sorts. As Europeans began to assert economic as well as political dominance, they could afford the luxury of cultural snobbery and social exclusion. European feelings of superiority and prejudice did not originate at this time; rather, there was a change in the environment that allowed for the legitimation of these attitudes and the opportunity to institutionalize them.

It is difficult to find unequivocal evidence of changing colonial attitudes toward Malays during the period of the shift from "nationalities" to "races" in the census. The "myth of the lazy native" (Hussein Alatas 1977) did not begin in the late nineteenth century; it had been around since the eighteenth. But as Hussein Alatas notes (1977:116–17), the image of the Malays became more negative as British intervention increased. By the 1930s, Rupert Emerson observed, there was a "common European and Chinese complaint that the Malays are a lazy and shiftless people who are wantonly refusing to accept the benefits which are offered to them" ([1937] 1964:18; Emerson notes that this statement is a libel). I do not believe that this sort of attitude was the orthodox view in the mid-nineteenth century. Although John Cameron, writing in 1865, acknowledged the Malays' lack of industriousness, he added that they were a "noble race" and likened them to the English (Cameron [1865] 1965:8–9). Sir Frank Swettenham's journals describing his travels in the Malay states from 1874 to 1876 contain many comments critical of individual Malays (some of whom were plotting to kill him) but no broad claims about their abilities or potential (Burns and Cowan 1975). Swettenham's published books, written two or three decades later when British rule was unquestioned, are full of characterizations of Malay laziness and disinclination to work (Swettenham [1906] 1955:136–37, 1900:37–38). To be fair to Swettenham, however, it should be noted that he always gave an environmental or sociological explanation, never a genetic explanation, for his observations about the Malay preference for leisure.

John G. Butcher (1971), in his analysis of the writings of British colonial officials, contrasts their frequent expressions of admiration for Malay character with the British descriptions of Malays as lazy, indolent, and reluctant to change their way of life. Butcher agrees with J. de V. Allen (1964) that the British admired the Malays, especially the Malay aristocracy, because the British saw a reflection of their own values—those of British gentlemen—in Malay courtesy, respect for authority, and scorn of manual labor (Butcher 1971:43–48).

I suggest that British attitudes toward the Malay community changed during the late nineteenth century in the direction of a more unquestioned belief in the weaknesses of the Malay character and the need for a strong paternalistic role for the colonial government. The problem was no longer the resistance of Malay rulers to British intervention but the British need for a justification for imperialism. Paternalism, the protection and guidance of the Malays, was the ideological justification for most of the colonial era. The decline of intimate personal contact with Malays left most Europeans dependent on other Europeans for their understanding of Malay character. As Butcher (1971:75) observes: "By World War I the view of Malay society had become so standardized that Residents [British administrators] may have found it difficult to imagine a Malay society that did not conform to their own image of it."

Broader social and political influences on census classifications did not end with colonial rule. The 1957 census, taken on the eve of Independence, was the first to compress all the various non-Peninsular peoples of the archipelago under one subheading of the Malaysian category: "Indonesian." This practice was continued in 1970 and 1980. To be sure, there had been considerable assimilation of Indonesians in Malaysia through marriage and adoption of Malay identity, and it was increasingly difficult to measure a distinct Javanese or Boyanese population. However, the change in the census classifications coincided with the imperative of forming a self-conscious Malay community to participate effectively in the postcolonial political system.

The links between broader social currents and census classifications are rather nebulous. Not only do we not have records of the reasons for the formulation of ethnic classifications by census administrators, but the actors themselves may not have been conscious of the factors involved. Nonetheless, I conclude that changes in racial ideology had clear effects on ethnic classifications in censuses. Given the limitations of other forms of historical records (ideas that seem self-evident are rarely the subject of bureaucratic record keeping), the census classifications provide important evidence on the development of European racism in colonial Malaya. Although many of the outward forms of racist thinking have been eliminated from census classification in the post-Independence era, the residue of racial ideology continues to haunt contemporary Malaysia.

Appendix A. Ethnic Classifications in the Censuses of the Straits
Settlements and the Federated Malay States, 1871–1911

1871	1881	1891
Straits Settlements	Straits Settlements	Straits Settlements
Europeans and Americans (18 subcategories)	Europeans and Americans (19 subcategories, also divided by Resident, Floating, and Prisoners)	I. Europeans and Americans (19 subcategories)
Armenians		II. Eurasians
Jews	British Military	III. Chinese
Eurasians	Armenians	Cantonese
Abyssinians	Jews	Hokkiens
Achinese	Eurasians	Hylams
Africans	Chinese	Khehs
Andamanese	Hokkiens	Straits-born
Arabs	Hylams	Teo-Chews
Bengalees & other Natives of India not particularized	Kehs	IV. Malays & other Natives of the Archipelago
Boyanese	Macaos	Aborigines
Bugis	Straits-Born	Achinese
Burmese	Teochews	Boyanese
Chinese	Tribe not stated	Bugis
Cochin-Chinese	Aborigines of the Peninsula	Dyaks
Dyaks	Achinese	Javanese
Hindoos	Africans	Jawi Pekans
Japanese	Anamese	Malays
Javanese	Arabs	Manilamen
Jaweepekans	Bengalis & other Natives of India not particularized	V. Tamils & other Natives of India
Klings		Bengalis
Malays	Boyanese	Burmese
Manilamen	Bugis	Parsees
Mantras	Burmese	Tamils
Parsees	Dyaks	VI. Other Nationalities
Persians	Japanese	Africans
Siamese	Javanese	Anamese
Singhalese	Jawi Pekan	Arabs
	Malays	Armenians
	Manilamen	Egyptians
	Parsees	Japanese
	Persians	Jews
	Siamese	Persians
	Singhalese	Siamese
	Tamils	Sinhalese

1901	
Straits Settlements	Federated Malay States
I. Europeans and Americans (23 subcategories)	I. Europeans and Americans (17 subcategories)
II. Eurasians	II. Eurasians
III. Chinese	III. Chinese
Cantonese	Cantonese
Hokkien	Hokkiens
Hailam	Hailams
Kheh	Khehs
Straits-born	Straits-born
Teo-Chew	Teo-Chius
Hok Chiu	Kwong Hai
Tribe Not Stated	Other
IV. Malays & other Natives of the Archipelago	IV. Malays & other Natives of the Archipelago
Aborigines	Aborigines
Achinese	Achinese
Boyanese	Boyanese
Bugis	Bugis
Javanese	Dyaks
Jawi-Pekan	Javanese
Malays	Jawi-Pekan
Manilamen	Malays
Sam Sam (Malay-Siamese)	Manilamen
V. Tamils & other Natives of India	V. Tamils & other Natives of India
Bengalis	Bengalis, etc.
Burmese	Burmese
Parsees	Not particularized
Tamils	Tamils
VI. Other Nationalities	VI. Other Races
Africans	Africans
Annamese	Annamese
Arabs	Arabs
Armenians	Armenians
Japanese	Egyptians
Jews	Japanese
Persians	Jews
Siamese	Persians
Sinhalese	Siamese
Not Stated	Singhalese

1911
Straits Settlements

Aboriginees of the Peninsula

Afghan

African (unspec.)

Annamese

Arab

Armenian

Burmese

Chinese, China-born

Chinese, Straits-born

Egyptian

Eurasian

European & Allied Races—American
    (31 subcategories)

Fiji Islanders

Indians, Indian-born

Indians, Straits-born

Indians, Born Elsewhere

Japanese

Jews

Kanakas

Malays & Allied Races

  Achehnese

  Amboinese

  Balinese

  Bandong

  Bahjarese

  Bantamese

  Batak

  Borneo Races, misc.

  Boyanese

  Bugis

  Bundu

  Dayak

  Dusun

  Javanese

  Jawi Pekan

  Kadayan

  Korinchi

  Malay

  Rawanese

  Sulu

  Sundanese

  Totong

Mauritian

Persian

Philippino

Siamese

Singhalese

Soundanese

Syrian

Turk (Asiatic)

1911
Federated Malay States

European Pop. by Race (17 subcategories)	"Other" Pop. by Race
Eurasians	Africans
Malay Pop. by Race	Annamese
Malay	Arabs
Javanese	Armenians
Sakai	Filipinos
Banjarese	Japanese
Boyanese	Jews
Mendeling	Siamese
Krinchi	Singhalese
Jambi	Unspecified
Achinese	
Bugis	
Others	
Chinese Pop. by Tribe	
Cantonese	
Kheh	
Tie Chiu Kheh	
Hokkien	
Hiu Hua	
Hok Chiu	
Tie Chiu	
Hailam	
Kwong Sai	
Other Tribes	
Indian Pop. by Race	
Tamil	
Telugu	
Punjabi	
Bengali	
Malayali	
Hindustani	
Afghan	
Gujerati	
Maharatta	
Burmese	
Other Indians	

SOURCES: McNair, Waller, and Knight 1872:6, 11; Straits Settlements 1881:3–6; Merewether 1892:36–38; Innes 1901:14–16; Hare 1902:17, 56; Marriott 1911:79–84; Pountney 1911:118–24.

Appendix B. Ethnic Classifications in the Census of British Malay,
Malaya, and Malaysia, 1921–1980

1921	
The European Pop. by Race (20 subcategories)	The "Other" Pop. by Race
Eurasians	Annamese
The Malay Pop. by Race	Arabs
Malays	Armenians
Javanese	Filipinos
Banjarese	Japanese
Boyanese	Jews
Bugis	Negros
Achinese	Persians
Korinchi	Siamese
Mendeling	Sinhalese
Bornean Races	Turks (Asiatic)
Sakai	Not Returned
Other Races	
The Chinese Pop. by Tribe	
Hokkien	
Cantonese	
Tie Chiu	
Hailam	
Kheh	
Hok Chiu	
Hok Chia	
Hin Hua	
Kwongsai	
Northern Provinces	
Others and Not Returned	
The Indian Pop. by Race	
Tamil	
Telugu	
Malayali	
Punjabi	
Bengali	
Hindustani	
Pathan	
Gujerati	
Maharatta	
Burmese	
Gurkha	
Other and Indians Unspecified	

1931

Europeans by Race (24 subcategories)   Others by Race
Eurasians   Annamese
Malaysians by Race   Arab
  Malays   Armenian
  Javanese   Ceylon Peoples
  Boyanese   Filipino
  Achinese   Japanese
  Batak   Jews
  Menangkabau   Negro
  Korinchi   Persian
  Jambi   Siamese
  Palembang   Others
  Other Sumatra
  Riau Lingga
  Banjarese
  Other Dutch Borneo
  Bugis
  Other N.E.I.
  Dayak
  Sakai
  Others
Chinese by Tribe
  Hokkien
  Tiu Chiu
  Hakka (Kheh)
  Hok Chhia
  Cantonese
  Hailam
  Hok Chiu
  Kwongsai
  Other and Indeterminate
Indians by Race
  Tamils
  Telegu
  Malayalam
  Punjabi, etc.
  United Provinces
  Burmese
  Bengal, etc.
  Bombay, etc.
  Bihar & Orissa
  Nepal
  Other and Unidentified

1947

Malaysians by Specific Community
  Malays (Indigenous Malaysians)
    Malays Proper
    Aborigines
      Biduanda, Mantera, and other
      Jakun
      Negrito
      Other and unidentifiable
        aboriginal stocks
  Other Malaysians
    Sundanese
    Javanese
    Boyanese
    Achinese
    Menangkabau
    Korinchi
    Jambi
    Palembangan
    Other unspecified or
      indeterminate Sumatra peoples
    Riau Lingga Malays
    Banjarese
    Dyak
    Other unspecified or
      indeterminate Borneo peoples
    Bugis
    Other unspecified or
      indeterminate "Indonesians"
      peoples
Chinese by Tribe
  Hokkien
  Tiechiu
  Kheh (Hakka)
  Cantonese
  Hainanese (Hailan)
  Hokchia
  Hokchiu
  Kwongsai
  Henghwa
  Other unspecified or indeterminate
    Chinese peoples

Indians by Specific Community
  Tamil
  Telugu
  Malayali
  Other unspecified or indeterminate
    South Indian peoples
  Sikh
  Bengali
  Gujerati
  Maharatti
  Marwari
  Pathan
  Punjabi
  Rajput
  Sindhi
  Other unspecified or indeterminate
    Indian peoples
Europeans & Other "White"
    Communities (17 subcategories)
Eurasians
Other Communities
  Ceylon Tamil
  Sinhalese
  Other unspecified or indeterminate
    Ceylon peoples
  Arab
  Siamese
  Burmese
  Annamese
  Armenian
  Filipino
  Japanese
  Jew
  Nepalese
  Other or indeterminate communities
    not elsewhere specified
  Not specified

1957	1970	1980
Malaysians	Malay	Malay
Malays	Malay	Malay
Indonesian	Indonesian	Indonesian
All Aborigines	Negrito	Negrito
Negrito	Jakun	Jakun
Semai	Semai	Semai
Semelai	Semelai	Semelai
Temiar	Temiar	Temiar
Jakun	Other Orang Asli	Other Indigenous
Other Aborigines	Other Malay	Other Malay race
Chinese	Community	Chinese
Hokkien	Chinese	Hokkien
Tiechiu	Hokkien	Cantonese
Khek (Hakka)	Cantonese	Khek (Hakka)
Cantonese	Khek (Hakka)	Teochew
Hainanese	Teochew	Hainanese
Hokchia	Hainanese	Kwongsai
Hokchiu	Kwongsai	Hokchiu
Kwongsai	Hokchiu	Hokchia
Henghwa	Henghua	Henghwa
Other Chinese	Hokchia	Other Chinese
Indians	Other Chinese	Indian
Indian Tamil	Indian	Indian Tamil
Telegu	Indian Tamil	Malayali
Malayali	Telegu	Telegu
Other Indian	Malayali	Sikh
Others	Punjabi	Other Punjabi
Eurasian	Other Indian	Other Indian
Ceylon Tamil	Pakistani	Pakistani
Other Ceylonese	Ceylon Tamil	Bangladeshi
Pakistani	Other Ceylonese	Sri Lankan Tamil
Thai (Siamese)	Other	Other Sri Lankan
Other Asian	Thai	Other
British	Other Asian	Thai
Other European	European	Vietnamese
Others (not European	Eurasian	Other Asian
or Asian)	Other	Eurasian
		European
		Others

SOURCES: Nathan 1922:176, 179, 186, 190, 194; Vlieland 1932:122, 165–68, 180, 192, 200; Del Tufo 1949:174–75, 286–303; Fell 1960:56; Department of Statistics 1977, 1:292; 2:110–11; Department of Statistics 1983, 1:156.

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