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PERSISTENCE AMID TRANSITION:
THE VIEWS OF MALAY STUDENTS IN AMERICA
ON ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE
IN THE CONTEXT OF MALAY HISTORY AND CULTURE

by

Phil Matanick

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty

The E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Doctor of Missiology Degree

Asbury Theological Seminary

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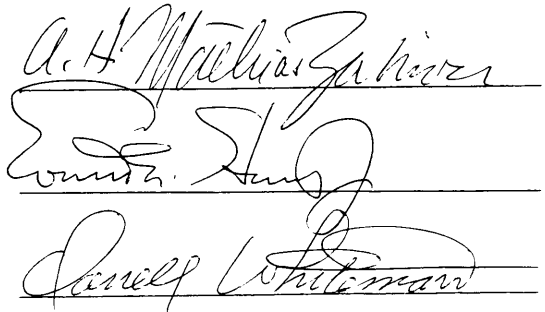
DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation, entitled
**PERSISTENCE AMID TRANSITION:
THE VIEWS OF MALAY STUDENTS IN AMERICA
ON ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE
IN THE CONTEXT OF MALAY HISTORY AND CULTURE**

written by
Philip Matanick

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Missiology

has been read and approved by the undersigned members of the
Faculty of the E.Stanley Jones School of World Mission and
Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary


The block contains three handwritten signatures, each written on a horizontal line. The first signature is 'A. H. Matthias Zacher', the second is 'E. J. Jones', and the third is 'Dorely Whitman'.

Date: May 1995

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ABSTRACT

Persistence amid Transition:

The Views of Malay Students in America
on Ethnic Identity and Religious Change
in the Context of Malay History and Culture

Philip Matanick

The Malay people of Malaysia have had a Christian witness for centuries, and yet remain resistant to Christian evangelization efforts. This study seeks to understand why this is so, by presenting a profile of the Malays. The thesis is that the Malays have been historically, culturally, and religiously conditioned to be resistant to Christian overtures. This is defended through three prongs: historical investigation, religious-cultural analysis, and an empirical study of modern Malay university students in the United States.

The first prong, that of the historical investigation, demonstrates that the successive colonization of Malaya by Western nations that identified themselves as Christian, coupled with the Christian missions' close association with the colonial administrations, their implication in policies seen by the Malays as detrimental to the Malays, and their neglect of the Malay people have led to a Malay antagonism against and fierce

resistance to Christianity.

The second prong, the religio-cultural study, analyses the relationship between Malay ethnic identity and normative Islam. A strong attachment to Islam coalesces with an exclusivistic Malay ethnic identity to make the Malays see Christianity as foreign to who they are as a people. The fact that Malays get their personal identity from the group militates against individual Malays breaking the social and religious barrier to considering Christianity as a viable option.

The third prong of the study entails the findings of interviews of Malay university students in the United States. The information adds to the preceding by giving a firsthand account of what Malays believe about Islam and how they practice it. It also shows their understanding of Islam's relation to the state, and their view of their Malay identity in relation to Islam and other religions, especially Christianity.

The interviews also test whether Malay international students display the openness to religious innovation that is typical of many internationals, and whether their exposure to American culture over time causes them to change their views on Christianity. We discover that the Malays in the United States retreat into a Malay ethnic enclave mentality that prohibits free inquiry and causes them to maintain their allegiance to Islam.

In some cases, moreover, the relative lack of external, societal pressure to conform to Islam leads them to internalize their faith, and thus become more personally committed to Islam.

The study concludes by noting that the rapidly changing Malay society is shattering traditional lifestyles and strong kinship ties, potentially weakening the societal barriers to receptivity to Christianity. In addition, we conclude that Malays overall have never been the object of concerted and thoughtful evangelization efforts, and that Malays do respond favorably to Christian gestures of kindness. Finally, a massive prayer movement is mobilizing to effect the evangelization of Malays. Knowledgeable, selfless, cross-ethnic and cross-cultural witnesses, empowered by God, are needed to bring a clear picture of Jesus Christ to the Malays.

Advisor: Dr. A.H. Mathias Zahniser

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INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

"The biggest sin is to convert from Islam to another religion. If you convert you are no longer Malay."

--A female Malay University of Kentucky
senior, September, 1992

Stunned, Jim hung up the phone. Observing her husband's crestfallen countenance, Meg hurriedly responded with "What is it? What's the matter?" Jim, still dumbfounded from his recent conversation, eventually managed a lifeless "It's Ismail¹ . . . He no longer wants to be a Christian."

"What do you mean?" Meg shot back incredulously. "Ismail's been so faithful, so committed. I don't understand." Jim then carefully related his painful conversation with Ismail, their long-time friend.

Ismail is a Malay young man who came to the United States to earn a degree in computer science from a large midwestern university, at which there were nearly one hundred other Malays. In one of his classes during his first semester he had met Jim Lapham, an American computer programmer who was going back to school for a masters degree.

Jim befriended Ismail and in time invited him to go on a family outing at a state park. Ismail was hesitant, but their mutual interest in computers led him to accept. Besides, Ismail didn't want to offend Jim, especially since Jim had helped Ismail with a major assignment.

The Laphams' unpretentious kindness proved disarming. On

¹All Malay student names are pseudonymous.

another occasion, Ismail joined the Laphams for dinner, and eventually became a regular visitor in their home.

Ismail's friends cautioned him against his increasing involvement with Christians.² Being a loner by nature, Ismail never completely fit in with his fellow Malays. Perhaps it was the fact that he was not particularly sociable within his own culture that gave him the freedom to step beyond the confines of his group.

At any rate, Ismail was immediately struck by the moral character of his American friends. Furthermore, they prayed often and naturally, and spoke of God in personal terms.

The Laphams were not pushy. In fact, it was Ismail who suggested that he would like to attend church with them. To the Laphams, Ismail's immediate positive response was as heartening as it was surprising. He felt drawn by the loving warmth of the people, and, above all, loved the music.

In a matter of weeks, after lengthy discussions with Jim, Ismail prayed to accept Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice for his sin, thus becoming a Christian. It was then that trouble hit. Ismail's Malay companions, long suspicious of his involvement with the Lapham family, had begun to monitor his activities. When they discovered a pattern of Sunday morning outings, they confronted Ismail, demanding an explanation. Scared, Ismail denied any connection with the church, insisting

²The Laphams are, in fact, committed Christians. Yet, to the undiscerning Malay student, all Americans who don't expressly identify themselves with another religion are Christians.

that he had been merely going for long walks. When the truth was confirmed that Ismail had indeed been attending church, he vehemently denied having become a Christian, stating instead that he was going to learn, so that he could better understand Christianity in order to counter it more effectively.

Ismail's compatriots didn't buy his story. An *imam* was called in to reason with him. When this didn't work, Ismail was threatened with physical and spiritual harm if he ever again met with the Laphams or went to church.

Fearing for his safety, Ismail moved in with the Laphams. He went to the university only when escorted by a church member. For the next several weeks, he immersed himself in church life, attending whenever possible, and methodically working through a Bible study course.

Ismail's testimony to experiencing God in an intimacy unknown in Islam, and his commitment to Bible study, were thrilling to Jim and Meg, who prayed with and for him daily. Moreover, the Laphams felt that their friendship with Ismail had matured to the point of mutual trust, openness, and honesty.

Then the incomprehensible happened. Jim and Meg came home from work one day to find Ismail and all of his possessions gone. He had moved out without saying a word. None of the Malays would respond to Jim's inquiries. Furthermore, Ismail was nowhere to be seen on campus. Two weeks went by without a trace. It was as if Ismail had vanished.

Then came the phone call. On hearing Ismail's voice, Jim was both relieved and apprehensive. Ismail sheepishly apologized

for his leaving unannounced, and then related that he had wanted to call, but was only now completely alone so that they could have this forbidden conversation.

In short, Ismail stated that he could no longer be a Christian. As a Malay, he was born to be a Muslim. He couldn't betray his family and his people. Also, he could no longer stand the isolation. Even Ismail, loner that he was, couldn't withstand the social ostracism. Besides, he couldn't face the likelihood that his scholarship would be rescinded and he would be sent back to Malaysia in shame. The cost was too great.

Breathing a hasty prayer that he'd say the right thing in what could well be his last conversation with his friend, Jim urged Ismail to consider the eternal perspective. He reminded Ismail of the reality of his experience with Christ, and the fact that he had witnessed the power of prayer in Jesus' name and had experienced Christian love. Ismail conceded the above, but countered that it was not right for him to be a Christian. He thanked Jim for his kindness, and concluded with regrets that they could never meet again. Stunned, Jim hung up the phone.

Ismail was one of over 400,000 international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States. Studies of such students reveal that most report a desire for American friendships (Altbach and Wang 1989:150). The findings suggest that contact with Americans helps international students become more flexible in their thinking and more open to innovation (Kelman 1962:270, Niyekewa-Howard 1970:72, Sharma and Jung 1985:38, and Hamid 1979:270). Moreover, through a

generalization of affect, students with a positive view of Americans reported favorable attitudes toward American religious practices, whether or not they had any direct exposure to them (Salter and Teger 1975:221).

While they generally desire American friendships, many internationals find it difficult, though, to befriend Americans (Meloni 1986:4), or to gain acceptance by them, resulting in the formation of ethnic enclaves for mutual support (Spaulding and Flack 1976:75).

Regarding change in religious perspective of international students, basic cultural and religious values prove the most resistant to change (Spaulding and Flack 1976:35). Still, international students typically experience some relaxation of religious commitment while in the United States (Kedem and Bar-Lev 1983:387, Coelho 1972:74). Furthermore, many develop a greater tolerance for religious traditions other than their own (Salter and Teger 1975:218, Hull 1978:143). Religious innovation is most likely in students who are isolated from their co-religionist friends (Lofland and Stark 1965:872). In addition, Matheny (1981:5-6) observed that Muslims (as are all people) in times of transition are far more receptive to religious innovation than are those not in a state of transition.

Muslim students in the U.S., in contrast, through exposure to an array of orthodox Muslims and Muslim student organizations, more often than not develop an enhanced religious identity (Haddad and Lummis 1987:22, Poston 1991:126). Focusing on Malay students specifically, Von der Mehden (1987:185) states that

Malay students in the United States frequently become more committed to Islam.

With this in mind, do Malay students fit the description of the typical international student? Do they seek American friendships? Do they become more tolerant of other religious perspectives and more inclined to religious experimentation? Conversely, do Malays fall into the category of those Muslim students whose overseas sojourn leads to a greater commitment to Islam? Do Malay students in the United States experience the general international student phenomenon of a loosening of the reigns of tradition, or do they pull more tightly inward into a more rigorous and entrenched Islam? Was Ismail's openness to Christianity typical of many Malay international students, or was his ultimate refusal to break with Islam indicative of a persistence of Malay ethnic and religious identity that is stronger than the pull toward innovation commonly experienced by international students?

My interest in these questions is more than academic. For the past nine years I have taught English as a second language to international students. Four of those years were in Malaysia, where I taught Malay Muslims, and where my family and I lived with and befriended Malay neighbors.

Malaysia itself has a strong church, but the Malays themselves remain unevangelized. In fact, informed sources indicate that among the 22 million Malays worldwide there is no visible Malay church. Isolated individual converts either revert back to Islam or assimilate into Western-style, English speaking

churches, completely out of touch with their families and former Malay communities.

Christianization of the Malays has been attempted since the 16th century, and Christian contact with the Malay peoples almost certainly dates back to several centuries earlier.³ As a matter of fact, Malay was one of the first non-European languages to have the Christian Bible.⁴ How then do we account for the fact that we have so little to show for all of this?

Definition of Key Terms

Before we go any further, we need to distinguish between the following important terms:

Malay - This is a term for a particular people group of which

there are an estimated 22 million worldwide. The dominant group in Malaysia, they also comprise substantial percentages of the populations of Indonesia, southern Thailand, and Singapore.

In 2500 B.C. Malays began migrating to what is now Malaysia. Though Malays are not the original inhabitants of the area, the Malaysian government considers them, along with the aborigines, to be *bumiputera* (children of the soil), connoting a close attachment with the land and indigeneity. Since their early arrival, they have always been the predominant people group of the region, and prior to the large-scale immigration of Chinese and Indians in the 19th century, they were the overwhelming majority of the

³Nestorian Christians from Persia made their way to the Straits of Melaka as early as the 7th century, and there may have been Christians among a trading community on the Malay Peninsula at that time (Roxborough 1989:4). Later, Catholic priests and diplomats traveled through the Straits of Melaka on their way to China (Dodsworth 1928:9). Also, Armenian Christian traders from what is now Turkey lived in Melaka during the Melaka Sultanate of the 15th century (Roxborough 1989:4).

⁴The first Malay Gospel, printed in 1629, is significant as the earliest example of translation and printing for evangelistic purposes of a portion of the Bible in a non-European language. The Malay New Testament was completed in 1668, and the entire Bible was translated into Malay in 1733 (Nida 1972:269).

population. The Malays are virtually all Muslims, while few of the other Malaysian peoples have adopted Islam. Malay also refers to the language spoken by the Malay people.

Malaya - The peninsula just south of Thailand as it was called prior to 1963 when it joined with Singapore and the territories of Sarawak and Sabah to become Malaysia. (Singapore withdrew in 1965 to become a separate country.)

Malayan - Of or pertaining to the territory of Malaya. It is also used as a generic adjective to describe the people who lived in Malaya, without distinguishing between the various ethnic groups, whether Malays, Chinese, Indians, or aboriginals.

Malaysia - The name of the country which includes the peninsula between Thailand and Singapore, and the large states of

Sabah (previously known as British North Borneo) and Sarawak on the northern part of the Island of Borneo. Sabah and Sarawak are commonly referred to as East Malaysia, in distinction from West Malaysia or peninsular Malaysia. What is now included in Malaysia was gradually taken over by the British between 1824 (when the Anglo-Dutch Treaty demarcated the boundaries between British and Dutch holdings) and 1914 (when the last remaining Malay state granted British sovereignty). Prior to its independence from England, the peninsula was known as Malaya. In 1957

the peninsula became an independent country within the British Commonwealth, known as the Federation of Malaya. With the 1963 incorporation of Singapore and the territories of Sarawak and British North Borneo (renamed Sabah), the whole became known as Malaysia. Singapore withdrew in 1965 to become a separate nation.

Singapore - An island of 225 square miles and approximately 2.8 million people just off the southern tip of peninsular Malaysia, to which it is connected by a causeway. In 1826 it joined with Penang and Melaka to form the Straits Settlements (Penang, Melaka, and Singapore are ports along the Straits of Melaka), which later became part of the whole colony of British Malaya. In 1955 Singapore became a self-governing territory within the British Commonwealth. It was part of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965. Singapore is now an independent country, a sort of Greek-style city-state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a profile of the

Malaysian Malays⁵ as an unreached people group, with special attention given to Malay university students in the United States. It is my hope that this information will result in more understanding and therefore more intelligent and thoughtful approaches to the Malays. My thesis is that the Malays have been historically, culturally, and religiously conditioned to be extremely resistant to gospel presentations. I attempt to defend this thesis through three prongs: historical investigation, religio-cultural analysis, and an empirical study of modern Malay university students in the United States.

The first prong, that of the historical investigation, lends authenticity to the problematic nature of Malay evangelism. The current thinking of Malays regarding Christianity has been shaped by centuries of interaction with Western Christian colonial domination and the presence of numerous Christian missions. It is unthinkable to discuss intelligently the question of Malay evangelism without a consideration of the enduring influence of the previous centuries of Muslim-Christian relations in Malaysia.

The historical study is an account of the history of the Christian influence on the Malays. Of special interest are policies and actions that have affected the Malays' views of Christianity. Numerous works exist on Christian mission in Malaysia, but none treat the subject of Christian influence on the Malays specifically as thoroughly as is accomplished here. The study also evaluates Christian mission efforts specifically

⁵Malaysia itself has 10 million Malays (Johnstone 1993:365).

regarding Malay evangelism, another area of rather limited research to date.

After a brief look at pre-Muslim influences in Malaya, I investigate the influence on Malays of the successive Portuguese, Dutch, and British occupations of Malaya. Emphasis is placed on the British occupation, as it was the only one not limited to coastal ports of entry, and with a large Western immigrant population. The historical study concludes with the advent of Malaysian Independence in 1957.

The British colonial study focuses first on the British themselves, and then on British policies, with a view toward Western/Christian-Malay relations. The historical investigation concludes with a look at the six major mission thrusts in Malaya that were established before the 20th century. These are the Roman Catholic Church (from 1511), the Anglican Church (from 1809), the London Missionary Society (from 1815), the Christian Brethren (from 1860), the Presbyterian Church (from 1881), and the Methodist Church (from 1885). The only other pre-20th century mission, the Basel Mission, is excluded because of its comparatively small size, and because it was confined to the Island of Borneo. Apart from the London Missionary Society, the six mission thrusts represent Christian denominations which remain among the largest and most influential in Malaysia. The Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, and the Anglican Church are the largest Christian organizations in Malaysia even today.

The mission studies are brief accounts, covering only those

individuals who engaged in evangelistic efforts among Malays, and any action by each particular mission or church that may have positively or adversely affected Christian-Malay relations.

As with the more comprehensive historical study, the study of Christian-Muslim relations does not include post-independence Malaysia. This places an admittedly large limitation on the analysis, for much has transpired in the Malaysian church in the nearly four decades since independence. It is simply beyond the scope of this project to delve into the ever-multiplying kinds of churches and sects in Malaysia. Moreover, the work of those currently interested in Malay evangelism and the position of Malay converts and would-be converts would be jeopardized by specific references.

My hypothesis for the historical study is that the successive colonization of Malaya by Western nations that identified themselves as Christian, coupled with the Christian missions' close association with the colonial administrations, their implication in policies seen by the Malays as detrimental to Malays, and their neglect of the Malay people have led to a Malay antagonism against and fierce resistance to Christianity. A note of hope for current evangelistic endeavors is that we will discover, I believe, that a caring, long-term Christian witness has never been demonstrated on behalf of the Malays. Malays have not so much rejected Christ as they have a negative Christian legacy.

The second prong of the investigation involves a religio-

cultural analysis of the Malays. This analysis overlaps the historical chapter in that it traces the development of Malay identity through time. The Malays have inhabited the Malay Peninsula for more than two millennia. Islam did not become a strong presence, though, until the 15th century. Centuries of Malay tradition evolved into a complex code of customary law, including an amalgamation of Hindu and primal religious practices. Orthodox Islam had much to contend with in its gradual and peaceful spread throughout the Peninsula. The tension between Malay ethnic identity and universal or normative Islam is a recurring theme among those who study the Malays. What is the basis for Malay identity? What is the relationship between Malay ethnic identity--the tightly controlled, close knit Malay society--and universal Islam--Malay adherence to the Islamic religion that goes beyond exclusivistic Malay concerns. Has Islam become so much a part of "Malayness" that Malay religion and culture are synonymous?

My hypothesis here is that a strong attachment to Islam coalesces with and reinforces an even stronger exclusivistic Malay ethnic identity to make Malays see Christianity as completely foreign to who they are as a people. I believe we find the Malays in a defensive posture, guarding their unique identity against numerous pressures to lose it, and employing Islam as a symbol of Malayness against a plurality of competing ethnic and religious groups. New possibilities for Christianity to gain a hearing are arising, though, in that rapid urbanization

and technological development are causing unprecedented social upheaval and a concomitant deterioration of traditional social ties, resulting in a hitherto unknown sense of anomie.

The third prong of the study entails the findings of an interview of Malay university students in the United States. The interview data corroborate and add to the findings of the foregoing chapters. The information provides a first-hand profile of what Malay students (and where possible through generalization, Malays as a whole) believe, how they practice Islam, their view of Islam's relation to the state, their view of their Malay identity in relation to Islam and other religions, especially Christianity. The interview data not only give a picture of Malay university students, but also add much to our understanding of where Malaysia and Malay Islam is headed. Thus, it helps us know what we will face in efforts to befriend and evangelize Malay international students, but it also adds clarity to the whole Malay Muslim landscape, enabling us to anticipate better the climate of Malay-Christian relations in Malaysia.

Malay international students are, admittedly, not representative of the whole of Malay society. Thus, we will need to proceed with caution when suggesting generalizations for all Malays from the interview data. Yet, unlike other Asians in the U.S., Malay international students are not an elitist group drawn from the upper echelons of the socioeconomic pool. The Malay students in the U.S. are Malaysian government scholarship students intentionally selected from all geographical regions and

economic levels of Malay society in order to raise the overall educational achievement of Malays relative to the other people groups in Malaysia. Those chosen for overseas education do have a higher than average secondary school academic record (to ensure they have a decent chance of academic success in the United States), but they are by no means all from well-to-do families or the shining stars of the Malaysian education system. Thus, they are, in fact, representative of a large cross-section of Malay society.

Where they are not representative is in their age group. As we will observe, Malay Islam is often divided along generational lines, with the younger generation being less committed to a primal religious worldview. On the other hand, the typically heightened receptivity of persons in times of transition and of international students in the United States make Malay international students a key subgroup to investigate from a missiological perspective. If it can be demonstrated that this population is more open to religious innovation, and yet remains resistant to Christian witness, it can reinforce the notion that Malays as a people are in fact resistant.

Yet, I believe we will discover that various religious and cultural factors will emerge that reveal that Malay internationals do not exhibit the openness to change that is common among international students as a whole. Therefore, we may need to be all the more tentative about assuming that gospel resistance in Malay internationals necessarily means at least the

same level of resistance at home. If it turns out that Malay international students are basically closed to religious innovation where their non-Malay co-international counterparts are open to change, an exploration of the reasons for this finding should reveal much about cultural and societal factors that shape the Malays. This, in turn, may provide insights as to how we may most effectively break down barriers to hearing and understanding the gospel message.

Moreover, Malay international students are a legitimate and important unreached people block in their own right. One reason for this is that they are disproportionately influential in Malaysia upon their return. With this in mind, the student interviews are also designed to note any changes that may occur in them during their two-year sojourn, and to see if their foreign stay influences their receptivity to the gospel. Consequently, we get a picture of who the students are and what they believe, but we also discover insights into how American Christians can make an impact on Malay students while they are in the United States.

My hypothesis concerning Malay students' sojourn in the U.S. is that due to previous Islamic indoctrination, continual Islamic surveillance, and an exceedingly powerful ethnic enclave mentality, Malay students overseas do not display the openness to religious innovation that is typical of international students in general. The hopeful element here is that gestures of hospitality from non-threatening American Christians can alter

the strongly negative Malay feelings about Christianity.

The three prongs will combine to paint a picture of where the Malays have been, and where they are today, and provide some insight into where they may be going in their receptivity to the Christian message. A descriptive account of Malays is valid missiologically only to the extent that the information will result in more understanding and therefore more intelligent and thoughtful approaches to the Malays. Thus, a concluding chapter summarizes the factors causing Malays to be unreached, as well as the present state of affairs of Malay Islam and ethnic identity, and gives suggestions for approaches that may be the most effective in presenting a loving witness to the Malays.

CHAPTER 1

Historical Conditioning, Part 1:

Pre-colonial Influences and the Colonials

"Europeans...contributed more than their share
to arousing tensions by their own actions"
--John Butcher

Historical and Cultural Conditioning

Recently, I took a trip to Bybee Pottery outside of Richmond, Kentucky. The potter took portions of clay from the same lump and made objects as different as sturdy coffee mugs and delicate flower vases. The flower vases and coffee mugs each came from the same material and were fired in the same kiln; the difference was in how the potter had shaped them - applying pressure here, constricting there, expanding or pinching at some other points. At the early stages the clay was pliable, the form as yet undetermined and susceptible to any number of influences. As the potter worked, his hands gradually shaped the clay until it assumed a distinct form. In the case I watched, it was a bowl. Eventually the bowl was baked so that its shape became permanently fixed. The particular lump of clay I observed was made by the forces acting on it to become a bowl. Likewise, the coffee mugs were what they were because of a different set of forces at different points.

To understand a people, it is essential to know what forces have operated on them to shape them to become what they are

today.⁶ Hardened through the fires of time, they cannot easily escape the force of those influences. Thus we begin our trek through time⁷ to explore what has shaped or scripted⁸ the Malays to reject Christianity.

Ancient History

On August 31st, 1994, Malaysia celebrated just 37 years of nationhood. Young, urbanizing and industrializing - Malaysia is certainly this. But peel away the layer of modernity, and the kaleidoscope of Malaysia's history unfolds with a cast of Malays, Arabs, Indians, Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, Ibans, English and others. The legacy of the land abounds with ancient temples, Portuguese fortresses, mosques, shrines, churches, native blowpipes, Malay krisses, and British colonial buildings. It all began unknown millennia ago.

Negrito aborigines inhabited the land as hunters and gatherers. Around 2,500 B.C., the Proto-Malays spreading south

⁶See Appendix A for a discussion of the literature pertaining to the history and culture of the Malays and their Southeast Asian context, particularly related to the colonial period, and including Christian-Malay relations.

⁷It is not my intention to write a history of the Malays. Rather, I want to highlight the events that have affected Christian-Malay relations and to evaluate Christian missions to the Malays. At times a bare-bones sketch of events will suffice to give the reader a historical context.

⁸I am indebted to Steve Clarke (1992:1) for introducing me to the concept of a social script. As a society undergoes its developmental stages, the shared feelings and responses of a people form a social script which becomes a lasting and indelible influence upon the national character and outlook. Furthermore, the shared feelings and responses "are consequently re-enacted by subsequent generations."

from China made their way to the Malay Peninsula and the islands beyond. Their stone implements were more sophisticated than those of the Negritos. Being cultivators and sailors, they lived a more settled life and eventually forced the Negritos into the hills and jungles.

Around 300 B.C., a new wave of immigrants in turn pushed the Proto-Malays inland. They were the Deutero-Malays, who had learned to use iron weapons and tools. The Deutero-Malays and the people from Java, Sumatra and other parts of Indonesia are the ancestors of the modern Malays (Area Handbook for Malaysia and Singapore 1965:31).

Indian Influence

Through trade, the early inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula were exposed to larger civilizations. Located at the convergence of two major sea routes linking the great markets of India and China, the peninsula was a hub of international commerce.

In fact, the sea was more of a highway than a barrier to the exchange of peoples, goods, and ideas. The Straits of Melaka, described as a "gullet . . . through which the foreigners' sea and land traffic in either direction must pass" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:6), became the battlefield in the struggle for power by indigenous rulers who established states on the western Malayan and northern Sumatran coasts.

The early development of the Malay Peninsula illustrates the workings of an international economic system a millennium and a half before the Industrial Revolution and the advent of modern

modes of communication. Early Indian texts refer to the peninsula as the Land of Gold. India had long obtained gold from Siberia. By the 1st century A.D., however, the aggressive expansion of the Huns cut off the overland gold trade. An edict of the Emperor Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) prohibiting gold exports from the Roman Empire deprived the Indians of supplies from the West. Thus, the Indians turned to the East, and most particularly the Malay Peninsula, for their needs. By the 5th century Malaya was also valued for its rich supplies of tin, for which its alloys were in perennial demand in India to make religious images.

Between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D., the growth of an expansive trade network linking the Middle East, India, the Malay Peninsula, the islands of the western Indonesian archipelago, and China was stimulated by the further deterioration of conditions in Central Asia and the closing of the overland trade routes. Starting in the early 4th century, the Huns repeatedly invaded Northern China, causing horrific devastation; but Chinese dynasties were established south of the Yangtze River, and the southern region experienced unprecedented prosperity (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:8).

Such dynasties were forced to trade by sea for luxury goods that had formerly come overland. Spices, aromatic woods, incense and much more were initially obtained from the Arabian Peninsula and then shipped along the Indian coast and through the Straits of Melaka to Canton and other southern Chinese ports. Much of

this Arabian trade was carried in Malay ships operated by Malay sailors. Gradually, demand for the exotic goods of Arabia was supplanted by that for substitutes obtained from the trees of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and western Java. Small kingdoms clustered around the Straits of Melaka and along the west and east coasts of the peninsula served as control centers for the transshipment of Arabian goods and as collection centers for local goods, which were then sent to China.

Although the markets of southern China were of primary importance for the entrepot states of the region of the Straits of Melaka, it was India, rather than China, that provided the main impetus for religious, cultural, and political developments. Archaeological evidence of Indian influence on the peninsula includes 4th century Sanskrit inscriptions found in Perai, opposite the island of Penang, and an early Buddhist inscription in slate found in Kedah (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:9).

It appears that over a long period of time, and in increasing numbers, Indian merchants settled along the coasts, marrying the daughters of local rulers. Indigenous Malay rulers found Hindu concepts of kingship useful for the establishment of stable regimes. They adopted the concept of the *devaraja* (god-king), which depicted the ruler as the incarnation of a Hindu god. Brahmin priests presided over an elaborate system of ceremony and ritual in the royal court. The infusion of the divine into the temporal gave a more stable foundation to the creation of large and more powerful political units. Especially

significant was the transition from the indigenous concept of the ruler as a "first among equals" chosen by his contemporaries for his superior prowess to the imported notion of hereditary dynasties in which the throne was transmitted from father to son (Lamb 1964:103-105).

The late 7th century gave rise to the powerful kingdom of Srivijaya, which controlled passage through the straits and dominated Malay-Indonesian trade until its disintegration in the 14th century. Srivijaya refers to an assemblage of mainly entrepot-type Indianized centers encompassing much of Sumatra and Malaya, with its center in Palembang in southeast Sumatra (Area Handbook for Malaysia and Singapore 1965:34-35).

Although masters of a commercial empire, Srivijaya's maharajahs promoted their religious beliefs. Palembang was a center of Buddhist studies for several centuries, boasting a flourishing community of 1,000 monks (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:10). The city's renown as a center for Buddhist learning is underscored by the fact that the Indian scholar Atisa, later famous for a reformation of Buddhism in Tibet, studied at Palembang under a master of the Tantric School, in the 11th century (Lamb 1964:110)

Weakened by rival factions, the Srivijayan kingdom was eventually absorbed in the end of the 14th century by the Hindu Majapahit dynasty of the island of Java. Majapahit rulers, believed to be either the incarnation of one of the Hindu deities, or their descendants, kept many Shaivite priests as

attendants in their palaces (Zainu'ddin 1970:50).

Majapahit dominance was short-lived, and by the 15th century it had been replaced on the trade routes of the Melaka Straits by the Melaka Sultanate. Never again would the Malays be ruled by followers of Indian religions, yet, even today, this early Indian influence can still be felt. The Malay language, so inseparable from the Malay identity, contains many words borrowed from Sanskrit. Traditional Malay wedding rites, challenged by Islamic scholars, but dear to the hearts of many Malays, contain numerous Hindu customs. The very Islam practiced by the Malays for centuries has been a syncretistic amalgamation of primal spirit religion, Hinduism⁹, and Islam. Hindu tantrism was much more compatible with indigenous Malay spiritism than was Islam when it arrived. "Between the primitive beliefs and practices of the Malay and those of the Hindu there was much in common" (Windstedt 1951:27). Hindu religious ideas continued to permeate Malay religious life long after Islam became the accepted religion of the Malays.

In truth, Indian influence lasting a thousand years affected every department of Malay life. The Indians brought the Malay race a vocabulary of abstract terms like "religion," "asceticism" and "fasting." Hinduism in Tantric form established the

⁹We acknowledge here that Hinduism consists of a conglomeration of ancient religious tradition of such imprecise perimeters as to cause some to question the adequacy of the very term "Hinduism" (Knipe 1991:1-2). Nevertheless, a definable pattern of beliefs has emerged, sufficient to warrant the use of the term (see Knipe 1991:7-10).

importance of fasting long before Muslim traders reached the Malayan archipelago (Winstedt 1951:28).

The Hindu religion shaped the Malay religious and personal identity. Malay magic became developed under Hinduism. The influence of Hindu tantrism predisposed the Malays towards Sufi mysticism and away from Muslim orthodoxy. Hinduism fortified the Malay shaman by corroborating the efficacy of trances. It taught the shaman the discipline of meditation and a Sanskrit term ("tapa") for "ecstatic fervor" (Winstedt 1951:28). It taught the Malays the breathing techniques and powers of concentration that enabled the shamans to transport themselves anywhere. As Muslims, the Malays often claimed to transport themselves to distant places. An 18th-century ruler of Perak was said to have visited Mecca every Friday and even brought back green figs as proof of his journeys (Winstedt 1951:28).

Hindu incantations were introduced into Malay rituals and the Sanskrit term "puja" came to mean the utterance of a *pawang* or an expert in any art believed to need the use of magic. Some Malays in east coast fishing villages still hold an annual "*puja pantai*" (roughly translated "sacred utterance at the beach") festival to mark the beginning of the fishing season. This ceremony invokes the guardian spirits of the sea to protect the fishermen and to grant them big catches (Hamid 1964:183).

Perhaps the concept that most influenced Malay practice vis-a-vis Islam was the Indian notion of the *devaraja*, the god-king. Under Islam, Malay leaders assumed the title "Sultan," but the

title carried with it much of the semi-divine nature of the raja. Sultans were given uncritical and unconditional loyalty. They were the guardians of Malay adat (tradition/custom) as well as the Muslim religious heads of their realms. With the sultans as the unchallengeable heads of state, subjects had no choice but to be Muslims. To challenge the sultan was to challenge the divinely mandated natural order of reality. To attempt to remove oneself from the protective sphere of the sultan and thus from what was "Right," by veering from the accepted standards of adat and/or religion was unthinkable. It would be tantamount to making oneself a nonperson, a nonentity.

The Melaka Sultanate and the Evolution of Malay Identity

"Malacca in its prime
The image of Malay renown framed in time"

--The opening lines of the preface of
the historical Malay ballad,
"Death of a Warrior"

The foundation of the Melakan empire is shrouded in an inextricable mixture of fact and legend. What started as a humble fishing village on a beach near the mouth of a river, became the center of a Malay kingdom which eventually embraced an empire receiving tribute from rulers on the peninsula and neighboring islands. It would be difficult to overstate the impact of historical Melaka on the Malay consciousness. Let us review the legend of Melaka to see what it contributes to the Malay identity to this day.

The founder of Melaka was a fugitive prince from Palembang who was forced to flee his country. He is known in Malayan

history as the "Parameswera," an honorific title he gave himself meaning "Prince Consort." Through cunning and intrigue, he escaped dangers on his way to what was to become Melaka (Sejarah Melayu 1970:12). A delightful Malay story explains why the Parameswera chose that spot to settle, and how it got its name:

Apparently he was leaning against a tree by the river watching his hunting dogs holding at bay a pelandok, a tiny mousedeer--the Brer Rabbit of Malay folk-tales--when it suddenly kicked one of the aggressors into the water, an incredible feat for such a small animal. The Parameswera exclaimed, "This is a fine place for a city. It breeds bravery; even its mousedeer are full of fight. Let us make a settlement here." He asked his followers the name of the tree against which he was resting. One answered that it was the malaka tree. "We will call our town after it," declared the Parameswera. (Miller 1966:27)

This event, the founding of Melaka in 1403, marks the beginning of the solidifying of Malay power and unity.

The Parameswera negotiated with the powerful Ming Dynasty in China to become a protectorate of China. This brought the protection necessary for Melaka to develop into a prosperous commercial center. The Portuguese who conquered Melaka confirmed its importance and affluence. One of their chroniclers, Tome Pires, wrote "Men cannot estimate the world of Malacca on account of its greatness and profit" (Miller 1966:26). "No trading port as large as Malacca is known, nor any where they deal in such fine and highly prized merchandise" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:14). By the early 16th century, Melaka might have had a population of as many as 100,000 persons, remarkable given its lack of agricultural hinterland (rice had to be imported). Melaka's relative size is put in perspective by noting that the

populations of London and Paris at that time are each estimated at just 50,000 persons (Needleman 1989:441; Partner 1976:77).

In his last years the Parameswera converted to Islam, signified by his assumption of the name Iskandar Shah.¹⁰ Bunge and Vreeland (1984:14-15) maintain that the conversion was politically motivated, for a marriage had concluded an alliance with the northern Sumatran state of Pisai, whose ruler had recently become a Muslim. The conversion promoted close ties with Melaka's Indian and Arab trading partners. Yet, the Parameswera's conversion was not merely a conversion of convenience, for Iskandar Shah strongly encouraged Islam in Melaka until his death in 1424 (Miller 1966:31). Indeed, he invited Muslim missionaries and attempted to eradicate Hinduism.

Most of the neighboring states were Buddhist or Hindu-Buddhist, and Iskandar Shah's successor, who took the Srivijayan title of "Sri Maharaja," remained faithful to the old Indian religions. Sri Maharaja's death in 1444 brought a succession struggle, ending in the accession of Muzaffar Shah, a zealous Muslim (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:15). He proclaimed Melaka a Muslim state. Thenceforth Melaka's prosperity and expansion were linked with the propagation of Islam throughout the region.

As to the question of the spread of Islam, it gained a

¹⁰Iskandar Shah was the Islamic equivalent of Alexander the Great, whose exploits figure largely in Muslim legends.

foothold in Southeast Asia relatively late.¹¹ J.C. van Leur (1955:111) quoting other sources states that "there are allusions to Arab settlements or colonies on the west coast of Sumatra as early as A.D. 674, and that Arab tombstones dating from 1082 in Java . . ." have been found. These provide evidence of the existence of Arab settlements, but they do not provide certainty as to whether or not any of the local inhabitants adopted Islam. The earliest evidence for Islam on the Malay Peninsula is not until the 14th century. "Apparently, Muslim Arab communities in the region were neither numerous nor influential enough in the early centuries to challenge the state Hindu-Buddhist cults or the animistic beliefs of the common people" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:15). Actually, it was not the Arabs, but Indian traders who initially carried out the process of Islamization. These traders came primarily to trade in the ports of the area. Although religious conflict was an issue in some local succession struggles, such as that which brought Muzaffar Shah to power, overall, conversion was accomplished gradually and peacefully. "The expansion of Islam in South-east Asia little resembled the rapid advance of the religion, along with the Arab armies, in the Middle East in the seventh century A.D." (Lamb 1964:111). For lack of a centralized polity, Islam was spread by individuals. Leur (1955:114) maintains that Islam was spread as a "missionary community in the early christian sense." Its advance in the

¹¹For a more complete history of Islam in the area, see Coedes (1969), Winstedt (1935), and Leur (1955).

Malay Peninsula was slow, emanating from Melaka. As the power of Melaka expanded, so did its religious influence. In fact, Melaka became the center for the study of Muslim theology for the entire Indies.

The mystique of the newly formed Muslim state is enhanced by tales of court life. Hinduized rituals for royal ceremonies were perpetuated, and shrouded the ruler in an aura of sanctity.

The royal person became sacred and was treated accordingly. He never walked, not outside the palace anyway. He was either borne on an elephant with the Temenggong, Minister of War, in front of him and another minister behind bearing the Sword of State while swords- and spearmen walked along the flanks and to the rear, or he was carried in a royal hammock by major chiefs. On short distances, a slave bore the ruler on his back. A court language, the bahasa dalam, language inside the palace, was evolved especially for the rulers's personal activities. For instance, he was never "carried" but "borne about on high;" he never ate but "regaled" himself; he did not "sleep" but "reposed." (Miller 1966: 33)

The ceremonial rituals of the court were prescribed to the smallest detail. No one could come into the presence of the ruler uninvited. The colors, white and yellow, were exclusive to royalty, as was the wearing of gold jewelry (Miller 1966:33).

The Melaka mystique is further increased by virtue of Melaka being the locus of alleged miracles. Legend attributes numerous miracles to the powerful Chinese Admiral Cheng-Ho on his visits to Melaka in the early 15th century (Miller 1966:29). Healings, miraculous turn of events, and magical objects are prevalent in Melakan folklore. In Melaka, St. Francis Xavier reputedly raised from the dead the only son of a devout woman (Coleridge 1872:513), and gave prophecies that were fulfilled in exact detail (Coleridge 1872:512).

Melaka is the fount of Malay patriotism and folklore. The well-known Malay poet Usman Awang, in his poem "Jiwa Hamba" (The Servile Spirit) writes: "On the remains of Malacca fort, we inculcate the spirit of independence." Possibly no piece of writing is more read in schools than the beloved Malay epic poem "Death of a Warrior." This epic, which recounts the story of a struggle between unconditional loyalty to the Sultan and allegiance to justice, is significant to us here in that it is in historic Melaka that heroic exploits take place. Brandishing a magical kris, Hang Jebat, "warrior brave and daring," is able to subdue hundreds.

The only major early Malay history is the lengthy Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals) commissioned to give a favorable account of the Melakan Sultanate. Sejarah Melayu is one of the most significant pieces of Malay literature ever produced. "As the author was writing 'for the greater pleasure' of a Sultan of Malacca, it is to be expected that his central theme would be, as it is, the greatness of Malacca, its rulers and chiefs, and the superiority of the 'men of Malacca' over all others" (Sejarah Melayu 1970:x). Thus, in Sejarah Melayu we read of the "noble character," "justice," "humaneness" and "handsomeness" of the various rulers. In Melaka, every army or fleet is "in number past counting;" every woman must be "of peerless beauty;" and every man must be full of bravery and cunning.

Malay cunning, in fact, is one of the central themes of the Malay Annals, as it is one of the self-perceived traits of Malay

identity.¹² In the Annals, repeatedly, the men of Melaka are too clever for the foreigner. In China, Melakan envoys succeed by a trick in doing what no Chinese could do, namely, see the face of the Lord of Heaven (Sejarah Melayu 1970:118). In Java, so successfully do the Melakans turn the tables on a foreign ruler who had tried to make them look foolish that he has to admit their superiority (p.109). Every encounter between Siam and Melaka is a triumph for the quick wits of the Malays (pp.97,99), and in Pahang the Sultan is so humiliated by the triumphs of Melakan ingenuity that he abdicates in chagrin (pp.168-176). "Even foreign missionaries of Islam look foolish when they encounter Malays" (p.xii). More than once foreign Muslim scholars have their theology corrected by their Malay pupils (pp.93-94, 146,149,162).

A second major theme of Sejarah Melayu is, as mentioned, the superiority of Malays to foreigners. Gentle digs on foreigners characterize the whole work. In general, the work records the stages in the advance of Melaka to prosperity and greatness, the final description being that of Portuguese Viceroy of India, Alphonso d' Albuquerque, who upon seeing the greatness of Melaka "was seized with desire to possess it" (Sejarah Melayu 1970:151).

Melakan greatness made the Malay language the lingua franca of the entire archipelago. Rich and versatile, Bahasa Malaysia

¹²The tiny pelanduk (mousedeer), already mentioned as the Brer Rabbit of Malay folklore, is a ubiquitous symbol in Malaysia. It is a symbol of Malay cunning against greater opposing strength, the triumph of the underdog.

(the Malay language) has been arguably the single biggest contributor to Malay cohesiveness and identity. A prominent British colonial governor, Frank Swettenham, (Clifford and Swettenham 1894:ix) stated that "As a tongue which is capable of expressing, with admirable terseness, the most minute shades of difference between every physical action, and between many states of feeling . . . Malay has few rivals." Large billboards promoting the use of Malay dot the Kuala Lumpur landscape with the words "Cintalah Bahasa Kita!" (We Love our Language!). The Malay constitution even proclaims the habitual use of the Malay language as one of the three distinguishing features of a Malay.

To reiterate, the Melaka Sultanate represents the pride of the Malays. Malay historical writing has its roots in Melaka. Along with this goes the pride of the Malays in their language. Malay patriotism stems largely from Melakan heroism, including prominently that of the fight against the Portuguese when they invaded.

The Melakan Empire represents the beginning of the Malays functioning as a unit, rallying together under a common banner. In line with this, the Melakan Empire binds the coming of Islam with Malay identity and Malay greatness. It is of great significance to the Malays that the earlier Buddhist Srivijayan Empire was founded in and emanated from what is now Indonesia, while the flowering of Islam in the area grew from the soil of the Malay Peninsula.

For over a century the Melakan Empire brought pride and

prestige to the Malays as never before or since. "Much as Europeans sought to emulate and recapture the glory of classical Greece and Rome, Malay rulers through the succeeding centuries sought to reflect and restore the magnificence of Melaka in its golden age" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:12).

Invasion of the "Franks" (1511-1641)

As the 15th century was the Malays' Golden Age, it was also Portugal's Age of Discovery. The Portuguese were eager to expand their influence to the East for two reasons: a crusading spirit against Muslims, and a desire for Asian spices.

Spices were the most important commodity in the trade between Europe and Asia. The spice trade was so lucrative that pepper, for example, bought in Asia for the equivalent of U.S. \$45 could be sold in European markets for U.S. \$1,800 (Ridsdale 1985:30). Melaka was one of Portugal's targets as it was the collecting point for spices from the Moluccas, also known as the Spice Islands. "As the Portuguese writer Barbosa put it, 'Whoever is Lord in Melaka has his hand on the throat of Venice'" (Ridsdale 1985:29).

In 1509 the Portuguese, headquartered in Goa, sent a delegation to Melaka to seek permission to establish a trading port. The excited locals, who had never seen Caucasians, called them "Franks," the appellation commonly used to describe the Christian crusaders by the Muslims during the Crusades. Portuguese accounts (Bastin and Winks 1966:45) claim that the Portuguese were not well-received, but were rebuffed by Malay

forces backed by Indian Muslim traders. The Portuguese were forced to flee, leaving behind 20 prisoners. This provided their justification to return in force.

The Malay version gives quite an opposite account. In the Malay Annals (1970:151) we find Melaka's Chief Minister welcoming the Portuguese commander with "robes of honor." The Portuguese, to their discredit, return evil for good by attacking Melaka.

The ships forthwith opened fire with their cannon. And the people of Malaka were bewildered and filled with fear at the sound of the cannon, and they said, "What sound is this like thunder?" And when presently the cannon balls began to arrive and struck the people of Malaka, so that some had their heads shot away, some their arms and some their legs, the people of Malaka were more and more astonished to see what manner of thing this artillery was, and they said, "What may be this round weapon that is sharp enough to kill us?" The next day the Franks landed two thousand men armed with match-locks apart from a vast horde of sailors and sepoys: and the men of Malaka under the leadership of Tun Hasan Temenggong went out to repel them. And when they encountered the Franks, battle was engaged, (the flashes of fire from the cannon being like flashes of lightning in the heaven) and the weapons falling like heavy rain. Then Tun Hasan Temenggong and the men of Malaka charged; and the line of the Franks was broken and they gave ground. Then the men of Malaka charged again, and this time the Franks were routed and fled to the waterside, pursued by the men of Melaka. (Sejarah Melayu 1970:152)

As exaggerated as this account may be, in Malay folk-history, the entrance of Christianity to Malay waters is marked by cannonfire, resulting in the loss of Malay heads and arms and legs. It is a bloody battle in which God provides victory through the stalwart bravery of the innocent and wronged Malays. Furthermore, Christianity is brought by "Franks,"--white foreigners, crusading enemies. As cosmopolitan as Melaka was in its prime, it had never been the home of Europeans.

On May 2, 1511, Alphonso d' Albuquerque himself (the Portuguese Viceroy of India) sailed for Melaka with 18 ships carrying 800 Portuguese and 300 Indian auxiliaries. Two months later the fleet entered Melaka harbor. "D' Albuquerque added to the impressive--and ominous--spectacle by firing salutes from every ship and sounding all trumpets " (Miller 1966:43).

The Malay Annals give a detailed description of the ensuing battle, beginning as follows:

The Franks engaged the men of Malaka in battle, and they fired their cannon from the ships so that the cannon balls came like rain. And the noise of the cannon was as the noise of thunder in the heavens and the flashes of fire of their guns were like flashes of lightning in the sky: and the noise of their match-locks was like that of groundnuts popping in the frying pan. (Sejarah Melayu 1970:162)

Meanwhile, Melaka's ruler, Sultan Ahmed, along with an Islamic teacher, is on the front lines, perched on an elephant, calmly studying the doctrine of the Unity of God "amid a hail of bullets" (Sejarah Melayu 1970:162). Eventually, the Sultan's teacher can take it no longer and cries out, "'Sultan, this is no place to study the Unity of God, let us go home!' Sultan Ahmed smiled and returned to the palace" (Sejarah Melayu 1970:162). Here we see another great contrast between Islam and Christianity. The representative Christian, d' Albuquerque, who, in fact, intended to crush Islam, starting with Melaka (Miller 1966:44-45), rains bullets on the Islamic head, Sultan Ahmed, who is peacefully preoccupied with higher spiritual contemplations. (What could be more noble for a Muslim than the

study of the Unity of God?) Concentrating on the lofty Muslim views of God, the Sultan is composed and absolutely fearless.

When the Portuguese launched a ground attack, the Sultan again mounted his elephant:

The Franks then fiercely engaged the men of Malaka in battle and so vehement was their onslaught that the Malaka line was broken, leaving the king on his elephant isolated. And the king fought with the Franks pike to pike, and he was wounded in the palm of his hand, saying "See this, Malays!" And when they saw that Sultan Ahmed was wounded in the hand, the war-chiefs returned to the attack and fought the Franks. (Sejarah Melayu 1970:163)

Such language as "the flashes of fire of their guns were like flashes of lightning in the sky" and "the noise of the cannon was as the noise of thunder" call to mind the words in the United States national anthem "and the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air," and evoke the same feelings of national pride in the Malays as do the words of the "Star Spangled Banner" in the hearts of many Americans.¹³ The key difference for our purposes is that the aggressors in Melaka were Christians bent on religious as well as military conquest.

The fort which the Portuguese built upon their eventual capture of Melaka became a symbol of heroic Malay resistance, much as the Alamo Mission is to Americans. The Malays who defended Melaka are seen as freedom fighters. When the British later destroyed most of the fort, a Malay chronicler lamented this act of vandalism. "'The fort,' he wrote 'was the pride of

¹³Throughout this work, I use the term "American" to refer to citizens of the United States, and not to North, Central, and South Americans in general.

Malacca and after its destruction the place lost its glory, like a woman bereaved of her husband, the lustre gone from her face'" (quoted in Miller 1966:67). The ruins of the fort, which still bear the fort's original Portuguese name *A Famosa*, The Famous, are a popular Malay war memorial.

On August 24, 1511, Melaka was captured. The Sultan and his followers fled to the interior. At the hands of Christians, Melaka lost its independence, never to regain its days of glory.

The "Christian" Legacy

As the Christian flag was raised over the Sultan's palace, d' Allbuquerque sent his troops six abreast through the streets, killing indiscriminately (Miller 1966:45). "D' Albuquerque's son recorded, 'Of the Moors, women and children there died by the sword an infinite number for no quarter was given to any of them'" (Miller 1966:45).

D' Albuquerque stayed for three months to set up an administration and to supervise the construction of a fort near where the mosque had stood along the seashore. *A Famosa* (The Famous) was an impressive stone fortress; its outer stone wall was eight feet thick and 20 feet high. A five-storied tower rose by the sea, and two towers at the rear faced the countryside. Huge cannons peered through embrasures on all positions.

A Portuguese city developed within the walls of Melaka. "No less than nine churches raised their spires in the town" (Miller

1966:47).¹⁴ The Malays and other races lived outside. On the hill which the fortress encompassed, and on which had stood the palaces of the Melakan sultans, rose the most impressive church, Our Lady of the Annunciation. To the Portuguese, the church became an inspiring landmark. To the Malays, it was a symbol of departed glory. Their mosque had been replaced by enemy fortifications; their palace by a church.

To put things in the proper perspective, the Portuguese were not the first Christians to arrive in the area. Nestorian Christians, Catholic priests and diplomats, and Armenian Christian traders had all preceded the guns of the Portuguese. Christian traders had even inhabited Melaka during the Melaka Sultanate of the 15th century (Roxborough 1989:4). Undoubtedly, the Muslim traders predominated in the commerce carried on between the East and West, but there was a Christian representation. As Crawford (1856:98) states: "It is probable that Christian traders of Syria and Egypt frequented the archipelago along with the Mohammedan, long before the arrival of the Portuguese, and Ludonica Barthema, in his itinerary, alludes to having met persons of this description; but no Christian converts appear to have existed previous to the conquest of

¹⁴I'm reminded of the twinge of sadness I experienced as I overlooked the town of Bethlehem and was struck by the number of mosques and towering minarets. I knew in my mind that the Muslims had a right to be there, but my emotions were telling me that Jesus' birthplace belonged to Christians. My gut feelings in Bethlehem give me some indication of the emotions that must have been aroused in the Malays when they saw the seat of their former Muslim empire littered with Christian churches.

Albuquerque."

Can it be true that there were no Christian converts after centuries of contact? The contrast between the Christian and Muslim traders is interesting. Wherever the Muslim traders went, Islam was planted. Christian traders had contact with the Malays, but transmitted little or no religious influence. At this point, attention should be called to the fact that Islam was spread primarily not by trained religious specialists, but rather through the efforts of the Muslim traders.

Christian Europe during the time of the Muslim trade monopoly of the Melaka Sultanate was at the height of sacramental institutionalism. Christians believed that the grace of Jesus Christ was dispensed by the church through the sacraments. The sole practitioners authorized to facilitate such dispensing of grace were the ordained clergy. Entire populations were baptized into the church, and individuals were believed to be linked to Christ only through continual partaking of the sacraments. There is much speculation as to the extent to which the average European actually understood about Jesus and the Bible, or personally experienced inner transformation resulting in a changed moral character. The evidence suggests that many were Christians only in the sense that they were baptized into the jurisdiction of a particular bishopric (Latourette 1938:211).

Such state Christians brought with them a religion whose rituals had to be performed on their behalf by a professional clergy. The Muslims, in vivid contrast, with their five daily

demonstrations of public prostration in prayer, were each visible object lessons and advertisements for their faith. Moreover, their lives, governed by *Shari'ah* Law, typically displayed a higher moral caliber than did their Christian counterparts. To reiterate, it was Islam, and not Christianity, that spread as a "missionary community in the early Christian sense" (Leur 1955:114).

Tragically, the Portuguese lives bore no resemblance to the Christ they claimed to represent. Their lifestyle was no more endearing to the Malays than had been their initial conquest. St. Francis Xavier, who visited Melaka three times en route to destinations further east, was appalled by the drunkenness and sexual immorality of the Portuguese (Coleridge 1872:349). He also described them as full of "quarrels and enmities" (Coleridge 1872:391). With impunity, the Portuguese men raped the local women, and took multiple concubines (Northcott 1991:49). Tome Pires, a Portuguese chronicler who worked in Melaka after its capture, described Portuguese Melaka as the "Babylon of the Orient," and its Portuguese inhabitants as "voluptuous" and "profligate" (Miller 1966:48). Bunge and Vreeland (1984:19) describe the Portuguese rule as a "blend of piracy and proselytization."

It is not that the Portuguese were irreligious. St. Francis notes (Coleridge 1872:181-182) that the commandants gave great assistance in the building of chapels, and that the Portuguese were frequent attenders of the sacraments of confession and

communion. The Portuguese religious works (often exhibited ostentatiously, as in their parading of statues of the saints or the Virgin Mary), coupled with their cruelty and ungodly example, must have evoked in the Malays the worst imaginable associations with Christianity. A Vicar of Melaka for 30 years was a spineless man who curried the favor of the evil Don Alvaro (Coleridge 1872:570) and "whose life was a scandal to religion" (165).

It would be inaccurate to suggest that the Portuguese were all bad, or that the Christianity practiced was never more than outward form. If it is true that the approach of the priests wasn't the most contextualized (locals were taught Latin), it is also true that Francis could proudly testify that most of the priests were of godly piety and indefatigable in their labors (Coleridge 1872:188). While Francis placed great emphasis on the reciting of prayers and creeds (190), he also spoke of the need for explanation, and not just rote memorization (391). While the partaking of the Eucharist and the hearing of confessions was stressed (190), Francis mentioned not just the "rules of religion," but also the "cultivation of piety" (374). Tirelessly, he sought to promote virtue and justice. Xavier and a band of followers humbly and sacrificially cared for the sick and dying in the midst of a plague (Coleridge 1872:510). Francis himself seems to have been highly respected by the Muslim Malays for his holy life, although Wong (1973:26) contests that Francis displayed an open contempt for the Muslims.

St. Francis Xavier's life and work is generally regarded as the single bright light of positive Christian witness in the 130-year Portuguese control of the Malay Peninsula. Most likely it was that, but I submit that Xavier's conviction that the Portuguese conquest and the advance of the church were inseparably tied resulted in a grave misrepresentation of the true nature of the church. The harm to the witness of Christ caused by such a gross misrepresentation outweighs the good caused by specific acts of charity and self-sacrifice.

Xavier saw himself as "an envoy of the great King of the West" (Coleridge 1872:510). A contemporary of Francis, Faria y Sousa (cited in Coleridge 1872:410), said of him that he "'was not less zealous for the honour of our King than for the worship of our God.'" Francis went so far as to say that the cause of the Christian religion was "bound up in the East with the prestige and power of Portugal" (Coleridge 1872:410).

A certain incident illustrates well Xavier's position. During one of Francis' visits to Melaka, Melaka's bitter enemy, the Achenese (Muslims from northern Sumatra), attacked Melaka, burned all but a few of Melaka's ships, captured a few fishermen, cut off their noses, ears, and heels, and "'sent them to the Governor of Malacca with a letter written in their own blood, wherein most proudly and insolently they provoked him to battle'" (Faria y Sousa, cited in Coleridge 1872:409). The Portuguese commander and his staff, with a small force and their ships in disrepair, felt there was no choice but to accept the losses.

Xavier, feeling the dishonor brought upon Portugal "'urged them in some way or other to wipe out the injury'" (Faria y Sousa, cited in Coleridge 1872:410). "'So much did that holy wrath of the great Xavier bring about,'" says Faria y Sousa, "' that he prevailed, with his zealous discourses, upon some rich merchants so as to get these rotten vessels put into such a state that the soldiers and sailors might safely embark in them'" (Coleridge 1872:410).

When the expedition was ready to sail against Aceh, Francis blessed them and promised a certain victory. The Melakan fleet, which Francis sent out "to vindicate the honor of the Christian name against the infidels," was christened the "'armament of Jesus'" (Coleridge 1872:411). In its absence, Francis frequently faced a crucifix and prayed for the success of the expedition. When the men returned victoriously, it was Francis himself who, bearing a crucifix, led the victory procession while salutes were fired on land and sea. Francis "reminded the victors that their true general had been He (Christ) in whose honor they had fought" (Coleridge 1872:416). It is sadly ironic that the crucified Christ, the ultimate symbol of non-vindictive, self-sacrificial love for one's enemies, became the symbol of military vengeance unleashed to "wipe out the injury" inflicted by the "infidels." The One who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," was represented by the "armament of Jesus."

It is bad enough that the Portuguese were cruel; it is worse that they were so in the name of Christ. The fatal flaw of the

Portuguese Christian witness is that no distinction was made between being Portuguese and being Christian. Even had the Portuguese been morally upright and their rule benign, this one thing alone would have killed the possibility of the spread of an indigenous Christian community. As church historian John Roxborough (1989:5) put it: "Inevitably, Christianity was perceived as the religion of invading foreigners whose presence was unwelcome." In fact, the Portuguese crusading mentality actually spurred the propagation of Islam as local rulers and their subjects sought common ground to resist the threat.¹⁵

Bunge and Vreeland (1984:19) sum up this era with the evaluation that "The Portuguese contribution to Malay history was --in contrast to that of the earlier Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic merchants and seamen--largely negative." The fact is that the Portuguese conquest of Melaka is known by the Malays to have been part of a crusade against Muslim influence in the Indian ocean. To this day, this colors the Malays' attitude toward Christianity.

Going Dutch (1641-1824)

The Dutch first appeared in Malay waters in 1595. The first decades of the 17th century witnessed their concerted attack on virtually the entire global network of Portuguese outposts. By 1618 they dominated the spice trade (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:19). The following year they conquered the Javanese capital, Jakarta,

¹⁵The very presence of the Portuguese in Melaka forced Muslim traders to take their business elsewhere, thus furthering the spread of Islam (Roxborough 1989:4).

renamed it Batavia, and made it their center in the region. The native states welcomed the Dutch as rivals of the Portuguese and took their trade to Batavia, thus striking a telling blow against Melaka.

In July, 1640, the Dutch, aided by Malays from Johore (located in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, Johore had become the Malay capital since the Portuguese drove the Malay rulers from Melaka), initiated a siege of Melaka. After six months of weary battle, the Dutch prepared for a final assault. A Dutch chronicler (recorded in Bastin and Winks 1966:73) tells us that the "Commander-in-Chief . . . and his Council thought proper to appoint . . . a day of public prayers and fasting so that God our Lord might be pleased to bless our exploit." Four days later A Famosa belonged to the Dutch.

"In undertaking the conquest of Melaka, the Dutch were activated more by the desire that the Portuguese should not be there than by any marked desire to be there themselves" (Dodsworth 1928a:viii). Trade shifted to Batavia, as the Dutch preferred it as the chief port in the region. Melaka never returned to its former status as a commercial center. Its capture had been a strategic necessity to the Dutch, but in their plan of empire it was just an outpost.

Like the Portuguese, the Dutch sought monopolistic control of the spice trade. Unlike the Portuguese, for the Dutch, Christianity was not the religious arm of imperialism.

Underlining the primacy of the economic interests of the Dutch (they focused on Batavia in Java not on Melaka), and

setting a significant precedent for the future, was the fact that when the Dutch had sought the aid of Johore for the conquest of 1639-41 it was laid down that neither party would interfere in the religion of the other. (Roxborough 1989:5)

Fortunately for the local population, in religious matters the Protestant Dutch were more tolerant than the Portuguese had been. Unfortunately, though, the Dutch were "more thoroughgoing in the mechanics of exploitation and extraction" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:20). According to Isabella Bird (1883:120), a 19th century traveler: "If the Portuguese were little better than bucaners, the Dutch who drove them out were little better than hucksters - mean, mercenary traders, without redeeming qualities, content to suck the blood of their provinces and give nothing in return." Although this harsh judgment is more appropriate to the Dutch rule in the Indonesian archipelago, it applies to the Malay Peninsula as well. Abdullah Munshi, a prominent Malay, shared Stamford Raffles' view that the Dutch despised the Malays (Abdullah 1970:78).

In spite of this, the Dutch were more sensitive to Malay society than the Portuguese had been. Local *adat* (custom) was incorporated into Dutch judicial management (Ellen 1983:52). In the process of honoring local customary law, however, specifically Islamic laws were largely disregarded (Northcott 1991:49). This was due primarily to the perceived threat worldwide Islam posed to the colony. Dutch attitudes toward Indonesian and Malayan Islam had been shaped by exaggerated fears stemming from "a lack of adequate knowledge, if not of almost

total ignorance, of matters Islamic" (Benda 1958:338). Islam was thought of as a tightly organized religion with a hierarchical clergy wielding great powers over rulers and subjects.¹⁶

In reality, widespread unity among the Malays was nonexistent (Benda 1958:340). Since the expulsion of the Malay Sultan from Melaka with the coming of the Portuguese, rival Malay factions had continuously jostled for power. Moreover, the very process of the spread of Islam was as yet far from complete. The Melaka Sultanate had brought to power Malay Muslims, but it had not brought Islam to every Malay. Islam's spread inland was slow. At the time of the coming of the Dutch, the impact of Islam on most of the population could still be considered "slight" (Lamb 1964:111).

The Dutch were able to gain a more thorough control over the area than had the Portuguese, resulting in less inter-factional warfare. This Pax Nederlandica (Benda 1958:341) brought the stability necessary for the peaceful process of Islamization. In the words of Drewes (1955:296), "Dutch rule . . . was involuntarily but undoubtedly conducive to the strengthening of Muslim influence." Freedom of religion and noninterference in matters of religion combined with the locals' animosity toward the Dutch to cause an intensification of Muslim feelings. Furthermore, hereditary local chiefs intent on squelching the

¹⁶Dutch literature speaks of Muslim religious leaders as "priests" and "popes." The so-called *priesteraad* (priests' council) was used to designate Muslim religious judicial tribunals.

newer, more orthodox Islam were not allowed to resist forcibly.

In summary, resistance to the Dutch sparked holy indignation which, in addition to resisting foreign rule, reformed local religious practice (Voll 1982:115).

Although, as we have noted, the Dutch were not on a religious crusade, and did not necessarily align their desires with the cause of God, there was no room for any Christian presence that deviated from the economic self-interest of the Dutch. The Dutch United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*--VOC) coordinated the Dutch efforts. Although primarily a commercial institution, the VOC was granted the authority to raise armies, conclude treaties, and build fortresses (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:19). Christian missions were bridled by the fact that Christian workers had to be approved by the VOC and were largely restricted from work among Muslims. Though there were some missionary efforts towards the Baba (Malay speaking Chinese) Catholics, the Dutch Presbyterian mission in Melaka was primarily concerned with the colonial community (Northcott 1991:49). The only church built by the Dutch in Melaka still stands. This church has baptismal records dating back to the 17th century, but there is no record that a Malay was ever baptized (Dodsworth 1928a:19). There is no solid evidence of any Dutch mission to the Malays.

Concerning the mission of the Church, the Dutch era represents 183 years of lost opportunity. Toward the end of this time period, a few notable missionaries were beginning to win

whole communities to Christ in Indonesia. Writing about missions in Indonesia at the time, Stephen Neill (1986:248) comments that "nowhere else in the world have so many Muslims been won to the Christian faith." Since the Malays and Indonesians are closely akin, and since the Islam of the Malays was essentially the same as that of the Indonesians, one might reasonably expect to have found at least some measure of success among the Malay Muslims if concerted efforts had been made to reach them with the gospel. Instead, anti-Dutch sentiment and religious freedom served only to further the spread of Islam.

The Dutch era also represents 183 years of continued negative Christian witness. At the hands of "pious" and devout churchgoers, the Malays were subjected to economic plunder and exploitation. The Portuguese had taught the Malays that Christians reserve no love for non-Christians. The Dutch then taught them that Christians don't even love fellow Christians. When the Protestant Dutch ousted the Portuguese to become Malaya's new conquerors, "they at once embarked on a campaign of persecution against all Roman Catholics. These Calvinistic Dutch were as intolerant of the Papist Portuguese as the latter had been of the Muslims" (Wong 1973:26). For nearly the next two centuries, the Catholics were actively suppressed (Latourette, Vol 3, 1939:255). Once again the church became identified with military conquest, and its people with greed.

Under the Union Jack 1824-1957

The British East India Company was an association of

merchants who were granted a charter by Queen Elizabeth in 1600 for the monopoly of all English trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. An important trading contract that belonged to the Company was the export of tea from China to Europe. To replenish supplies along the route, the British sought to establish a port in Southeast Asia.

In 1785, the Sultan of Kedah gave the Company trading rights to use the island of Penang as such a port. Francis Light landed in Penang in July 1786, planted the Union Jack on the jungle-covered island, and officially took possession of the island.

Light, a personal friend of the Sultan and a skillful diplomat, had negotiated the British use of Penang in exchange for British protection against the Sultan's enemy to the north, Siam (Miller 1966:65-66). Reluctant to form what would appear to the Dutch as a defensive alliance, to the Sultan's dismay and Light's personal shame, the East India Company reneged on its promise to protect Kedah against Siam. Feeling deceived, the Sultan assembled a fleet to recapture Penang. Light had no choice but to subdue the Sultan's fleet. Shortly thereafter, "civilization" arrived in Penang when the Charter of Justice introduced English law to the settlement. Ironically, the "civilization" thrust upon the "benighted" Malays was initiated by a British act of betrayal.

The French Revolution led indirectly to the British occupation of Melaka. The French revolutionary armies had taken over the Netherlands and were soon to take over the Dutch naval

bases. To prevent the fall of the bases to the French, the Dutch government-in-exile gave its various possessions to the British to occupy until the war was over. In this arrangement, Melaka was transferred to the British in 1775.

The British were determined that when Melaka was returned to the Dutch, it would be of as little use as possible. To the chagrin of the local population, *A Famosa*, the memorial of Malay heroism, was disassembled. The Dutch reoccupied Melaka in 1818. It turned out that the fort need not have been destroyed, since in 1824, under the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, Melaka was peacefully ceded to the British.

The Straits Settlements

When the Dutch returned to Asia, when their war with France ended, and reoccupied their former bases, including Melaka, they sought to extend their control over the area. Alarmed by this trend, Thomas Stamford Raffles, a British East India Company man, convinced the authorities that another settlement in the Straits of Melaka would establish British supremacy in the region.

In 1819, Raffles landed on the island of Singapore, which at the time was largely swamp, inhabited by about 1,000 Malay fisherfolk. Raffles established a trading post on the island and through good relations succeeded in getting Johore (the southernmost Malay territory) to cede Singapore outright to the British.

With its strategic location and its free port status, Singapore achieved phenomenal success. By 1825 its trade had

already surpassed that of Melaka and Penang combined, and, in addition to Malays, its population included communities of Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Europeans, and Armenians.

Bunge and Vreeland (1984:26) state well the importance of Singapore and the increasing decline of influence of the Malays in their homeland:

Singapore was in a very significant sense the successor to Srivijaya and Malacca--a link between China and India as well as a center for the commercial life of Southeast Asia and for the diffusion of new ideas and techniques into the region. The difference was that Malays were no longer the principal actors but bystanders in the development of the new entrepot. Singapore had a British administration and what would rapidly evolve into a Chinese-controlled economy.

Singapore's position was secured by the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, which demarcated it along with the Malay Peninsula as under British control, while Sumatra and the Riau and Linnga archipelagos were placed within Dutch rule. This peacefully settled the Dutch-British rivalry, but the Malay world, which had maintained a "considerable sense of cultural and ideological, if not political, unity through the centuries of fragmentation and foreign intervention, was split between the two European powers, and the basis for the two separate nations of Malaysia and Indonesia was established" (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:27).

In 1826, Singapore and Melaka were joined with Penang and Province Wellesley (a small stretch of land on the west coast of peninsular Malaysia) under a single administration. These "Straits Settlements" were under the British Indian government (until 1857 the British East India Company government), but in 1867 they were made a separate crown colony under the British

Colonial Office.

The Treaty of Pangkor

British control, though formally indirect, was more firmly established in the peninsula by the January 1874 Treaty of Pangkor. The states of Selangor and Perak had been plagued with unrest. The treaty settled a succession dispute of the Perak throne and established the office of "British Resident" to assist in the administration of the Malay states. The treaty stipulated that the advice of the resident "must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom."

The Borneo States

While the Malay Peninsula was gradually coming under British influence, the territories on the northern shore of the island of Borneo were experiencing separate development--Sarawak under the "white raja," and Sabah under the British North Borneo Company.

In 1835 James Brooke set out in a schooner to explore the East. Brooke landed in Sarawak in 1839 and found the Raja Muda Hashim, a relative of the Sultan of Brunei (of which Sarawak was a province), struggling to put down a rebellion. The following year Brooke returned and helped the raja quell the rebellion. For his contribution, Brooke, then 38, was installed as the Raja of Sarawak (Turnbill 1964:130-131). This marked the beginning of over a century of rule by the white rajas.

The British government, though, would not recognize Brooke as an independent raja, nor take Sarawak over as a protectorate.

Brooke toured England, appealing for protection for Sarawak and urging its union with the Straits Settlements to form one crown colony. In 1863 Britain acknowledged Sarawak as an independent state, but did not take it in as a protectorate until 1888.

Meanwhile, sovereignty over North Borneo (present-day Sabah) was obtained in 1877 by what later became known as the British North Borneo Company. Under a royal charter the Company provided facilities for the British Navy and was sent officers from the Straits Settlements to assist in administration. North Borneo, too, became a British protectorate in 1888.

The inhabitants of North Borneo were not as willing as those of Sarawak to accept the encroachment of British rule. The North Borneo Company encountered recurring resistance, the most significant of which was the rebellion of 1895-1905. Increasing taxes had stirred one Mat Salleh, an indigene, to lead a revolt against the Company. Mat Salleh developed a mystique of invincibility, and because of his fierce resistance to foreign occupation is revered as a great hero in Sabah today.

The Federated Malay States

Back in the peninsula, in 1896, Frank Swettenham, at that time Resident of Perak, persuaded the rulers to sign the Treaty of Federation, which established a British federal government at the tin miners' settlement of Kuala Lumpur. The Federated Malay States were created, including the states of Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. The governor of the Straits Settlements was designated high commissioner of the Federated

Malay States, and a resident general (the first being Swettenham) was placed in charge of the residents of each of the Federated Malay States.

The Unfederated Malay States

In 1909, a treaty with Siam gave England supremacy over the northern Malay states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu. Despite British prodding, the sultans of these states refused to join their states to the federation. They received British advisors, who differed significantly from the residents of the Federated Malay States in that they did not have executive power but were obliged to use persuasion on matters of policy (Bunge and Vreeland 1984:32). Only the state of Johore remained independent. It was not until 1914 that it gave the British the right to advise in Johore's internal affairs.

The Unfederated States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Johore were the least developed of any on the Malay Peninsula. Being generally the poorest in natural resources the British desired (most notably tin) their rulers were allowed to maintain a measure of independence that enabled them to remain havens of traditional Malay life and culture while most of the rest of the peninsula was much more radically changed by colonial social and economic forces.

During the period of British colonialism, increased mining and plantation activities demanded heavy manpower commitments and through the years a gradual influx of Chinese and Indians expanded to a precipitous flow (McGee 1964:72). The non-Malay

population of around 500,000 at the turn of the century reached almost 3.5 million at the time of independence in 1957. The religious complexion of the society was thus changed by the immigration of Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist Chinese as well as mostly Hindu Indians. In addition, a small minority of Arabs, Indians, and Pakistanis became influential commercial and religious members of the Muslim population. The result was that by the first census after independence, the Malays, who were also Muslims, were but half the total number of people in the new nation.

When Sabah and Sarawak were brought into the Federation in 1963 to form Malaysia, the percentage of Muslims was further diluted. Coastal Malays form only a small percentage of the peoples of the two states, which have a heterogeneous indigenous population and sizable Chinese elements. In 1960, Sarawak was only 23.4 percent Muslim and Sabah 37.8 percent (Means 1982:482). For a period after its incorporation, there were efforts to convert the people of Sabah to Islam under the political leadership of Tun Mustapha, and a number of well-publicized conversions took place (Tunku Abdul Rahman 1978:143). Although the Muslims have dominated the political and cultural life of the nation as a whole and have continued to be the largest religious group, they comprise only slightly over half of Malaysia's population.

The British Themselves

"We Malays consider the British to
be the least of the three evils."
--A Malay student reflecting on Portuguese,
Dutch, and British rule over Malaysia.

British Rulers

It is widely acknowledged that the British were the least disliked of the colonizers of the Malay Peninsula. A Malay who was present when the English came to take Melaka from the Dutch observed that "all races in Malacca were pleased, for they had tasted the bitter nastiness of Dutch rule" (Abdullah 1970:78). Concerning their cross-cultural sensitivity, the British were a mixed bag--some exceptionally skillful; some not. A representative sample of some of the more influential early British rulers will suffice to make this point.

Francis Light, who governed Britain's first Malayan territory, Penang, from 1786 until his death from malaria in 1794, was tactful and uncommonly skillful in human relations. Although the Malays remained suspect of the British East India Company, Light himself so won the affection of the local population that at his death they reportedly mourned "the loss of one who had watched over their interests as a father" (Miller 1966:66).

Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder and first governor of Singapore, was a man of legendary stature. Of all his biographers, none presents him in such a positive light as do the writings of his friend and tutor, a Malay Muslim named Abdullah

Munshi. Abdullah (1970:78) was impressed with Raffles' keen attention to learning the way of the Malays, his kindness to the Malays and his treating of all people as equals. Abdullah felt that both Mr. Raffles and his wife did everything with charm, modesty, and prudence (Abdullah 1970:80).

Not one to withhold criticism when he found fault, Abdullah (1970:75) presents Mr. Raffles in the most glowing terms:

He was broad of brow, a sign of his care and thoroughness; round-headed with a projecting forehead, showing his intelligence. He had light brown hair, indicative of bravery; large ears, the mark of a ready listener. . . . His lips were thin, denoting his skill in speech, his tongue gentle . . .

As to his character, I noticed that he always looked thoughtful. He was very good at paying due respect to people in a friendly manner. He treated everyone with proper deference, giving to each his proper title when he spoke. Moreover, he was extremely tactful in ending a difficult conversation. He was solicitous of the feelings of others, and open-handed with the poor. He spoke in smiles.

Colonel Harry St. George Ord, the first Governor of the Straits Settlements Colony, ruled with an administrative efficiency surpassed only by his pompous insensitivity. Penang, the colony's first capital, was festively adorned for the installation ceremony. A chronicler recorded that Colonel Ord "stalked" into the town hall for the ceremony "without removing his hat, and sat down on the dais without taking any notice of anyone. The impression thus created was never removed and was justified in the years that he remained in the Straits" (quoted in Miller 1966:87). When Governor Ord asked permission to intervene in a local Malay squabble, the Under-Secretary of the

Colonial Office in London wrote, "Most certainly the present Governor cannot be trusted to interfere wisely" (quoted in Miller 1966:101).

More personable than his predecessor, Colonel Andrew Clarke succeeded Ord in 1873 as Governor of the Colony. A man of action with an enmity toward bureaucracy, Clarke lobbied strongly for more direct British involvement in Malay affairs. Clarke was unashamedly imperialistic, and saw his position as a means of expanding the British Empire (Miller 1966:104). He followed an "act-first;-explain-it-later" style of leadership. Without London's approval, Clarke negotiated the Pangkor Treaty, which initiated indirect rule through a British Resident. In a subsequent letter to the British Secretary of State, Clarke frankly admitted that he was "perfectly aware" he had "acted beyond my instructions . . . but I have confidence that your Lordship will feel that the circumstances at the time . . . justified me in assuming the responsibility I have taken" (quoted in Miller 1966:112). Clarke assured London that they could still withdraw from the position he had taken, but he added that "the time has arrived when, as a nation, we shall be neglecting a great and paramount duty if we any longer delay that intervention which the causes of civilization and good order so loudly demand" (quoted in Miller 1966:112).

After considerable debate, the Colonial Office concluded that they could not conscionably withhold civilization from the benighted Malays, and so Clarke received authority to appoint

Residents to the Malay states of Perak and Selangor. The Residents were to "advise" the rulers on administrative matters.

There seems to have been misunderstanding on both sides as to what the other understood this to entail. Since the Resident had no executive power, no way of forcing a ruler to follow his advice, he had to rely on his own powers of persuasion. The success of the system, therefore, depended on the personalities of both sides getting along with each other. This proved disastrous for the very first appointed Resident at Perak, Mr. J.W.W. Birch.

Birch could not have been less suited for this delicate task. He so abruptly and forcefully attempted to bring widesweeping changes that the local rulers suspected the British of trying to take over their country and destroy their customs and traditions (Miller 1966:115). Birch's tactless insensitivities and highhanded obstinacy was revealed in a report in which he said, "It really concerns me little what were the old customs of the country, nor do I consider they are worthy of any consideration." (quoted in Miller 1966:119).

Perak's Sultan Abdullah responded by refusing even to entertain Birch's ideas. The functions and purpose of the Resident had been spelled out in only the vaguest of terms. Abdullah had not understood that under the Treaty neither he nor his chiefs were free to collect taxes as they had always done. He resented the proposed appointment of official collectors. Even more, he resented Birch's intention to abolish debt slavery.

For one thing, Birch failed to distinguish debt slavery (in which persons mortgaged themselves in return for financial assistance from their creditors) from western slavery. Although debt slavery had sunken to the point where it was clearly abusive, it had long been a common institution in the Malay states, and was the means by which the wealthy ruling class got free labor. In the Malay rulers' minds' Birch appeared intent on usurping all their prerogatives.

After Sultan Abdullah's third refusal to sign into effect laws drafted by Birch to appoint tax collectors and end debt-slavery, Birch threatened that the British Government would depose Abdullah unless he complied with Birch's initiatives. At this, the Sultan, making it known that he was doing so under duress, signed the papers authorizing the Resident to control the levying and collecting of all taxes (Miller 1966:130).

Abdullah promptly called together his major chiefs to discuss how to kill Birch and "to resist the white people." The local chiefs demonstrated their hatred of Birch by calling the leading *bomoh* (spiritist and traditional healer) to hold a seance into whether the guardian *jinn* of Perak would kill Birch. Abdullah himself, acting as one of the mediums, "repeatedly stabbed an effigy of Birch of rice dough," forecasting Birch's immanent death (Miller 1966:120).

Meanwhile, Clarke was succeeded by Major-General Sir William Francis Drummond Jervois as the third Governor of the Colony. Jervois was a professional soldier who would have annexed the

Malay States if given the chance. It had been decided that Birch should be replaced as Resident of Perak, but Jervois postponed this move fearing the Malays might view it as a sign of weakness. Both Jervois and Birch scoffed at reports of plots to kill the Resident, and responded by asserting in no uncertain terms that "'Her Britannic Majesty's Government have determined to administer the Government of Perak in the name of the Sultan'" (quoted in Miller 1966:121). Birch blatantly defied the Sultan, by himself assisting in the escape of five debt slaves, two of whom belonged to the Sultan.

Certain that the British were intent on interfering with Malay custom, Abdullah gave Birch's execution order to a major chief whose prerogative it was to execute the ruler's enemies and who was therefore above the law according to Malay custom. The next morning, as Birch was bathing in a floating bath-house, he was speared to death and then hacked to pieces with a sword. In Perak there was feasting for two days.

Jervois immediately called India for reinforcements as he interpreted the murder as the signal for an uprising against the British. He personally led 150 soldiers to Perak. Those implicated in Birch's death were either executed or exiled. The Malay chiefs were stunned by the intensity of the British reaction to Birch's death; to them, Birch had been justly condemned as a foreign infidel who had tried to uproot their customs and usurp the hereditary powers of the Malay rulers.

Perak was occupied as 1,200 troops arrived from India and

more came from Hong Kong. A naval brigade also landed. For 18 months, the British military ruled Perak, and Governor Jervois was not hesitant to find reasons for using the troops against hints of Malay insurrection.

Birch's "head-over-heels way" (Governor Clarke's assessment of Birch's style) of plunging himself into "cleaning up" Perak, and his murder, may have ended the experiment in indirect rule had not Birch's successor been of exceptional character. Mr. Hugh Low, Perak's second Resident, carefully studied Malay religious and customary law and spoke fluent Malay. He gradually regained the trust by his sympathetic approach and by going to great lengths to maintain good relations with the chiefs and not to interfere with their customs. As to the former Resident's practice of protecting runaway slaves, he wrote in his diary,

I have no intention following . . . If I were here long enough I would undertake to abolish every form of slavery in a moderate time with the consent of the chiefs and the people but I shall be of no use here if I do not first thoroughly acquire their confidence and that cannot be done if my first acts be to show that I am determined to prevent or encourage the break of (what) is at present so cherished an institution." (quoted in Miller 1966:129)

To show the effectiveness of Low's approach, it may be added that, over a six-year period, step by slow step, Low succeeded in persuading the rulers to end debt-slavery in Perak.

Low lived in a small, Malay-style house near the Sultan's palace. Traveller Isabella Bird, who once stayed with Low, was impressed that his house was always open to any visitor. Bird (1883:357) wrote that Malays had

free access to him during all hours of daylight and as I sit

writing or reading, a Malay shadow constantly falls across my paper, and a Malay with silent, catlike tread glides up the steps and appears unannounced in the veranda, on which Mr. Low at once lays aside whatever he is doing and quietly gives himself to the business in hand. The reigning Prince and Raja Dris are daily visitors.

Low included the major Malay chiefs and some Chinese business leaders in decision-making, and conducted official meetings in Malay rather than in English.

Another early British official who sought to establish friendship and understanding between the British and the Malays was the Colony's first Governor, Sir Frederick Weld. In order to immerse himself in Malay life, he left the running of the Straits Settlements to the Lieutenant-Governor. Weld travelled extensively to understand village life and to meet with local sultans. He humbly wore Malay hat plumes that identified him as subordinate to the sultans. During a scheduled visit with the Sultan of Pahang, Weld graciously waited for several hours for the Sultan to finish a game of chance in which he was engaged (Miller 1966:130).

By the 1880s "Residents were chosen primarily for their knowledge of the Malays and ability to govern with firmness tempered with tact" (Butcher 1979:50). The British had come to realize that they could not rule without regard for Malay sensitivities. The District Officers of Sungei Ujong, for example, were advised that since Malays were not accustomed to regular office hours they should be accessible at all times (Sadka 1968:220).

The British, in fact went to great lengths to earn the

friendship of the Malay rulers. The Residents joined the rulers in their amusements, went hunting with them, and strove to assure them that the actions of the British were in their best interests.

To the chiefs, the Resident patiently explained the reasons for administrative innovations; to the unyielding and unfriendly among them, he showed firmness and determination and where necessary he even went out of his way, as Swettenham put it, to "outswagger the greatest swaggerer of them all." (Miller 1966:126)

In marked contrast to the Dutch and Portuguese, the British took an interest in Malay affairs, and attempted to be fair in their dealings. Moreover, the Malays came to respect the British for their administrative skills and their even-tempered handling of disturbances; the only thing the Malays had respected about their former colonizers was their military might.

Yet, the Malays were not blind to the fact that the British were in Malaya for the good of England. However benign, colonization is always self-serving. Indeed, this self-serving attitude was not successfully hid from the Malays. It surfaced in a condescending, patronizing attitude on the part of many British officials. During the Birch residency, Governor Jervois maintained that the Perak Malays were not fit to rule (Miller 1966:121). Sir Frank Swettenham (1948:173-174), the great Malayan administrator, scholar and historian, wrote that "the Colonial Secretary desired to use British influence to save the Malays from themselves." Malays were frequently described as lazy, especially when they failed to respond to British initiatives (Butcher 1979:59). The social Darwinism of the 19th

century led the British arrogantly to assume that industrialized Europe was the epitome of civilization. Physically, the people of the tropics were believed to lack the innate vitality of the races of Western Europe (Dodsworth 1928a:v-vi).

It was common for British officials to see themselves as lords of the manor and the Malay *rakyat* (commoners/the masses) as their tenantry. Butcher (1979:54) suggests that this attitude was especially prevalent among officials who had come from the Irish or English landed class. In a letter to his parents, C.D. Bowen, a member of the wealthy Irish landed nobility, wrote in 1887 that "'when I wake up in the morning there are generally six Malays on the veranda waiting till I have had my bath, etc. It is just the Irish tenantry all over again . . .'" (quoted in Butcher 1979:54). About his village life he wrote, "Living in a place like Utan Melintan one just represents the Irish landlord; one goes out in the morning and sees dirty and untidy places and tells the people to get them cleaned up. Their answer is always 'if it pleases your honour we will do it'" (Bowen 1950:900-901). Arthur Keyser (1897:71), a District Officer from English landed society, gave this description: "English officials . . . are accustomed to pass their lives amongst the Malays . . . much as those of the cottagers on his estate would be to a home-staying country squire in England."

Occasionally, the British superiority complex led to the abusive "white raja" mentality. Robson (1894:14) defined the white raja as one who "expects to receive as his right the usual

prostrated homage paid by a ryot to his raja." One District Officer who exemplified this definition was C.F. Bozzolo of Perak. He was known for his innovative ways of punishing offenders. Norman (1895:539) records that on one occasion, two Malays who had passed Bozzolo without giving a respectful greeting were forced to obtain dog licenses as signs of their subhuman behavior.

British Isolation

With an influx of personnel, and more regular communications caused by the advent of more and better roads, it became increasingly difficult for an official to rule a district as if it were his personal domain. Officials in the Malay States belonged to a rapidly expanding bureaucratic system and had to conform to its demands (Butcher 1979:55). Treasury work, court cases, and official correspondence confined officials to their offices and prevented them from travelling in their districts. Frequent transfers made it still more difficult to acquire an intimate knowledge of one's district (Selangor Journal 1896:8-9).

Ironically, the coming of more direct British rule brought a decline in the personal authority and influence of the District Officers (Butcher 1979:55). In 1897 a prominent official claimed that there "'is no longer that friendly relationship between many of the District Officers and the people of the country that there used to be'" (quoted in Butcher 1979:56). Another official complained that his days were entirely filled with court cases and office work. When asked about the Malays in his district he

replied that he never saw Malays anymore (Malay Mail 1897:6). Significantly, his evenings were now spent at the new local British club.

As more and more Europeans made Malaya their home, government officials no longer needed locals for companionship. As soon as a handful of Europeans settled in an area they inevitably formed a club. Butcher (1979:59) maintains that the social clubs were "by far the most important institutions for Europeans." By 1890 there were government-sponsored clubs in nearly every district in Perak. Taiping district had two general social clubs, a rifle club, turf club, and Masonic Lodge. Kinta district had a recreation club and a gymkhana club (Annual Report of Perak 1890:22). Bowen(1950:95) wrote in 1891 that he regularly attended a club ten miles from the town where he was stationed.

The diaries of one Hugh Clifford illustrate how the increase in Europeans could pull officials away from the Malays. An entry from 1888, when Clifford was one of only two Englishmen in town, reads:

. . . To bed at 7:30 A.M. Up again at 3 P.M. Walked--A thief was caught. Slept before dinner--The Bendahara (Malay Chief Minister) visited me--Went to the Balai & talked to To'Raya, To Kaya Cheno . . . & the Orang Kaya Pahlawan (Warrior). Talking with Alang till daylight. (recorded in Butcher 1979:56)

Clifford's diary for 1893, when his town had an entire English community, also contains references to his contacts with Malays, but there are now a number of passages which indicate a degree of absorption into English social life. The following excerpts

serve as examples:

Played L(awn) T(ennis) with Thomas before breakfast & after Tea. 5 sets in all. He is not a strong player.

Working on papers nearly all day. Played L.T. with Belfield & beat him 3 sets out of 4--4-6, 6-0, 6-3, & 6-4--dined with Belfield. Won 1197 points at Piquet (recorded in Butcher 1979:57).

It is important to note that, except for the most elite of Malay, Chinese, and Indian society, the clubs were the exclusive domain of the English. The clubs were meant to encapsulate a slice of English high society and transport it whole to Malaya as a respite against the administrative pressures and the debilitating climate.

The British community rapidly grew distant from the general public and developed into an isolated social clique. One man, disenchanted with Kuala Lumpur, wrote cynically, "if your soul is satisfied with the Lake Club and the Selangor Club; with criticizing your neighbour's dress and admiring your own; with tea and scandal; or poker and whiskey and soda, by all means stay in Kuala Lumpur, for that is the very place for you" ("Traacher's Hill" 1890:378-379).

In considering the fact that the European community became an increasingly self-contained social group, it is important to note that to make and maintain a career it became more important to establish good relations with one's superiors than to befriend the Malays or other Asians. Although the Governor had the final say, he generally approved the local Residents' recommendations for promotions and dismissals (Butcher 1979:57). Since most

British men worked for the government, the Resident's power over the European community became immense. Commenting on this, Robson (1894:5) wrote that if "the Resident is a sportsman, why we are all death on sport. If the Resident thinks only of work our energy is something frightful to behold." There are accounts that some men lost or gained positions based on their ability at cricket (Butcher 1979:58).

Marriage could also change an official's relations with his constituency. Clifford (1898a:161) wrote of men who had to forego leisurely conversation with the Malays in order to provide for a wife. In fact, marriage for British men in Malaya was extremely expensive. The attitude common to the middle class of Britain at the time, the class to which the majority of British in Malaya belonged, was that a man should marry only when he was able to provide his wife with the standard of living to which she was accustomed in her parents' home. In Malaya, the salary considered necessary for marriage was much higher than that in Britain because "the standard of living for Europeans in Malaya was higher and much more rigidly defined than the middle-class standard in Britain" (Butcher 1979:84). In a cookbook and housekeeping guide prepared by Noel Walker, the wife of a civil servant, Walker wrote: "There is no doubt that as soon as a man arrived in Malaya his ideas of what he cannot do without become very much enlarged . . ." (quoted in Butcher 1979:84). A local newspaper ("Marriage in the East" 1897) chided that "The tendency out here is for everyone to live exactly after the style set by

the well-to-do; to keep up the same table equipment, to follow the same pursuits, to become in fact dumb treaders of the same social mill."

Women were especially sheltered from exposure to the wider society. Servants did the shopping, as it was considered improper for a European woman to venture into the market. One British woman wrote that her daughter "was induced to go once, when she first lived in town - but only once. She fled, before she publicly disgraced herself" (Wilson 1937:64). The fact that a servant could buy goods more cheaply than could a European also discouraged women from going to the market.

British Superiority Complex

The isolation from the Malays and other Malayan peoples was enhanced by a smug air of superiority assumed by the British. Their world empire spoke for itself of the unparalleled grandeur of English civilization. Social Darwinism demonstrated to the world (in the eyes of the British) that humankind had reached its zenith in the social life of Her Majesty's court.

American traveler and writer Matt Ward wrote in 1853 (p.247) that the British residents of their colonies "imagine the universe to be deeply impressed by the graceful sublimity of their deportment." Ward (1853:248) observed the typical British colonial to be "insolent and overbearing to his inferiors." Moreover,

People shrink from him in disgust, and his vanity ascribes their conduct to a becoming awe for his pre-eminence; he imagines the silence which arises from contempt to be a deferential respect. . . . Indeed he entertains too exalted

an opinion of himself to doubt another's appreciation of his surpassing excellence. (Ward 1853:247-248)

Ward believed that English supremacy was maintained only by an inordinate respect for British power on the part of those governed. Of colonized Muslims, Ward (1853:215) wrote: "So exaggerated an opinion do they entertain of England's power, that the curse of their Prophet is scarcely more dreaded than the terrors of her ire." In short, "Englishmen . . . have so carefully stowed away English supremacy in a nice glass box, guarded at every angle by portentous 'hands off,' as successfully to protect it from the too close scrutiny of the masses" (Ward 1853:1).

Were Ward's opinions the musings of an isolated Anglophobe, or was there substance to his claims? Governor Swettenham complained of the increasing number of non-Europeans in the civil service (Butcher 1979:107). As Asian civil servants increased, the government developed the principle that as much as possible an English person would never have an Asian as his or her superior. Swettenham's successor, Sir John Anderson wrote that "'Any European would consider it an indignity to be asked to serve under a Eurasian'" (quoted in Butcher 1979:109).

The British would not appoint an Asian to a position higher than the most junior European in any particular department. Malayan doctors who received their training in England and who had higher qualifications than their superiors were generally not promoted above entry-level positions (Chelvasingam-MacIntyre 1973:40-41). The best government rest houses were reserved for

the British. The hospital system included a special British ward and a special British operating room. The first class sections of trains were divided into "A" and "B" compartments. The more comfortable "B" compartments were reserved exclusively for the British (Butcher 1979:99). Evidently, non-Europeans were even excluded from "public" balls (Butcher 1979:98). To add insult to injury, Asian habits that annoyed the British received attention disproportionate to the injury caused, while incidents of British misbehavior such as drunkenness and the molestation of Asian women were downplayed (Butcher 1979:105).

The British truly believed in their inherent superiority, or at least they stated it often and loudly enough to drown out any whispers of doubt. J.H.M. Robson, founder of the newspaper the Malay Mail, and twice unofficial member of the Federal Council, declared that Eurasians seldom possessed "those robust, rugged, manly attributes which have helped the Anglo-Saxon race to go forth and found the greatest Empire the world has ever seen." Robson (1897) went on to describe the Tamils as "sadly wanting in backbone and grit when it comes to analysis of character." A young British official wrote in 1907 that the development of the rubber industry was "a record of great achievement by courageous and masterful men--such men as were admittedly turned out only by the Anglo-Saxon race" (Knocker 1924:149-152).

A government handbook listed that one of the advantages of living in Kuala Lumpur was that "it does not require the European and Asiatic to live side by side" (F.M.S. Railways 1914:27-28).

The respect for the British increasingly was exchanged for a contempt for British arrogance. Contemporary newspaper editorials, letters, articles, and speeches are replete with expressions of the Malaysians' dissatisfaction with the British people. Dr. Lim Boon Keng, a prominent Chinese spokesperson for the non-European community, spoke for many when he said:

. . . however worthy my posterity may be, they will never be allowed to be more than the most subordinate servants, clerks, and so on, under men who think their white skins are the sole signs of born rulers and administrators, and who have the impudence to declare that we prefer them in authority over us before all others. It is a lie. (Lim 1912)

Speaking of the Spaniards, Dutch, and English of the 19th century, Syed Hussein Alatas (1977:7), professor of Malay Studies, and himself a Malay, states that:

All three powers were agreed that Western rule and Western culture were superior; that Western peoples should lead the world; that they were most suited to exploit the natural wealth of the East; and that they were the best administrators. Consequently, the ideology of colonial capitalism played down the capacities of Southeast Asian societies. Every conceivable item was invoked to denigrate the Southeast Asian, including his size and physiognomy.

Hence Geoffrey Gorer (1936:40), an anthropologist whose training should have helped to correct prejudice, wrote of the native Muslims: "A purely personal point which prevented me enjoying their company was the question of size; I do not like being among people who appear smaller and weaker than I am, unless they have corresponding superiority elsewhere; I dislike the company of those I feel to be my inferiors."

After a thorough study of the relations between the British and the Asians in Malaya, Butcher (1979:121) concludes that

some Europeans considered anything short of abject servility as insolence. Europeans, moreover, contributed more than their share to arousing tensions by their own actions. What all these diverse examples illustrate is not only that Europeans saw themselves as superior to other races but that in this period many of them were also filled with a fear of anything which might even appear to threaten their superiority.

British Living Standards

British cliquishness, and the ideology of superiority were not the only things that alienated the British from the Malays; the high standard of living of the British made them inaccessible and resented. The image of the natives and their place in the scheme of things was reflected in an actual state of affairs. Government salary scales placed the British at the top, non-European immigrants (i.e., the Chinese and Indians) in the middle, and the indigenous peoples (including the Malays) on the bottom.

Since the British controlled the administration and since they played a dominant role in the economy it was natural that they occupied high positions in Malayan society and enjoyed a relatively high level of comfort. The official British view on the matter was that the British should live above a certain standard in order to preserve the respect in which they believed they were held by the Malayan people. English planters used this very argument in successful appeals for salary increases (Butcher 1979:223). The colonial government supported unemployed Europeans or gave them passage out of Malaya because destitute whites were considered a great threat to British prestige. It was for the same reason that British drivers were replaced as

soon as possible.

The British were successful in maintaining a standard of living above the rest. "Only a very small proportion of the Asian population enjoyed a standard of living as high as that enjoyed by most Europeans" (Butcher 1979:224). Unfortunately, the goal of such a standard--the respect of the Asian population--was weakened rather than strengthened by the social distancing caused by British society.

Alatas contends that the Malays resented the British status system. He (Alatas 1977:228) writes with contempt that:

The European colonial community had the best of everything. In the administration and in business they held the highest posts. In agriculture they owned the biggest estates. In their social life they kept to the best clubs, hotels and restaurants, and they lived in the best residential area. They created in the colonies a social world which enjoyed all the benefits of health, wealth, status, residence, power, prestige, and influence.

Alatas' claims are not true in exact detail. For instance, the Chinese had their own social club in Kuala Lumpur that rivalled the best of the British clubs. Luxuriously furnished, it had the highest subscription fee of any club in the Federated Malay States (Wright and Cartwright 1908:856-857). Furthermore, in Kuala Lumpur the Resident-General's official residence was one of very few European houses which could compare with the mansions built by some of the Chinese entrepreneurs (Butcher 1979:83). Prior to 1900, the wealthiest individuals in the colony were Chinese. These points noted, a scholar who lived in Malaya was able to pinpoint that the "distinguishing feature of the situation in Malaya . . . is not that there are some Europeans

who are living luxuriously, but that, broadly speaking, there are none who do not live in that fashion" (Emerson 1937:488).

The British community as a whole clearly enjoyed the highest living standard, and the social gulf continually widened. Some examples of the early days when the first Residents had few of the comforts of home will serve to show how far the British had fallen in their social rise. Birch for months lived in a houseboat on the river. Hugh Low in Perak, Hugh Clifford in Pahang, Martin Lister in Negeri Sembilan, and Frank Swettenham in Selangor, among the first Residents of their respective states, each lived in humble conditions. I have already mentioned (p.47) that Low occupied a small, Malay-style house that was always accessible to the Malays. Swettenham's first home was a palm-leaf-covered stockade on the banks of a river. Twice a day tidal waters covered its mud floor. In these early days, the Residents spoke mostly Malay and searched out Malay companionship. Twenty or so years later, relations with Malays were devolving as quickly as British society was evolving. In keeping with the dignity of his new post as Resident-General, Swettenham had a house built on a hill overlooking the beautiful Lake Gardens of Kuala Lumpur. A veritable mansion, the house "contained dining, drawing, morning, and billiard rooms, five bedrooms, five dressing rooms, office accommodation, servants' quarters, stables, and quarters for the horse-keepers and gardeners" (Butcher 1979:74). Swettenham, who had lived in a makeshift house with flooded mud floors, now commented in all seriousness

that the house was not extravagant "'nor much more than enough for a man with a family'" (quoted in Butcher 1979:74).

The socio-economic gap was seen clearly in the number of servants employed by the respective communities. Whereas in England a family was considered fortunate to have one servant, the average British family in colonial Malaya employed between three and six servants (Butcher 1979:142). A Malayan family, though, had to be reasonably well-off to be able to afford even one servant. In 1928 Gibson (p.120) claimed that it was "essential" for European families to have at least five servants. A 1931 Commission on Temporary Allowances assumed that a married British official would need seven servants - a houseboy, cook, waiter, gardener, nurse, chauffeur, and clothes washer (Butcher 1979:130).

This same Commission outlined the European and Asiatic standards for a family budget in 1930.¹⁷ The monthly budget was \$960 (a respectable salary for Malaysians even today) for Europeans, and \$176 for Asians or Eurasians. Granted, the European budget is for an official of slightly greater seniority and experience than his Asian counterpart, but it is still grossly inequitable. Even though the Asian family has one more child than the European family, the Asian family is expected to suffice on 44% of the European food budget, and 16% of the European clothes budget. The Asian electricity and water budget

¹⁷See Appendix B for Table 1 (Monthly Family Budgets in 1930: European and Asiatic Standards), excerpted from Butcher (1979).

is a mere 22% of that of the Europeans. The Asian education allowance is, appallingly, only 7% of the European allowance. For Asians, transportation will be by bus, while the English example, of course, requires the English to be whisked about in chauffeur-driven cars. Furthermore, the English gentleman could not be expected to live without his whiskey, gin, and cigarettes. To make matters worse, provision was made for European, but not Asian, widows.¹⁸

¹⁸ The resentment caused by inequities in pay must not be minimized. I observed such resentment when I was working in Malaysia. I taught English as a second language in an American-Malaysian cooperative program, designed to prepare Malay students for American universities. The students completed a not-for-credit English language track before advancing to one of various associates degree programs.

The English track was taught by American and Malaysian (mostly Malay) teachers. The credit courses in the various majors were taught mostly by American professors and associate professors. The Malaysian teachers were paid on a Malaysian government scale. We American English teachers were paid a much higher salary, based on what we might expect to have been paid as full time ESL instructors in the U.S. The American professors were paid more still. They received their current salary from their respective universities in the States. Since many of them were tenured and quite senior in their teaching experience (those were the ones who could afford to take a year or two away from their jobs back home), some of the American professors had salaries upwards of \$80,000.

As an English teacher teaching four classes a day, five days a week, it was naturally hard for me to watch professors who earned from two to five times what I did, come in only two or three days a week to teach their six or eight hours. For the Malaysian teachers, the feelings I experienced were magnified many times over.

The Malaysians were paid the equivalent of approximately \$6,000 per year. For Malaysia, it was fairly good pay, but that was small consolation considering that we American English teachers with whom they rubbed shoulders, and who were doing exactly the same work (with the exception that the Malaysian government required the Malaysians to punch a time clock and come in for half a day on Saturdays, while we Americans weren't required to do so), were being paid several times more than they were simply because we were Americans. Individually, most of the

The British, indeed, grew to be seen as a soft and spoiled, pampered people. The tropical climate contributed to this image. European science at the time taught that residence in the tropics placed an intolerable strain on the body of Europeans, for whom the temperate zone was considered natural (Butcher 1979:70-71). Time away from the heat and humidity was believed to be absolutely essential to prevent physical and mental deterioration. Consequently, the British took regular vacations to various hill stations. These were no experiences of roughing it. All of the amenities of city life were made available, servants and all. In an account of a short stay at a particular hill station resort near Kuala Lumpur, it took 20 porters to carry the provisions necessary for a single British family (Butcher 1979:72-73). All of the supplies and some of the family members (transported in chairs which were slung on poles and carried by four coolies each) were carried by servants seven full miles uphill. Imagine the emotions aroused in you if you were forced to carry a wealthy, high society foreigner seven miles uphill in the scorching sun, only to wait on her hand and foot when you reached the top. This was all done in the name of maintaining a certain image and protecting the British from the effects of the climate.

British Sexual Relations

Americans worked hard, were friendly, and were well-enough liked, but corporately, we were resented. In my estimation, the financial gap between the Malaysians and the Americans divided us as much as the language and cultural barriers.

The climate and separation from England, or as one writer put it, from "the unimaginable peace of an English summer night" (Peet 1934:59-60), were continually invoked to excuse a number of British foibles. While the climate supposedly deadened physical and mental capacities, it was paradoxically believed to strengthen the libido (Butcher 1979:196,204-205). That the tropical climate was said to heighten sexual passions, and that it was sometimes also stated that Asian women possessed a physical attractiveness irresistible to Europeans, led most Britishers to view prostitution as an inevitable feature of their life in Malaya (Butcher 1979:196).

In the towns it was common for British men to visit brothels. The British in Malaya had considerable freedom from the sexual norms of Victorian England. Governor Swettenham defended this distinction by stating that morality was dependent upon, among other things, "the influence of climate." The official acceptance of prostitution is evidenced by the fact that the British government reserved an area for brothels when it planned the city of Kuala Lumpur in 1882 (Butcher 1979:1980). In 1909, when the Reverend Horley of the Methodist Mission complained of the open visibility of prostitution in close proximity to a church and school, the Resident of Selangor easily persuaded the Colonial Office to ignore Horley (Butcher 1979:198).

The British preferred Japanese prostitutes, who were brought to Malaya primarily to fill the British demand. "In 1911, 900 of

the 1,692 Japanese women in the F.M.S. (Federated Malay States) were 'known' prostitutes, and another 129 were, according to the census, brothel-keepers. It was said that any town large enough to have a post office also had a Japanese brothel" (Butcher 1979:197).

The records indicate that the Malayan men typically preferred prostitutes from their own race. The low number of Malay prostitutes¹⁹ is a strong indication of the widespread disapproval of prostitution throughout Malay society. The British who were frequently seen going to and from the Japanese brothels could not have but damaged the reputation of the religion of these men in the eyes of the Malay community (Marsh 1968:35-36).

While prostitution was common in urban areas, away from the towns it was common for British men to have mistresses. Malariologist Sir Malcom Watson (in discussion in Culpin 1933:920) estimated that 90 percent of European men living in outstations in the early 20th century had Asian mistresses. While Watson's claim is impossible to confirm, it should be treated with respect in that Watson's work brought him into contact with planters throughout the F.M.S. Many of these planters were single men who lived for years without the benefit of the companionship of women of their own race. Watson (in Culpin 1933:920) related that the planters' mistresses "supplied

¹⁹In 1911 there were 2,164 known Chinese prostitutes, but only 50 Malay prostitutes ("Report of the Secretary for Chinese Affairs for 1911" 1912:2).

the only companionship which these men had, often from one week to another. They were . . . helpmates without whom many more...men would have succumbed to both alcohol and malaria." Bruce Lockhart, a planter who himself had a Malay mistress, wrote as if Asian mistresses were the norm among planters (Lockhart 1936:30,141,197).

Concubinage was by no means limited to planters. Winstedt (1969:18) implied that government officials in outstations frequently kept Asian mistresses. If prostitution was expected in the city, concubinage in the outstations was considered a virtual necessity. A railway engineer who lived with a Malay woman put it bluntly: "My God! I've been in this bloody jungle for fifteen years, and the only things that keep me alive are Siti and the Sydney Bulletin!" (Wells 1926:69).

I do not want to leave the impression that all, or even most of the Malayan British approved of the sexual standards in the colony. Numerous British individuals lamented the prevalence of prostitution and concubinage.

Bad though it was regarded it appears that much was forgiven if a man gave no hint that the relationship was anything but one based purely on necessity. It was one thing for a man to write . . . that "no sane man would ever form an irregular union with a woman, who at best is a sorry makeshift, if he knew that a girl of his own race was willing to share hardship during early years." It was quite another thing however for men to give the impression, so resented by "All Whites," that they actually preferred Asian women to European women. (Butcher 1979:204)

Once again separation, the Asian women themselves, and climactic conditions are held responsible for the actions of the men.

Think of the young assistant standing all day over Asiatic labour, many of them working with breasts and bodies exposed to the sun, surrounded by women to whom a few dollars are a fortune for which they would sell the best of themselves, and exposed to all the insidious temptations of the heated tropical zone. ("A Letter to a British Newspaper" 1923:15)

The heat, the climate, had a stirring effect which a man in England cannot fully appreciate. Add to that the sight of a graceful brown form with full breasts scantily covered, a perfect figure, a moon-like face and sensual mouth, framed in a jet-black head of hair, illuminated by dark soft eyes, and the bachelor would not be human if he did not set his thought agoing. (Bailey 1944:129-130)

Neither of the writers in the preceding quotes approved of extramarital sexual relations. Both were arguing in favor of early marriages. Under the circumstances, though, it was implied that no man could be fully blamed for succumbing to such sexual temptation. The man was forgiven even more if he expressed that he did not hold the same lofty feelings for his Asian companion that he supposedly would have for a European woman (Butcher 1979:205). This brings us back to the British concern for image. The British woman had to be elevated above all others. Once again, all aspects of British life (in this case British women) had to reign superior over Malayan society.

British Image

It is most bitterly ironic that the very efforts intended by the British to win the respect and confidence of the people, were the things that ostracized the British from the Malayan population. The British had determined to rule not by force of military might as the Dutch and Portuguese had previously attempted, but to command the respect of the population through

good example. It is here that the notion of prestige comes into play. As prestige was assumed the basis of rule, any perceived threat to that prestige was considered a grave offense. Any act thought to degrade the British in the eyes of the Malaysians was condemned. Thus, the British were constrained to be on their best behavior around the Malaysians. In response to the news that two English planters had assaulted a Chinese bar-boy, a British editorial urged "every decent white man to ostracize them from the society that they have disgraced. They are pariahs, unfit for the companionship of honorable men" ("Pariahs" 1922:44).

The British' exalted view of themselves caused them to believe that they were constantly looked up to as examples and thus that they could not let down their subjects by lowering their guard.

A white man in the tropics is watched as a minor god. He may be hated or liked, despised or respected, but being in the minority he is the object of attention from the moment his native servant has taken in breakfast to the time when he has dismissed the chauffeur or rickshaw puller and moved to bed. From the minute he has entered his office, he is watched by natives and feels, if he has a conscience, that he must give an example, in conduct, wisdom and strength. (Belainkin 1932:69)

The writer was right that the natives watched a Britisher's every move. Consequently, he spoke of the importance of setting a good example in "conduct, wisdom and strength." What he did not see, but what should have been so obvious as to hit him square across the face, was the resentment caused by the cushy lifestyle the "white man" in his paragraph enjoyed at the expense of the locals. From dawn to dusk he is waited on hand and foot

by "native servant," "chauffeur or rickshaw puller." Undoubtedly the native onlookers in his office are those earlier described by Lim (1912) as "the most subordinate servants, clerks, and so on, under men who think their white skins are the sole sign of born rulers and administrators."

A major consequence of the need to present a good image was the reinforcement of the British inclination to separate themselves from the non-Europeans. The pressure to act above reproach was difficult to endure.

They therefore attended clubs and private gatherings that, being confined to Europeans and a very few carefully chosen non-Europeans, allowed them to relax without worrying about what kind of image they were presenting. "We ate & drank & played games like small children," wrote a teacher, who in his first months in Malaya took a humorous view of European attitudes, about a party with some friends. "It was good to put aside our true greatness for a period." (Butcher 1979:171)

Although wishing to establish a public image of cordiality, the British in general ceased to seek close relations with the Asians, and thus forfeited the esteem they tried so hard to earn.

Not every Britisher made excuses for British behavior. G.L. Peet (1934:59-60), the Straits Times reporter in Kuala Lumpur in the 1930s, argued that British difficulties in Malaya were caused not by the climate but by the fact that the British took no interest in the community around them. They suffered from an exile mentality by which they refused to give up British ways and attach themselves to the ways of Malaya.

Dr. Waugh-Scott (1913), a renowned estates doctor, blamed the dismal moral state of affairs on neither climate nor

separation but on a "mental disharmony" brought on by a failure "to square our manner of living with our ideals of conduct and behavior." In other words the "tropical Neurasthenia" so discussed in medical circles was quite simply guilt.

We may choose to ignore in our conscious behaviour the fact that intemperance, unkindness, improvidence, impurity, concubinage, etc., are unsocial and wrong, but the unconscious never ignores . . . such matters. Deep down, unsleeping, and always maintaining its conflict with the behaviour which the conscious mind has willed, lies the great herd instinct which regards such conduct as taboo, and until our practice agrees with our deepest principles there can be no real equanimity of spirit.

"Living in sin" is a kind of joke as we mention it round the pahit table, but on through the day and night the never ceasing 'Thou shalt not' of the unconscious is grinding its pathway towards the conscious with serious effects on the peace of mind of those who do not take steps to mend matters.

Much of our indulgence in alcohol and the inordinate rush after pleasures and excitements of all kinds are merely the symptoms of this lack of mental harmony. (Waugh-Scott 1913)

Although they challenged the status quo, the Peet and Waugh-Scott quotes are two additional voices in support of our belief that the image of the British actually conveyed to the Malays was decidedly negative. The "intemperance, unkindness, improvidence, impurity, concubinage," "indulgence in alcohol," and the fact that such "living in sin" was spoken of in jest, would have offended any sensible Malay Muslim. Furthermore, the fact that the British did not attempt to appreciate the riches of the Malay culture, but religiously guarded their British customs to the minutest detail, displayed a lack of genuine interest in the Malays as people.

In short, although the British were respected for their administrative skill and technological know-how, the socio-

economic gap, the British superiority complex, and the prominence of what the Malays at least would have considered immoral behavior, all contributed to a negative view of the British. For our study, it is important to note that especially since Muslims don't compartmentalize life into secular and sacred domains, the Christian church would most certainly have been implicated in the shortcomings of the British.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Conditioning, Part 2:

British and Missionary Policy

"If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature,
but by our institutions, great is our sin."

--Charles Darwin

British Policies

The Pre-British Malays

We have considered the effect that British attitudes and lifestyles were likely to have had on Malaysians in general and Malays in particular. I would now like to focus on British policies and programs to determine whether or not they are perceived by the Malays to have been detrimental to the Malays. In this, I am interested in how the British colonial system affected the Malays' relationship to the Christian gospel. The colonial rule over the Malays has bearing on the Malay international students' perceptions of Christianity even now.

To understand the changes brought by the British, it is necessary to know something of the Malay situation before the coming of the British.

For centuries the Malays lived in scattered villages along the banks of the main rivers. The few larger centers of population did little to detract from the impression of a sparsely populated forested land. The majority of the settled population were peasant farmers engaged in a primarily subsistence agricultural economy based on rice. The Malays kept some livestock, fished the rivers, and supplemented their diet

with fruits and vegetables grown on home plots. On both sides of the peninsula, but especially on the east coast, many made a living from fishing the sea.

Although the economy was basically a subsistence one, there was always considerable trade along the rivers, in the hands of the local nobility, or "foreign Malays,"²⁰ Arabs, and later Chinese. Under a system of tribute to their local chiefs, villagers collected forest produce such as rattan, bamboo, and resin which were traded for imported textiles, tobacco, salt, and iron tools. There was also a valuable export trade in tin and a smaller one in gold, the two products for which Malaya was most well known outside of Malaya (Wheatley 1962:xxi-xxiv).

The largest political unit in peninsular Malaya was the independent state, ruled over by a hereditary monarch with the Malay title *yang di-pertuan* (he who is made Lord) or by the Hindu term for ruler, *raja*. The title *sultan*, known in the Malay states since the coming of Islam, was not widely used until the 20th century. The ruler was supported by a number of territorial chiefs, holding areas of the state in which they lived; they in turn were supported by minor chiefs and village headmen whose responsibilities included administration, revenue collection, and mustering the people necessary for war or joint labor projects. The office of *yang di-pertuan* was first and foremost to express the symbolic unity of the State and to protect its order and

²⁰The term was sometimes used of Malays from another state, but more commonly of ethnic Malays (mainly Buginese and certain Sumatrans) from outside the peninsula.

integrity. The *yang di-pertuan* was invested with an aura of sanctity and the supernatural that were expressed outwardly in elaborate ceremonial practice and belief, important even though it often represented no corresponding concentration of power (Roff 1967:2-3).

The exercise of power by the ruler beyond his district was limited by the extent to which he could control and command his territorial chiefs. In the mid-nineteenth century as incomes from the richer tin-bearing areas gave some chiefs a disproportionate source of economic power, the district ruler was sometimes left with little control beyond his own district.

In fact, the actual workings of the Malay political system were seldom characterized by any form of centralized authority in the mid-19th century when the British presence was being established. The district chief was the key to political organization, holding under commission from the sultan an area of the state in which he exercised direct personal control. Because the non-subsistence sector of the economy was based on trade along the river, a chief nearly always lived in the main village of his district at a strategic point on the river, enabling him to exact toll on the traffic and to defend his district.

The district chiefs' basis of authority was people, so that much depended on the ability of a chief to gather and retain a following both from among his own kin and from the peasants.

In the absence of adequate communication or of a centralized administration, a sultan had to possess extraordinary personal

authority in order to be, in effect, more than a district chief among district chiefs. It is true that the usual position of the royal capital at the mouth of the state's principal river, and thus at the most advantageous of taxation points, gave him an economic edge, as did the system of tribute. Nevertheless, proportionate to their power, chiefs retained more income than they paid and achieved positions rivaling that of their rulers. The situations in which lesser chiefs did in fact attain power closely rivaling that of their superiors were marked by jealousies, fighting, and fission. These were counterbalanced, though, by a recognition of the value of the sultanate with its established hierarchy of authority as a validating mechanism for the whole system.

It was to the advantage of the chiefs to maintain the sultanate, the symbol of the state and fount of title, as a basis for their position vis-a-vis each other, as a source of prize in dynastic maneuvering, and as the embodiment of the larger political unit with its advantages for trade and defense. Thus, although the real power of the ruler might be little greater in political and economic terms than that of one of the senior chiefs, and though the life of the state was punctuated by periodic quarrels and intrigues, there was a general acceptance of the sultanate, if not necessarily the sultan, as formal head of state. (Roff 1967:6).

The whole system rested on the division of Malay society into two main social groups: a ruling class (those of royal descent) and a subject class. The ruling class consisted of families which had a customary right to various chiefly offices which were ranked in a complex order of seniority based on a system in use during the Melaka sultanate in the 15th century. As with the office of sultan itself, all the lesser titles had

their own privileges and symbols of rank, "respected and jealously guarded as an expression of the virtue inherent in the office and shared by the holder and his kin" (Roff 1967:4). The concept of the sharp distinction of status between the rulers and the ruled and concern for its expression was of critical interest to the traditional elite. The boundary between subject class and ruling class was thus strictly enforced. At the base of this social system were the ordinary Malay rice cultivators, owing obedience to their local chief and with little knowledge of the world beyond their village.

A Double Standard

Early British administrators, seeking rationalization for British intervention in Malaya, were quick to point out abuses in the Malay system. Swettenham (1900a:260), for example, referred to the rule of the various chiefs as despotic. He (1948:141) elsewhere said that the rulers had stripped their people of all initiative and that "the normal state . . . was robbery, battle, and murder."

Malay historian of Malay history, Syed Hussein Alatas (1977 :131) complains that this is a case of the colonial Europeans parading the vices of native rulers while ignoring their own. It is true that the colonial rulers never failed to point out the inhumane actions of their Malay predecessors, while explaining away the great injustices perpetrated by their own people. Referring back to the Dutch rule, American historian Clive Day (1904:49) says the opportunism and economic exploitation of the

Dutch "was the natural motto to follow when in contact with the native political organization." The following description shows that Day (1904:49) is somehow able to twist even the worst of Dutch policy into something respectable:

In attempting to pick their way in the tortuous paths of native politics the Dutch made mistakes which were sometimes followed by disastrous results, and the course that they pursued in some cases is decidedly questionable from the standpoint of modern ethical standards. There is much to criticize, but there is something of boldness and sagacity that commands admiration in this side of Dutch policy.

What was "decidedly questionable" ethically was blamed not on the Dutch but on the "tortuous paths" of native politics. The victims are blamed rather than the exploiters. The full force of the colonial evils is softened further by the terminology used. Whereas Dutch mistakes are "decidedly questionable," Malay mistakes are labelled the result of "greed," "despotism" and "moral depravity."

This double standard is seen in the British criticism of the native rulers' inability to fight epidemics, while aggressively promoting the sale of opium, the result of which was far more devastating than any epidemic which hit Malaya (Alatas 1977:15-16). Edwin Hodder (1890:73), in a history of the worldwide expansion of Christianity entitled The Conquest of the Cross, wrote of English adventurer Rajah Brooke's mistakes in Sarawak merely that it would be "inopportune to attempt to discuss the vexed questions that have arisen in connection with the energetic methods and severe repressive measures . . ." Hodder went on in detail to praise Brooke for his skill in administration,

"especially in connection with the civilization of the natives and the planting of Christianity amongst them."

Going back to Malay society at the time of the coming of the British, the British account of Malay social disintegration was clearly exaggerated, especially where it suggested either systematic or motiveless tyranny (Roff 1967:9). Yet, the British view finds strong support from a few extant Malay accounts. Malay author Abdullah wrote in 1843 (1970:269) a dismal description of the situation of the Malays under Malay rulership:

I viewed with particular disfavour the lives led by the Malays and the circumstances of those with whom I had been acquainted. I had observed their conduct, behaviour and habits from my youth up to the present time and had found that, as time went on, so far from becoming more intelligent they became more and more stupid. I considered the matter carefully in my mind and came to the conclusion that there were several reasons for this state of affairs, but that the main one was the inhumanity and the repressive tyranny of the Malay rulers, especially towards their own subjects.

Abdullah accused the Malay rulers of stifling the will to learn, to work hard, and to better oneself. He wrote as follows:

As it is, under Malay rule ordinary folk cannot lift up their heads and enjoy themselves, and dare not show any originality for it is forbidden by the ruler. Wishing possibly to build themselves finely decorated houses of stone they are afraid to do so. They are afraid to wear fine clothing, shoes and umbrellas in case they are taboo. They are afraid even to keep fine clothing in their houses because it is said that such things are the perquisites only of royalty. Rich men especially live in perpetual fear and are fortunate if their only losses are their belongings. For indeed their very lives are in danger. Means are found whereby such men may be penalized and mulched of their belongings. If a man is reluctant to lend any of his most cherished possessions, it is accounted a serious offense. And once he has given them up they are lost forever; he will never see them again. A beautiful young girl in his house is like a raging poison, for it is quite certain that the ruler will take her as one of his wives with or without her guardian's permission. This practice more than any other

arouses the hatred of the servants of Allah. I heard of one courageous man who refused to part with his daughter. The ruler ordered him to be murdered on some pretext, and then took the child away. All such acts as these are forbidden by Allah and His Prophet and incur the censure of mankind throughout the world. (Abdullah 1970:271)

Alatas (1977:135) counters that Abdullah's beliefs are atypical of Malays in general in that he was a Western-educated British sympathizer, employed by the likes of British dignitaries. Alatas believes, moreover, that the British colonial scholars suppressed material critical of British rule, but promoted Abdullah's work specifically because it was pro-British.

Alatas (1977:135) admits that there were numerous cases of Malay abuse of power, but he contends that this was not the norm, and that the British have blamed a whole social class for the abuses of a few. There were in fact a number of checks on the arbitrary use of power by the aristocracy. Firstly, the ruler and ruled alike shared a common rural life in which status differences were reflected only to a limited extent by differences in material welfare. Secondly, systematic oppression would have been counterproductive in village life because it would have resulted in lack of cooperation in production of goods and services. A ruler's power lay in his ability to attract and keep people under his protective sphere. If he could not win the allegiance of people, he could not increase his own wealth and security. Finally, there was the ultimate protest open to peasants faced with intolerable conditions - departure to another area. Roff (1967:11) reports

that this option was frequently taken. There was no shortage of land, houses were easily built, and peasants had few possessions. A ruler who became despotic could easily lose his subjects to a more benevolent ruler down the river.

Malay Devolution

While the British overemphasized the bad state of affairs of the Malay states, I believe Alatas and the Malays have been too favorable in their assessment of pre-British Malay society. In his determination to put the colonial powers in a bad light, Alatas downplays examples of abuse on the part of pre-British Malay rulers. For example, he makes no distinction between the inhumanity of certain sultans who had their entire families tortured and put to death, or who for entertainment threw naked women into a pit of hungry tigers, and a senior British officer who enjoyed forcing young boys to box each other until the blood flowed and who delighted in the spectacle of releasing ducks in the midst of fierce dogs (Alatas 1977:11,131,133).

The aforementioned mitigating factors granted, there appears to be no question that the determining characteristic of the relationship between the Malay subject and ruling class was unquestioning submission. This relationship is expressed in a number of rueful Malay sayings: "Whoever becomes king, my hands still go to my forehead" (in homage); to try to help someone under the wrath of the sultan is "like helping a cow catch a tiger"; and a peasant standing up against his or her ruler is "like a soft cucumber fighting a prickly durian fruit."

Neither the subordinate position of the subject class nor the right of the ruling class to demand goods and services from them were questioned. Any significant accumulation of property was expropriated from the peasants. Indebtedness was common and led to the personal servitude of debt-bondage (Roff 1967:10). The system of corvee labor which supported the ruling class and built and maintained village paths, boat docks, and mosques, was typically onerous.

Though it may be overdrawn, Miller's description (1966:90) of mid-19th century peninsular Malaya paints a basically accurate picture of how far the Malay states had fallen from the glory days of the Melaka sultanate:

Life existed under a dark pall of lawlessness and internecine warfare in which the chiefs with the best fighters remained in possession of a port, or a stretch of river, or a slice of country in the interior, and the ruler clung to his throne by armed might. Robbery and murder went unpunished unless royalty or the nobility were victims. Taxation on the peasants was crushing, and the homes of rulers and chiefs were stocked with slaves who worked off their debts in years of subjection. To the immediate outside world, many of the Malay States were reaching a stage of complete disintegration; Winstedt, in one of his histories, described some of the States as "committing harakiri."

Why Malay society had devolved to such a state is a matter for future discussion. The point here is that when the British entered Malaya, civil wars, fratricidal struggles, and oppressive conditions were rampant so that the Malay states were in a state of serious decline.

Malay Subordination

The primary goal of British involvement in Malaya was the creation of political stability and Western-style government as a necessary precondition of and context for economic and commercial development (Malays would say "exploitation") of the country's natural resources. Providing a moral rationale for this endeavor was an expressed concern for the welfare and advancement of the Malay people within the framework of traditional Malay society. The contradiction inherent in these aims, the one impossible to realize under existing Malay institutions and the other dedicated to their preservation, led to what Roff (1967:13) calls "the schizoid character of British Malay policy."

The British recognized that the Malays were not asking for a new government system. Partly as a means of avoiding social unrest, and partly in the interests of the "protectorate" relationship, the British colonial policy sought to shield Malay village life from the disruptive effects of the new economic development. An abundance of land made it possible to allot large tracts to European and Chinese plantation and mining enterprises without seriously infringing upon Malay property rights. The problem of providing a sufficient and cheap labor force when the Malays were either too few in number or reluctant to become wage laborers was solved by the wholesale introduction of immigrant workers from southern China and the British possessions in India. Land policies in the 20th century were calculated to keep the Malays cultivating traditional crops on

their customary land.

Roff (1967:13) states that British rule and the importation of immigrant labor had the cumulative effect of leaving "Malay life behind like a *prahu* in the wake of an ocean liner, rocking slightly but otherwise left to its own way." Malay society was indeed rocked with ocean liner-sized changes that came with speed boat rapidity. Between 1880 and 1900 the combined population of Perak and Selangor (the two states with the most direct British involvement) rose from 130,000 to about 600,000, most of the growth coming from foreign, predominantly Chinese, immigration. Tin mines boomed, and countless hectares of primal jungle were transformed into oil palm and rubber plantations, to the extent that Malaya quickly became the world's leading producer of tin, palm oil, and natural rubber. The total revenue of the states under British protection rose more than 30-fold, and the value of exports increased more than 80-fold.²¹ By 1900, 1,500 miles of paved road and 300 miles of railway traversed the peninsula (Roff 1967:13).

The growth of the government administrative bureaucracy kept pace with the other developments. In the separate protected states and after 1895 in the new federation centralized departments were established for finance, public works, education, police, agriculture, and lands and mines. With the

²¹ The virtually unlimited supply of cheap labor from China and India made possible the exploitation of Malayan agricultural and mineral resources without obliging the Malays to share significantly in the task or its rewards.

executive positions reserved exclusively for the British, all areas of public life quickly were subsumed under British control.

In all practical terms the Malays came to play little part in the shaping of their lives, though side by side with the Western structure of economic and administrative growth, the form and some of the substance of the pre-colonial world was preserved in sufficient degree to ensure that traditional life could to all appearances go on much as before. (Roff 1967:14)

After the initial and disastrous neglect of local sensitivities displayed in the events surrounding the 1875 Birch murder, the British attempted to make the traditional Malay elite feel included in the running of the government. The chiefs were given salaried positions as "Native Magistrates" and were consulted on all matters of state, especially those concerning Malay affairs. Although the British had taken over the government, the traditional Malay hierarchy was preserved and even strengthened by British rule (Butcher 1979:8). The centralization of power within each state had the effect of emasculating the independent authority of district chiefs. The sultans' position was now supported by real as well as ritual authority, and so they enjoyed a security previously unknown. With British endorsement they were no longer in danger of being outshone by district chiefs of lower rank.

The Malay aristocracy's traditional hierarchical order was preserved by the bestowing of administrative titles and corresponding salaries commensurate with their previous rank and influence. (In practice they were not expected to do much more than live off of their government allowances.)

The British educational policy also maintained the distinction between the aristocracy and the rakyat (the masses). Special government schools were established exclusively for children of Malay royal descent. Although the schools did little to prepare the students for anything but subordinate government posts, they became one more symbol of the sacrosanct nature of the Malay aristocracy.

Overall the British had stripped the substance from Malay rule, leaving the skeleton of Malay traditional status intact. The swift and severe retribution for the 1875 Birch murder and the equally decisive response to a rebellion in the state of Pahang caused by chiefs who were discontent about salary scales (Linehan 1936:129,134) made it clear that it was futile to openly resist British power. Thus, the Malay chiefs settled for the best that they could get--the security that came with the official recognition of their status. Even then it was an unwilling acquiescence to a situation beyond their control. Throughout the British rule, records are full of petitions by Malay aristocrats complaining of inadequate representation and insufficient attention to their interests (Roff 1967:17).

As the complexity of the administration grew, because of the rapidly expanding Chinese mining and commercial community, with concomitant urban growth, financial operations, land management, and communications, the sphere of influence of the Malay chiefs correspondingly diminished. Their traditional status intact, the chiefs were left with no real say beyond assistance in minor

incidents of Malay life alone.

The educational system also reflected the schizoid tension inherent in a system committed to preservation for the Malays in the midst of far-reaching innovation. With the exception of a few Malay elite who were provided an education patterned after the British public school system (and this only in order to give the Malay elite token subordinate government posts), the educational policy towards the Malays was designed (with the approval of some of the Malay aristocracy) merely to make them better farmers. While English was fast becoming an indispensable qualification for government appointments, the British pushed Malay vernacular education for the Malays. English classes were not even offered. This had the effect of excluding Malays from positions of influence, not to mention involvement in the broader commercial sphere.

Clearly, the subordination of Malays was intentional. In 1896, a survey of 4,365 past pupils of Malay vernacular schools in the state of Perak found that only 118 were employed as "clerks and orderlies." The majority were farmers. The situation only worsened with time. Of the 2,900 students who left the vernacular schools in 1903, only one became a clerk (Roff 1967:25). Resident E.W. Birch approved of this pattern, commenting that it was good that the Malays were not being "over-educated," but rather were following in the footsteps of their parents by working on the fields (Birch 1912:444).

An official 1905 government report ("The System of Education

1905:9) on education admitted that the Malay vernacular school curriculum was extremely limited (confined to literacy and basic arithmetic), "but sufficient for the ordinary requirements of Malay boys, who will become bullock-wagon drivers, padi growers, fishermen, etc."

Commenting on the exclusion of English from the curriculum, Frank Swettenham (1891:16) explained that it was not advisable "to attempt to give the children of an agricultural population an indifferent knowledge of a language that to all but a very few would only unfit them for the duties of life and make them discontent with anything like manual labor." Swettenham (1906:258), later, in his usual patronizing manner, defended Perak state's allocation of only one percent of its budget to education by stating that

the results are not unsatisfactory, and the Government has never desired to give the children a smattering, or even a larger quantity, of knowledge which will not help them to more useful and happy lives than they now lead. To the Malay the principle value of school attendance is to teach him habits of order, punctuality and obedience.

In fairness to the British, it must be said that many of the Malays themselves resisted anything that threatened to disturb their traditional village life. The introduction of free government Malay schools in Perak and Selangor in the 1870s and 1880s was met with suspicion. It was only by patience and persuasion that school attendance was increased.

Much of the village Malays' distrust of the British-sponsored schools lay in the fear that the children would be seduced to the Christianity with which the British were

associated. To counteract this fear, the British appointed Quranic teachers and made classes in Quran reading mandatory.

The standard of instruction in the village schools was appallingly low. I have already alluded to the serious underfunding. A system seriously handicapped by a gross shortage of materials was further debased by incompetent teachers. Teachers' skills were barely above those of their students. R.J. Wilkinson (1906:61), Inspector of Malay Schools for the Federated Malay States from 1903 to 1906, discovered that very few of the Malay school teachers had ever read a single book beyond the textbooks and prayer books that were actually used in class. He lamented that "The destruction of the old Malay literary instinct --even more than the loss of so much of the literature itself-- is a painful feature of the change that has come over Malay letters since they have been entrusted to European guidance." The low priority given to the education of the Malays is demonstrated by the fact that prior to 1902, the salary of a Malay assistant teacher was less than that of the lowest ranking Tamil laborer (Wright and Cartwright 1908:226).

Subsequent reforms gradually lifted vernacular Malay education from its miserable state, but it remained designed essentially "'to educate the rural population in a suitable rural manner and equip them to live a useful, happy rural life'" (Personal communication from O.T.Dusseck to William Roff recorded in Roff 1967:28).

A growing demand for English-educated staff from both the

government bureaucracy and private business placed a financial strain on the administration. The government turned to the Christian missions to supply much of this need. Because the government discouraged proselytization among the Malays for fear of arousing Muslim-Malay antagonism, the missions turned naturally to providing education for the non-Malays, who predominated in the towns of the protected states where all such English-medium schools were established. Some attempt was made to compensate for the effects of the schools being in urban areas by providing scholarships and hostel accommodations for rural Malays prepared to come into the towns. The system did not work very satisfactorily: village children did not adjust well to the towns away from their own homes and were often neglected, and parents were reluctant to let them go. One effect of the transfer of education to the Christians missions was to place instruction in English even further beyond the reach of Malays. Although the mission schools were willing to give ordinary secular schooling to Malays, few Malay parents were willing to risk the possible alienation from Islam that sending their children to Christian schools might entail. By 1900 there were twenty-four English schools in peninsular Malaya, all but seven of which were under mission control, with an overwhelmingly non-Malay enrollment ("The System of Education in the F.M.S." 1905:12-15).

The seven non-mission government English schools were also located in the towns, thus available mainly to the Chinese,

Indians, and Eurasians. The 1901 census (Report on the Census of the F.M.S., 1901 1902:28) of the Federated States showed that of the three largest towns (Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, and Taiping), fewer than ten percent were Malay.

The overall effect of the British educational policy on the Malays (of which the Christian mission schools were a part) was to keep the Malays hopelessly out of step with the rapid changes going on around them. They were ill-prepared to compete in the highly competitive Chinese business sector, ill-equipped to cope with the rapidly encroaching industrialization, and made powerless against the British administrative juggernaut.

British Impact on Malay Life

Benefits

We have briefly viewed the effect of the British administration upon Malay schooling. We now turn to the broader topic of the British impact on the quality of life of the Malays. In his 1900 book, The Real Malay (1900a:258-262), Frank Swettenham gives a lengthy discourse on the positive changes brought by the British. Permit me to cite a lengthy portion of the text, as it is representative of the nearly universally accepted British colonial belief about British influence in Malaya:

There was a time, not many years ago, when the Malay Peninsula was a sealed book to white men. The whole country was divided into eight or ten States, and each State was despotically governed by one man--sultan, raja, or chief, as the case might be. Under this hereditary ruler there were always a number of more or less powerful chiefs, who nominally held their offices from the head of the State; but

cultivated it. Work was plentiful, wages high, and the labourers few; so all classes became rich, as the resources of the country were exploited by Chinese and other immigrants, who now flocked into the States. Hospitals were built, the sick attended, sanitation insisted upon, and epidemics of cholera and smallpox--the scourge and terror of the country--disappeared as by magic. The long-abandoned fields were cultivated, and plentiful harvests added to the comfort and prosperity of the labouring classes, who saw their children educated in Government schools, where reading, writing, and simple courses of figures, all taught in Malay, were supplemented by the study of the Koran. The man who used to walk about with three daggers in his belt, two spears in his left hand, a sword under his right arm, and a gun over his shoulder, now goes into the jungle with only a chopping knife; and the boy of tender years has given up his array of miniature weapons for a slate and a bundle of books.

"The old order changeth," and, in the case of the Malay, the change amounts to something like regeneration. But the miracles that have been wrought are all evident to eye and ear. The increase of comfort, the better houses, better clothes, the cultivated fields and cared-for orchards--signs of freedom, prosperity, and safety--these are but the reflection of administrative progress; of roads, railways, canals, and waterworks; of solid and even handsome public buildings, populous well-ordered towns, and beautiful parks and gardens.

In short, says Swettenham (1948:xvi), the British "have raised the Malays to a condition of comfort and happiness never before known in their history."

While we may wish to completely dismiss Swettenham as a pompous British official, blind to all faults of his beloved, noble British Empire, there were, in fact, some Malays who shared Swettenham's views. Abdullah (1970:269-271) had much to say about the corruption and tyranny endemic to the ruling class:

It was no light tyranny that was exercised by the Malay rulers, apart from a few who were good. Women and children who caught their fancy they have abducted by force as though they were taking chickens, with no sort of fear of Allah or regard for His creatures. They have often murdered men whose offenses in no way merited death, just as they would kill an ant. They have plundered the property of other men,

killing the owners or dragging them off into captivity. If they owe money they refuse to pay it. They are very fond of gambling, cock-fighting, opium-eating and keeping a host of slaves. . . . They send the royal spear to a house demanding the owner's goods with threats, and they take away his womenfolk by force. There are many other disgraceful practices apart from these, which I feel too ashamed to mention in this book. Besides, they despise the servants of Allah, human beings like themselves, and look upon them as dogs. When they pass by on the road, they order everyone to stay by the roadside, in the mud and the filth. They keep young girls by the score, sometimes more than a hundred, as concubines in the palace. . . . It is obvious that the things I have mentioned are simply means of gratifying the ruler's lusts. They are neither right nor in accordance with the laws of Islam, nor are they approved or condoned by public opinion. They are done just to suit the ruler's own pleasure. Sometimes he has ten or twenty children. One or two of them may be good but the rest behave like devils. . . . When they grow up however wicked the things their father did they themselves may be three times worse. As for the poor people who are the victims of this oppression, this injustice, this tyranny, they are in no position to make any complaints, save only to Allah. . . . Was there not a time when half the world was under Malay dominion and rule? . . . Why have their lands been despoiled by Allah ere now, and passed into foreign bondage. Is it not because of extreme injustice and tyranny that Allah has weakened them and enslaved them under alien rule?²²

It is possible to assess the sentiments of the subject class towards the ruling class from the proverbs and idioms of the day. While the literate ruling class likely encouraged and preserved those which supported the status quo, several sayings have survived which reflect the popular resentment against the ruling class. The unopposable power of the ruling class in relation to the subject class was compared to that between a tiger and a goat

²²Alatas (1977:135) rejects Abdullah's writings as those of a British propagandist because Abdullah worked for certain British higher-ups. While it is true that he rubbed shoulders with British elite, it is also true that his writings were completely independent of British patronage, and were not uniformly uncritical of the British.

(*Macam kambing dengan rimau*--"Like a goat against a tiger"). The unequal relationship was also expressed by the comparison between the soft cucumber and the thorny durian fruit (*Macam timun dengan durian*--"Like a cucumber against a durian"). The effects of a ruler's impositions are compared to those of a rampaging elephant entering a village (*Gajah masuk kampong*). The suffering caused by the struggles between rival chiefs is compared to the suffering of a small animal caught between two fighting elephants (*Gajah sama gajah berjuang, pelanduk mati di tengah*--"When two elephants fight, a mousedeer caught in the middle is killed."). The expression *Kais pagi, makan pagi; kais petang, makan petang*--"Scratch/dig up the soil in the morning, eat in the morning; scratch/dig up the soil in the evening, eat in the evening" was used to express the day-to-day survival drudgery experienced by the subject class.

Mohamed Amin (1977:68), himself a Malay, and Jomo (1988:20), a Malaysian, note that pre-colonial resistance to the British lacked popular support because of the Malay rulers' oppressive and exploitative relationship to the *rakyat* (masses).

There were clearly elements of truth in Swettenham's assessment. Particularly at its beginning, British colonization brought definite benefits to the Malays. Most of the Malays remained peasant cultivators, and as such were better off following the imposition of British control. The establishment of internal peace and ordered government removed the constant fear of embroilment in the rivalries of Malay aristocratic

factions. The stripping of the power of the chiefs to exact service and tribute lightened the burden of toil. Debt-slavery was abolished. Furthermore, the introduction of civil law based neither on power nor hereditary social rank removed some of the uncertainties of life.

Detriments

Indebtedness. Certainly the pro-peasant rhetoric of the British administration was strong, but we need only to dig a little beneath the surface to find the true and lasting impact of the British upon the bulk of the Malay population. To begin with, colonial rule transformed a primarily subsistence economy into one increasingly dictated by market forces. The more predictable and stable order imposed under colonial rule contributed in a decisive manner to encouraging peasant commodity production. More importantly, it established the conditions for cash crop cultivation, primarily for export to foreign markets. While the peasantry stood to enjoy considerably higher incomes from export-oriented cash-cropping, it was also exposed to the vicissitudes of a capitalist-dominated world market beyond its control.

Ultimately, the most destructive consequence was that the growing commercialization of the Malay peasant economy, especially with trade expansion and the increasing market orientation of production, increased the role of credit. The spread of commodity exchange and the introduction of capital undermined long-existing forms of mutual assistance, which

previously served to minimize credit needs in pre-colonial Malay society.²³

In the newly monetized and commercialized colonial economy, the absence of a fair credit system hurt the peasants badly (Kratoska 1975). Having little access to cash beyond the returns from the sale of their produce, the peasants became fair game for unscrupulous money lenders. Used to producing for their own consumption needs, Malay peasants were ill-prepared for the rapidly commercializing economy. With old social and economic relations breaking down and non-monetized forms of exchange displaced by transactions requiring cash, peasant dependence on credit mushroomed.

Indebtedness among *padi* cultivators tended to be especially high because of the seasonal nature of their production and, hence, income flow. Approximately 80 percent of rice cultivators in Melaka (Narkswasdi and Selvadurai 1967:150, cited in Jomo 1988:43) and Selangor (Selvadurai 1972:66 in Jomo 1988:43) borrowed annually, mainly for consumption purposes.²⁴ Although most of the seasonal loans were usually repaid at harvest time, some was carried over. Before long, this accumulated, resulting

²³ "The erosion of the significance of *tolong menolong* (mutual help) in rural life is part of the process of the incorporation of the rural economy into the capitalistic system with its stress upon the maximization of profit and . . . the individual rather than the interests of the community" (Mokhzani, Abdul Rahim 1973:429).

²⁴ For example, in Melaka in 1965, "two-thirds of all loans were used for consumption or domestic purposes...; loans applied to direct farm investment made up only four percent of the average borrowed" (Ho 1969:30).

in chronic debt.

Indebtedness was also correlated to the incidence of tenancy and landlordism. Land, a saleable commodity since the coming of the British, could be advanced as collateral for credit (and thus could be lost in case of failure to repay), as well as sold to relieve indebtedness. As a result, many peasants were reduced to sharecropping. Land ownership also undermined the practice of shifting agriculture.

Class Differentiation. Another result of the introduction of credit was the widening of the gap between Malay social classes. Since wealth was seen as an indicator of the likelihood of loan repayment (Barnard 1973:127), credit was less easily available and interest rates were substantially higher for the poorer peasants. This was especially serious because poorer Malays spent a greater proportion of their credit on meeting consumption needs than on productive investments. Thus, their productivity tended to decrease year after year, resulting in increased poverty and increasingly exorbitant interest rates on loans. The end result was that the poor Malay rice farmers became relatively poorer.

One of the major prongs of colonial agricultural policy was the encouragement of increased Malay peasant food production for consumption by the labor force engaged in the capitalist sector (primarily Indians on rubber and oil palm estates, and Chinese tin miners), thereby minimizing the loss of foreign exchange. Discouraging Malays from engaging in cash crop (rubber and palm

oil) production was ostensibly to shield them from vulnerability to the vicissitudes of the world market. Actually, the British did not want to lose money importing food for their labor force. The British saved money, while the Malays were excluded from the lucrative rubber market.

The Malay Reservations Enactment of 1913 is another example of a policy which was alleged to protect the interests of the Malay peasantry, but, in fact, accelerated the process of class differentiation among rural Malays (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:154). Under this Enactment, colonial Residents were empowered to declare any land within their state, reservation land, which could not be sold, leased, or otherwise disposed of to non-Malays. Colonial legislators blamed the shortage of peasant land on non-Malays, but it was really due to rapid alienation of land to plantations for British capitalist interests.

The colonial authorities made the Malay peasantry pay a heavy price for reservation land by imposing crop conditions. Since rubber cultivation was consistently more remunerative than *padi* production, the Malays continually opted to switch to rubber. While it is true that the new policy kept the reservation land within Malay hands, its objective from the British viewpoint was to protect the traditional *padi* land. The British insisted on traditional rice cultivation on the reservation land (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:158).

The British further excluded the Malay *rakyat* (masses) from the more lucrative cash crops by passing laws stipulating that

rubber could only be tapped on large tracts of land, thus favoring the wealthy Malay ruling class and further widening the Malay social gap.

The implementation of the reservations policy also resulted in the falling of land prices by as much as 50 percent, so that Malay peasant land-owners often petitioned for their property to be excluded from reservation land (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:206). Since reservation land was no longer good security for credit from non-Malays, the participation by wealthier Malays in usurious activities was encouraged considerably since they alone were able to accept Malay peasant land as collateral for loans. With this advantage, Malay creditors could charge higher interest rates. Consequently, wealthier Malays were able to purchase the developed reservation land at lower prices than on the open market. The Malay Reservations Enactment thus contributed to the social stratification of the Malay community and to some concentration of land-ownership among wealthier rural Malays.²⁵

This can be seen in the case of a Malay reservation established in 1919 which was studied by Fisk (1961:22):

Under these circumstances it must be concluded that the application of the Malay Reservation Enactment to this reservation, while preserving Malay ownership of much of the area, has not been effective as a means of promoting a sturdy, independent and relatively prosperous Malay peasantry living from the operation of its own land. On the

²⁵ While the British regularly cited the Malay Reservations Enactment as an example of their protecting the interests of the Malays, the fact that a majority of the Malays petitioned against it, and that the Malays were not included in the formulation of the policy (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:205), indicates that the British were merely looking out for their own self-interests.

contrary, disruptive social and economic factors are tending to produce a small number of Malay landlords renting their land . . . and an increasing body of impoverished landless Malays living within the reservation.

Besides claiming to protect Malay interests, British propaganda made groundless allegations that the Malay poor were reckless in their rubber tapping methods. The British claimed that, among other things, the Malays ruthlessly tapped so that the bark replacement could not keep up with bark consumption (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:228). A 1930 survey by the Rubber Research Institute presented evidence refuting the claims that the Malays were inefficient rubber tappers (Lim Teck Ghee 1971:229), but the myths prevailed.

Moreover, the British blamed non-Malay middlemen (petty traders and small money lenders) as the cause of peasant impoverishment, while administrative causes were conveniently ignored. Jomo (1988:35) states that "the middleman represents the conspicuous tip of the iceberg of commercial capital exploiting peasants."

While the British all but forced the Malays to continue *padi* cultivation, administrative support was minimal. Drainage and irrigation services for peasant land were virtually non-existent. "Roads and other communications were built to serve estates and mines; any benefits to peasants were mainly incidental, rather than by design" (Jomo 1988:70).

In short, the colonial state consistently responded in the interests of capital--especially British capital--against the interests of the poor Malays.

British Ideology

Alleged Western Superiority

In this research, I am interested in the Malays' view of their colonizers. What faults did the Malays find with the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, and more importantly, how closely did the Malays associate Christianity with those faults? In his important volume, The Myth of the Lazy Native, Syed Hussein Alatas, professor of Malay studies at the University of Singapore, presents the representative current Malay viewpoint. He argues that the European colonizers utilized the idea of the lazy native to justify innumerable unjust practices.

The image of the native under domination is the most unprovoked prejudice entertained by a dominant group towards the subject people. The Malays gave up their land and political power to the British. They were displaced from mining. They accepted the situation where the wealth of the country was drained to England and to other countries. They became the poor in their own country. They had to share their country with a sizeable immigrant population who were brought down in the interest of colonial capitalism. Yet despite their acceptance of all these they were accused of indolence, treachery, amok running, etc. (Alatas 1977:127)

Alatas (1977:2) further contends that although the British rulers were personally benign individually, colonial capitalism was ruthlessly exploitative, designed solely to suit the interest of the alien ruling power.

It is vital to our interests that Alatas associates Christianity with the evils and self-interest of colonialism. "The twin gospel, commercial benefit for the mother country and civilization for the natives, *which includes Western Christianity* (emphasis mine), became the reigning ideology" (Alatas 1977:117).

In the eyes of many Malays, the European colonizers, Christians included (the Malays made no distinction between Europeans as to religious practice--all were "Christian"), promulgated this "twin gospel" "to justify conquest and domination" (Alatas 1977:117).

Alatas' thesis is that the colonizers employed degrading stereotypes of the natives to further justify their exploitative control. In his Introduction, Alatas (1977:17) names "the church" as one of the institutions which used its power to impart the ideology of the lazy native in order to keep the Malays in subjection to British rule. Furthermore, it is highly significant that Alatas includes Christian missionaries among those who proclaimed the natives "indolent, dull, treacherous, and childish" (Alatas 1977:112). Whether or not these accusations against the church and missionaries were generally true is far less important than the fact that it was or is perceived to be true.

Based on the ideology of the lazy native, a status ranking dominated by race was created: "The Europeans formed the ruling class at the top of the hierarchy; next came those of mixed European blood and Christian in faith; then came the foreign Asian immigrant communities and finally the native population" (Alatas 1977:18). Put simply, in the Malays' estimation, the Christians were at the top and the Malays were at the bottom. The rest were in between.

As discussed earlier, the British endeavored to be

gentlemanly and humane in their treatment of the Malays on an individual basis. Yet, they were not entirely successful in presenting a positive image of themselves. Abdullah (1970:71-72), who was himself generous in his judgment of the English, lamented that his people, the Malays, judged their colonizers on the basis of a few bad Britishers "following the Malay proverb, 'A single buffalo has mud on it and the whole herd is smeared.' Such deeds and behaviour remain long in the memories of other men, for one man tells another and the tale passes round until it becomes firmly rooted in peoples' minds." The result, according to Abdullah, is that the British were generally feared. "Anyone happening to meet an Englishman at once fled far away" (Abdullah 1970:71).

Alatas agrees that the British were feared, but he challenges Abdullah's belief that the British did not deserve such a reaction. Alatas (1977:134) contends that Abdullah was blindly sympathetic to the English, and that his work was aggressively disseminated by the British for the very reason that it served as pro-British propaganda.

Indeed, the British had to rely on propaganda, says Alatas, because their schemes were so patently self-serving that they had to find a means of justifying their actions. The British did this so thoroughly that, in the end, they had convinced themselves that their involvement in their colonies was the highest expression of altruism (Alatas 1977:15). Even J.S. Furnwall (1948:489), one of the rare Britishers who were critical

of certain colonial policies, insisted, nevertheless, on the necessity of colonialism.

European conquest was bolstered by the prevailing theory of social Darwinism or evolutionary socialism. Industrialized Western civilization was believed to be the apex of evolutionary development. Bernstein, an influential Marxist socialist in Germany, wrote that the question is not whether but how the Europeans should occupy the tropical lands. "Moreover, only a conditional right of savages to the land occupied by them can be recognized. The higher civilization ultimately can claim a higher right" (Bernstein 1963:178-179). Bernstein invoked the authority of Marx for his pro-colonialist view. Tutelage of the civilized over the uncivilized was regarded as a necessity (d'Encasse and Schram 1969:130).

The condescending and at times contemptuous attitude toward Asians was widespread among Europeans of all persuasions. For example, the great Russian revolutionary, V.G. Belinsky (1811-1848), known for his sense of evenhanded rationality, wrote that "National pride is a lofty and noble sentiment, an earnest of true excellence; but national conceit and susceptibility is a purely Chinese sentiment" (Belinsky 1956:125). Like the Spanish priests who blamed the Filipinos for the low moral standards of the Spaniards, Belinsky (1956:127) blamed the Tartars for the negatives of Russian life. Another Russian thinker, advanced in his notions of social justice, Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), contrasted the Russian culture with that of India, which "has

outlived its prime and is wasting away in senile impotence" (Herzen 1956:481).

The technological superiority of the West gave rise to the claim that it was superior in all fields, and this was applied retroactively to history. Rengers (1947:41), summarized the position:

Being Western in education and thought, we easily criticize or condemn institutions and customs intimately connected with the mentality of the Easterner. What seems absurd or reprehensible to us, through the centuries has often proved not only acceptable but the only workable solution. The fact that the East is different from the West should not automatically mean condemnation of the institutions of the East. For centuries this prejudice and lack of knowledge had created a very bad impression of the native population. The Portuguese had warned the Dutch that the natives could not be trusted. The bad impression had remained during the whole period of the East India Company although there were notable exceptions.

A cursory review of the literature reveals clearly that the British did indeed see the Malays as lazy. Thomson (1875:16-17,33) a traveller in the region, said that

the Malays do as little work as possible. . . . There are many Malays in Province Wellesley, but they do not work on the plantations, and indeed it is almost impossible to say how one-twentieth part of the Malay population occupies itself. As Mohometans they practice circumcision, and recite frequent prayers. The rest of their lives they seem to spend in rearing large families to follow their fathers' example, and to wait lazily for such subsistence as the bounty of nature may provide.

Frank Swettenham (1948:137) added that "the Malay has no stomach for really hard and continuous work, either of the brain or the hands." He claims, in fact, that the "leading characterization of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work" (Swettenham 1948:136).

Misplaced Responsibility

Alatas admits that this image, however prejudiced, was not entirely unfounded. "The European colonial image of a lazy, incapable, treacherous and scheming native partly did reflect a section of native society" (Alatas 1977:204). Yet, Alatas submits, as the evidence suggests, that the Malays were victims of what he calls "the principle of misplaced responsibility" (Alatas 1977:205). The colonials attributed to the natives traits that the colonials had created themselves. For example, Malays were considered incapable of large-scale business and commerce, when, in actuality, the Dutch trade monopoly had eliminated what had been a highly successful Malay trading class. Dutch expansion in the 17th and 18th century stopped the emergence of commercial coastal states. Independent Malay coastal states which revolved around commerce had provided the Malays with the means for far-reaching trade networks. At least as early as the mid 12th century, Malays were regularly trading with eastern Africa. By the early 14th century Malay traders frequented China, the Malabar Coast, and the coast of Bengal . By the 15th century Malays were in Hormuz (Schrieke 1957:244-245).

Since business and commerce were an important part of the colonial capitalist concept of industriousness, a society lacking in such a class, as the Malays now were, was considered indolent.

The British took all the top political, economic and administrative positions, thus blocking the upward mobility of

the Malays. The resultant lack of motivation on the part of Malays was cited as evidence that the Malays lacked drive and ambition.

Misplaced responsibility was even employed in regard to the native physical constitution. When the Malays received greatly inferior medical care and were thus generally less healthy, the British labeled them frail.

Perhaps the best instance of the principle of misplaced responsibility was the spread of opium. Here again Malayan society was blamed for a situation created by colonial rule. Before the coming of the Western colonial powers, opium consumption was confined to the royal court. Within only several years of the start of British rule, opium addiction was widespread, especially among the Chinese.

From official reports, newspaper articles, books, and private correspondence it is beyond doubt that the British intentionally promoted opium usage on a scale hitherto unknown. Opium sales boomed to the point that opium became the single largest source of revenue of British Malaya. Between 1896 and 1906 opium sales alone accounted for between 43 and 60 percent of the entire revenue of British Malaya (La Motte 1920:24). It became so lucrative that the British promoted it as necessary for survival in jungle life. It was claimed to prevent malaria, diarrhea, dysentery, and tuberculosis. Opium was also said to relax the nerves, strengthen the body, and stimulate the mind (Jackson 1961:55). In 1910 the British government nationalized

and monopolized the manufacture, sale and distribution of opium (La Motte 1924:53).

The sheer hypocrisy of this is clear from the fact that opium had long since been forbidden in England, recognized as it was for its destructiveness (La Motte 1924:12-13). The Malays are all too aware of this. Alatas (1977:23) states that "This is the clearest known instance in history of a policy being adopted and organized on a huge scale, without any moral scruple, in the interests of colonial rule and capitalism. . . . Thus for more than 100 years, the civil servants of British colonies were paid partly from opium, from the proceeds of human misery and degradation." Or, as La Motte (1924:12-13) put it: "An opium has been called upon to waste this human life, by destroying its value and efficiency, in order that Europeans might prosper." Alatas believes that the rapaciousness of the Spanish and the exploitation by the Dutch do not equal the evils brought by the British, although virtually all Western historians count the British as the best of the three.

Greed Over Scruples

Despite British rhetoric to the contrary, "the colonial capitalist ideas of development were largely based on unlimited greed for profit and the subordination of all other interests to this" (Alatas 1977:84). The profitable and corrupt indentured labor system exemplifies this. Laborers from India and China came on a credit-ticket system. Their passage to Malaya was debited to their account. These laborers were then supplied with

opium, toddy, and gambling to relieve them of what little wages they might have. The result was that many coolies never received any cash wages, but were in perpetual debt (Blythe 1947:70-71).

Gambling, opium, and toddy were the three addictions supported by the colonial government. These addictions served colonial capitalism in that they tied the workers as virtual slaves to the employers for longer periods than originally stipulated. In addition these were sources of income. The government outwardly blamed the local supervisors for the abuses, while it secretly supported the use of the three vices.

Christianity, sadly, is here again implicated by association. Sir Stamford Raffles is believed by Malay scholars to have been at the same time a leading promoter of both the opium trade and Christian missions (Alatas 1977:138).²⁶ Regrettably, the response of many of the Christian missions in Malaya was to attack the vices, but not the source. Government policy was rarely questioned.

Myth of the Lazy Native

The Malays view the stereotype of Malay indolence as entirely unfair and based on the grossest misinterpretation of history. For starters, the Malay will note that before colonial

²⁶ I could not substantiate Alatas' claim that Raffles promoted opium trade. Ferguson-Davie (1921:16) claims the exact opposite. What is important here is what Malays believe to be true.

Imagine what most Americans' view of Islam would be if a Muslim country took control of the U.S. and openly pumped highly addictive drugs into the country while it also brought in Islamic religious teachers.

bondage there was little or no technological gap between themselves and the Europeans, and that the subsequent gap was the result of colonial blockage of the flow of trade and ideas from the Western world (Alatas 1977:216).

When Raffles and many of the British administrators of the 19th century arrived on the scene, the Malays and others in the region had passed through more than three centuries of political, economic, social and military onslaught by predatory European powers who took them by surprise when they first arrived. Many of the negative traits described by the 19th century observers were the creation of the Europeans of the earlier centuries. (Alatas 1977:117)

Alatas (1977:119) adds that "Neither culturally nor religiously has laziness been approved by the Malays." Moreover, "anyone having first hand knowledge of Malay fishermen and *padi* planters will realize how absurd the contention is."

The Malay image of themselves is of a people with dogged determination and acuteness of mind.

Let us first consider the image of the Lazy Malay. It struck us as odd that a people who, in the words of Raffles, 'is so indolent, that when he has rice, nothing will induce him to work', could be continuously engaged in war and piracy against formidable opponents. The history of the Malays from the 16th century onwards was full of internal as well as external conflicts. As a matter of fact the Malays were the most harassed people. No region in South East Asia had been attacked and occupied by so many forces from so many parts of the world. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the Siamese, had all attacked and occupied certain parts of the Malay Peninsula. We may also mention the attack of Aceh and the Bugis raids. If the Malays were that lazy they would have lost their independence long ago. The fact that the British succeeded in occupying Malaya through diplomacy, while those using force failed, was partly the result of the activity and alertness of the Malays. (Alatas 1977:117)

The picture of the Malay ruling class created by colonial historians was one of instability, anarchy, and despotism. While admitting that the description fits certain rulers in certain

time periods, Alatas (1977:133) counters that Western colonialism "introduced its own form of despotism, instability, anarchy, backwardness, and the absence of the rule of law." As for the charge of Malay treachery, Alatas (1977:117-118) submits that it was no more than the expected "situational response towards groups who were themselves cunning and treacherous."

Alatas believes that British commercial and political interests were the criteria upon which the British based their judgments. Since commerce and empire building were the most esteemed activities to the Europeans, the Malays, not motivated by such interests, were considered lazy. "Industriousness was equated with acquisitiveness" (Alatas 1977:119). What makes the British interpretation more unfair in the Malays' minds is the fact that it was European colonial domination that had stripped the Malays of an independent trading class. Winstedt (1956:17) comments along these lines that "Because he is an independent farmer with no need to work for hire, the Malay has got an undeserved reputation for idleness." In stronger language, Alatas (1977:72) says the same: "It was this unwillingness to become a tool in the production system of colonial capitalism which earned the Malays a reputation of being indolent."

Put simply, Alatas holds that the stereotypes of the Malays amount to no more than European "snobbery, conceit and naivete."

Missionaries' View of Malays

Some Accepted Western Superiority

What of the missionaries? Did they develop a fair and

accurate picture of the Malays and their plight? Bishop Blasdell (1952:83-89) lamented that, overall, the church identified closely with the Western colonial powers that put the Malays in a relatively low position.

L. Richmond Wheeler (1928:344), a missionary to Malaya, accepted that the British were no less than the Malays' greatest benefactors who only reluctantly became involved in the affairs of the Malays in order to save them from destroying themselves. "The British, after much delay and unwillingness, took over the control of the anarchic interior, and only this saved the race from extinction." It is hard to believe Wheeler is describing the very same situation that Alatas (1977:127) labels "the most unprovoked prejudice entertained by a dominant group towards the subject people."

The truth, of course, lies somewhere in between. It is just as easy to stereotype unfairly the early missionaries as it was for the colonials to stereotype unfairly the Malays. Their detractors love to highlight a few choice comments of the more bigoted and imperialistic missionaries. One such person, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) missionary Ferguson-Davie, had a number of disparaging things to say about the Malays. For instance, buying into the myth of the lazy native, he wrote that "The Malays themselves, from their racial characteristics...seem a particularly difficult people to deal with. The spirit that can leave all to follow Christ, or that is willing to suffer hardship for His sake, is so alien to the

naturally indolent (emphasis mine) and easy going temper of the Malay" (Ferguson-Davie 1921:16). He also noted that although "Malays are polite, friendly, and easy going, they are very attractive to the casual traveller . . . their best qualities are superficial" (Ferguson-Davie 1921:13-14). The Malays were so inferior in Ferguson-Davie's mind that he had questions as to "whether or not the Malays will die out amidst the more virile immigrant races" (Ferguson-Davie 1921:12-13).

In a discussion of the issue of Malay evangelism, Ferguson-Davie (1921:18) blames Malay resistance solely on Islam and the Malay character. There is no mention of the atrocities of the Portuguese, or of the economic exploitation of the Dutch. Instead, in a stroke of nationalistic pride, Ferguson-Davie praises the Portuguese and Dutch as pioneers of the great Western civilization built up in Malaya by the British.

Most Admired Malays

A closer look at the writings of missionaries in Malaysia reveals that Ferguson-Davie was exceptional in the degree to which he held anti-Malay, pro-British sentiments. In fact, his anti-Malay feelings were not shared by most of the other missionaries. A more representative viewpoint comes from Laurence Browne, also of the SPG. Browne (1936:20) found the Malays "charming," "courteous," and "contented" with a "love of sport and of home life." He understood that their apparent lack of initiative was due to the coming of British rule. Moreover, the laziness for which Malays were infamous was due to a

"philosophic outlook, rather than an innate characteristic" (Browne 1936:21). The Malays were content to live off the land. They had few wants and these required little effort to satisfy. When the Malays need to "they work hard and intelligently when they apply themselves to work."

The most lengthy description of Malay character was penned by British administrator Frank Swettenham. Though not a missionary, Swettenham considered himself a Christian. He unabashedly supported the right of British involvement in Malaya, and shared the opinion of Ferguson-Davie that the British had saved the Malays from themselves (Swettenham 1900:258-262). Yet, his view of individual Malays was almost entirely positive.

Like many others, he did believe that "the leading characteristic of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work" (Swettwenham 1948:136), and that Malays could be very difficult to manage (read: they would not readily submit to exploitative employment relationships) (Swettenham 1948:152). Yet, he softened these criticisms by noting that the Malays were the product of a "climate which inclines the body to ease and rest," and that they were conditioned to shy away from overlordship since they had experienced unjust treatment at the hands of their own despotic rulers (Swettenham 1948:137). These few negative comments, along with the statements that the Malay is "inclined to swagger," "extravagant," "a coxcomb," and ethnically exclusive, are the only blots amidst an otherwise spotless 35-page catena in praise of the Malay character.

The Malays are described as "smiling." Toward outsiders they are "shy and reserved" but become "open and pleasant" to those who befriend them. Indeed, they are famous for their hospitality. They are also "artistic," "cheerful," "loyal," and "courageous." And while the Malay has no stomach for really hard work . . ." if you can only give him an interest in the job, he will perform prodigies; he will strive and endure, and be cheerful and courageous with the best"(Swettenham 1948:139). In fact, "you will wish for no better servant." The Malay is, moreover, of "quick intelligence" and "a ready imitator." Malays are fine conversationalists and possess a "strong sense of humour." They are "guided more by their hearts than their heads" and are not jealous, envious, or materialistic."

Swettenham wrote briefly about Malay women specifically. The Malay woman's "intellectual education is so slight that one can only be surprised at the quite uncommon intelligence shown by many" (Swettenham 1900:269). They are "witty and interesting," have a "cheerful temperament" and "a strong sense of humour." In short, they are "capital company."

Missionary writer L. Richmond Wheeler (1928:345,347) said that the Malays have a "natural kindliness and good sense" and "are a quiet, stay-at-home folk." Bishop Thoburn (1892:496) was impressed with their "pride" and "courage." Missionary Laurence Browne (1936:20) wrote that Malays "have retained a charm peculiarly their own. Their courtesy, their contentment, their

love of sport and home life, make them attractive people, perhaps especially to the British."

We will see later that Western missionary efforts almost entirely excluded the Malays, targeting only the Chinese and Indians of Malaya. My speculation is that one of the reasons for this was a view held by some (albeit not openly articulated as such, and possibly even subconscious) that the Malays were less in need of salvation than were the Chinese and Indians. The Malays were, as Wheeler said, attractive to the British. Missionary J. Thomson (1875:33), while believing Malays to be lazy, also considered them to be "gentlemanly" and not given to the most odious practices found among the Chinese, who "smoke opium, lie without restraint, and whenever opportunity offers are dishonest, cunning, and treacherous" (1875:16-17).

Alleyne Ireland (1905:45) noted that the Chinese were addicted to gambling and opium, and the Indians were drunkards, but that the Malays were relatively free from such vices. Alatas (1977:115) believes the views the Europeans generally held of the respective races were that the Malays were "lazy," the Chinese "venal," and the Indians "cringing and cheating." Perhaps it is stretching it to try to rank these qualities in order of gravity, but to at least one segment of the missionary force, those Victorian legalists for whom the stamping out of opium, gambling, and prostitution in the colony was their highest calling, mere laziness was a Sunday School picnic compared to the vices of the immigrant races.

C.G. Warnford-Lock's description of the races in Malaya echoes closely Alatas' statement. "By nature, the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief and the Kling (Indian) is a drunkard" (Warnford-Lock 1907:38). Warnford-Lock (1907:39-40) goes on to give a most scathing account of the Malayan Chinese:

"The Chinese coolie must be made to realize that he is not on an equality with Europeans. He is the mule among the nations . . . stubborn and callous; unlovable and useful in the highest degree. But never under any conceivable circumstances to be trusted or made a friend of." Moreover, "In the whole philosophy of a Chinese coolie, there is not a particle of fellow-feeling . . . no more sympathy." A Chinaman "will think nothing of knocking a sleeping mate or helpless woman on the head, for the sake of a dollar or two."

Contrast this with descriptions of the Malays. "With many virtues, the Malays...are above everything but the immediate pressure of want...the Malays are essentially gentlemen too; they have no acquisitiveness, and if they can satisfy the wants of the moment they are happy - they lay great store by the proverb that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof" (Cameron 1865:133-134). Similarly, "'The character of the unsophisticated Malay is remarkable for its simplicity and honesty. Having no artificial wants, they are satisfied and content with what would be considered positive destitution by a Chinese;...they have a regard for truth, and may generally be depended upon in their statements'" (Oxley, quoted in Swettenham 1900:237). J.D.

Vaughan (1857:125) considered truthfulness a prominent feature of the Malays, and appreciated the absence of obscenity in their language. In addition, "when the Malay is treated as a man and not a brute, he proves docile, faithful and industrious; without exception superior to any eastern sailor afloat" (Vaughan 1857:125).

It is my opinion that the British, and especially the Christian missionaries, were fond of the Malays. They were not the "wretched heathen" that the Chinese were. This attitude may ironically have pushed the missionaries in the direction of the Chinese and Indians, who, with their idol-strewn altars, and their back-alley toddy shops and opium dens were obviously in need of redemption. Malay Islam was, in sharp contrast, inoffensive. One unidentified SPG missionary wrote in 1913 ("Mohammedanism in Malaya":243) that many Europeans "are impressed by Mohammedan piety" and "its striking virtues (such as temperance and the observance of the outward forms of religion) being those which appeal to us by their very contrast with our own particular weaknesses."

Why Missionaries Neglected Malays

Yet, this factor was only a small part of why the Malays have not been reached with the gospel. I have already mentioned that the Malays were rarely the target of Christian evangelism. In fact, pitifully little effort was made in evangelizing the Malays compared to the personnel and resources expended in reaching the other people groups. The nonexistence of a Malay

church today stems largely from the fact that, in spite of opportunities to do so, the missions and their churches did not put forth the effort necessary to establish and maintain relations with the Malays.

As suggested, it was not that the missionaries did not like the Malays. They neglected the Malays, though, for a variety of reasons. One simple fact was that few missionaries were willing to live in the rustic interior villages inhabited by the Malays. As did the rest of the Europeans, the missionaries congregated in the major cities, where an affluent Western lifestyle was more easily obtainable, but, unfortunately for the work of Malay evangelism, where relatively few Malays lived before the 20th century.²⁷

It was widely believed in European circles in Malaya that missionary work was actually forbidden by treaty in the Malay states. The origin of this misunderstanding is that in 1874, when a treaty was signed on the island of Pangkor between the British Government and the chiefs of Perak, it was agreed that "the Sultan receive and provide a suitable residence for a British Officer to be called Resident, who shall be accredited to his court, and whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom."

²⁷ The 1901 census of the Federated States showed that of the total population of cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants each (Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, and Ipoh), fewer than ten percent were Malay. In Kuala Lumpur, with a population of 32,381 (of whom more than 23,000 were Chinese), there were only 3,727 Malays; in Taiping with a population of 13,331, there were only 787. (Report on the Census of the F.M.S., 1901 1902:28).

A similar condition was made in 1895, when the Federation was formed, with regard to the Resident-General. The clause only forbade the Resident to use his position to interfere with Malay religion or custom, and says nothing about missionary work.

The question arises whether the Sultan had the power to prevent missionary work within his State, although there was no treaty forbidding such work. If the *shari'ah* or Muslim law had been the law of the States it would have been possible for a Sultan to restrict non-Muslim activity. Such was not the case, though. A Sultan had to act constitutionally with his Council of State (which included British officers). Thus, it would have been hard for him to justify the banishing of a missionary unless it could be proven that the missionary had actually caused a disturbance of the peace.

But the insistence upon legal rights does not mesh well with the gospel of love. The Malays had great respect for the office of Sultan, an office that dates from pre-Islamic days, when the Sultanate was thought to be invested with a measure of divinity. Missionary work was at times limited relationally, if not legally. To force oneself into a state against the wish of the Sultan would have been an act of grave discourtesy which would have thus militated against a favorable reception of the gospel message. In response to this, Browne (1936:71) points out that the Sultans were generally courteous and friendly, and usually gave permission to reside in their states and do unobtrusive work to missionaries who had proven themselves to be inoffensive

members of society and a friend of Malays.

The Straits Settlements--i.e., Singapore, Melaka, Penang, and Province Wellesley--were British territory, and thus subject to no official barriers to missionary work. As Browne (1936:68) put it, "The Government there is British, and it would be contrary to British ideas of liberty of conscience to hinder the propagation of Christianity.

The Unanswered Call

The London Missionary Society

Compared to the situation today, in colonial Malaya, missionary work among Malays was unrestricted. How then did the Church respond to this opportunity? The first English-speaking missionary to Malaya came to Malaya only as a second choice because he was denied access to China. During the years of 1808 to 1842 missionaries were not able to gain a footing in China itself. Europeans were allowed to live only in coastal Canton and Macau (Lovett 1899:399). William Milne was appointed by the London Missionary Society (LMS) to work with Robert Morrison (missionary to China 1807-1834). Milne reached Macau on the 4th of July, 1813. The refusal of the Chinese authorities to permit Milne to reside in either Macau or Canton led Milne and Morrison to originate what became known as the Ultra-Ganges Mission (Lovett 1899:429). The plan was to choose places frequented by Chinese, as near to China as possible, and make the work there a base and training ground for successful work in China when the time should come for China to be open to missionaries. Melaka

was chosen, and Milne arrived there in April of 1815, as the headquarters of the mission, with other stations in Batavia (currently Jakarta), Penang, and Singapore (Lovett 1899:429).

Since the hope was to get into China, the emphasis of the LMS in Malaya was work with the Chinese and the learning of the Chinese dialects. To its credit, however, the LMS did not completely ignore the Malays.

Milne was soon joined by W.H. Medhurst, C.H. Thomsen, and Samuel Milton. In those early days they did not find a ready response from either the Malays or the emigrant Chinese. In his history of the LMS, C. Silvester Horne (1904:135) gave this reason for the lack of response:

It is to be feared that the natives had learned to suspect every institution that was called Christian as being designed to accomplish some sinister political end. The first difficulty which Christian missionaries experienced in many fields was to live down the effect produced by so-called Christians who had predated them.

After over a year and a half of preaching, teaching, "personal intercourse with the heathen," and especially the printing and distribution of literature (all primarily to the Chinese), the mission baptized its first convert, Leang Ah Fa, the Chinese printer (Horne 1904:434). From then until Milne died in 1822, there is no record of additional converts. The Anglo-Chinese College (a Christian school for Chinese) became the focal point of the mission. Of the nine LMS missionaries who came to Melaka between 1820 and 1839, four of them worked almost exclusively with the Anglo-Chinese College (Lovett 1899:437).

In 1843 the opening of the Chinese ports led to the

establishment in Hong Kong of the Anglo-Chinese Theological Seminary, of which James Legge, the last of the directors of the Melaka mission, became Principal. This brought the college and mission at Melaka to an end. The order came from London for the entire Malayan operation to close.

The same ending came to the Malayan mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which had sent the Rev. Ira Tracy and Alfred North, a printer, to Melaka in 1834 (Wong 1973:29). Together they worked closely with the LMS until the Board also closed shop in Malaya upon the opening of China. Both mission agencies left Malaya without establishing a church. For both Missions their work in Malaya was seen only as a stepping stone to China.

In its 27-year tenure in Malaya, the LMS appointed only two missionaries to the Malays, one in the beginning and one at the end of the period. The first was C.H. Thomsen, who arrived in Melaka in September of the mission's first year, and who later transferred to Singapore after it was occupied by the British in 1819.

The Rev. Claudius H. Thomsen was a German who studied the Malay language in Malaya under the renowned Malay Muslim author Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir. Though zealous and extremely hard-working, Thomsen was not well-liked by his Malay tutor. Munshi Abdullah found him obstinate, especially in his refusal to be corrected in his Malay translation of Bible passages. In his monumental work, The Hikayat Abdullah, Abdullah (1970:152) makes

the following disclaimer:

If they come across any mistakes in the Gospel according to St. Matthew due to Mr. Thomsen's clumsy renderings in the Malay language, they should kindly remember I was acting under instructions and could do nothing to add or remove a single word without Mr. Thomsen's full authority. I myself have fully realized that in this Gospel there are many awkward-sounding passages, and words used in impossible contexts. Because of these solecisms people are liable to misconstrue the sense. But what could I do, especially as I did not know the original language of the Gospel which, I believe, is a translation from the Greek? If it had been partly at least in English I would have understood a little. I hope that in view of all these troubles my readers will not heap insult and calumny upon my reputation on the grounds that I was Mr. Thomsen's teacher.

Again of his translation errors, Abdullah observed that Thomsen

incorporates beliefs in which the Christians put their trust and which they hold in high esteem. Should it not be a place where men can find a model of good writing, in the spelling of words and in the letter-combinations, and where they can obtain or borrow the finest phrases? If you treat the book thus, as if you had no respect for it, neither will others who see it pay any respect, for they will realize that the author is foolish and inconsistent, a man of no education. It is not just a matter of the spelling and the joining of letters. The whole meaning is often wrong, as far perhaps from the original sense as the earth from the sky.

In Singapore, Thomsen opened a class for Malay boys and his wife opened one for Malay girls. By 1828, 12 Malays had been converted to Christianity and were baptized. There was never much support from the Mission, and the 12 baptized Malays soon returned to Islam (Sng 1980:32). Considering the initial nonresponsiveness of the Chinese to the work of the LMS (especially taking into account that the Straits Settlements, where the LMS worked, had a Chinese majority and that the LMS had several workers targeting the Chinese), the response of the Malays to Thomsen, whose relationship skills were questionable,

is impressive.

Most of the Malay work of the LMS was Malay Scripture portions and tract distribution. In fact, by 1830, tens of thousands of pieces of literature had been given to Malays (Sng 1980:129). The response to this was discouraging. An 1837 LMS report concluded that there was not a single Malay Christian, nor even any hopeful catechumens ("Editorial" 1871:92-93).

This instance of seeming Malay nonresponsiveness can be partly attributed to three factors. First of all, the Malay literature portions were Thomsen translations which were sometimes tragically unclear or misleading. Secondly, perhaps a majority of the Malays of the time were illiterate. Thirdly, the LMS did not have Malay-speaking missionaries (and did not use local Chinese Christians who also spoke Malay) to personally follow-up literature distribution. Expecting results from such a method is tantamount to expecting a well-groomed garden by doing no more than blindly scattering seed.

The only other LMS missionary to Malays was Benjamin Peach Keasberry. Born of British parents in India in 1811, Keasberry worked as a clerk in Batavia (presently Jakarta), where he learned the Malay language. Also in Batavia, under the influence of LMS missionary William Medhurst, Keasberry became a committed Christian and learned printing and bookbinding. He then went to the U.S. for theological studies in preparation for a missionary career in China.

In Singapore in 1839, enroute to China with his new American

wife, Keasberry grieved that no one had continued the work Thomsen had initiated among the Malays (Sng 1980:49). Benjamin and his wife, Charlotte, decided on the spot to join the LMS with special assignment to work with the Malays.

The work of the Keasberrys is a clear indication that the Malays were not "hardened" or unreachable. The Keasberrys immediately started Malay services at the LMS chapel. In a letter written in 1839, two other missionaries wrote of the openness of the Malays:

many others here are willing to receive instructions, as is evident from the regular attendance of Malays, both men and women, in our Mission Chapel every Sabbath afternoon, on Mr. Keasberry's and Mr. Youngblood's sermons. A spirit of enquiry is at work among some of the Malays and this spirit neither of us can satisfy.²⁸

The work outgrew the Mission Chapel, and so, in 1843, the Malay Chapel (affectionately known by the Malays as "Gereja Keasbury" or Keasberry Church) was built. At its opening service over 60 Malays attended.

It was at this time that the LMS closed all work in Singapore and Malaya. The Keasberrys again declined the chance to go to China, this time by resigning from the LMS. Keasberry became a self-supporting, independent missionary to the Malays through income he earned from printing for the government and private businesses.

The Keasberrys opened and operated a boarding school for Malay boys. The boys were taught English and Malay, printing,

²⁸ Alexander and John Stronarch's letter to the LMS in London, quoted in R.M. Greer (1959:18).

lithography, and bookbinding. There were also daily Bible readings and weekly chapel services conducted in Malay. A girls school was later established.

Like the Malay Chapel, the boarding school is evidence of the openness of Malays at that time. "Despite its distinctly Christian background, the school gained ready acceptance from the Malays' (Sng 1980:51). Enrollment went as high as 60 Malay students. It is amazing that this overtly Christian school even won the respect and approval of Malay leaders. The Sultans of Muar and Kedah sent their sons to the school. The students also included two sons of the Temenggong (Malay chief military officer) of the state of Johore, one of whom later became the Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore.

Perhaps Keasberry's most lasting work was in writing, translating, and publishing Malay literature. In an extraordinary example of positive and nonthreatening Muslim-Christian relations, Munshi Abdullah worked closely with Keasberry in the publication of the New Testament in Romanized Malay as well as in Arabic. Keasberry wrote or translated several other Christian works into Malay, in addition to compiling the first Malay hymnal (Sng 1980:51).

To his disappointment, Keasberry only ever gained a handful of Malay converts, and never established a permanent Malay church. After his death, the converts reverted back to Islam. A contributing factor to the lack of permanency of the work is that Keasberry was a one-man show. There was no support base beyond

his immediate family. Even the boarding school was literally a family operation. Keasberry and his two sons taught the boys, and his second wife--his first wife had died--and their two daughters taught the girls. When Keasberry died, the work died with him. Keasberry had appealed to various mission boards to send workers, but none were interested (Sng 1980:53).

Considering the formidable obstacles barring Muslims from conversion to another religion, the accomplishments of the Keasberry family are heartening. God alone knows what might have taken root had there been a team of missionaries to work alongside the Keasberrys and to continue the work after Benjamin's death.

For 38 years Keasberry labored on behalf of the Malays - preaching, teaching, translating, printing, and frequently visiting in Malay homes. Although those 38 years saw few converts, Keasberry possessed a self-giving, listening spirit, and a warmth that clearly won the admiration of the Malay community (Makepeace 1921:238). The seed had been planted, yet no one followed to water the seed in preparation for a harvest. In 38 years, was God calling no one else to work among Malays?

It is significant that Keasberry spent 38 years among the Malays [Thomsen had spent 20 (1815-1835)]. To my knowledge, no one before or since has given that much time to Malay work. The lesson here is that Muslim ministry with long-term results will not be accomplished through short-term efforts. Keasberry was one who did not allow barriers to obstruct his vision. On

September 6, 1875, Keasberry collapsed and died while preaching at the Chapel. His last words reflect the single-minded conviction that inspired his efforts: "The time is coming when the Mohamedans will acknowledge and worship the Savior" (quoted in Sng 1980:52).

The Anglican Mission

We will now consider the impact of the Anglican Mission on the Malays. The Church of England was seen by the British government as an extension of itself to be used in the "noble" work of civilizing its colonies. Men like Sir Francis Light of Penang and Sir Stamford Raffles of Singapore felt their efforts were part of a grand moral enterprise. As a British member of Parliament put it: "In every quarter of the globe we have planted the seed of freedom, civilization and Christianity."²⁹ This ideology caused the Anglican Church's witness to the Malays to suffer from two inherent weaknesses. First and foremost, the Anglican Mission was too closely associated with the colonial government and its policies. Secondly, the Mission long maintained an ingrown chaplaincy style of ministry.

A third weakness was unrelated to the close relationship between the Church of England's mission and the mission of England. Like the LMS and the ABCFM before it, the Anglican Mission viewed Malaya as merely a springboard for mission to China, rather than a place of mission in its own right. These

²⁹ Hutchisson in 1828, cited in Max Warren, The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History 1965:30

weaknesses will be discussed in reverse order.

For over a hundred years Anglican missionaries passed through Malaya on their way to China, but not until they were driven out of China in the early 1950s did they concentrate on the evangelization of Malaya. "Malaya seemed 'just too far beyond India to participate in her attractive glamour; just too far short of China to profit by the calls of her teeming millions . . . on the highway to everywhere, but until recently, nothing in ourselves'" (Smith in Northcott 1992b:36).

The close church-state relationship that existed in England was transferred to the colonies and resulted in a chaplaincy style of ministry. The Anglican church in Malaya was not intended to be a missionary church. It was initially established to minister exclusively to the English community. Not until the 1950s did it turn its focus outward. In fact, Anglican missionaries in Malaya were called "chaplains," not "missionaries." Chaplains were government employees answerable to the East India Company and after 1867 to the Colonial Office. It must be remembered that the East India Company's overriding concern was trade, and it rigorously opposed any inclinations of the Anglican church to develop as a separate entity from the East India Company-funded chaplaincy (Warren 1965:30). The funding of Anglican churches and chaplains enabled the East India Company effectively to keep the Anglican Mission under its thumb. "Governors tended to regard the church as a department of state and the chaplain as just another civil servant" (Hunt 1992:37-

38). The boundaries between church and state became so blurred that disputes arose between governors and chaplains over the scheduling of services and the wearing of vestments.

The church was seen by the Malaysians for what it was - one branch of the colonial administration. Its close association with things British discouraged the development of indigenous congregations (Dumper 1964:11). Another factor that worked against indigenization was that, as civil servants, chaplains were frequently shuffled from place to place. Chaplains rarely stayed in one place for more than a couple of years (Harrison 1985:131). Consequently, even for those who might have wished to, there was not sufficient time to develop a lasting foundation upon which to build an indigenous congregation.

Furthermore, its accountability to the East India Company made the mission of the church subservient to the interests of British trade. This position found its ultimate symbolic expression in the Treaty of Pangkor, which gave the British Residents jurisdiction over all matters save Malay religion and culture. In effect, the British government was saying, "We're taking over everything. We are assuming unquestionable right to exploit the country for our self interests. (Of course, British-style democracy and civilization will be to everyone's benefit, and for such you should be forever grateful). To prove that we have no hard feelings, and don't mean to intrude into your private affairs, and to let you feel that you are still calling the shots, we promise not to push Christianity on you. Keep your

religion of the prophet, and your peculiar little festivals.

Don't bother us and we won't bother you."

From the standpoint of the Kingdom of God, it is a tragic loss that, for all of its lofty moralizing rhetoric, when it got right down to it, the one thing the British government was willing to sacrifice was the spread of the gospel. The colonials were all too willing to risk the ire of the Malays when British pounds sterling were at stake. Sadly, when the eternal souls of the Malays were at stake, the risk of offending Malay sensibilities was considered too high. Thus, when in 1846 the Bishop of Madras visited Malaya, he wrote: "It appears that no missionary operations against heathenism are directly carried on at this station" (quoted in Hunt 1992:38).

With the vast resources of the colonial government, the Anglican Mission could have had a far-reaching influence among the Malays. Some educational initiatives did, in fact, do some good. The Anglican Penang Free School took in many Malays from elite families. No less than *Bapa Malaysia* (The Father of Malaysia), Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first and most beloved prime minister, claimed the school as his alma mater. The Christian influence of the school was evidenced in his lifelong attitude of friendliness toward Christians, and his even-handed treatment of all religions.

Malays were not averse to sending their children to Christian schools when it was clear to them that the educational quality was excellent. The prospects for social and economic

advancement for their children outweighed their misgivings about exposing their children to Christianity. It also proved to be true that caring, sensitive missionaries, such as Benjamin Keasberry, won the respect and admiration of the Malays. Had the Christian missionaries taken a greater interest in the interests of the Malays, the whole tide of opinion about Christianity among the Malays may well have been different today.

Unfortunately, the Anglican Church, among others, upheld the status quo against the best interests of the non-whites. No attempt was made to break down racial barriers. In fact, non-whites were often excluded from services for the English (Loh 1964:11).

The British only reinforced the strong racial enclaves that existed in Malaya. Malays were kept in their rural villages, growing rice. The Chinese were the tin miners and the merchant class. Indians were rubber-tappers, laborers and clerks. Although the Church in Malaya attacked individual vices, it did not challenge the systemic injustices that put one race above another, or question the divine right of England to impose its own brand of "civilization." In the words of Michael Northcott (1992:51) ultimately "the Anglican Church failed to act as a sign of the Kingdom of Christ in which people of all classes and races are called to worship together."

The Anglican Church was so wrapped up in being the Church of England in Malaya, and so aloof from Malayan society, that as late as 1936, at a church council, the locals reported that the

expatriates (who made up the majority of the council) "had no comprehension of the issues the Asian clergy were trying to raise" (Diocesan Council Records, cited in Northcott 1992:53).

In the 20th century, the church's commitment to the process of independence was weak. Church leaders called for government reform, but would not concede the possibility of local rule. The manner of British rule was subject to scrutiny. That British rule was best was not open for debate.

The close identification of the Anglican Church with the colonial government ultimately made the Church's relation to the Malays adversarial, when it came to the issue of Malayan independence. It also caused a major identity crisis when, in 1957, British rule was abolished.

What of Anglican outreach specifically for the Malays? As with the other mission boards, workers targeting Malays were lamentably few. Writing in 1921, Anglican Bishop Ferguson-Davie (1921:85) said that while "there have been many clergy of different religious bodies working among these two latter peoples (Tamils and Chinese), *there has only been one missionary in 100 years* (he was referring to Keasberry), as far as is known, who has devoted himself to Malay work." While not literally true (for example, in his own Anglican tradition one Bishop McDougall founded a school for Malay children in Sarawak, East Malaysia in 1848), Ferguson-Davie's statement is not far off the mark, and underscores the virtual neglect of the Malays by Christians. This fact prompted Ferguson-Davie (1921:17) to cry out: "Is it

not a reproach to our Church that there are no missionaries living amongst these people--our own fellow subjects . . . ? 'Whom shall we send, or who will go for us?' Do we not seem to hear the question asked? Is there none to reply, 'Here am I, send me.'"

Ferguson-Davie opened a Medical Mission in Melaka in 1911 as a means of building a foundation of trust among the Malays, and simply to demonstrate Christlike love. The Malays immediately welcomed the Christian doctor and her three Chinese assistants. In her very first report, Dr. Mildred Staley wrote "'We have paid eighty-seven visits to kampongs in six months and receive a warm welcome everywhere, and some of these kampongs already send for us in cases of serious illness and *seem to trust us fully*'" (emphasis mine) (Ferguson-Davie 1921:64). Soon three dispensaries were established in outlying Malay kampongs. That the confidence of the Malays had been won is shown by the fact that in the first year of operations, over 5,000 Malays visited the dispensaries (Ferguson-Davie 1921:64).

The work continued to expand, and there are reports of Malays walking for miles to receive medical attention from the Christian dispensaries. In 1914 the work was moved to bigger premises with three wards for inpatient care. A Sunday School for interested patients was also begun. Bishop Ferguson-Davie observed that the medical personnel were, through their sacrificial giving of themselves, bearing witness to the meaning of Christianity to the Malays among whom they worked. In the

1919 report, Dr. Warren, who had succeeded Dr. Staley, wrote that "'There have been six baptisms during the year--four of orphans adopted by the Mission, one of a patient, and one of a servant'" (Ferguson-Davie 1921:65).

Dr. Staley had found the Malay women particularly ripe for the gospel. She recounts anecdotes of Malay *kampung* women "who had lost all faith in pawangs' (traditional healers) or hajis' (those who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca) treatments" (Ferguson-Davie 1921:66). Others lashed out at Islamic fatalism that asked them to accept passively the suffering of their beloved children. Dr. Staley believed that the women felt "the bitter sense of injury and outrage" (quoted in Ferguson-Davie 1921:67) at the double standard Islamic women were expected to live under. The men were free to be relatively carefree, while the women were left with the daily burden of sustaining large families without the aid of modern conveniences.

In 1919, ill-health forced Dr. Warren to leave the Mission. By the time of Ferguson-Davie's writing in 1921, a replacement had not yet been found. In Melaka and a similar Medical Mission that had opened in Singapore in 1913, the work was never able to maintain the number of workers that were needed to do the visiting in the Malay homes that was being called for.

Ferguson-Davie predicted that the Malay work would expand. In actuality, insufficient funding and lack of personnel came to curtail services. In the 1920s, the Malays shied away from the Melaka clinic as Chinese patients were admitted. Finally, in

1933, the hospital was closed for financial reasons (Browne 1936:53-54). Once again, an effective ministry among Malays died because of the lack of support from the Christian church. It is true that from the standpoint of numbers, such works were not wildly successful. It is equally true, though, that the foundations of credible Christianity were being laid, and that hints of Malay receptivity to the gospel were turning up here and there.

After commenting on what he perceived as the very positive effects on the Malays of the Melaka medical mission, Laurence Browne (1936:54) in 1936 bemoaned the fact that in all of Malaya "There is at the moment *not a single missionary* able to devote the greater part of his time *to the Malays*" (emphasis mine). Browne's statement occurs in the context of a country which was completely open to Christian missionaries, and in which there were literally hundreds of missionaries to the non-Malay races of Malaya. Where was the church?

The Methodist Mission

The founding fathers of the Methodist Mission in Singapore and Malaysia, James M. Thoburn and William F. Oldham, arrived in Singapore on Saturday, February 7th, 1885. They found almost immediate interest among the Chinese. By March 1st, 1886, they were running a Methodist English school for the Chinese (the Anglo-Chinese School). The start of Tamil work was no less dramatic. By September of 1885, Oldham was conducting evangelistic services among Tamil prisoners. Within eight months

of arrival, the mission had established a growing Tamil school (Doraisamy 1982:9). In early 1887, a Tamil church was built.

Also in 1887, the capable Sophia Blackmore arrived in Singapore. She trained Eurasian and Chinese Christian women, and together they did house to house visitation and opened and operated a Chinese girls school and a Tamil girls school (Means 1935:31).

By 1900 the Anglo-Chinese School in Singapore had an enrollment of around 600 (Sng 1980:113). Other active ministries included day schools, Sunday schools, Bible studies, a girls home, visitation at a leper colony, street preaching, home visitation, and witnessing at any event that drew a crowd, including Chinese festivals. These were all for the Chinese, Indians, or Eurasians.

There was also organized lobbying of the colonial government for more just treatment of women, the closing of brothels, the banning of the importation of women for prostitution, and the outlawing of opium and alcohol sales. Except for the efforts against the sale of opium and alcohol, the lobbying efforts of the Methodist missionaries were largely successful.

These activities were carefully planned and carefully evaluated. Personnel and funds were allocated. There was also a strong emphasis on leadership development. In short, in those early years the Methodist Church did much effective outreach, and they were thorough in training, execution, and follow-up (Hwa Yung and Hunt 1992:154-155).

The one exception to this was evangelism of the Malays:

From the beginning this was set aside for one or two missionaries who had a reasonable command of the Malay language. There was never the widespread participation of every person associated with the Church. Local preachers and exhorters who engaged in this work were few. From 1890 up to 1919 only William Shellabear and various short term Chinese assistants or WSFM teachers were involved on a consistant basis, and even Shellabear was rarely directly involved. (Hwa Yung and Hunt 1992:155)

William G. Shellabear came to Singapore in 1891 to work with Malays. Muslim evangelism was slow, but Shellabear was able to establish a small Malay congregation. The only recorded converts were Silas Salleh, a Chinese convert to Islam who subsequently became a Christian under Shellabear, and a Malay, Haji Abdul Shukor. Silas Salleh went on to become a missionary to the Baba (Malay-speaking non-Muslim Chinese) population. Haji Abdul Shukor was baptized in 1895. Eventually, death threats by the Malay community forced the mission to move him to Hong Kong (Hunt 1991:411). In those days it required great personal sacrifice for a Malay to make the *haj* to Mecca. Only the most devout made the effort. Therefore, it is significant that a Haji (one who had made the *haj*) became a believer in Jesus.

Sopia Blackmore joined Shellabear in his efforts to reach Malays. She met fierce opposition when she and her women attempted to sing songs or tell Bible stories in the Malay *kampungs* around Singapore (Hunt 1991:411). Her girls home sometimes took in orphaned Malay girls, but there is record of only a single convert to Christianity.

Blackmore attributed the slowness of the Malay work to

"Muslim prejudices" (Hunt 1991:411). Yet, in this case the guarding of Malay racial solidarity was a stronger factor than the Islamic religion. This is evidenced by the fact that no opposition is recorded upon the conversion of Silas Salleh, the Chinese-Muslim convert to Christianity, whereas the conversion of a Malay, Haji Abdul Shukor, provoked physical attacks by the Malay community.

Both Blackmore and Shellabear became increasingly involved in the administrative duties of their respective schools, and were unable to devote much time to evangelism or recruitment of Malay pupils. At a critical time, following the baptism of Haji Abdul Shukor, Shellabear returned to England for a year upon the death of his wife in 1895. On his return in 1896, Shellabear was made the head of the Singapore District of the Methodist mission. As a Malay language scholar, he was also devoting more and more time to translation work. These two preoccupations forced him to give up his small Malay congregation. Since there was no one to replace Shellabear in the work, the congregation dissolved.

Shellabear felt that the distribution of Christian literature, and especially of Scripture portions "would probably be the surest and most effective method of reaching the hearts of the hitherto almost neglected Malay people" (Shellabear 1946:237). From 1888 until 1940 he wrote or translated no less than 57 books, chiefly for the use of Malay Muslims, but also for Malay-speaking Christians. Besides Christian publications, Shellabear took a great interest in Malay literature as having

value in and of itself. He produced a still-acclaimed critical edition of the Malay historical classic, The Malay Annals. He edited a collection of Malay proverbs and wrote a Malay-English dictionary. In addition to this, he edited several volumes in the Malay Literature Series for the British government.

Shellabear promoted not only Christian literature, but also Malay literature and the appreciation of Malay classical works.

Shellabear realized that there could be no shortcut to the hearts of the Malays. Driven by a love of the Malay language and people, he went to the greatest possible lengths to understand the Malays through a thorough mastery of their language, folklore, and culture. He went so far as to learn Dutch so that he could read the Dutch literature on the Malay language. Shellabear was recognized by the Malays as a leading Malay and Arabic language expert, and respected for his accomplishments. The sad fact that bears repeating is that so few shared Shellabear's heart for the Malays. The "hitherto almost neglected Malay people" became the henceforth almost neglected Malay people.

With Shellabear off the scene (poor health had forced him to return to the U.S. in 1920), no one continued evangelistic efforts among the Malays until 1931 when Robert and Fanny Blasdell were appointed to Melaka to build hostels for Malay children who would attend the Methodist School. Fanny Blasdell was the daughter of William Shellabear and spoke fluent Malay. From her father she had caught a love for the Malay people. The

Blasdells had come to Malaya to do Muslim evangelism. After 12 frustrating years of teaching in an English-medium school, they jumped at the chance to work with Malays in Melaka.

The Blasdells lived in Malay kampongs, establishing good relations with the Malays. Eventually they were able to persuade parents to send their children to the hostels (one for girls and one for boys) and the school. This was only possible because of the Blasdells knowledge of the Malay language, and their sensitivity to Malay customs and to Islam. Both hostels had special prayer rooms, and school classes were scheduled around the regular Islamic prayer times.

We have already seen that in the mid-1800s the colonial government realized that it was cheaper to farm out education to government-aided private schools than to establish and operate government schools. The requirements for a school to receive government grants were only that the school pass a yearly inspection and that the requisite number of students pass the examinations. Otherwise, such schools were free to do as they pleased. With government encouragement and financial aid, as well as land grants for the building of new schools, the missions jumped at the opportunity. The fact that the schooling was to be English-medium and concentrated in the more well-developed urban areas made it all the more readily accessible to the missions. None entered into the ministry/business of schooling more wholeheartedly than did the Methodists. From 1900 to 1940 this branch of the Methodist mission grew from 1,850 students in 13

schools to 17,472 students in 56 schools (Hunt 1991:413).

The Methodist Church grew to become so dependent upon this program that in 1920 only two of the 90 Methodist missionaries in Malaya were not teachers receiving salaries through the Grant-in-Aid program (Doraisamy 1982:56). The entire English-speaking mission became financially dependent upon the government money received for the operating of schools. As one missionary put it succinctly in 1935, "No schools, no Grant-in-Aid, no Mission" (Barclay 1956:774).

This missionary's comment could just as well have been "No opium, no Grant-in-Aid, no mission." Over half of the money the private schools received from the government was derived from opium sales (Hunt 1991:411). Bishop James Thoburn, whose initiative led to Methodism's spread in Malaya, justified receiving money from opium sales by saying that it was no different from the daily protection and services the churches received under the British government, which was heavily funded by opium revenues. This compromising position made it impossible for the Methodist Church to lobby credibly against opium. The testimony the Methodist Church could have had in joining the Malays against the widespread introduction of opium was effectively muted.

Following unfounded accusations that the Methodist school students were being forced to convert, in 1917, the colonial government placed restrictions on religious activities in the schools and on church management of the schools. Teachers had to

receive government approval. In 1928, compulsory attendance at chapel services was prohibited, as was the teaching of religion during school hours. The percentage of students involved in Christian activities dropped steadily (Minutes 1931:37).

The religious influence of the Methodist schools was narrowing and could not counterbalance the increasing emphasis on academic performance and secular learning. One teacher complained in 1935 that the schools taught enough Western knowledge to make students disbelieve their old religion, but not enough Christianity to turn them to the new faith (Hunt 1991:414). With most of the Methodist missionaries wrapped up in schools, and the schools becoming increasingly subject to government controls, the Methodists were steadily losing their Christian impact.

The major influence of the schools upon Malaysian society was found in their role in the creation of an English-educated urban elite. The benefit went to urban Chinese and Tamils. The rural Malay society was virtually ignored.

The Methodist Church's involvement in the economic development of Malaya was another area which benefitted the immigrants to the detriment of the Malays.

In 1901, Chinese entrepreneur Wong Nai Seong brought a group from China to Sarawak to develop the agricultural potential of the Rejang Valley. Because many of the group were Christians, and because the Methodist Church was known to be a responsible administrator, Wong invited the Methodist Church to help run the

new colony. Bishop Frank Warne went from Singapore to Sibu, Sarawak to be the pastor in charge. When Wong went bankrupt in 1904, Rajah Brooke appointed Methodist missionary James Hoover as the arbiter between the colony and the government. For three decades Hoover was the Kapitan China for all of the Rejang Valley Chinese. His position gave him enormous scope for expanding the role of the church in the Rejang Valley (Barclay 1956:114-133).

Hoover energetically ventured into economic development, bringing in additional Chinese workers, and granting them land. In the process the Methodist Church dispossessed the Iban and other indigenous peoples. Hoover's vision was one of "manifest destiny." He regarded Chinese dominance as inevitable in Sarawak, and even doubted the survival of the indigenous peoples. In 1910 the Chinese were given a 12-mile frontage of choice land on either side of the Rejang River at Sibu, and "all Dyaks, Malays, and others" were forced out (Barclay 1956:122). This action, though obtaining an immediate Methodist stronghold, identified the Methodists with colonial power and exploitation in the eyes of the Malays.

The "success" in Sarawak prompted the Methodist Church in West Malaya to launch into economic development. In 1903, H.L. Leuring negotiated with the Perak government to bring Chinese settlers to the present site of Sitiawan. Subsequent groups of Chinese colonists were brought to other areas under cultivation. The Methodists won many Chinese converts from among those they brought to Malaya, and built many congregations. Furthermore,

the agricultural work generated income for the Mission. The Methodist Mission ran a plantation, and several individual missionaries purchased property (Barclay 1956:172).

In both East and West Malaya, church leaders were intimately involved with the economic development of the country. A Methodist missionary played a key role in the introduction of rubber cultivation into Malaya (Hunt 1991:413). Money from the sale of land grants to the Chinese benefitted the Mission.

The relative size of the Methodist role in Malayan economic development was small. Yet it was important for the statement it made. Ministries of caring, such as medical clinics and children's homes, were dwarfed by Methodist business concerns. Considering its perceived role in society, "Methodism clearly not only supported but had vested interests in the colonial policy of making land grants to Chinese for the development of an agricultural export economy" (Hunt 1991:413). The Methodist Church helped develop the economic power base that was dominated by non-Malays. Through education and economics, the Methodists excluded (sometimes intentionally) the Malays, relegating to them an ever decreasing piece of the pie.

So, not only did far too few missionaries actually evangelize among the Malays to establish solid, ongoing Malay congregations, but even the other activities and policies of the Methodist Mission did not provide a positive climate for the reception of the gospel by Malays. The church's overall testimony to the Malays was negative.

The Blasdells demonstrated the possibility for Methodists to take a constructive and appreciated role in Malay society, but they were on the margin of the Methodist Church establishment. Their work was only grudgingly allowed by then Bishop Edwin Lee (Hunt 1991:415). The Blasdells constantly had to fight their superiors for the right to work among Malays. The Methodist schools were so consuming of personnel that the Blasdells were continually sought to be put in charge of schools.

At a time when the Methodists had nearly 100 missionaries in Malaya, they did not feel the need or the ability to spare even one of those missionaries for work among the Malays, who made up 50% of the population. With huge amounts of effort directed at evangelizing and educating the other half of the population, the Methodist Church was content to relate to the Malays through the distribution of literature alone.

Why was this so? One factor is that prejudice against Islam was high. English language articles denigrating Islam appeared in the Methodist publication "The Malaysia Message." There was also the question of the legality of evangelism among the Malays.

Yet the major reason for a lack of interest in mission among the Malays seems to have been financial. Virtually all the missionaries were tied up with school work, which paid for itself and supported the English and Tamil language congregations. The Chinese churches were likewise financially independent, or could be supported from the business profits of the mission. Work among Malays, on the other hand, showed little prospect of being self-supporting . . . or evangelistically successful. Expending money or human resources on such mission never had strong support from either the American mission board or the Methodist Mission leaders. (Hunt 1991:415)

The Christian Brethren

The Christian Brethren were another of the early missions in Malaya. The 1842 opening of five ports in China following the First Opium War cleared the way for Chinese from impoverished South China to immigrate to Southeast Asia. Many ended up as laborers in the newly discovered tin fields of Malaya. The Christian Brethren came to Malaya in 1860 to work among Chinese immigrants, as well as to take over the property the LMS had vacated when it moved its operations to China (Lee Kam Hing 1992:110). Thus, from the start, the Christian Brethren, as did the other missions, "assumed a non-Malay character" (Lee Kam Hing 1992:115).

In fairness to the missionaries, the challenges to successful Malay evangelism, even back then, were formidable. The 1874 Pangkor Treaty essentially was about restoring order in the state of Perak so that British rule would be unchallenged, and so that Chinese immigrants could safely be brought in to work the tin mines. Blood had been shed, and Malay misgivings were at a fever pitch. "British administrators, anxious that the various economic activities be not disrupted by any return to disorder, scrupulously restrained missionaries from venturing into Malay areas lest their zeal lead to hostile reaction from the Muslims" (Lee Kam Hing 1992:115).

Furthermore, accounts of the ill-effects of living in the tropics were not entirely fanciful. Nineteenth century missionaries to Malaya faced real health hazards. Two of the first five Brethren missionaries returned to their homeland due

to failing health. One J. Moore lost both his wife and child to fever. Moore himself returned to England because of sickness and died soon afterwards. Another missionary died shortly after contracting leprosy. The Malays and other indigenous peoples tended to live in the rural villages, where health care was far behind that of the cities. Living among Malays posed health risks to Europeans unaccustomed to tropical diseases.

One Brethren missionary did venture into the Malays' domain. J. Moore, whom we noted had suffered the loss of his wife and child, went to Melaka in 1889 after having learned Malay. Determined to be all things to all people, Moore rented a house in a Malay village, wore Malay clothes, and sought to live as closely to the Malays as possible. It is not known why, but his presence was strongly opposed by the Malays, and by his own account, after eight years in Melaka there was no response to the gospel from the Malays (Lee Kam Hing 1992:117). Eventually, the Malay opposition caught the attention of the British authorities, and Moore was asked by the British to leave Melaka. Moore left Melaka, went back to England, and died shortly thereafter. Brethren outreach to Malays had begun and now ended with Moore.

The Presbyterians

By far the earliest Protestant presence in Malaya came with the Dutch Presbyterians who conquered Catholic Melaka in 1644. During British colonial rule, missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) were sometimes Presbyterian, though the LMS in Malaya was essentially Congregationalist. LMS

missionaries in Singapore and Penang worked closely with the East India Company Anglican chaplains in ministry to the Scottish community.

When the LMS uprooted for China in 1842, the Scottish communities called their own ministers, and this led to the arrival of Charles Moir, the first missionary to come to British Malaya under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (Roxborough 1992:79). Moir arrived in Penang in 1851, and learned Malay, hoping to do Malay mission work. Swamped with responsibilities both as a parish minister to the Scots in Penang and as an assistant in the pre-existing Chinese mission work in Province Wellesley, Moir could not make time for the Malays.

I did not previously mention that one of Benjamin Keasberry's major outreaches "was among the Straits Chinese at the Malay Chapel in Princep Street (in Singapore) which he had built in 1843. What had been intended as a mission to Muslim Malays bore more fruit among Malay-speaking Chinese whose ancestors had been in Malaya for several hundred years" (Roxborough 1992a:80). After Keasberry died in 1975, the Presbyterian Church eventually took over Keasberry's Chinese work. A mission could have just as easily carried on Keasberry's Malay work, but being "less fruitful," it was left to die on the vine.

Actually, the Presbyterians had ties with the Chinese from China (many Chinese Christian immigrants to Malaya had been converted in southern China through the English Presbyterian

Mission) and desired to maintain this connection. Thus, it was natural to focus on the Chinese rather than the Malays.

Like the Anglican Mission, the Presbyterian mission followed a chaplaincy model of ministry. Its primary concern was for the expatriate community. The rationale for such a model was that the credibility of mission work was believed to suffer when the Europeans lived immorally. Many also believed that the economic and political forms of Western civilization were morally dangerous apart from the influence of the biblical principles of righteousness, self-control, and servanthood to counteract greed and moral license. Certainly, the need for chaplains was rapidly increasing. When Presbyterian services began in Kuala Lumpur in 1902 there were less than 150 expatriates in the city, but by 1911, expatriates had increased to 1,396 (Roxborough 1992a:85). In summary, the Presbyterians worked among the Chinese and Tamils, but in the main, churches were built by and for expatriates.

The Roman Catholic Church

A final mission to consider is that of the Roman Catholic Church. The Portuguese, as we have discussed, were a negative witness to the gospel, and as such, set the tone for centuries of anti-Christian sentiment among the Malays. There were elements of caring service from the church, though, that mitigated to a degree the harsh, warlike tenor of the Portuguese era. Beginning in 1515, Father Alfonso Martinez spent 34 years as the parish priest of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Melaka. Martinez built

a Pauper Hospital and a Misericordia for the poor, widows and orphans (Roxborough 1992b:29). Under Martinez' ministry, there were a few Muslim converts, but their conversions were evidently motivated primarily by the benefits they would receive as Christians under the Catholic Portuguese (Roxborough 1992b:29).

When Melaka fell to the Dutch, the Roman Catholic Mission in Malaya did not dissolve. The Catholics of Melaka became poor, but were able to sustain themselves, and even managed to grow. The church there developed a blend of Malay and Portuguese culture, unique to Melaka. Some Malays, surprisingly, have even suggested counting the Portuguese-Malay Catholics of Melaka among those who qualify for special government benefits as either indigenes or Muslims.

The Dutch and English did not like Catholics, but struggles within the international Catholic Church hindered evangelism and church growth more than did any threat from Protestants, who from 1815 were also sending missionaries to Malaya (Balhetchet 1976:12). The problem was a struggle between the Portuguese and the French over who would have jurisdiction in Malaya.³⁰ "The conflict was not without irony - Catholics from two European powers arguing over who should run a mission to Chinese, Indians

³⁰ When the Portuguese government became increasingly unable to fulfill its obligation under the Padroado,* the French Catholics sought to expand into territory previously allocated to Portugal.

*The Padroado was the system of royal patronage by which the Pope in 1493-94 had divided the world into Spanish and Portuguese jurisdiction and had made the respective kings responsible for all missionary appointments.

and Eurasians in a Malay part of the world under British rule" (Roxborough 1992b:10). The issue was not completely sorted out until the late 1800s. In the process, Catholic outreach was stunted.

In spite of the ecclesiastical wrangling, Catholic churches were eventually established throughout Malaya, often before any Protestant works were begun. To its credit, the Catholic Church was not ingrown, but attempted to reach the local populations. This was surely due in part to the fact that since the Portuguese expulsion from Malaya, expatriates had always been predominantly Protestant. Therefore, the Catholics had nowhere to turn but to the local population. The Catholic Church was the first to ordain locals. As early as 1788 (27 years before the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries) a local Eurasian was ordained in Penang (Roxborough 1992b:11)

Although the Catholic Church sought to Christianize the Malayan peoples, baptismal records throughout the 19th century indicate that, like the other missions, the Roman Catholic Mission did not penetrate into the world of the Malays. The Catholic Mission in Taiping, Perak is a fairly representative example. From its founding in 1875 until 1897 there were 245 Indians baptized, 225 Chinese baptized, 120 Eurasians baptized, and no Malays baptized (Roxborough 1992b:15).

Vatican II and the Charismatic Renewal have breathed fresh life into the Catholic Church. Lay participation is high. The Roman Catholic Church has emerged as a leader in social

consciousness, and as such has earned the respect of the Malaysian government and its people.

Yet, historically, the highly institutionalized, hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church was foreign to the religious style of both traditional Malay spiritism and Malay Islam. Williams (1985:112) maintains that Rome held a rigid mentality which directed the Church along the lines of the European model, and viewed with grave suspicion any adaptation to local mentality and custom. Purity of faith was identified with conformity and uniformity with Rome. With its images, cathedrals, and Latin Mass, the Catholic Church was perhaps the most "churchy," and thus foreign to the Malay Muslims. The pre-Vatican II Church was, by the Church's own admission, "mainly the kingdom of the priest, the organist and the trained choir" (E.A. Skelchy, quoted in Roxborough 1992b:27).

Summary of the Church's Neglect of Malays

In summary, I want to reiterate that Malays were not targeted for evangelism by any denominational mission board or independent mission agency in the history of Malaysia. Malay evangelism was never even attempted by some missions. For the others it was spasmodic, temporary, and completely tangential to their overall thrusts. What little work that was attempted, was done by relatively isolated individuals who rarely had the full backing of their respective agencies.

Certainly, personnel were not allocated for Malay evangelism. Even in the Depression years of the 1930s the

Methodist Church always had at least 44 missionaries in Malaya. Malaya was their third largest mission worldwide, following only India and China. Yet, in those years, not one of their missionaries worked among the Malays (Journal of the 121st Annual Meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Dec. 2-5, 1939). From the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in Malaya in 1815 until Malaysian independence in 1957, literally thousands of missionaries lived and worked in Malaya. Of those thousands, perhaps half a dozen worked mainly with Malays, and another dozen worked with Malays at some point or another in their ministry.

Consequently, when we consider why Malays are unreached, we must first point the finger at ourselves as the church. With the empirical research in view, we must also pose the question of whether Christian relations with Malays during colonial times affect Malay students' openness and even prospects of conversion to Christianity. At the risk of belaboring the point that Malays were historically neglected by mission boards, I present the following sample of quotes from mission leaders who worked with and/or wrote about Malays:

- 1887-Being myself specially interested in the Malays, I was surprised to find that none of the Singapore missionaries were doing anything to reach them.--William Shellabear (1946:236)
- 1911-In Java altogether we have 19,000 Christians won from Islam. . . . There is no mission, however, among the Muslims in Malaya.--John Rauws (1911:246)
- 1913-There are thousands of Malays, and to whom, with the exception of the Malacca work mentioned, there is not one single missionary.--Charles Tisdall (1913:173)

1921-There has only been one missionary in 100 years, as far as is known, who has devoted himself to Malay work.

--C.E. Ferguson-Davie (1921:21)

1928-Malays have been . . . neglected people.--Marmaduke Dodsworth (1928a:56)

Under British rule there have been various efforts (to reach Malays), but mostly poorly organized.--Wheeler (1928:349)

Few missionary workers in this country have a sound knowledge of Malay or of the outlook and mode of thought of the Malays, so direct evangelistic work among this people has been weak and spasmodic.--Wheeler (1928:350)

There has been no determined effort on the part of the Church in prayer, hope, study or propaganda.--Wheeler (1928:350)

Missionary work among Malays has been spasmodic and relatively meagre.--Wheeler (1928:350)

Singapore is the centre of one of the largest Muhammadan areas in the world; yet the Church of England, which has missions in nearly all other large Muslim areas, has never had a single ordained man or catechist for similar work here where there are some forty million Muslims, of whom one and a half million are under British protection in the Peninsula.--Wheeler (1928:351)

1936-By some strange chance one corner of the Muslim world has been overlooked in the programme of missions, a country for the administration of which Great Britain is responsible, the Malay Peninsula. In that country there are 17,000 Europeans, presumably all nominal Christians, 36,000 Indian Christians, and 30,000 Chinese Christians. But the Malays, who number 1,644,000, are all Muslims, and there is practically no effort being made to evangelize them. There are probably not more than six Christian Malays in the whole country. The possibility of intercourse between the 80,000 Christian residents in the country of the Malays constitutes in itself an open door. (*italics mine*)
--Laurence Browne (1936:9)

1954-The Malays have not been the object of serious evangelistic approach.--Blasdell (1954:189)

Throughout the years of . . . ministry effort in Malaya, little attention has been given to the Malays.--Blasdell (1954:189)

1957--Concerning "the possibilities of evangelism among the Malays . . .no obvious advances can be claimed.--Healey (1957:24)

Missionary societies . . . have tended to neglect Malays in the past.--Healey (1957:19)

The churches have more or less accepted the idea that Malays are not to be evangelized, and thus have ceased to think about the subject.--Marrison (1957:297)

Some would argue that we should not invest limited resources in "resistant" people groups, but rather should target "receptive" peoples. It is precisely such reasoning that led missions of the last two centuries to turn away from the Malays. The result has been lost opportunity, and still no Malay church.

I would like to show a brief, chronological progression of Malay Islam, to prove that we have indeed missed opportunities to change the whole Malay religious environment.

CHAPTER 3

Religio-cultural Analysis

"Muslims we are but animism we feel"

--Wazir Jahan Karim, 1990

Historical Overview and Progression of Malaysian Islam

Since the Advent of Colonialism

We concluded the last chapter with a look at the "unanswered call," the church's overall neglect of the Malays. To picture what the missionaries to Malaya faced when they encountered Islam, it will be helpful now to look at the type of Islam practiced by the Malays through time.¹

Colonial Pre-British

The earliest Christian missionaries to Malaya found an Islamic facade barely if at all masking a Hinduized court, officials administering a system of Hindu and customary law, and the populace looking to shamans and Hindu magic and astrology for the cure of disease and for success in agriculture, fishing, love, and war. "Both the men and women of Malacca," wrote 16th century Portuguese chronicler Tome Pires, "are fond of mimes after the fashion of Java" (quoted in Winstedt 1950:35-36), enjoying the shadow play with its repertory from the Hindu epics the Mahabharata and Ramayana. By changing names and inserting Quranic prayers, Indian Muslim missionaries had "baptized," not replaced, a thousand years of Hindu practice. Hindu incantations

¹Appendix C discusses the sources covering the interplay of Malay religious practice, culture, ethnicity, and politics.

were called prayers (*do'a* -Arabic) and made unobjectionable by the addition of the new confession of faith, acknowledging the One God and Muhammad his prophet:

It is not I who get rid of the evils of black magic,
 It is Batara Guru; it is the gods of the Hindu heaven,
 It is seven deities of supernatural power.
 Son of Batara Kala, grandson of Ganesa!
 Descend and dispel all hazard and ill-luck,
 Dispel them from the home of all the sons of Adam!
 The sword of Vishnu is before my face.
 Genies in whose keeping are earth and water,
 Genies in whose lap is the world,
 Return ye to your place, the broken rock at the navel of the seas!
 Enter not the line drawn by my teacher!
 If ye enter, I will curse you with the words of the Prophet Solomon;
 I will curse you with the creed, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet." (quoted in Winstedt 1950:36)

With the appropriate Islamic prayer attached, shamans invoked their predecessors and Siva and Vishnu to defend the fellers of a new rice clearing from the malice of Arabic genies, Persian fairies, Hindu demigods, and Indonesian nature spirits. An effective mode of syncretism was the supplanting of the heroes of the Hindu epics by a fictitious picture of Alexander the Great as a forerunner of Muhammad in the fight for monotheism. Malay rulers who had been incarnations of Indra and Vishnu were now made descendants of a Macedonian man-god through the Sassanian kings of Persia.

In place of the shaman's fearful initiation in the forest and the fasting and seclusion copied from Hindu ascetics in order to acquire magic, the Malay now submitted to listen shrouded to the prayers for the dead read over him; fasting, he would repeat the name of Allah five thousand times, until hysteria brought hideous visions of ravening tiger or coiling snake to be succeeded in those who endured by visions of prophets and angels teaching the neophyte the magic arts for which he craved. (Winstedt 1950:37)

The Hindu Malayan religion included a gnostic concern for mystic names and formulae and the worship of innumerable saints.

As for the mystic names and formulae, in Hindu days the Malay had invoked nature-spirits and deities by every possible designation so that an incantation might not go astray. It is therefore no break with tradition to invoke Allah by all His Excellent Names and to replace *Om* the Hindu word of power with the Arabic *Kun* "Let it be" and with the *Basmala*,² whose recital can attract fish from all the seas, make the barren fruitful, lay the tyrant low and bring honour and salvation. The Malay's new teachers taught him how the appropriate Arab text written on an amulet at the right astrological moment in scented rose-water musk and saffron with a recitation of the proper formula would save a woman from all attempts on her virtue even by the black art and would protect a man from a bullet, spear, pestilence and shipwreck. (Winstedt 1950:38)

British Colonial

By the time the British entered the picture three hundred years later, the Hindu names had been dropped. It is obvious, though, from early British observers that Islam in Malaya certainly had not rooted out pre-Islamic religious beliefs and practices. It is equally obvious that Islam had not yet become the integrated way of life that it is to many Malays today.

Writing about her 1875 trip to Malaya, Isabella Bird's description of Islam is of a religion devoid of genuine vitality or moral imperatives. It is no more than an oppressive club of theocratic law wielded by an elite few for the legitimization and preservation of their special status. Islam was, in Bird's

² or *Bismillah*, as in *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem* ("In the name of God, the Merciful, the Mercy-Giving"). It is a phrase with which Muslims begin endeavors or actions.

estimation, causing a "slow decay" and a "freezing and retarding influence" on the Malay spirit (Bird 1883:35).

While Malays were ignorant of Quranic teaching, Malay Islam was teeming with vampires, were-tigers, specters, storm fiends, innumerable spirits, and "a gigantic demonology" (Bird 1883:452). "I never heard of any country of such universal belief in devils, familiars, omens, ghosts, sorceries, and witchcrafts" (Bird 1883:451). In fact, Bird saw the Malays as "wholly given to idolatry" (Bird 1883:462). Not only were such beliefs tolerated, they were incorporated into Muslim practice. One example of many is that the official regalia of the sultans (who were the heads of Islam) were believed to possess supernatural powers that made the rulers invulnerable to the agency of spirits.

Bird's unflattering depiction continues with a picture of Islamic teaching. Islamic education "consists mainly of teaching the children to repeat, in a tongue they do not understand, certain passages from the Koran" (Bird 1883:29). Bird concludes that Malays "are for the most part ignorant" of what Islam actually teaches (Bird 1883:177).

Another evidence of the great divide between past and present Malay Islam is that in Bird's time, Muslims freely drank of the fermented juice of the toddy palm (Bird 1883:31). No self-respecting Malay now would risk drinking an intoxicant in the presence of others.

Bird's assessment of Malay Muslims, in short, is that they were "ignorant and grossly superstitious" (Bird 1883:460). Her

statements must be tempered, of course, with an understanding of her own bias. She repeatedly labeled Malays as "bigoted Muslims" simply because they let it be known that they disliked Christianity, yet she reserved for herself the right to view Islam disparagingly without considering herself bigoted.

It would be unfair, though, simply to write off Bird's assessment as the product of a close-minded Victorian Christian ethnocentrist. For one thing, Bird is not stingy with praise of the local people, and frequently sets their customs in a favorable light. Furthermore, she is not blindly pro-British, as can be seen from her thoughts on the universally maligned Malay phenomenon of running amok.

Considering how punctilious and courteous the Malays are, how rough many of the best of us are, how brutal in manner many of us are, and how inconsiderate our sailors are of the customs of foreign peoples, especially in regard to the seclusion of their women, it is wonderful that bloody revenge is not more common than it is. (Bird 1883:453)

Malay writers themselves wrote of the Malays as superstitious and of the poor quality of Islamic teaching. Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir had written in 1843 that Islamic schooling was little more than the uncomprehending, rote memorization of the Quran (Abdullah 1970:79). Teachers were so heavy handed and excessively strict that pupils were sometimes chained to poles and ordered to recite the Quran.

Abdullah, moreover, spoke of his fellow Malays as fatalistic, superstitious, and ignorant of scientific knowledge. During a smallpox epidemic, many refused to allow their children

to be vaccinated, believing that if it was the will of Allah, their children would die with or without the vaccination (Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir 1970:237). In the area of scientific knowledge, Abdullah claimed that although it had been over three hundred years since Magellan circumnavigated the world, none of his friends had ever even heard that the earth is spherical (p.235). This is all, of course, in stark contrast to current Malaysian Islam, which prides itself in keeping abreast of the latest scientific insights.

Abdul Majid was another Malay writer who commented on Malay Islamic practice. Written after Bird, his observations lend further weight to our contention that 19th century Islam was wanting by current standards. Again we hear that Islamic teaching was "confined to Qur'an-reading only," and that the boys grew up to be "men ignorant of Islam" (Roff 1978:63). It was not uncommon for a bridegroom to be taught for the first time the five pillars of Islam immediately prior to his wedding so as to be sure that he was a good Muslim and knew at least the first lesson in Islam. Referring to mandatory daily Islamic ritual cleansing, Abdul Majid laments that "Many young men, I knew, did not even know how to wash themselves" (Roff 1978:63).

Malays were fearful of the spirit realm, and put great stock in omens (Roff 1978:45). Moreover, Abdul Majid describes his culture as one in which gambling was prevalent (Roff 1978:78,86). Drinking was also apparently common and openly practiced among upper class Malays, even during Ramadan (Roff 1978:109). In

short, most Malays were religious, but their understanding of Islam was minimal (Roff 1978:xii).

Lest we mistakenly conclude, though, that large numbers of Malay Muslims would inevitably have converted to Christianity if the missions agencies had only devoted more resources to Malay evangelism, Dutch Islamicist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (Benda 1958:339) warns against the "erroneous assumption that the syncretic nature of Islam at the village level would render conversion to Christianity easier in Southeast Asia than in other Muslim lands." After all, for all the "impurities" of the village Islam of the peasantry, Malays considered themselves to be good and devout Muslims, profoundly attached to their own version of the faith. As early as 1894, Bishop Thoburn (1894:12) wrote that "In the Malay Peninsula and in the islands beyond, the Mohammedans have gained a strong foothold, and their Malay converts are extremely bigoted in their attachment to the faith of Islam."

Hurgronje's caution is a point well taken, and Thoburn's remark is undoubtedly true. Yet, the historical evidence still suggests that Malays were relatively open to the gospel during the early British colonial years, and generally grew progressively resistant. Concerning Thoburn's statement, however hardened in their attachment to their faith, staunchly Muslim Malays were at the time a minority. Yes, orthodox Islam had gotten one foot in the door, but the other foot was still solidly grounded in traditional Malay spiritism.

In an impassioned 1913 article entitled "A Plea for the Malays," Charles Tisdall observed that the "heathen tribes" of Malaysia and Indonesia were rapidly falling to the encroachment of Islam. The Islamization of the Malay Peninsula was going on before the very eyes of the British, and the church was standing back and watching it happen (Tisdall 1913:172). A Methodist school teacher who just arrived in Medan, Sumatra wrote at the time:

Scattered through the vast regions are multitudes who have never heard of Christ, but who are rapidly learning the faith of the false prophet. If things go on at this pace Mohammedanism will be the religion of Sumatra. It is now a race between the Cross and the Crescent. The one who gets to the ears and hearts of the people first will be the ruling faith. What will the Christian churches at home do about this matter? (quoted in Tisdall 1913:172)

Tisdall adds:

Today the heathen tribes in Sumatra and Borneo would quickly become Christian if only missionaries could be found to go and preach Christ to them, as may be seen from the result of the Rhenish Mission in the Battak country, Sumatra, the total Christian community of which numbers over 100,000 souls. But there are only a few missionaries for this work, and in many districts there are none at all; and so the religion of Mohammed, which is being carried in by Arab traders, is fast claiming these people for its own. . . . In allowing the Mohammedans to forestall them, the work of converting these people to Christianity is being rendered more difficult every year. (Tisdall 1913:172)

Of the Malays specifically, Tisdall writes: "The greatest need in this part of the world at present is a Mission to the Malays...The colporteurs of the Bible Society...report that the Mohammedans are anxious to hear about Christianity and more ready to buy Gospels than ever before" (Tisdall 1913:172-173).

Tisdall goes on to lament that in all of Malaya, with the exception of a work in Melaka, there is not a single missionary to the Malays. He notes that almost all the Missions, at one time or another, started Muslim work, but finding little or no results, quickly abandoned their effort, and devoted themselves entirely to work among the Chinese and Indians. Tisdall proposes that a new Mission be started for Malay work only.

It was Tisdall's opinion that Malay Muslims were in fact easier to work with than many other Muslims:

I would point out also that Moslem work here is very much easier than that in Arabia, India, or Persia, where a worker must know Arabic, the Koran and the Traditions, as well as all the arguments against Islam and in opposition to the Mohammedan ideas of Christianity, before he can really do any work worth speaking of. Here, none of these things are so immediately necessary; and a worker who would be a failure through inability to learn the language for work in Arabia, India, or Persia, might be a success here, where only Malay (a comparatively easy language) is needed. (Tisdall 1913:174-175)

This opinion was shared by others, including W.T. Cherry (1907:94): "But it is our opinion that their invulnerability against the truth is greatly exaggerated. It would probably be found that there are nothing like the difficulties here that beset workers in North Africa and other hotbeds of Islam." Tisdall's final analysis was that the Malays were "ripe for the harvest."

In response to Hurgronje's cautions against expecting easier results among Southeast Asian Muslims than Muslims of other areas, it can be pointed out that part of Indonesia had already seen significant Muslim conversion to Christianity. True, it did

not come easily, but it did happen. Three-quarters of a century of efforts in Java resulted in well over 60,000 Christians of Islamic origin (Browne 1936:55). Browne believed the Javanese were not less committed to Islam than were the Malays, indicating that results may well have been likely among the Malays had comparable efforts been made (Browne 1936:56). Sadly, "The efforts made on behalf of the Malays have not been sufficiently intensive or continuous to give any expectation of success" (Browne 1936:54).

The earliest Protestant missionary efforts in Malaya indicate that the Malays were not necessarily more resistant to the gospel than were the other Malayan people groups. One Dr. Legge (1898:141), speaking of the work of the LMS in Singapore in the first half of the 19th century, said "Our Chinese mission in Singapore has been a failure; the Malay mission had a little success." That the Malay work was more successful than the Chinese work is most significant. Dodsworth (1928a:27), writing in 1928, reports the opposite to be true. This indicates that an earlier window of opportunity was already shutting by 1928.

Administrator Frank Swettenham's years of service in Malaya led him to conclude in 1900 that Islam in Malaya was little more than a thin veneer covering a bedrock of "superstitions and animistic practices." Contrary to Bishop Thoburn's assessment, Swettenham (1900a:147) believed "the Malay is hardly ever a bigot in matters of religion."

Swettenham (1900a:145) notes a lackadaisical attitude taken by most Malays regarding Muslim basics such as prayer, fasting, and mosque attendance:

I have said the Malay is a professing Muhammadan, his life is ruled by the Muhammadan law, and he accepts the teaching and injunctions of the Moslem priesthood, but, with rare exception, he cannot be called devout; he does not pray five times a day, he does not rigorously observe a forty days' fast, he is not a regular attendant at the mosque. He is married and buried as a Muhammadan, he is circumcised and goes through the outward observances imposed by his Faith, yet, when he is hard pressed, he has a way of harking back to original sin, and the practice of witchcraft abhorred by the priesthood. This tendency to backsliding applies to all ranks of Malay society, from the highest to the lowest.

Swettenham continues: "If Malays are not inclined to work, neither are they greatly inclined to religious discipline or observance; still they are more tolerant than others whose lives are guided by a relation to higher moral principles" (1900:145).

The above indicate that Malays at the turn of the century displayed a general lack of discipline with respect to Islamic practice, and that their observance stemmed from social pressure rather than from intrinsic spiritual motivation. It is noteworthy, though, that the primal religious practices which Swettenham calls "witchcraft" were by now "abhorred" by the religious leadership.

Swettenham's description of an unthinking, animism-based, blindly accepted Malay Islam is echoed in a 1913 article entitled "Mohammedanism in Malaya":

Though a professing Mohammedan and ready to die for the faith which he only dimly understands, the Malay never entirely abandoned the superstitions of earlier days. He goes through the outward forms imposed by his faith, is circumcised, married and buried as a Mohammedan but in times

of stress has a way of harking back to the practice of witchcraft, and resorting to the propitiation of the spirits of earth, air, or mountain, which has no place in Orthodox Muslim belief. (p.244)

In an article written in 1911, Hugh Clifford speaks of the Malays as a people whose conversion to Islam was far from complete:

Their conversion was slow and gradual, and may even now in some respects be regarded as imperfect. Upon the bulk of the Malayan peoples their religion sits but lightly. Few are found to observe the law concerning the Five Hours of Prayer, and many fail to put in an appearance at the Friday congregational services in the mosques. The Fast of Ramadan, however, is generally observed with some faithfulness. Compared with other Mahommedan peoples, the Malays are not fanatical. . . . Throughout, the superstitions of the Malays show indications of this Hindu influence, and many of the demons whom their medicine-men invoke in their magic practices are clearly borrowed from the pantheon of India. For the rest, a substratum of superstitious beliefs, which survives from the days when the Malays professed only their natural religion, is to be found firmly rooted in the minds of the people, and the influence of Mahommedanism, which regards such things with horror, has been powerless to eradicate this. (Clifford 1911:476)

We see again that the Malay Islamic establishment was, albeit unsuccessfully, attempting to eradicate pre-Islamic practices. At the time of the Portuguese, Hindu and primal religious practices were freely and openly admitted under the umbrella of Islam. Another observation is that the fast of Ramadan, which was listed by Swettenham in 1900 as one of Islam's rules that was not being observed, was now being generally observed.

Clifford also notes that Malay grievances with the British were based on political or social rather than religious issues, indicating a lack of integration of Islam within Malay society.

Today in Malaysia, Islamic principles are invoked whenever Malays discuss political or social issues. In other words, Islam is now not a separate sphere, isolated from the wider concerns of society.

Finally, in Clifford's estimation, Malays were "much addicted to gambling" and held extremely lax standards of sexual morality (Clifford 1911:476). Clifford was not blind to the good in Malays. He described them as a race which is "exceedingly courteous and self-respecting," and against popular opinion stated that "the Malay is not treacherous" (Clifford 1911:476). The point is that Clifford did not have an ax to grind when he made his comments about Malay gambling and sexual conduct. A similar observation is found in an 1880 article about Malays, in which the writer, after praising the virtues of the Malays compared to other native peoples, states that "the moral character of the Malays does not stand high" ("Malays" 1880:400).

No one today, though, however critical he or she may be of the Malays, is about to say that the Malays as a whole are given to gambling or sexual promiscuity. Such accusations would be so patently contrived as to expose the accuser as having no more than a baseless personal vendetta against the Malays. Surely, therefore, Islam has made great headway in squelching practices unacceptable to Islam.

The aforementioned general ignorance of Islamic teaching in Malaya had remained basically the same at the time of Tisdall's observations in 1913 (170):

The greater number of the Moslems of Malaysia, on the other hand, are very careless about religion, know little or nothing about Islam or Christianity, but have a very real belief in the spirits of trees, etc., derived from the religion of their forefathers before they became Mohammedans. If you ask a Malay whether he is a Sunni or a Shiah he will stare at you in astonishment, not having the slightest idea of what you are talking about. He cannot tell you how many Imams there were; after whom his two sons Ali and Omar are called, nor any other point concerning the religion he claims to follow. It is quite an uncommon thing to see a Moslem at prayer; and in every way they are as unlike the Persians as it is possible to be.

It is striking that even the prescribed prayers, displayed openly and even ostentatiously in modern Malaya, were still uncommon as recently as 1913.

In another passage Tisdall contrasts Muslim Malays with Muslim Arabs, Indians, and Persians, implying that, unlike the others, Malays do not know the Quran or the *Hadiths*, the sayings of Muhammed (Tisdall 1913:174-175).

In a 1917 account, we are told that though the *Hadiths* had been translated into Malay, they were seldom read (Warren 1917:208).

A 1918 article submits that "a rigid Turk being set down in their country would scarcely allow that they (the Malays) had a chance of safely skating over the narrow bridge into paradise of the prophet" (Tisdall 1918:7).

The superficial nature of Malay Islam whereby the deep, underlying belief system remained essentially the same as it had been in pre-Islamic Malaya, is underscored again and again throughout the first half of this century. In 1923, Wilkinson (10) observed that "In times of pestilence or trouble the people

of a Malay district fall back upon their old primitive faiths and offer up vain sacrifices to the spirits of the country."

In the same year, Cherry (1923:30) expressed that "Islam does not satisfy the religious needs of these people. . . . There is as little significance amongst the Malays of the name 'Moslem' as there is amongst Europeans of the name 'Christian.'"

At this time we get a glimpse that the forces of secularization were making inroads. Malay Islam was actually reported to be stepping away from, not towards, more orthodox Islam. "Every year brings additional laxity in what the devoted Malays would consider essentials of religion" (Wilkinson 1923:89).

In 1928, traditional spirit-religion was still at the core of Malay religion. "Islam in Malaya is most superficial. The Malays have not completely thrown off the spell of their primitive Animism" (Dodsworth 1928a:56).

Their Islamic beliefs are thickly interwoven with others from earlier days when first animism and then Hinduism held sway over their ancestors; their marriage customs and rice planting and harvest and other everyday practices are still largely influenced by the other cults. (Wheeler 1928:345)

The poor state of Islamic education was also still in evidence in 1928: "Very few Malays can read the Koran in Arabic which means that for the masses the reading of the Koran is a mere repetition of words" (Dodsworth 1928a:43).

By this time, though, the non-observance of regular prayer times and fasting reported in 1913 had changed. "The five 'foundations' (*rukun*) of Islam are well in evidence--confession

of faith, prayers, fasting (chiefly in the month of Ramadan), almsgiving, pilgrimage" (Wheeler 1928:345). This is a major change from 15 years previously.

Somewhere between 1913 and 1928, Islamic revival had occurred, but was subsequently being challenged by the encroachment of industrialization and Western civilization. Dodsworth noted in 1928a (pp.56-57) that mosque attendance and the keeping of the fast of Ramadan were less strictly adhered to than they were a decade earlier. In the same year, Wheeler (1928:346) contended that Islam "which was so impotent, has revived considerably and become a force to be reckoned with in moral and practical behavior among all sections of the Malay community."³ Wheeler stated that as opposed to earlier years, the Friday service was well attended, daily prayers were observed by many, and the fast of Ramadan was widely kept. It appears that at this stage in Malay history, Malays were simultaneously being pulled in two opposite directions away from Malay

³Wheeler's quote in fuller context shows the dramatic changes that had taken place in Malay Islam since the Portuguese first arrived. In Wheeler's estimation, Islam was insignificant to Malay life until at least 1875: During the melancholy period, from 1511 till 1875, Islam was a negligible force, save as an added weight on the side of obscurantism and oppression. Superstition was rife; education utterly neglected; mosques were unused. Gambling, drunkenness and vice combined with constant feuds to produce disastrous conditions. . . . When the present condition of the Malays is compared with the prevailing condition up to about fifty years ago, a great improvement is seen. . . . The old religion, which under less propitious circumstances was so important, has revived considerably and become a force to be reckoned with in moral and practical behavior among all sections of the Malay community (Wheeler 1928:346).

traditional religion: toward secularization and toward orthodox Islam, and that orthodox Islam was beginning to gain the upper hand.

In 1936 we find Malay traditional religion still strongly entrenched, but steadily losing ground. Browne (1936:41,44) states that although the religion of the Malay Peninsula is basically the shamanistic religion, fertility rites to ensure successful harvests and the birth of healthy offspring "which were common at the end of the nineteenth century, are fast dying out." Yet, Malay religion was still largely a syncretistic mixture of traditional practices and Islam. "The Malay believes and practices the primitive religion we have described simultaneously with his belief and practice of Islam" (Browne 1936:45). Islamic observance in 1936 was not what it is today. For example, no Malay women wore the veil. Yet, old laws were beginning to be replaced by Islamic law (Browne 1936:19).

In 1945, "most of the people of the eastern part of the Peninsula are recent converts to Mohammedanism and still conform closely to the pagan Malayan religion in many respects" (Cole 1945:112). It is noteworthy that the Islamization of the Peninsula had not yet been completed at least as recently as 1945. Today, this very region (the eastern part of the Peninsula) is the most staunchly Muslim. Cole makes a strong case for her belief that the Malays were not strict Muslims (Cole 1945:111-125). Women still did not wear a veil. There was little difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim village, and

Islam was said to be little more than a "veneer" over "paganism" (Cole 1945:120).

Mid-century Malay Islam demonstrated great ingenuity in the assimilation and reconciliation of old and new beliefs. The Malays had accepted the ideas of the great Islamic civilization, "without abandoning their own prehistoric paganism" (Winstedt 1951:3-4). Winstedt (1951:7) labels Malay Muslims as orthodox, yet superstitious. Islam "allowed the Malay to retain the native spirits of the animist and even the gods of the Hindu under the orthodox designation of infidel genies or jinn . . . the spirits and goblins of Arabia's pagan days" (Winstedt 1951:97).

Winstedt's thorough description of Malay religious practice, published in 1950, reveals an Islam still replete with divination, magic, and spirits of all sorts. Moreover, the ancient belief in a vital or effective force (*semangat*) was in Winstedt's words "in widest commonality spread" (1950:19). This impersonal life force, akin to the Melanesian concept of *mana*, was believed to inhabit inanimate as well as animate objects. As we shall see in our student interviews, this concept is no longer widely accepted. For one sample of Malays, at least, it is a matter of great ambivalence.

Sympathetic magic was much in evidence. For example, Malay women would let their hair hang loose when they were sowing so that grain would be luxuriant, and then would clothe themselves lightly at harvest so that stalks would be thin to cut (Winstedt

1950:18). One way for a lover to abduct the soul of a girl was to boil or steam any possession of hers or sand from her footprint, reciting at the same time Quranic incantations. Religion teachers were invited to spit into children's mouths or upon their heads in order to transfer to them the ability to recite the Quran (Winstedt 1950:19).

It was not until the mid-20th century that non-Muslim observers began to identify the Malays as orthodox Muslims. It was widely recognized, though, that the Malays were adept at keeping their traditional beliefs under the umbrella of orthodoxy.

Missionary to Malays, Robert Blasdell, said the Malays were "almost solidly Muslim" (Blasdell 1954:189). Yet, he too speaks of the Malays as clinging to their animistic past. He tells us that the only physician known to the village Malays is the *pawang* - a traditional healer/shaman using a combination of divination and herbal remedies. This is definitely not the case today, as Western medicine and science have penetrated even the remotest Malay villages, and as the Islamic establishment has removed its imprimatur from such practitioners. In fact, an aggressive Islamization is attempting to displace pre-Islamic traditional religious practices with universal, orthodox Islam.

Blasdell also comments that the Malays "are opposed to Christianity and show no inclination to be even mildly interested in it" (1954:190). He believes, though, that Malay resistance to Christianity was more of a defense against assimilation and the

inroads of Westernization, than a well-thought-out rejection of Christianity. At this time, Islam was evidently not well-integrated into the worldview of the Malays. The adherence to Islam was an uncritical acceptance of an ethnic identifier and boundary maintainer. Likewise, the lack of interest in Christianity stemmed not so much from religious principles, but from a natural resistance to something that was perceived as a threat to Malay ethnic identity.

Blasdel's writing pictures the Malays as in a time of transition. As Malaya was approaching independence and nationhood, the Malays were seeking to define their identity. The Malays were conscious of their technological, economic, and educational backwardness relative to the Chinese, and in sight of independence, to much of the world. They were seeking (as they still are) ways to develop without sacrificing their traditional values and village and family relational ties. Blasdel tells us that at this point "their sense of need and of frustration is compelling them to look for help beyond their own community and country" (1954:190). He believed that abundant openings were there for Western Christians to help Malays enter the world scene using biblical principles to counteract the evil sides of modernization and capitalism. Christians with skills sorely needed by the Malays would be welcome (Blasdel 1954:190). Concerning education and literacy in particular, Blasdel believed the way was wide open for Christians who would learn the language and live among the Malays. Blasdel believed the Spirit

had provided a "high tide" of opportunity that would eventually recede. The door was wide open to establish good relations and bridges of trust.

In retrospect, Christians had the opportunity to convey to the Malays that true Christianity is not coterminous with Westernization, but challenges the greed and rapaciousness of the Western model of development. The Malays are rejecting secular models, but do not see Christianity as having anything to contribute to the solution. Instead, Islamic principles of economics are being explored, and initial attempts are being made at their implementation. I submit that if the church had distanced itself more from the colonial power base and ideology, and had been more sensitive to the Malay cause, the Malays now would not view their choices as an either-or polarization between Westernization and Islamization.

In a 1957 article, Marrison grants traditional Muslim opposition to Christian expression. Yet he describes the Malays as neither bigoted nor bitter, and says that they are not well informed about Islam (Marrison 1957:290). Their attachment to Islam is firm, in that they identify their race with Islam. Yet, they have no sophisticated arguments against Christianity. Marrison, like Blasdel, recognized that the Malays were looking for bearings as a newly independent people. "The present-day Malay has many perplexities to face in his political and social life, and anything the churches could do, not to take advantage of the situation, but rather to help in his thinking and facing

these problems would be a gain" (Marrison 1957:297). Marrison, too, believed the Malays would welcome aid from Christians, especially in their "acutely felt need" for education (1957:297). Again, the door was open wide for sympathetic contact between Christians and Malays.

Hamid's 1964 description of the Malays states that all the Malays are Muslims (Hamid 1964:180). Still, syncretistic practices are the rule. The Malays of Hamid's time still believed unquestioningly that everything, animate and inanimate, has a *semangat* (soul), even though official Islam taught otherwise.

Hamid describes magic as widely prevalent. Practices which I understand to have died out, were routinely carried out when Hamid wrote his article. One such practice was an annual beach ceremony in which the fishermen of the state of Kelantan invoked the help of guardian spirits of the sea so that they would have protection and big catches (Hamid 1964:189). The Malay students I have talked to reject this practice as anti-Islamic and have no personal recollection of the ceremony.

Kirk Endicott's An Analysis of Malay Magic (1970) is the standard work on Malay magic. At the time of his writing, traditional Malay spiritism was still rampant. The Malays he questioned all believed that all objects, whether animate or inanimate, had *semangat* (a soul or vital energy). Malays spoke of the *semangat* of, among other things, rice, fruit trees, and tin ore (Endicott 1970:50).

However prevalent the pre-Islamic practices, it is clear that by around 1970, Islamic prescriptions were much more carefully observed than they were in the early part of the century. Ryan (1971) notes that most Malays observed the five daily prayers, and that the fast of Ramadan was generally kept. Besides Ramadan, Muhammed's birthday and *Hari Raya Haji* (the day commemorating the conclusion of the Haj or Pilgrimage to Mecca) were now celebrated widely. Previously, of the Islamic calendar, Malays gave little if any attention to anything but the fast.

By this time also, the State Department of Religious Affairs was enforcing the collection of *zakat* (the obligatory alms). This newly centralized system enabled an equitable distribution of funds. Ryan says that in the former days the *zakat* collection was sometimes not enforced, or the money not channeled to the poor (Ryan 1971:42). Ryan reports, further, that Malays abstained from eating pork, drinking alcohol, and from gambling. Moreover, Islamic law, as opposed to traditional customary law, was more and more being implemented.

While Islamic practice was coming to full bloom, according to Ryan the pre-Islamic flower had not yet begun to wilt. The Malays were following two parallel cycles or calendars: the Islamic one and the seasonal one. In Ryan's day the Malays were still largely rural people whose way of life and very existence was closely bound up with the seasons. Many of the celebrations and festivals of the rural people were connected with agriculture rather than with formal religion. As of the time of Ryan's

writing (1971), ceremonies to propitiate the spirits responsible for the preservation of the *semangat padi* ("soul of the rice") were commonly practiced (Ryan 1971:60). Likewise, sacrificial offerings of buffaloes and goats were given routinely by fishermen on the east coast of Malaya to propitiate the spirit of the sea. To my knowledge such animal sacrifices have stopped completely.

The treating of sickness is another arena in which we note the slow progression of Islam (and secularization) amidst strongly entrenched traditional beliefs. Ryan observed that with the spread of Western medicine, the younger generation was abandoning traditional healers. Still, the *pawang* (medium/medicine man) and the *bomoh* (herbalist/medicine man), both of whom practice medicine through the counteracting of spells, were preferred by the older Malays. Ryan stated that hospitals were viewed as the last resort to the older generation.

Today, in my estimation, it is the other way around. When modern medicine offers no hope, Malays turn in desperation to those who deal in the spirit realm.

Pre-Islamic traditional entertainment was still popular, but on the wane. One case in point is the *wayang kulit*, the shadow play in which the cut-out figures representing the characters are manipulated behind a screen in such a way that their silhouettes appear on the screen. The background is Hindu and the stories

are based on the *Ramayana* and *Panji*⁴ legends with their hosts of gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines. Ryan tells us that, with the exception of villages in the east coast state of Kelantan, the *wayang kulit* is "not seen very often today" (Ryan 1971:65). Thirty-five years earlier, British colonial officer Guy Madoc commented on the abundance of traditional Malay entertainment, including dancing and the *wayang kulit* (Allen 1983:94).

Other traditional forms of entertainment which Ryan says Islamic teaching was clamping down on were the *makyong* play, which includes music, dancing, and narrative, and the *joget* dance (Ryan 1971:62). The *joget* is especially frowned upon today because it involves men and women dancing together, even though the dancers do not touch.

Ryan states that of the three strands of Malay culture (animism, Hinduism, and Islam), Islam is beyond doubt the strongest. "Islam has successfully absorbed these animistic and Hindu influences, and in so doing has produced historical Malay culture" (Ryan 1971:52). It is significant that Ryan says that Islam "absorbed" rather than "displaced" or "eradicated" animistic and Hindu influences. Ryan saw Malay culture as an amalgamation of animism, Hinduism, and Islam under the cover of Islam. It is noteworthy though, that Ryan believes that the

⁴The *Ramayana* is the famous Sanskrit verse epic which was introduced to Southeast Asia centuries ago when Hinduism was the predominant religion. The *Panji* legends are Javanese popular stories based on quasi-historical figures from East Java.

Malays were developing a new consciousness of being part of the universal brotherhood of Islam.

Ryan speaks much of the traditional Malay wedding ceremony, an elaborate, Hindu-based celebration culminating in the bride and groom sitting motionless on a decorated dais, while ritual offerings are placed before them. The dress is non-Islamic, and the symbolism full of spiritism. Finger tips are stained with henna to ward off evil spirits. Eggs are offered to enhance fertility. Amidst the festivities that can last up to seven days, the only Muslim element is a brief ceremony in which the *kadi* (registrar of Muslim marriages and divorces) pronounces the couple husband and wife. "The Malay wedding ceremony is still perhaps the most significant ceremony in a person's life and it also affords a good example of the way older traditional customs have been only touched by Islam" (Ryan 1971:52). As we will see from the student interviews, Islam has now more than "only touched" the Malay wedding.

David Banks' study of Malay kinship, published in 1983, but based on fieldwork done between 1967 and 1974, reveals that rural Malay society, at least, was permeated with spiritism (Banks 1983:121-123). Spirits of the dead, familiar spirits, and spirits associated with particular places were part and parcel of everyday life. Appeasement and manipulation of the spirits was the order of the day. The pillars of Islam were all practiced more or less consistently, but the daily activities of life, and even the relationships between people were determined by

interaction with spirits. The Malays didn't question the supremacy and sovereign control of God, but in the nitty gritty of temporal life, the spirits were real and had to be dealt with. God was "out there", while the spirits were in the jungle next door.

Writing in 1978, Ronald Provencher makes an interesting comment about the continuation of pre-Islamic traditions in Malay culture: "In this syncretism Islamic elements are not distorted or diminished by animistic or Hindu-Buddhist elements; rather each religious tradition has appropriate places within the whole Malay religious belief and practice" (Provencher 1978:255). According to Provencher, the individual religious practices were not new mixtures blending Islam into pre-Islamic practice. Rather, both pre-Islamic and Islamic practices were distinct entities used for distinct purposes. Hence, primal religious conceptions were maintained and their rituals carried out intact, with Islamic prayers tacked on at the beginning and end. These traditional spirit-religion practices were reserved in Provencher's time primarily for agricultural rituals. Hindu-Buddhist symbols were preserved in the rituals guarding the sanctity of Malay royalty and in ceremonies utilizing metaphors of royalty, such as the traditional wedding ceremony.

While noting the two distinct spheres of Malay religious life (Islamic and pre-Islamic), Provencher is clear on which one was predominant:

Islamic ritual is more commonplace than animistic or Hindu-Buddhist ritual. The ritual includes five daily prayers,

the Friday sermons, the several Islamic holy days, the occasional Islamic religious feasts (*khenduri*) to celebrate good fortune or security or remembrance of the dead, the annual month of fasting, and the return of family and friends from pilgrimage to Mecca. They outweigh the animistic and Hindu-Buddhist portions of curing rituals and elaborate weddings. (Provencher 1978:255)

Coming down to the present, Von der Mehden (1987:181) echoes the others by stating that Malay Islam stems from a complex set of influences derived from Sufi (Islamic mysticism), Hindu, and animistic sources. According to Von der Mehden, non-Muslim elements are more prevalent in Malay villages than they are in urban areas, where both secular and religious teaching serve to weaken pre-Islamic influences. The rural Malay is generally conservative and ritualistic in religious belief. Moreover, strong community norms and expectations place restrictive guidelines for defining his or her place in the world. As Winzeler (1970:77) observed earlier, "They see Islam or at least certain aspects of Islam as enveloping them in a set of ritual relationships, and as being a major dimension of community life and organization. . . . Along with this is a set of constraints which reflect an emphasis on social obligation, particularly of a ritual or ceremonial nature."

We turn now to the pillars of Islam: declaration of faith, prayer, fasting, giving, and pilgrimage. Virtually all Malays accept the belief that there is no deity except God and that Muhammed is his prophet. Concerning the mandatory five daily prayer times and special services at midday on Friday, at the village level, "these precepts are generally followed, not so

much because of sanctions established by law as to personal belief and peer-group pressure" (Von der Mehden 1987:181). Urban Malays are said to be less regular, perhaps even lax, in their observance of these practices. Yet, an increasingly religious environment is causing more and more attention to be paid to the prayers and mosque attendance.

Fasting during Ramadan is the most important event in the Malay religious calendar. "The restrictions during the fast are widely followed" (von der Mehden 1987:181). Here again, legal sanctions are less important than individual attitudes and peer-group pressure.

Zakat, the religious tax or required alms, has long been an accepted practice. In the more atomized urban centers, there is less social cohesion and thus less social pressure to enforce collection.

The number of Malays making the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *haj*, has risen considerably since independence. The government has aided in developing savings for the *haj*, organizing the trip, and seeing to the comfort and safety of the pilgrims to the extent that a higher percentage of Malays now make the *haj* than any other Muslim country in the region (Von der Mehden 1987:182). The *haj* is one event that has catapulted the Malays into the wider world of Islam.

Von der Mehden believes that Malay Muslims carry out the basic rituals of Islam in a conscientious and orthodox manner.

Moreover, this is done more from the dual motives of personal conviction and social pressure than from fear of legal sanctions.

The rural Malays, however, though they consider themselves part of the worldwide community of Islam, are in Von der Mehden's estimation still "deeply influenced by a set of primarily non-Islamic beliefs, a folk Islam that often combines Islamic elements with animist and Hindu factors" (Von der Mehden 1987:182). Von der Mehden (1987:187) notes that, outside the Islamic pillars, syncretistic ceremonies dominate in the various rites of passage in the human life cycle--birth, circumcision, marriage, death. This is not unlike Provencher's postulation that Malays simultaneously follow two distinct calendars, an Islamic one and a seasonal one. Magic with its sorcery, amulets, and formulas, and a wide-ranging spirit world that necessitates propitiation through various ceremonies, is incorporated into the rural Malay's orthodox religious framework.

Von der Mehden's conclusion regarding the place of pre-Islamic elements in Malay Islam is as follows:

There has been some decline in these more traditional beliefs and practices as religious leaders have urged the populace to give less emphasis to spirits and magic; the influence of Islamic modernism has challenged these "impure" views and ways; and the process of education, modernization, and urbanization has weakened traditional ties. However, there is no doubt that a substantial portion of the rural population as well as less educated urban migrants retain and accept these beliefs. (1987:182-183)

Pre-Islamic elements don't affect the ritual pillars of Islam. Yet, pre-Islamic beliefs are still prevalent, though declining. Moreover, though pre-Islamic traditional religious

practices are challenged as "impure" by the *ulama* (Islamic religious specialists), folk-practitioners of Islam don't see such elements as in opposition to orthodox Islam, but include these practices under the Islamic umbrella through the approval of local Muslim religious leaders who incorporate verses from the Quran and the names of God in their magical formulas.

The current literature, with which my own observation concurs, suggests that the ritual pillars of orthodox Islam are observed rather strictly, and increasingly so. The increase can be attributed to intensified government encouragement of Islamization, which includes extensive Islamic teaching. There is both an increasing social pressure to conform to strict Islamic observance, as well as a general Malay societal increase in the personal conviction of the importance of the integration of Islam into every facet of life.

Summary of Islam in the Colonial Period

In summary, the Malaysian colonial period began with the Europeans finding a Malay community in which Islam was relatively new and only in the early stages of spreading throughout the region. Beneath the surface, a deep-rooted pre-Islamic religious belief system was vibrant. With little understanding, the masses uncritically adopted Islam as a banner around which to rally against the foreign invaders. As Islam made territorial advances, the underlying traditional religious beliefs and practices remained intact, though increasingly adapted to the Islamic framework through the use of Arabic prayers and the

redefining of the gods and spirits into good and evil *jinn* (spirits) in an Islamic cosmology.

It was not until the late 1800s that Islam can be considered to have been a significant force in the life of the typical Malay peasant. Islamic teaching was until then, at least, in a miserable state, and the pillars of Islam were generally not observed. Throughout this century, Islamic teaching and practice have made great strides, but have not succeeded in rooting out pre-Islamic religious practices, especially in rural areas. Islam is now more well integrated into the everyday life of the Malay than ever before. Malay Muslims are orthodox in belief and practice and proudly identify themselves as part of the worldwide Islamic community.

British Colonial Impact on Islam

Our brief survey of Malay Islam has focused on the general tenor of the Islam practiced by the Malays through time. Malay Islam was never monolithic, and that most certainly applies to the current situation. We will later examine the various styles and movements within Malay Islam, but before doing so we will sketch the British colonial impact on Islam.

The imposition of "Christian" colonial rule brought ironically both a threat and a legitimacy to the place of Islam in Malay society, both of which further solidified the position of Islam. The threat came from the fear of Christianization. Legitimacy came from official British governmental sanction of traditional Malay political and religious offices.

Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah remarked in 1916 of the *Mufti*⁵ of Johore:

To become a Government Mufti in Malaya is a great glory. You have an official uniform, with a whole banana-comb of epaulettes on the shoulder, a *jubbah* (robe) embroidered with gold thread, a silk turban, and your own car. The *ra'ayat* (masses) fear and obey you, eat the scraps from your table, your spat out *sireh* (betel vine). (Hamka 1950:59)

Despite its rather specific reference, this comment is an indication not only of a reactionary, universalistic Islamic criticism of established religious authority but also of the nature of this authority in the Malay states.

Prior to the British

Prior to the protectorate period, Islam in Malaya had not, in any effective sense, been a "state religion." There was a general awareness that all Malays were Muslims and that this distinguished them from, for example, Chinese or Siamese. To undergo conversion to Islam was in fact to *masuk Melayu* ("enter Malayhood"), but this identification of ethnic group with religion was of future rather than present significance. In the realm of religious belief, as in that of political organization, the Malay state as a rule lacked the resources necessary for centralization of authority. Such religious officials as existed were those members of village communities who, for reasons of exceptional piety or other ability, had been chosen by the

⁵The *Mufti* in Islam is a jurisconsultant, empowered to give a formal legal opinion (*fatwah*) on matters submitted to him.

community to act as *imam* of the local mosque, or the court *imam* of chiefs or the ruler, who commonly possessed no authority beyond their immediate responsibilities and belonged to no separate or organized class. The absence of a priesthood in the Malay states was often puzzling to Europeans, who persisted in finding one where it did not exist (McNair 1878:276).

There certainly did exist, though, a clear if frequently inactive association between the secular power and the religious life of the people. Indeed, to speak of "secular" power in this context is a misnomer, for the relationship between the ruler and ruled embraced the spiritual as well as the material well-being of the state as an entity. At the installation of the new ruler of Perak, for example, it was usual at a certain point in the proceedings for an official of the court mosque to invoke God's blessings upon the ruler and the state and to recite the Quranic text, "Lo, We have set thee as a Viceroy upon the Earth," as a warranty of the ruler's responsibilities as defender and arbiter of the Faith (Wilkinson 1932:97). And though formal means of discharging these responsibilities were in practice often absent, this was not always the case. In Rembau in the 1830s there appears to have been a State *Kadi* (religious magistrate), responsible to the ruler, who had general oversight of all the mosques in the state (Newbold 1839:58); and in Kelantan in the 1880s the chief minister of the state was successful in enforcing restrictive Islamic legislation upon a large proportion of the population (Clifford 1898:24). In Perak, at a much earlier date,

an office corresponding to that of State Mufti was exercised by one of the eight major hereditary chiefs.

The assimilation of religious authority to customary political authority is shown also in the treatment accorded to *zakat* and *fitrah* taxation.⁶ According to Islamic law, *zakat* and *fitrah* taxes should be collected by mosque officials and disbursed by them for certain specified ends, among which are the bestowal of gifts upon travelers, indigent Muslims, and converts to Islam. In practice, says Wilkinson (1906:112-113), "the Malay chiefs, by identifying themselves with Imams and by a liberal interpretation of the term 'pious poor,' succeeded in securing the tax for themselves." But this is an overstatement, for the right to the collection of religious revenues carried with it a corresponding obligation to serve at least some needs of Islam by contributing to the building and upkeep of mosques, the payment of mosque officials, and occasional employment of itinerant teachers and scholars. In sum, for the Malays, custom and religion--*adat* (by which was meant customary law, ceremonial procedures, and the norms of behavior between individuals and classes) and *ugama* (religion)--were related parts of the one whole, together ensuring the proper functioning of society and preventing its disintegration. Of this complex of values, the

⁶*Zakat* is an alms tax levied in different kinds of property and distributed to eight categories of deserving persons. The *zakat al-fitr*, known in Malaysia as *fitrah*, is an obligatory gift of provisions made at the celebration of the end of the fasting month.

prescribed caretakers were the ruling class, the traditional elite.

Policy of Noninterference

The Pangkor Treaty between the British and the chiefs of Perak, which became the model for all subsequent treaty arrangements with the Malay states, explicitly excluded from compulsory Residential "advice" questions touching upon "Malay religion and custom." Only in Kelantan, Kedah, and Johore was this formula preserved intact (in the remaining states Islam alone was specified), but the principle of noninterference in custom and religion was accepted throughout and the link thus posited between them was of profound significance. In part it reflects British acceptance of a state of affairs that was held to exist by the Malays themselves. In part also it signifies a recognition that custom and religion were two institutionalized expressions of Malay life in which interference was most likely to arouse resentment and hence unrest.

Where custom was concerned, the principle of noninterference was in practice reserved mainly for those ceremonial and ritual aspects of Malay public life which least affected colonial administration. An example of this may be seen in connection with an incident in Pahang in 1897. The Sultan had expressed a desire to confer titles on his two sons, the elder to be *Tengku Besar*, a traditional title carrying with it a claim to be regarded as heir apparent, and the younger to be *Tengku Muda* and thus successor to his brother. The Malay political system

required only that the granting of these titles be approved by the major chiefs. Reporting the matter later, the Resident of Pahang noted: "This proposal having received the sanction of the High Commissioner, the titles were duly conferred on the two young Rajas in the Sultan's Balai, all the forms and ceremonies prescribed by Malay custom being rigorously observed" (Pahang Annual Report for 1897:22). Had the rigorous observance of Malay custom required recognition of heirs not acceptable to the colonial power, it would have been overridden, as in fact was accomplished in Selangor (in the face of considerable Malay opposition) a few years later during a succession dispute.

In the same way, customs abhorrent to contemporary English social mores or ideas of justice were not regarded as coming within the restriction upon compulsory advice, so that debt bondage, corvee labor, seigneurial right, excessive punishment for adat offenses, and the like were progressively restrained or eradicated. The effect was to set a high premium on the formal and ceremonial side of Malay customary life, with a corresponding diminution in real content or relevance to the contemporary social and political situation.

Where religion was concerned, British policy was more genuinely and less conditionally one of noninterference. In the absence of a distinct or organized class of *ulama*, there was little fear of Muslim "fanaticism" capable of acting as an independent focus for political discontent at rule by infidels. British colonial officials, though sharing the prevailing view of

returning *hajis* as "leeches on the toil of their fellow men" (Bird 1883:362), seldom thought them, as did the Dutch in 19th century Indonesia, to be sources of serious social unrest, and far from attempting to restrict the pilgrimage actually did much to assist it (Bird 1883:38). Care was also taken to avoid offending Muslim susceptibilities, by strongly discouraging Christian mission evangelism among the Malays; and attempts were made to render government vernacular schools more attractive to parents (who feared a Christian bias in teaching) by arranging for the appointment of Quran teachers, a measure which resulted in secure employment for many village *ulama* (Islamic religious specialists).

Formalization of Islam

To say that the principle of noninterference in religious affairs was a characteristic of British rule in the Malay states is not to say that British rule was without its effects on Islam in Malaya. On the contrary, the preservation and reinforcement of the traditional bases of authority and social organization implicit in this policy, together with greatly improved means of communication and centralization and backed by the effective sanctions now open to British supported sultans, combined to produce an authoritarian form of religious administration much beyond anything known to the Malays before. The rulers and the traditional elite, much of whose real power had been stripped from them, understandably turned to the only field now left to them, religion and custom, to express what remained.

A direct effect of colonial rule was thus to encourage the concentration of doctrinal and administrative religious authority in the hands of a hierarchy of officials directly dependent on the sultans for their position and power. The introduction of an alien system of civil and criminal law to regulate all departments of life other than those held to come under the description "Malay religion and custom" resulted in pressure to establish a more formal system of Islamic law than had hitherto existed. Islamic legislation was enacted in State Councils, courts and legal procedures were established, and a legal bureaucracy was created to run them. Few of these measures were innovative in themselves; what was new was their systematic application and the organization that lay behind it. The net result was the formalization of a powerful alliance between the traditional elite and "orthodox" Islam.

Kaum Tua Vs. Kaum Muda

In addition to accelerating the solidification of Islam in Malaysia, Westernization spawned a new element in Malay Islam. A segment of the Malay population consisting largely of the intelligentsia sought to adapt a more universal Islam to the challenges of the wealth and power of the British and the economic and technological changes. The old guard of the traditional *ulama* and the hereditary ruling class were now challenged by this new, progressive, reformist group. The old alliance of religious conservatism and the traditional elite came

to be known as the *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction) in contradistinction to the more world-minded *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction).

The roots of the conflict between the *Kaum Muda* and the *Kaum Tua* may be seen in the threat offered by the former to the very basis of customary authority. The perfection and purification of Islam was for the *Kaum Muda* not simply an end in itself but a means for the acceleration and direction of social and economic change for the introduction of Malays into the worldwide arena and especially the universal Islamic community. This process was held to be retarded by traditional Malay Islam and its intermingling with Malay *adat*. A Malay student in Cairo wrote in 1928 that "In other parts of the Islamic world the *Kaum Muda* become the instrument of progress, shaking the *Kaum Tua* out of their senility and stupidity . . . [In Malaya] the ulama desire, like Saint Peter of the Roman Church, to hold the only key to the gates of heaven" (Abu Al-Murtazi 1928:3).

In attempting to wrest the key from the grasp of the establishment, the reformists came into direct conflict with the state religious authorities on a wide range of ritual, doctrinal, and social questions. As fundamentalists and purists they attacked customary and "superstitious" accretions to orthodox Islam; as modernists they proposed rationalized reformulations of Islamic practice which would better enable them and their co-religionists to compete in the modern world. On the one hand, the reformists sought to purify ritual and belief from purely local Malay ethnic innovations. On the other, they attempted to

reformulate Islam in response to the economic and social pressures of contemporary life.

In addition to, or it might be said as a result of, these attacks by the *Kaum Muda* upon established religion, their ideas were regarded as attacks also upon the traditional elite, who stood behind and were involved with the religious hierarchy. Some weight was lent to this by the continual criticisms of the Malay rulers and traditional leaders, both for their allegedly dissolute and self-indulgent way of life and more positively for failing to provide a leadership that would enable their people to strive more effectively in an alien-dominated world. Furthermore, *Kaum Muda's* criticism of adat, and their insistence upon a more individualistic ethic, could be seen as subversive to the existing social, political, and religious order.

Official Islam reacted both by argument and by force. Periodicals such as *Pengasoh* (The Educator) (1918-37), a biweekly magazine produced in Kelantan by the Council of Religion and Malay Custom and circulated throughout the peninsula, urged opposing viewpoints and condemned the *Kaum Muda* as irreligious. The section of the Muhammadan Laws Enactment of 1904 that forbade any persons "except in his own home, and in the presence of members of his own family only, [to] teach any religious doctrine unless he shall previously have obtained permission to do so from His Highness the Sultan," enabled a certain control over religious teaching, though it was much evaded. State judges issued legal rulings condemning the new ideas as *kafir* (infidel)

or *Kadiani*,⁷ and reformist leaders were refused permission to speak in some mosques.

The Kaum Muda opposition to rural-centered Islam in the persons of the village ulama was another aspect of the conflict.

Prior to the coming of the British, education had been entirely in the hands of village religious teachers who, in their homes or in the *surau*⁸ and sometimes in the larger *pondok*⁹ schools, taught the Islam with which they were familiar: uncomprehending recitation of the Quran, some elementary exegesis of the Quran and *hadith*,¹⁰ and Malay-Muslim ethical and behavioral precepts. Often, particularly in more recent times, these teachers had completed the pilgrimage, which gave them additional status and authority, but very few could claim more than the most

⁷The reference is to the adherents of the Ahmadiyya movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Kadian in the Punjab. The Mirza died in 1908, and when his son succeeded him as second *Khalifa* in 1914, the movement split in two, the Lahore party seceding from the original Kadian party. The most important difference between the two groups was that while the Kadian party regarded the Mirza as a Prophet (a claim that, in light of the explicit Quranic description of Muhammad as the last of the Prophets, was clearly heretical), the Lahore party looked on him mainly as a reformer. The Lahore party had some influence in Malaya among the English-educated. The Kadian party had comparatively little influence, but for those who were hostile to the forces of modernism and reformism, the term "Kadiani" was used simply as the abusive term implying heresy.

⁸A *surau* is a building that is not a mosque of general assembly, but is otherwise devoted to religious purposes.

⁹Literally "hut" or "shanty," but used especially with reference to small, residential religious schools.

¹⁰Tradition about the Prophet. It refers to a mass of literature embodying for the guidance of Muslims stories about the sayings and doings of Muhammad, and forming one of the principal sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

rudimentary and dogmatic knowledge of Islam, clouded in a haze of traditional Malay spiritual beliefs. Many of the most respected and venerated teachers belonged to, and led local manifestations of, one or another of the Sufi mystic sects which have so colored the practice of Islam in the Malay world. For the vast majority of Malay peasants, the transmission of their religion, where it existed systematically at all, was through the village *ulama*, and this remained true--was indeed intensified--after the provision of government vernacular schools in the rural areas.

In addition to their more or less formal didactic function, the *ulama* were culturally important in other and pervasive ways.

As imams of village mosques, as the chief religious functionaries at all important junctures of life concerning birth, circumcision, marriage, and at the frequent feasts given to mark special occasions; and as the companion to the *bomoh*, or spirit doctor (and often combining the two roles), in the physical and spiritual crises of life, the *ulama* were regarded as the arbiters of all questions of religion and much else besides.

Their relationship with the peasant community of which they were a part was a close and complex one, not easily assailed by those who subscribed to a different system of ideas.

Thus the village was the most important arena of the *Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua* conflict. Arguments about whether it was permissible for a Muslim to wear western dress, and whether taking interest from post office savings banks and rural cooperatives was lawful or not, divided people along the same

lines as arguments about whether it was proper to pray at the local spirit shrine or what was the correct interpretation of a verse of the Quran. To be *Kaum Muda* was to espouse modernism in any form and go against tradition; to be *Kaum Tua* was to favor all that was familiar, unchanging, and secure. The conflict can also be identified as the growing tension between an Islam incorporating particularistic customary practices that were symbols of Malay ethnic identity versus a more universal Islam attempting to divorce itself from ethnic ties.

The divisions in Islam now are not so neatly drawn as the *Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua* distinction, but the questions raised then remain some of the central issues in contemporary Malay Islam. The issue of whether the incorporation of traditional Malay healers and mediums is acceptable within the framework of Islam remains an ongoing controversy. Malays are likewise divided on the question of the acceptability of pre-Islamic Malay customs such as Malay traditional dance, martial arts, the traditional wedding ceremony, and traditional Malay postnatal prescriptions.

Of vital importance is the question of the identification of Malay religion and culture. Must Malay ethnicity and Islamic religious belief necessarily go hand in hand? To understand the Malays of today, this issue must be explored.

Islam and Ethnicity in Traditional Malay Society

Islam was introduced to Malaya gradually. This new faith, particularly from the 15th century, became a major factor in Malay self-identity. The role of Islam in Malay life, though,

was limited by historical, political, and cultural constraints. These include colonialism, Malay traditional mores and value systems known as adat,¹¹ Malay feudalism and, especially in the 20th century, the strong forces of ethnic nationalism. In this century, despite attempts by certain Muslim groups to elevate the role of Islam in Malaysia, the influence of Islam has continued to be checked by the strength of Malay ethnic demands in a plural context.

As we determined in Chapter 1, the role of Melaka can hardly be exaggerated as Islam came to the fore in the region mainly during the period of the Melakan Empire from 1403 to 1511. It was through Melaka that Malays made their presence felt in the area (Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid 1964:23). Malay scholar Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid (1964) has even suggested that Melaka was one of the key centers from which Islam spread to regions as far as the Sulu archipelago in the Philippines, giving the Malays some sense of belonging to a wider Muslim world. Islam had such a special position in the government that Muslim scholars could with impunity criticize the sultans themselves (Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid 1964:32).

Syed Alatas (1972) opined that Islam was crucial in the modernization of the Malays. He argued that Islam gave new and positive universal values to the Malays. Islam clearly shaped

¹¹Adat may be defined as "the total constellation of concepts, rules and codes of behaviour which are conceived as legitimate or right, appropriate or necessary" (Wazir 1992:14).

the definition of "Malayness." Previously known for their blind loyalty to their rulers--"*pantang Melayu menderhaka!*" ("it is un-Malay to rebel!")--once Islamicized, the Malays made their obedience conditional. Thus, the proverb was transformed to: "*raja adil raja disembah, raja zalim raja desanggah!*" ("a just king is obeyed, an unjust one is challenged!"). Islam provided a vehicle of dissent against the excesses of the rulers and the Malay feudal system. Moreover, Islam introduced radical changes to the Malay social system by contributing Islamic values (along with new vocabulary) such as *adil* (just) and *amanah* (trustworthiness) (Kassim 1968). Islam's influence was such that since its arrival, and especially since the days of Melakan glory, the literature of the Malays was written in the Perso-Arabic script.

From its arrival to the region, though, Islam had to wrestle with practices and conventions (commonly referred to as *adat*) already well entrenched in Malay culture. We recall, moreover, that prior to the coming of Islam, the Malays were practitioners of ancient primal religion, as well as long-time Hindus. Given its significance, it is necessary to explore the nature of pre-Islamic Malay society. Without going into unnecessary detail, *adat* included social-political practices, for instance, in matters involving inheritance, succession, divorce and family law (Gullick 1965) which were either non-Islamic or anti-Islamic. These restrictions were especially pronounced in the political realm. Gullick (1965) demonstrated that the Malay political

system was rigid and strictly regulated, and afforded tremendous powers to the rulers.¹² Muzaffar (1977) concluded that the central aim of the Malay ruling class has always been the preservation of its power. The rulers employed a mythology of their own invincibility to bolster their status and power. The Sultan's legitimacy and perpetuation of rule were reinforced by the practice of ascribing to him magic powers and the threat of retribution (Gullick 1965, Milner 1977). To challenge the Sultan was an act of high treason.

Even after the advent of Islam into Malaya, Malays continued to adhere strictly to the *adat* norms, while at the same time arguing their complementarity with Islamic principles.¹³ Symbols of Malay authority and legitimacy--such as the *kris*, yellow attire reserved only for the royal family, and the Malay headgear symbolizing authority--demonstrate the prominence of Malayness over Islam in the pre-colonial period at least.

Malay respect for the *adat* traditions and symbols of Malayness, and their reluctance to surrender them to Islamic influence is expressed well by the popular proverb: "*Biar mati*

¹²For another detailed analysis of the importance of *adat* in traditional Malay society, see Milner (1977).

¹³A Malay saying goes:
Adat bersendi hukum, hukum bersendi kitabullah;
Kuat adat tak gaduh hukum, kuat hukum tak gaduh adat.

Customary law is based on religious law, religious law is based on the book of Allah.

If custom is strong it does not upset religion, if religion is strong it does not upset custom.

anak, jangan mati adat!" ("Let the child die but not the *adat*!").

The strength and persistence of these non-Islamic and even anti-Islamic elements in Malay culture are such that even now they cannot be neglected without serious concerns from the community. Despite the occurrence of modern Islamic resurgence, and increasing government-sponsored Islamization, in Mutalib's estimation (1990:14) "this strong Malay attachment to non-Islamic values before the advent of colonialism has not undergone any epochal or radical change."

The Effect of Colonial Rule
on Malay Ethnic Identity

By way of review, from 1511-1641, the Portuguese policy in Melaka (then the religio-political center of the peninsula) was to check the spread of Islam and Muslim trading enterprise. Possibly because of the continuous resistance of the Malays to the Portuguese occupation, the Dutch, who overthrew the Portuguese in 1641, tolerated traditional Malay rulers, who, at the time were weakened by competing state rivalries (Andaya and Andaya 1982). The Dutch, though, were economically controlling and exploitative of Malayan resources. In short, the Portuguese and Dutch rules served only to rally the Malays against the outside aggressors.

The British took over Melaka in 1795, and in 1824, under the terms of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, England and the Netherlands demarcated their spheres of influence in the region. In the 1874

Pangkor Treaty, the British promised not to interfere in Malay religion and custom.

Thus began British occupation, an occupation, as we have seen, which greatly influenced the shape of Islam and Malay ethnic identity. As Britain's involvement escalated, and the sultans' powers became stripped of all but symbolic content, British officials were placed in positions in which their roles were no longer restricted to advice and consultation but included decision making affecting all matters, including, in practice, Islam and Malay culture (Andaya and Andaya 1982:154-155).

The vast British governmental administration that developed in Malaya unavoidably infringed upon all aspects of Malay life. Thus the declared non-involvement in cultural and religious matters proved impossible to uphold in practice. We will now consider the impact of British rule on Malay ethnic identity.

Probably the most significant outcome of British rule in Malaya was the emergence of a "plural society," the result of non-Malays, primarily Chinese and Indian, being brought into Malaya in large numbers to serve British economic interests. Possibly because the British saw these immigrant workers as temporary residents, they were not integrated into Malay society, but were separated from the Malays by residence and type of work.

Emerson (1937), Sadka (1968), and Amin (1977) believe the approach highlighted inter-ethnic rivalries. The immigrant population swelled to the point that in the 1921 census, Malays became a minority in their own country, constituting less than

half of the total population (Mills 1942:25). The Malays found themselves competing for power and resources with, not only the British, but also the immigrant communities, especially the more highly educated Chinese, who were gaining control of the business sector of Malayan society. In addition to all of this, the British system sustained dialect differences and rival state loyalties among the Malays themselves (Mutalib 1990:15). For ethnic survival, Malays were pitted against all others, including Indian and Arab Muslim immigrants. The result was that local Malay differences were guarded and reinforced in opposition to a wider pan-Malayan Muslim unity.

The British policy on Malay education also profoundly affected the Malay religio-cultural climate. Before the coming of the British, Malay formal education was primarily religious, conducted at local mosques and Islamic boarding schools which were also called Quran schools (Winzeler 1975). The British added a new dimension which perpetuated and accentuated the already existing cultural schism between the Malay aristocracy and the general populace. This new element was a policy of differential education - a policy regarded by some Malays as elitist and exclusive (Mutalib 1990:16). While the majority of Malays were afforded no more than the most basic primary education (mainly learning by rote and unthinking recitation of the Quran), sons of royalty were given opportunities to acquire secular English education all the way through tertiary education in Britain (Willer 1975). For instance, in 1938 only 239 out of

a total of 9,939 Malays enrolled in all schools in Melaka attended British secular schools (Mutalib 1990:16, citing Khoo 1980:98). The British discouraged the ordinary Malays from leaving their traditional vocations of farming and fishing. It is on record that Frank Swettenham, who held the positions of Resident-General, Governor, and High Commissioner, and George Maxwell, the Chief Secretary, viewed education of the Malays as a means of preparing them to fit into their proper place (i.e., what was most productive for Britain) in colonial society.¹⁴

Another area in which Britain effected the Malay religious-cultural situation was in the colonial government's relation to Islam. We have already noted how the British strengthened the position of Islam through the legitimization of Muslim offices and institutions, and through the discouragement or eradication of certain pre-Islamic religious practices. We will now consider how the British administration curtailed Islamic development.

First of all, it is significant that the Islam that Britain sanctioned was that of the traditional ruling elite. It was the old guard, non-reformist Islam that is often contrary to the principles of universal Islam and the Islamic resurgence that is challenging the Malays today. While the government provided a structure through which Islam could function, the very extent of

¹⁴Federated Malay States Annual Report of 1920, cited in Bedlington (1978:52), "The System of Education" (1905:9), and Swettenham (1891:16, and 1906:258).

the British administrative control meant that Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) was allowed only very restricted real power.

Islam is believed by many to have been, in effect, controlled by British officials in that the decisions of the Islamic courts and the implementation of Islamic law were subject to the approval of the British Resident (Willer 1975, and Yegar 1976). British law limited the powers of the *kadi* (Islamic judge/magistrate) by setting the maximum penalty for each particular crime (Andaya and Andaya 1982:171). In addition, British civil magistrates understandably based their decisions on the precedents of British statutory law (with which they were familiar) rather than those of *Shari'ah* or *adat* laws (Sadka 1968:156). Furthermore, the decisions of the Islamic courts were overruled by the civil courts whenever the British government thought appropriate. For example, children declared illegitimate by Islamic courts were made legitimate by British judges, and decisions by Islamic courts granting the custody of children to the father were overturned. Even Malay judges typically favored British over Islamic law. This was only natural since all the senior judges were appointed by the Resident General. Moreover, those Malays who did become judges arose from the ranks of the elite minority educated in the secular English system, and received their law degrees from Great Britain.

In short, the British influence on Islam was to legitimize the role of the sultans as the heads of Islam, thus enforcing the aristocracy versus masses class distinction, while denying Islam

any real power to implement change. The Malay aristocracy, in turn, used Islam as a symbol to reinforce its own authority and as a means of "sanctifying" traditional Malay customary law which itself bolstered the old class divisions.

Hence, if Malayan leaders and administrators continued to neglect Islamic principles in governing the state after colonialism ended, or if the confidence of Malay masses in the feasibility of Islamic principles in guiding their lives was lacking, part of the reason for such neglect, or the preference for the secular alternative, may be attributed to British rule. (Mutalib 1990:17)

We demonstrated earlier that during British rule ethnic divisions in Malaya were maintained and even accentuated. Not only were the races kept separate (by division of labor and socio-economic status), but under the British, the Malays fared badly relative to the Chinese and Indians. The reverse was true during the Japanese occupation of Malaya between 1941 and 1945 (Miller 1966:155-156). The Japanese treated the Malays favorably compared to the Chinese and Indians. As British policy had proven detrimental to Malay-nonMalay relations, so the Japanese preferential treatment of the Malays contributed to inter-ethnic rivalry.¹⁵

The above factors were also detrimental to Malay acceptance of universal, as opposed to parochial, Islam. This was because the British and Japanese both regarded Malays as an ethnic

¹⁵Because of the enmity between Japan and China, the Chinese in Malaya suffered badly under the Japanese, while the Malays were usually spared any hardship. The Chinese resented the Malays for not joining the mainly Chinese guerilla forces that resisted Japanese occupation. Many of the Malays actually collaborated with the Japanese.

category distinct from all non-Malays. Thus, Malays were pitted against, rather than identified with, non-Malay Muslims. In support of this contention, Mutalib (1990:17) points out that the two major Islamic conferences which were held during the Japanese occupation, turned out to be strictly Malay affairs which discussed the problem of Malay unity instead of issues involving the wider Muslim community.

Islamic Reformism and Malay Ethnic Nationalism

We have concluded that the colonial policies did much to fortify the Malay awareness of themselves as an ethnic group vis-a-vis others. We now consider the impact of the worldwide Islamic reform movement on Malay ethnic identity. Islamic reformism sprang from the contrast between the glory days of Islam from the 8th to the 16th centuries, and the decline of Islam in the 19th century in the face of Western military and economic domination. The result was the formation of a pan-Islamism with a message that called for a search within Islam for principles and means to equip Muslims for the challenges of the modern world, as well as a call for the expunging of accretions (folk practices) from Islam. Reformers sought a worldwide unity of Muslims to oust colonial imperialism, and placed a high value on science and reason. Especially relevant to the Malayan situation, the reformers branded the conservative *ulama* (religious specialists) "enemies of Islam" (Donohue and Esposito

1982:19). Islam had to be purged of impure elements, restored to its pristine form, and become progressive again.¹⁶

The winds of reform blew strongly in Malaya. The hub of the reform movement was Al-Azhar University in Cairo. It should be remembered that Malay scholars had been going to Mecca or Cairo since Islam first arrived in Malaya, while many others had performed the pilgrimage.

The key reformers in Malaya were Malaysians of Arabic or Indian descent who had studied in Cairo and Mecca. Their influence spread mainly through the publication of journals and newspapers. The most significant and most radical such publication was al-Imam, founded in 1906 by al-Hadi, a leading reformer (Roff 1967:57). Al-Imam castigated the *ulama* (religious leaders) for allowing Malayan Islam to be adulterated by impurities from *adat* and other religions. The traditional elite were criticized for their consumption of alcohol and their participation in dancing (Mutalib 1990:20). They were chastised for their perpetuation of Malay decadence, when their responsibility was to be role models. Their very authority was questioned, as for over three decades al-Imam called for the practice of *ijtihad* (informed independent investigation) of the Quran and *hadith*, rather than *taklid buta* (blind acceptance of intermediate authority) (Roff 1967:58). In addition to the call

¹⁶For discussions of the reformist movement and its key proponents, see Donohue and Esposito (1982), Esposito (1983b), Gibb (1971), Haddad (1983), Hunter (1988), and Peacock (1978).

for a cleansing within Malayan Islam, to inculcate a sense of identification with worldwide and especially Middle Eastern Islam, al-Imam devoted regular attention to news from other Muslim countries. The main concern of another major reform-minded newspaper, Neracha (Balance) (1911), was the eradication of the heavy accretions of folk Islam (Motalib (1990:20).

The tremendous call for reform, coupled with the exposure to the issues and challenges of the world Islamic cause, has been described as the dropping of "a bombshell on the quiet Malayan scene of Islam" (Tan S.H. 1961:10).

From the point of view of the Muslim reformers, though, the influence of Islamic reformism in Malaya did not have the explosive effect intended. Perhaps we could say that the detonation reached the minds but not the hearts of the Malays. For one thing, the vehicle through which reform ideas spread was the printed word. The ideas came to the Malay world, a world comprised largely of non-literate villagers, in the form of philosophically oriented articles written by Arabic educated intellectuals. The articles were written, furthermore, in a style much influenced by Arabic, and which presupposed some familiarity with Arabic (Roff 1967:65). Such language and style was difficult even for the Malays who could read. It is not surprising, then that such writers could not touch the typical Malay anywhere near to the degree to which the village *ulama*, who were intimately integral to the rural community, could (cf. pp.215-216). Roff (1967:65) suggests that the readership of the

reformist literature came from the intellectual elite, whose education had already predisposed them to a more universal Islam.

It was primarily a matter of preaching to the converted.

Another major factor which checked the influence of Islamic reform in Malaya was the ethnic, communal orientation of Malays vis-a-vis non-Malays that we have already discussed. We have seen that the colonial polices had conditioned the Malays to defend their own interests against those of other ethnic groups, even if Muslim.

The earliest and most vocal of the reformers were Muslims of Indian or Arabic descent. These were the founders and primary contributors to the reformist publications. Those championing the Malay cause from the turn of the century through the 1930s were, paradoxically, non-Malays. Many Malay leaders came to resent this. In fact, the first political parties in Singapore and Malaya, the Singapore Malay Association (1925) and the Malay Youth Association (1937), were formed partly to resist non-Malay leadership in Malay affairs (Andaya and Andaya 1982:249). The climax of Malay antagonism towards non-Malay Muslims came in the form of conferences for Malays only, convened in 1938 and 1940 to discuss Malay problems (Musalib 1990:21). Around this time, Abdul Rahim Kajai, considered the most influential Malay journalist of his day, coined the derogatory and popularly used terms for the Indian and Arab Muslims--the DKK (*Darah Keturunan Keling-Indian Blood*) and DKA (*Darah Keturunan Arab-Arab Blood*) (Roff 1967).

The telling blow to the Muslim reformist movement came when Malay leadership was assumed by Malays with a strong ethnic nationalist tendency, under the auspices of the United Malay National Organization (UMNO), since 1946. UMNO was formed specifically in opposition to the British "Malayan Union" proposal¹⁷ (Simandjuntak 1969:33-34).

It is unmistakably clear that UMNO was formed out of Malay as distinct from Islamic considerations (Miller 1966:164-171). A number of points establish this. Its declared reason for being was the safeguarding of Malay communal interests (Mutalib 1990:21-22). The party's slogan and battle cry--"*Hidup Melayu*" ("Long live the Malays") speaks for itself. The party's very founder, Onn Ja'afar (whose father was Arabic) was not only dethroned, but booted from the party when he proposed to include non-Malay Muslims in the party. UMNO's identification with Malay ethnic nationalism as opposed to universal Islam was underscored by the overwhelming opposition to the proposal that UMNO should seek to establish an Islamic state (Funston 1980:92).

UMNO's secular leanings alienated Islamic-oriented Malay leaders. Consequently, the first Islamic party in the country,

¹⁷The Malayan Union (which lasted only two years, 1946-1948, and was never fully implemented due to rigorous Malay opposition), proposed to end the sovereignty of the sultans over their respective states, uniting the states under a British Governor with full executive powers. Moreover, it called for the extension of equal citizenship rights to all who could claim Malaya as their homeland (defined as anyone with five years of continuous residence or ten years of total residence). To the Malays, this meant the stripping of their own control, and the granting of unwarranted political power to the Chinese (Miller 1966:165).

the Hizbul Muslimin (HAMIM) or Islamic Party, was formed in 1948.

It's goals were to fight for Malayan independence and then build an Islamic state based on Islamic principles (Mutalib 1990:22). The party was shortlived but reborn in spirit in 1951 when a splinter group broke off from UMNO to form the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Rejecting UMNO's secular-nationalist bent, the PMIP [later renamed Partai Al-Islam Se-Malaysia (the Islamic Party of Malaysia), better known as PAS] called for (as it does still) the implementation of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) with the ultimate goal of transforming Malaya into an Islamic state.

To secure its legitimacy in the eyes of the Malay-Muslims, and understanding the integral nature of Islam to Malay identity, UMNO made the spread of Islam one of its primary objectives. Yet, the Islamic cause was always subservient to strengthening the Malay position. For PAS, it was the other way around.

The fact that of the two Malay political parties, UMNO has always had the ascendancy, and has been without serious threat from PAS except in minor pockets of Malay society, is a vivid reminder that politically, Malay ethnic ideals have been stronger than Islamic ideals for the majority of the Malays.

Thus, it was this Malay ethnic nationalism--as opposed to an Islamic orientation--coupled with opposition from the ruling establishment (Malay Sultans, conservative *ulama*, or the *Kaum Tua*, as well as colonialist)--and . . . the forces of tradition or *adat*--that, for the most part, checked the growth of Islamic religio-political influence in Malaya. (Mutalib 1990:22)

Upon Independence in 1957, Islam was not given a significant role in the government of the newly-formed Federation of Malaya.

The fact that the Constitution was given a secular ethnic-nationalist tilt has had an enormous influence on the shape of Malay society over the succeeding decades. Islam was named the religion of the Federation, but other religions were made room for (Means 1976:163-167). As if to ensure that this was not to be interpreted as a doorway to Islamic control, the framers of the Constitution included the sentiment that the fact that Islam was to be the state religion did not imply that the state was not secular. Following this understanding, the first Malay Chief Justice concluded that the constitutional reference to Islam meant that Islam's role was "primarily for ceremonial purposes, for instance, to enable prayers to be offered in the Islamic way on official public occasions such as the installation or the birthday of the *yang diPertuan Agong* (king)" (quoted in Mutalib 1990:23).

Thus, we see that Islam was relegated to the same place that it had before the British came. It was primarily a ceremonial showpiece to lend sanctity to public office. In this capacity, moreover, it contributed to Malay ethnic exclusivism. In that by far most Malayan Muslims were Malay, and that virtually no Chinese (the only community large enough to pose a political threat) were Muslims, Islam's place in the government was little more than a highly visible expression of the association of political authority with Malayness.

In actual political practice, Islam had its hands tied. Although in principle the sultans of each state were given charge

over Islamic affairs in their respective states, the Federal Parliament had power to overrule any decision based on Islamic law. Moreover, all laws in conflict with Federal law were declared automatically null and void (Mutalib 1990:24). To reiterate, the Constitution reinforced the prominence of Malay ethnicity over Islamic identity in Malay society.

The above discussion of the Malay Constitution speaks to the issue of Islamic political power. To say that this was severely curtailed is not the same as saying that Islam did not have a powerful influence on the individual Malays and their corporate culture. Moreover, the events since Malaysian Independence have thrust Islam into a position of prominence unknown in the history of the Malays. We now trace briefly these developments to bring ourselves up to date on the current state of affairs in the ongoing tension between Malay ethnic and Islamic identity.

The question "Who is a Malay?" is foundational to the Malaysian nation. The Constitution designates language, custom, and religion as the criteria of Malayness. The Malay political parties emphasized their own criteria. UMNO emphasized race, language, and custom. PAS stressed Islam, race, and language (Nash 1991:703). Its very name declared its commitment to Islam as its first priority. Its continuing commitment to Islam is reflected in its 1973 name change. With a view toward embarrassing its rival, UMNO, for having only an English-language name, it became *Partai Al-Islam Se-Malayai* (the Islamic Party of Malaysia), better known as PAS.

In attempting to unite Muslims, and especially to unite Malays as Muslims, the PMIP/PAS sought to avoid the old division between *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) and *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction). It did this by excluding Indian Muslims from its hierarchy and by attempting to be reformist while making room for traditionalists (Peacock 1978:178). It was reformist in that it called for Malays to govern themselves based on the Quran and *Hadith*. Yet, it opened the door to traditionalists by allowing some latitude for the rulings of traditional Muslim teachers. PMIP/PAS's challenge to UMNO has always brought to the fore the question of which ethnic Malay party best speaks for the Malays. Is it the conspicuously Islamic one? Or is it the one oriented to Malay sovereignty? At the national, political level, it has been the latter, UMNO, which consistently won out. But this was accomplished only through a coalition with the two main non-Malay ethnically based parties, the Malayan (later Malaysian) Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). This coalition, which was known as the Alliance, was a delicate balance of often conflicting interests.

The eventual collapse of this balance precipitated communal riots in May of 1969. From 1957 to 1969 competing interests among the ethnic groups were quietly negotiated among the leaders of the Alliance's three ethnic parties. An understanding existed that the Malays, by virtue of their indigenous status and numerical superiority, would enjoy political primacy in Malaysia. This would be expressed by Malays holding the top political

offices; by preferential opportunities for Malays in the civil service, education, and in the licensing of businesses; by the recognition of Islam as the official religion; and by the gradual implementation of Malay as the official language (Mauzy 1983:22).

Non-Malays, in turn, would be allowed substantial freedom from restriction in business ventures, vernacular primary schools, an equitable justice system based on secular British law, and freedom of religion.

By May 1969 this delicately constructed inter-ethnic edifice was crumbling. After a divisive campaign centering on concerns over the increasing concentration of power in the hands of ethnic Malays, the Alliance coalition suffered a fatal blow, losing its ruling majority in Parliament to a smattering of diverse small parties, including the PMIP/PAS, the Democratic Action Party (DAP)--a primarily Chinese party seeking democratic reform, and several leftist parties. The opposition victory was the catalyst of two weeks of bloody race riots, in which seething animosity between Malays and non-Malays erupted into violence.

A National Operations Council (NOC), a form of martial law under the Malay Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, governed the country until parliamentary rule was restored in 1971. By dissolving political groups opposing Malay sovereignty, by reconfirming Malay as the national language, and by the launching of the New Economic Policy (a plan to raise the socioeconomic level of the Malays relative to the non-Malays), the NOC buttressed the special status of the Malays.

When the smoke cleared, and normal politics resumed, the Malays emerged with the preeminent position in Malaysian political life. The old Alliance coalition was replaced by a new and broader one called *Barison Nasional* (the National Front). In addition to the original three parties, with UMNO remaining the senior partner, it included two former opponents, the DAP and the PMIP/PAS. The *Barison Nasional* has since dominated Malaysian politics, though it has been challenged by the withdrawal of PAS in 1977 and the rise of Islamic revival movements, known as *dakwah*. Both PAS and *dakwah* represent large sectors of Malay society which are dissatisfied with UMNO's secular, ethnic-nationalistic, as opposed to a more universal Islamic, basis.

The Rise of Malay *Dakwah*

ABIM

The modern Islamic resurgence sprang from student activism of the tumultuous period of the late 60s and early 70s. Anwar Ibrahim, currently the Deputy Prime Minister (second in command) in Malaysia, but then a student at the University of Malaya, founded the foremost *dakwah* (revivalist) organization, the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM, the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia). Under his charismatic leadership the movement began with broadly social and nationalistic activism. Disillusioned with the government leadership, Ibrahim said:

The leaders were condemning corruption, but they were enriching themselves. They talked about Malay nationalism but were alienated from the Malay masses. They were obsessed by the West. They were too accommodating to non-Malay sentiments. They were extremely slow in implementing national policies in education and language. We were

impatient and angry about the plight of the Malays, their education, rural development, rural health. There was this huge University Hospital, but no clinics in the rural areas. There were schools with no laboratories, no libraries and no qualified teachers. We were very angry, disgusted and critical of the government. There seemed to be no moral foundation and no spiritual guidance. We turned to Islam to fill this vacuum and to look for solutions. (quoted in Anwar 1987:12-13)

The Islamic direction to the already existing Malay student activism was the result of the worldwide Islamic resurgence spurred by the oil boom of the early 1970s and the rise of the oil producing states in relationship to the industrial West. The Islamic revolution in Iran under Khomeini contributed to the prestige of the *dakwah* movement.

In Malaysia itself, another phenomenon further connected Islam with Malay nationalistic activism. Reeling from the 1969 riots, the Malaysian government in 1971 imposed great restrictions on students' rights to hold public meetings or demonstrations. Student membership in political parties was disallowed. Religious gatherings were, however, not restricted.

Consequently, Islam became a natural channel through which Malay public activism could be expressed.

The Malay students focused more and more on Islam as a vehicle for change. Leading world idealogues of Islamic revivalism gave the movement an appreciation of the comprehensiveness of Islam as a way of life. In seeking guiding principles for change, and in defining themselves, the ABIM increasingly found its Malayness in Islam. Again, in the words of Anwar Ibrahim (quoted in Anwar 1987:13): "There was a very

strong sense of brotherhood, of the need to fight against corruption, exploitation and oppression. We were still very concerned about Malay issues, but we were equally committed to Islam."

The ABIM began in 1971 at the University of Malaya, but was established as a permanent organization outside the university so that its leaders could continue to exert their influence beyond graduation. The ABIM opened chapters throughout Malaysia, and was the foremost voice of *dakwah*.

The goal of ABIM was primarily the advancement of the Malays, especially regarding economic development. The hallmark of their early activism was vocational training in rural Malaysia. A growing disillusionment with the secular rationale behind UMNO leadership prompted a turn toward Islam as the vehicle through which an activism associated with the wider world of Islam could meet the needs of the Malays. ABIM was less chauvinistic than the other leading *dakwah* groups. It did not call for an Islamic state. Instead it promoted individual piety and the expression of faith through communal activism. Still, it had strong pro-Malay and anti-Chinese agenda.

ABIM was successful in wedding the seemingly contradictory elements of universal Islam and Malay ethnic exclusivism. Islamic principles of, for example, justice and equality, were employed to advance the Malay struggle to carve out an unchallenged position of leadership and economic control against the conflicting interests of other Malaysian ethnic groups.

Darul Arqam

Another significant revival group is *Darul Arqam*, "House of Arqam" (after Arqam who was one of the friends and protectors of Muhammed).¹⁸ Its trademark is its Islamic communities modeled after 7th century Arabic lifestyle. Largely apolitical, *Darul Arqam* seeks to increase Malay religiosity by building support on the grass roots level. Members practice an austere communal life. There is total segregation of the sexes, and followers eat and sleep together in crowded dormitories. The women cover all but their eyes in Middle Eastern-style *purdah*, and the men wear green robes (green being the color of Islam) and turbans. While the group does want to see an Islamic government in Malaysia, this is only a long-range objective (Anwar 1987:37). They see this as possible only from the ground up. The priority is Islamization of the individual and family, and through this process they seek gradually to extend Islamization to the whole Malay society.

A paradoxical twist here is that while *Darul Arqam* has adopted a dress code modeled after Iran, and attempts to approximate the pristine lifestyle of the glory days of early Arabic Islam, it is known for its distinctive Malay chauvinism and desire for a life independent of Chinese and foreign control. In effect, *Darul Arqam* wants to adopt universal Islamic form,

¹⁸For a thorough treatment of the leading Islamic revival organizations in Malaysia, see Nagata (1984:81-130), Anwar (1987:9-57), and Jomo and Cheek (1992:79-106).

but for Malays only. It is another case of an attempt at joining universal Islam with specifically Malay interests.

The Malay reaction to *Darul Arqam* is varied. Many more secular-minded Malays look down on *Arqam* members as extremists. Others feel that *Arqam* members assume an air of superiority, as if they are the only Malays who are "doing" Islam right. Still others respect the *Darul Arqam* for their total commitment to an Islamic lifestyle. However they are perceived, *Darul Arqam* members are a visible and constant reminder that the Islamic revolution has hit Malaysia.

Jamaat Tabligh

The *Jamaat Tabligh* (the Missionary Society) is a Delhi-based missionary organization that is the most philosophically oriented and least structured of the *dakwah* groups. It is an informal, unregistered missionary movement which relies entirely on the work of volunteer missionaries. Though not chauvinistic, it focuses on Malays (particularly rural Malays), attempting through personal contact and example to foster personal commitment to Islam (Nagata 1984:116-122). The emphasis is on emulation of Muhammed's lifestyle, the performance of Islamic pillars, and each individual's responsibility to spread the faith (Jomo and Cheek 1992:81). Both *Tabligh* and *Arqam* encourage spiritual lifestyles which emphasize other worldliness, but neither emphasize the establishment of an Islamic state, nor pose a threat to Malay ethnic nationalism.

The Islamic Republic

The most recent and revolutionary organized expression of *dakwah* is a student group known as the Islamic Republic (IR). The IR calls for the immediate imposition of an Islamic state upon the ethnically and religiously diverse population of Malaysia.

Closely allied with PAS, the Islamic opposition party, the Islamic Republic wrested control of the Islamic Student Society (PMIUM--*Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Universiti Malaya*), the most influential student organization for Islamic and *dakwah* activities, from the ABIM in 1983 and has brought a more militant tone to that organization. (Nash 1991:712)

Conclusions About Malay *Dakwah*

It is clear from this brief sketch of the major Malaysian *dakwah* (revivalist) organizations that they have rather diverse makeups and emphases. Malaysian *dakwah* is distinct from Islamic resurgence in places like Iran, Turkey, or Pakistan in that, in Malaysia, the turn toward Islam grew from a drive to stake a claim in the power struggle between competing ethnic groups. It is important to note that Islamic resurgence began over Malay issues.

Clearly, though, the ensuing changes brought a new awareness of the comprehensiveness of Islam, and yes, of the universal Islamic community (Anwar 1987:3). Zainah Anwar (1987:4) goes so far as to claim that Malaysian *dakwah* has transcended Malay particularism:

the movement is not dominated by the reformist attitude of earlier revivalism. The West is no longer a source of emulation or the fount of solutions for Malay backwardness, even if couched in Islamic terminology. Islam now holds all

the solutions to society's ills . . . there is no element of Malay nationalism at all in this current revivalism. The present-day *dakwah* people do not call for the improvement of the lot of the Malays. In fact, they oppose the New Economic Policy as it is based on race instead of religion. Nationalism which recognizes the artificially imposed man-made national boundaries is also considered unIslamic as it opposes the Islamic concept of the universality of the *ummah*.

While it is difficult to overstate the significance of Islamic revivalism on the Malay consciousness, it is an overstatement to say that Malaysian *dakwah* is devoid of Malay nationalism. What the Islamic revival has done is place Islam so much in the forefront that no Malay organization, political party, or candidate for office can hope to succeed without flying the Islamic banner. Every candidate must now give at least lip service to enthusiastic support of Islamization, and present himself or herself as a devout, observant Muslim.

While PAS or the *dakwah* organizations never succeeded in mounting the support of large enough segments of the Malay population to dethrone UMNO or even implement their agendas on a wide scale, they were indirectly responsible for promoting far reaching government-sponsored Islamization.

To keep peace in the ethnically and religiously diverse Malaysian spectrum, UMNO has always found it necessary to pursue an accommodationist policy. In so doing, UMNO had to walk a tightrope between the interests of non-Malays, and those Malays who considered UMNO's conciliatory posture a betrayal of Malay interests. The Islamic resurgence added fuel to this already volatile situation. It gave UMNO's Malay rivals a new tack.

UMNO's accommodationist stance was now stigmatized as anti-Islamic. As Islam itself cannot be challenged, policies of Islamization could not be attacked frontally.

UMNO countered by denouncing certain groups as extremist, and thus antithetical to true Islam. Fearing the growing power of *dakwah*, the government looked for technicalities to block speeches by *dakwah* leaders, and even to imprison some of them. The most effective counter to *dakwah*, however, was neither criticism nor intimidation. The most effective government counter to its *dakwah* opponents was to embrace *dakwah* itself (at least in word), thus diffusing the main contention of UMNO's Malay opponents.

The clincher for UMNO in this was the coopting of Anwar Ibrahim, the popular president of the ABIM, and former UMNO critic. After Mahathir's 1982 ascendance to the position of chief executive, Anwar was wooed over to UMNO with promises of leadership positions and the machinery with which to further his goals for Islamization. Anwar skyrocketed up the political ladder with successive appointments as Deputy Minister, UMNO Youth President, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, and Agriculture Minister, before being appointed to the senior governmental post of Education Minister in 1986, and then his election as Deputy Prime Minister in 1993. With Anwar's "born-again Muslim" UMNO, PAS was placed on the defensive (Jomo and Cheek 1992:97). UMNO formed the Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association (*Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia*, or PERKIM),

which conducts missionary activity among the Chinese and *orang asli* (aboriginal peoples). UMNO further defanged its opponents with the creation of an Islamic bank and an Islamic university.

How are we to interpret these changes? It is probably at least partly the case that the co-option of Anwar Ibrahim was part of a tradition of accommodating Islamic demands in order to defeat the government's religiously oriented political opponents. As previous prime minister Datuk Hussein Onn intimated, "You may wonder why we spend so much money on Islam. If we don't Parti Islam will get us. The Party will and does claim that we are not religious and the people will lose faith" (quoted in Milner 1986:64). The current prime minister, Mahathir, unlike his predecessor, may not be merely bowing to political expediency. It is difficult to portray the appointment to high office of a religious figure of Anwar Ibrahim's stature and evident sincerity, as nothing more than a clever political outmaneuvering of the opposition, especially when combined with the Mahathir administration's unprecedented Islamization projects.

Effects of Islamization

Whatever the admixture of sincerity and politics, the Islamization of Malaysia is having a very real impact on Malay traditional culture. When the Malays began to adopt Islam in the 14th and 15th centuries, the rajas who accepted the new religion were quick to see it as a means to bolster their dignity and authority. Quranic verses were found to justify their special status as the "Shadows of God on Earth" (Milner 1981a:70).

Whatever their reasons for adopting Islam as an essential component of Malayness, the Malay rulers, who inherited primal religious and Indian traditions of leadership, did not see Islam as a threat to their position. Islam gave divine sanctity to age-old customs, and when the Western powers threatened, it proved a rallying point around which to unite the Malays. But the Islam to which the Malays opened their gates would prove down the road to be "a 'Trojan horse', which, once it had entered Malaydom, would eventually challenge some of the essential tenets of Malay life" (Milner 1986:52).

While the bywords of early Malay Islamic activism were nationalism and Malay economic development, the focus has shifted from the Malay race to the international--or non-national--Islamic community.

The dakwah, or Islamic missionary, movement is a highly visible aspect of a growing religious tension within the Malay community. Until a decade or so ago most accounts of the Malay community presented Islam as synonymous with Malayness. To convert to Islam, it was often observed, was described as *masuk Melayu*, or "entering Malayness." Today even the legendary "casual observer" has become aware of the existence within Malay society of a core of religious-opinion leaders who, in the name of Islamic authenticity, criticize the style of life of their fellow Malays. They criticize their customs, their dress, their behaviour, and the political and legal institutions under which they live. The religious leaders demand adherence to God's word, to the shari'a or sacred law of Islam. (Milner 1986:50)

The Malays are in a battle to determine the character of their identity as Malays and as Muslims. Thus far, the fundamentalist version of Islam has not come to dominate (Nash 1991:713). Still, "in Malaysia during the last decade it has become more and

more difficult to portray Islam as an ingredient of nationalism.

Shari'a-mindedness offers a sharp critique of Malayness" (Milner 1986:65).

A common denominator of most of the Malay *dakwah* has been a challenge to eradicate syncretistic elements from Islam. Traditional cultural practices which have their roots in spiritism or Hinduism are called into question. These include traditional healers, traditional dance and drama, the Malay wedding ceremony, and even the very Sultanate.

The extent to which the old guard of traditional authority is being replaced is seen most dramatically in a 1993 amendment to the Constitution which stripped the sultans of their immunity from legal prosecution. Since the sultans' functions are largely ceremonial, the new laws do not significantly alter the Malaysian legislative machinery. Yet, the move is nothing short of epochal in its symbolic import. Though their powers had been being systematically eroded since constitutional government hit Malaysia, this was the first officially declared "demythification of the royals" ("A Monarchy Thus Updated" 1993). The keepers of all that stood for traditional Malayness and an Islam that legitimized such a system, were now symbolically dethroned from their lofty position. To borrow Niel Armstrong's phraseology, this was one small step for the equal position of all under the law, but one giant leap for the "new guard" Malays.

Unquestionably, Malay Islam has ceased from being merely a religious legitimizer of the traditional Malay aristocracy. As

such, Malays are more attuned to the worldwide Islamic community, and to seeing Islam as a coherent system which has bearings on every facet of individual and social life.

Malay Ethnic Identity

Islam

To say that Malay traditional leadership is no longer the guardian and interpreter of Malay Islam is not to say that Islam has ceased to be a Malay ethnic identifier. Non-Malay Malaysians clearly do not see the Islamic resurgence as a portent of justice and equal opportunity of all.¹⁹ Most non-Malays have felt ignored, if not threatened by what they see as increasingly powerful, assertive and intolerant Islamic movements which challenge the rights of all who do not submit to Islamic prescriptions.

While some non-Muslims in the ruling coalition may reluctantly accept the government's Islamisation campaign as necessary to deal with the supposed threat posed by PAS in particular and the Islamic resurgence in general, most others view it as yet another confirmation of the secondary status of the non-Malays. (Jomo and Cheek 1992:104)

It may be argued, in fact, that Islam (albeit articulated in a more universal, orthodox form) is the chief ethnic boundary marker for the Malays. As we have stated, the Malaysian

¹⁹ A case in point is that non-Malay Muslims in Malaysia, and especially those who are Chinese, are not afforded the same status and privileges as Malays (Nagata 1974:41-46). Another example is the complaints of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (an ecumenical council of non-Muslim religions in Malaysia that serves as a watchdog agency against encroachment of their religious freedoms by the Malaysian government-sponsored Islamization programs), who have experienced Islamization as a serious threat to their religious freedoms.

Constitution defines a Malay as one who habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay culture, and practices Islam. The first of these identifiers has always been blurry. The social category "Malay" does not coincide with the linguistic category of Malay speakers. What do we do with Indonesian speakers of Malay, or Malays whose first language is not Malay (e.g., Javanese)? The aggressive national language policy in Malaysia, which has made Malay the language of habitual use of millions of non-Malays, is making the linguistic distinction increasingly meaningless.

Likewise, the Malay cultural tag is losing its significance.

The rise of an urban Malay middle class is causing cultural sameness.

Being "middle class" in the diffuse western sense means being part of a status group defined largely by a generalized bureaucratic lifestyle based on consumerism, which effectively eclipses more subtle and meaningful distinctions between the Malays and non-Malays and, with it, some of their identity. (Nagata 1984:71)

From the other direction, as non-Malays increasingly speak Malay and advance through the national education system, a convergence is taking place. On the surface, at least, Malays and non-Malays coalesce in the homogenized suburban housing complexes and city highrises that resemble their middle class counterparts throughout the world.

Traditional Malay Culture

The one remaining ethnic distinctive of the Malays is Islam. Again, this is a somewhat fuzzy boundary marker, but given the

fact that few non-Malay Malaysians are Muslim, and virtually no Malays are not Muslim, it remains the most workable distinction of the three traditional Malay ethnic identifiers.

The term ethnic refers to the existence of objective markers of human difference, and the social recognition of these markers (Kahn 1992:159). Anthony Smith argues that without cultural differentiation, ethnic identity lapses. "An ethnic group cannot shed all its cultural dimensions of 'signs' and retain this sense of identity intact" (Smith 1981:66).

Raymond Lee (1986c:28-29) sees ethnic relations as the interaction between groups competing for resources and status. With the constitutional arrangements, and the policies to strengthen the Malay position after the Malay 1969 racial riots (which were precipitated by the gains made by the non-Malay opposition parties in the election campaign and the victory parades to rub their gains in the Malays' faces), the resources, or we may say power, issue has more or less been settled. The ethnic group rankings, though, in the status hierarchy are still up for grabs. Basically, the British passed the power baton to the Malays. The British social prestige could not so easily be transferred. The British were outsiders who had always been in a position of control over the Malays and non-Malays. The Malays were merely fellow colonial subjects with the non-Malays. With the prestige-giver (the British) removed from the scene, there was no consensus about which ethnic group should provide the model of status aspiration (Lee 1986c:35). In the ensuing

jockeying for position in the status pecking order, each group resorted to the rhetoric of cultural superiority to shore up its claims. This was especially true of the Malays, who sought to raise their status to a level commensurate with their power. Malay cultural elements were used to define the boundaries of Malayness for the specific purpose of status enhancement. They became in Raymond Lee's words "symbols of separatism" (Lee 1986c:28).

As we have said, the rapid rise of an urban Malay middle class, which has an outward lifestyle basically indistinct from the urban middle class Chinese and others, increased the need for ethnic identity markers (Nagata 1984:72). The new Malay middle class is currently digging deeply to find its identification roots in "traditional Malay culture." Any visitor to Malaysia cannot but be deluged by the flood of symbolism of "traditional Malay culture." It has become a powerful force in shaping the values of the national culture.

In a bold and penetrating analysis of this current phenomenon, Joel Kahn (1992:172-173) postulates that many of the "existing notions of Malayness are constructions, and not mere reflections of a Malay culture which has always existed out there in the world." "The makers of these images, as well as the consumers, are overwhelmingly part of a growing Malay middle class of civil servants, educators and professionals" who are searching for convenient markers of identity (Kahn 1992:164).

The result is that a "neo-traditionalist" Malay culture is in the process of being created. "We are not here dealing with a simple recognition in ethnic discourse of a pre-existing set of cultural traits and markers. Malay culture itself is what is being constructed" (Kahn 1992:170).

This contemporary Malay culture, moreover, is being created in the context of disillusionment with the West and with certain elements of modernity, amidst an unprecedented urbanization and technological boom. The resultant portrait of Malay culture is the very antithesis of modern society.

Where the latter is urban, impersonal and rushed, the former is rural, personalised and contemplative. The peaceful rural setting of the activities of the artisan is contrasted explicitly with the noise and bustle of Kuala Lumpur. The social and ecological adaptations of the traditional Malay house stands in sharp contrast to the hot and noisy urban high rise. (Kahn 1992:165)

While the ancient Malay lifestyle was certainly rural, agrarian, rustic, and simple, it was for most Malays hardly idyllic. It was typically comprised of the burdensome drudgery of corvee labor, interspersed with bitter internecine warfare between rival chiefdoms. In the spiritual realm, a thoroughgoing spiritism made for a "religion" of manipulation and fear. The only Malays who enjoyed the leisure to recline, sipping coconut milk, and enjoy traditional entertainment were the elite few in the royal court.

Kahn notes further that it is the well educated upper-middle class, urban Malay "haves" who are touting "traditional Malay culture," and not the under educated, rural "have nots," who are

trying to narrow the gulf between themselves and their urban counterparts.

Ironically, the revived interest in a traditional, rural-based Malay culture is taking place in a social setting characterised by a massive decline in what is considered to be traditional Malay peasant community. This produces some fascinating paradoxes. The images generated by this culture industry in travel brochures, museums, newspapers, magazines, books and films depict Malay villagers as philosophical players of Malay games and fliers of kites, who like nothing better than watching dance dramas depicting the life of the Malay court. In my time in a Malay village in the mid 1970s I never once saw anyone flying a kite or playing *congkak* (a game resembling backgammon currently being revived by a Kuala Lumpur firm). And the villagers I knew had little interest in the performances of "traditional" Malay dance drama currently being staged in luxury hotels in Kuala Lumpur, preferring instead to watch *Dallas* and *The Professionals* on television. Traditional Malay wedding gear, a favoured display at local cultural centres was rejected by village brides who favoured platform shoes and blue taffeta. (Kahn 1992:164)

In the effort to carve out a distinctive Malay identity, the old values of *kampung* (village) and religion are being resurrected, and, according to Nagata (1984:72), they are propelling Malays into two different and seemingly contradictory directions. One is toward a revitalized Islam, evidenced through the far-reaching effects of the revival movements since the early seventies. Along with this comes the ideology of the universal community of Islam that supersedes ethnic, class, or racial distinctions. The other is toward a more militantly *Bumi* Malay (Malays as the indigenous and thus rightful heirs to the land) stance. In this position, the preferences of Malays for the Constitution and the priorities given Malays in economic development are aggressively upheld. Like the feudal loyalty of

the ancient Malays, which brought material rewards and social identity, loyalty to the modern Malay elite confers similar advantages. It perpetuates the Malay dominion along the old Melakan pattern in which absolute loyalty is exchanged for protection and favors. The "Malay traditional culture" theme we have just discussed feeds this second response.

The neo-traditionalist construction that is shaping Malay identity is evident in a broad range of symbols. Paradoxically, alongside the most aggressive Islamization Malay society has ever experienced, traditional and exclusively Malay cultural symbols (most of which have no Islamic connection, and many of which are counter to Islamic teaching) are paraded before Malaysia and the world.

The most obvious expression of what might be called the schizophrenic Malay cultural personality, is seen in the work of the government Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism. Clearly, the image of Malaysia that the government wants to sell to the world is of a culturally diverse and open society, with beautiful beaches and a rich heritage of traditional crafts and performing arts. In browsing through the "Visit Malaysia Year '94: The Traveller's Guide to Malaysia's Fascinating Treasures" booklet, or any of the many other Malaysian tourism publications, one would never guess that extensive Islamization had ever come close to Malaysia. In the hundreds of photographs printed in the more than a dozen current brochures I have collected, I had to look hard to find one or two small pictures of Malay women wearing the

Islamic head covering called the mini *telekang* (prayer shawl), more commonly known as the *tudung* (cover). My guess is that, particularly in the cities, the *tudung* is worn by a majority of Malay women. Of the 65 Malay women I interviewed in the study of international students, 31 wore the head covering. One can hardly go anywhere frequented by Malays and not see Malay women wearing *tudungs*. I am convinced the Malaysian tourism photographers intentionally went out of their way to exclude Malays in *tudungs* from their pictures. Instead of Islamic dress, the brochures are full of Malays in two settings. Malays are pictured either in traditional dress engaged in traditional dance, music or craftsmanship, or they are in Western dress lounging in five-star hotels or browsing in the new ultra-modern shopping complexes. Even the brochures for the staunchly Muslim peninsular east coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu depict Malays exclusively in terms of the traditional fishing economy and traditional entertainment. Such stylized ritual dance and drama was actually directly associated with spirit appeasement and even spirit possession. The title of a Terengganu brochure is "Terengganu: Cultural Splendour."

The only thing Islamic that figures prominently in the travel brochures in the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor, which is an enormous and beautifully impressive blue-domed mosque with four towering minarets. This architectural jewel which dominates the surroundings, is seen by non-Malays at least as much as a symbol of Malay dominance as it

is a representation of Islam. In line with this, non-Malays have sarcastically dubbed the mosque the "Taj Melayu"²⁰ (after the Taj Mahal), identifying it as an extravagant showpiece of Malay, in distinction from general Islamic, rule.

Interestingly, specifically Islamic institutions, and especially those of a more universal or transcultural nature, are excluded from tourist information. In the world Islamic community, Malaysia boasts the internationally acclaimed International Islamic University, a leading Islamic Study Center, a complex dedicated to preparation of pilgrims for the *haj*, and several self-sufficient Islamic communal settlements. Yet, Islam receives only the most scant attention in the tourism promotional material. The limited representations of Islam are all mosques, notable for their architectural and/or historic interest rather than their Islamic influence.

The Malay culture identity does not just target international tourists. Most tourists spots are, in fact, visited mainly by Malaysians themselves. The Malay professional class seems to be the primary target of tourism campaigns. Mini Malaysia in Ayer Keroh (near Melaka town) is one of many, many attractions geared for the cultural edification of Malaysian (especially Malay) tourists. It consists of reconstructions of traditional Malay houses based on the regional architecture of each particular state. There is also an open theater where

²⁰"Melayu" is the Malay language word for "Malay."

traditional Malay dance is performed, and a hall for the demonstration of traditional Malay games such as top spinning. Mini Malaysia also includes a souvenir shop selling Malay handicrafts.

Melaka and Seremban each have museums constructed in traditional Malay architectural style, and containing exhibits of the objects and history of Malay royalty. The National Museum in Kuala Lumpur also features royal Malay history, and like the aforementioned museums, puts the legends and heros of the pre-colonial Malay aristocracy in a favorable, if not glorious, light. These cultural displays are of the old Malay system in which Islam became a tool for the legitimization of royal status and authority. This representation of Malayness is at odds with the principles of Islamization.

Besides the permanent "Malay culture" attractions, Malaysia sponsors periodic "Culture Fests" for the preservation and propagation of Malaysian culture. These are affairs in which traditional dances are performed in major halls and hotel ballrooms throughout the major cities. These typically feature Malay dancers in historic garb, performing dances that, again, are rooted in Malay primal religion and/or the royal court. Both of these elements (pre-Islamic spiritism and traditional Malay adat) run counter to the aims of the forces of Islamization. Such cultural shows are well-attended by Malays.

Traditional, non-Islamic, Malay ethnic identifiers are ubiquitous in Malaysian society. One small example is that

explicitly Malay customary practices and history figure much more prominently on postage stamps than do any expressions of Islam.

I found another example in the pictures in Malay children's books. I have two Malay-English children's picture dictionaries published in 1986. These are primary school texts. Both books show scenes such as "in the kitchen," "in the classroom," "in the grocery store," or "at the beach." There are scenes depicting Malay village life, including traditional Malay drama. There are no scenes of anything specifically Islamic, such as "at the mosque," or "celebrating the breaking of the fast." Each item in the pictures is identified by its Malay and English names. In one of the books, there are a total of 16 pictures of women who could positively be identified as Malays. Of these 16 women, none of them are wearing the *tudung*, the Islamic head covering. The other picture dictionary has a total of approximately 60 adult women of any race. In this book, only one woman is shown wearing the head covering, and this is because in that particular picture, a picture identifying various articles of clothing, the head covering is one of the words being singled out for definition.

I have scanned several other Malay children's books and have found the same phenomenon. The pictures show Malays in either the most modern and progressive settings, such as white collar offices, high tech industry, and glitzy shopping malls, or they show Malays in rural settings, playing traditional games or

working in the fields. The Islamic element is conspicuously absent.

Yet another example shows an identification of Islam with Malayness. The greatest Muslim holiday is the celebration of the ending of the fasting month. Borrowing the custom of sending Christmas cards, the Malays exchange *Hari Raya* (the Big Day) cards. While it is a religious holiday, I observed that many, if not most, of the *Hari Raya* cards have pictures of symbols of Malay ethnic identity rather than anything explicitly Islamic. There are pictures of special Malay foods, families dressed in traditional costume, and of symbols of Malay royalty, such as the *kris*. The cards suggest that *Hari Raya* is something that **Malays**, rather than Muslims in general, celebrate. Here, an Islamic holiday is used to promote Malay ethnic solidarity.

Perhaps the most telling example of the recent push for Malay traditional culture is the 1990 design change for Malaysian coins. Whereas the Malaysian coins of each value were previously all minted with the same exact design--the Parliament building juxtaposed with the Islamic star and crescent--the newer coins have a different design for each value, each design depicting a particular article of traditional Malay life.²¹ This is extremely significant for the statement it makes. Not only are a

²¹The Malaysian one cent coin has a drum; the five cent a top; the ten cent a traditional game; the twenty cent some paraphernalia of the ancient royal court; the fifty cent a kite; and the dollar coin a *kris* (Malay knife associated with royalty).

general governmental symbol (Parliament--representing equally all Malaysians) and a symbol of Islam (the star and crescent - representing equally all Muslims) replaced by symbols of traditional life, but the new symbols are exclusively Malay, giving the impression that non-Malays (even non-Malay Muslims) are second class citizens in their own country. Truly the Malays are attempting to put forth "traditional Malay culture" as the epitome of social status in Malaysia.

Mixed Messages

The simultaneous promotion of traditional Malay ethnic identity and universal Islam, is indeed causing tension. Malay students are taught through intensive Islamic education that public dance is inappropriate, that women's dress should cover everything except their face and hands, and that traditional ceremonies and practices derived from Hinduism or spiritism should be abolished.

Malay society is sending mixed messages about Malay identity, and the result is a cognitive dissonance. When I taught English to Malays in a government technical institute in Malaysia (1986-1990, the students had mandatory Islamic studies classes. Western dress was forbidden for Malay women (they had to wear loose-fitting floor-length dresses), and there was social pressure for them to wear the head covering. Many of the women who came to the program not wearing the head covering, adopted it during the course of their stay at the institute. Yet, when some U.S dignitaries came to observe the program, the Malay students

hosted a night of traditional Malay entertainment in honor of the foreign guests. The Malays performed traditional music and dance dressed in traditional outfits. On another occasion, at a graduation awards banquet, the students performed a traditional dance, did a short drama about the life of a famous Malay princess, and gave a fashion show of the traditional Malay costumes of each particular state. None of the entertainment on either night was acceptable from an orthodox Islamic standpoint.

Yet, it was performed proudly and publicly to show off the beauty of Malay culture.

The inconsistency of the two conflicting expressions of Malayness hit me most strikingly when I attended the 1992 Malaysia Cultural Night at the University of Kentucky (UK) just a week or so after I had completed my Malay student interviews. I was surprised to see that some of the very students who had expressed to me the certain conviction that traditional Malay customs are incompatible with Islam, were on stage publicly demonstrating these very customs. Once again, most of what was performed was not only non-Islamic, but anti-Islamic. None of the women wore a head covering. In one song sung by a male and female duet, I caught the words "I'm young and free and full of desire" -hardly inspiring Islamic contemplation.

Actually, there were three responses to the cultural show. Several Malays participated in the performances. Most of the others attended the event. Some of these had convictions against actually performing the traditional entertainment, but had no

qualms about watching it, and even advertizing it. Only a handful of Malay students boycotted the event for religious reasons. As we shall see when we discuss the interview results, the Malays disapprove of in theory many activities that they do in practice.

There is another point of note concerning the Malaysia Cultural Night. It was sponsored by the Malaysian Student Association. This organization is comprised of all the Malaysian students at UK, and not just the Malays. Chinese Malaysians, in fact, outnumbered Malays at UK at the time by more than two to one. Yet, apart from a Kung Fu demonstration, and two contemporary Chinese songs, the entire evening was devoted to Malay entertainment, giving the impression, as in the case with Malaysian coins, that Malay traditional culture is the true representation of Malaysian culture.

In October of 1993, several Malay students performed traditional Malay songs and dance at the Lexington Children's Museum. I found myself asking how Malays could present themselves as such while at the same time unquestioningly accepting and defending Islamic teaching.

Islamic Pull Vs. Ethnic Pull

There is indeed simultaneously both an Islamic pull and an ethnic pull on Malay identity. Some argue that the Islamic pull is itself a manifestation of "a closing of ranks against non-Malays" (Nagata 1984:234), and is thus actually pulling in the same direction as the ethnic pull. Certainly Malays have found a

unifying quality in Islam, as well as a rallying point against opponents, and have used Islam to express their own distinctiveness and even superiority over others. Still, there are enough tensions in the Malay-Islam relationship to regard them as oppositional. The following from Mutalib (1992:158) clearly spells out the issues at stake.

Examples of Tensions and Contradictions in the Malay-Islam Relationship (Malayness/ethnicity versus Islamicity)

1. Adat (e.g. animistic and Hindu elements) vs. Shar'iah.
2. Communal identity (ethnic nationalism) vs. Universalism.
3. Special bumiputra (indigenous) rights and privileges vs. Protection and justice for all.
4. Strong feudal element in leader-led relationships (e.g. Sultanate) vs. Leader is 'khalif'; a vicegerent of God, and leader within Islamic law and tradition.
5. Malay territorial individual state boundaries vs. Umma, an ideological community transcending political and geographical boundaries.
6. Emphasis on 'Malay Muslim' (as opposed to non-Malay Muslim) vs. Non-racist creed.
7. 'Malay(si)a belongs to the Malays' (an early PAS slogan) vs. 'Malay(si)a belongs to all citizens', irrespective of racial and religious affiliation.
8. 'Politics and religion should be separate' (statement by Tunku, the first prime minister) vs. Islam is 'al-din', encompassing politics and other pursuits in life.
9. 'Masuk Melayu' (non-Malay converts to Islam become Malays) vs. 'Masuk Islam' (joining a universal 'umma').
10. 'Hidup Melayu' ('Long live the Malays' - UMNO slogan) vs. 'Hiduplah keadilan' ('Long live justice for all').
11. 'Malaysia's national culture must be based on Malay culture' (Prime Minister Mahathir's statement) vs. All cultures allowed to flourish side by side with Islamic culture.

12. Malay Sultans cannot be prosecuted in courts vs. Nobody is above the law.

As to the question of which force is tugging harder at the hearts of Malays, I will reserve my own conclusion until after we have examined the Malay student interview data. The student responses will be crucial to our understanding of the ethnic versus Islamic dynamic.

Zainah Anwar (1989) conducted a study of Islamic revivalism among students. She based part of her work on interviews of Malay students in universities in Malaysia and England. The issues she addresses and her findings provide a backdrop for some of the questions in my own interviews.

Anwar found the Malay students bitterly divided among themselves along the Malay ethnic versus Islamic lines. Two girls who lived in the same dormitory at the University of Malaya exemplify the expanding gulf. Hamidah, who immersed herself in an Islamic revivalist organization, had this to say upon completion of an intensive course on the fundamentals of Islam:

I realized that I had so many wrongs that needed to be corrected. . . . I feel I have changed. I have confidence to be an *imam* (leader), to be an example to the juniors. I can talk to them and discuss issues. If I say something is forbidden, I know why. For example, there are Malay customs that are against Islam like the *bersanding* (a part of the wedding ceremony where the newly-wed couple sits on a specially raised dais in glittering finery). Now I tell others it is unIslamic and an unnecessary tradition because it dates from Hindu influence and has nothing to do with Islam. Or music. Whenever I go back to the village there are always weddings with such loud music. I tell the people it's sinful because music lulls the mind, taking our concentration away from God. I was also against the Sudirman (Malay pop singer) concert. It's against Islam. You get carried away by music when you have so many other

important things to do like reading religious books to increase your knowledge. (quoted in Anwar 1987:50-51)

Norsiah, who considers herself a good Muslim, spoke in a completely different tone about the campus Islamic movements: "I don't see myself like the *surau* (prayer hall) people. They're the 'no-no' faces, no funfair, no friendship nights, no band. Everything is one big 'NO.' They're so narrow-minded--so, so narrow" (quoted in Anwar 1989:49). "They're the 'no-no' faces who have made Islam into a 'no-no' religion" (quoted in Anwar 1989:52).

Norsiah's continual exposure to revivalist Islam, and the social ostracism she felt as one outside the community of the faithful, eventually led her to feel that it was her duty to give up the old lifestyle that she loved (She had been the lead singer in a pop band and an organizer of Malay cultural events). "I knew I had to wear the *telekang* (head covering). Why? Well, you don't ask questions like that. Like you don't ask questions why you should pray" (quoted in Anwar 1989:65).

Norsiah is one who seems to have "converted " more from external social pressure than from inner conviction. Her statements reveal a conflicted soul. "I don't regret becoming a *dakwah*, but I do miss my old life. When I see nice clothes I feel frustrated that I can't wear them" (quoted in Anwar 1989:66). "Let me tell you honestly. The *dakwah* movement's most distinctive characteristic is that it always tells you what to do, or rather what not to do" (quoted in Anwar 1989:66-67).

An interesting phenomenon that Norsiah brings up is that when she was a non-*dakwah* member, she was regarded as a pariah by the *dakwah* girls. When she subsequently switched camps, her former non-*dakwah* Malay friends would have nothing to do with her. She notes, interestingly, that her non-Malay friends accepted her either way. According to Anwar (1989:89), less devout Malay Muslims relate better to non-Muslims than they do to more devout Malay Muslims.

It appears that Islam is acting as both a unifying and dividing agent in Malay society. As we have seen earlier, it is a unifying element in rallying all Malays around a single identity marker. As Anwar's students interviewees indicated, it is a divider, separating the "pure" from the "impure" Malay Muslims. In other words, the Muslim versus infidel dichotomy no longer separates just the Malays from the non-Malays, it has entered the Malay community itself.

Another theme that figured prominently in Anwar's interviews is that the *dakwah* Malays are critical of the Malaysian government in spite of its Islamization policy. In fact, government Islamization is considered a ploy to pacify Malays so that they won't pursue "real" Islamization. As one *dakwah* woman put it:

We're anti-government. This system is unIslamic. They say we can't have Islamic law because it is a plural society. But it was a plural society, too, during Prophet Muhammad's time and there was still Islamic law. But this government says there are other laws better than God's law for this society. Man-made laws are better? Something's wrong with them. We have to correct them. They are unIslamic. The government's Islamization programme is only aimed at

restraining the rise of Islam, not at implementing Islam. The government may have set up an Islamic bank, but then why allow those Western banks to operate? They should slowly be converted into the Islamic banking system. If the government were to implement Islamic law, automatically people will change. Instead this government paints a bad picture of Islam being inappropriate for a plural society. It is the responsibility of every Muslim to uphold the *syariah*. Then our salvation is guaranteed. (quoted in Anwar 1987:69-70)

Another student expressed similar sentiments:

But the government's Islamisation policy is a load of rubbish. It is a political manoeuvre on the part of UMNO in the face of Islamic revivalism and the PAS challenge. The government is not sincere. The government doesn't even accept Islam as the basis of authority. They're always talking about making use of the positive aspects of Islam. What they're implying is that some aspects of Islam are bad! If they can't implement Islam because Muslims do not form an overwhelming majority, why do they implement British laws? The British do not form the majority in this country. (quoted in Anwar 1987:75)

The overall thrust of Anwar's interview findings is that the Islamic resurgence movement is making Islam a divisive issue among the Malays. Whereas before, any minimal commitment to keep the pillars of Islam, regardless of one's relationship to traditional spiritism or modern secularism, was sufficient to include a Malay in the Islamic fold, Islamic revivalism has drawn a line in the sand, demanding every Malay to expose his or her true colors.

Concluding Comments and Questions

If a wedge is in fact being driven into Malay society, it may be a hopeful sign for Malay evangelism. A couple of Anwar's Malay interviewees shared that they were closer to non-Malays than they were to Malays they regarded as Muslim extremists.

Perhaps the belief that to be Malay means necessarily to be Muslim is breaking down. Moreover, while the Islamic fundamentalists in Malaysia are more vehemently anti-Christian than Malays have ever been before, and are imposing ever stricter limitations on Christian evangelism in Malaysia, the Islam they espouse is also more universal and less tied narrowly to Malay ethnic identity than has ever been the case in Malaysia. In other words, however controlling Islam in Malaysia may become, and however restrictive it may be of other religions, the tight identification of ethnicity with religion may be loosening, potentially allowing more latitude for crossovers from one religion to another. This is a matter that we will address in the conclusion, again after having the benefit of the results of my own student interviews.

By way of a preliminary response to this Malay ethnic versus Islamic question, we need to realize that the very recognition that such a divide is occurring or not is a matter dividing Malays. Noted Malay scholar Chandra Muzaffar sees no separation between Malay ethnicity and Islam. In fact, he views Malaysian Islamization as a powerful means of reinforcing Malay ethnic boundary maintenance (Muzaffar 1987:26-27). Muzaffar understands this to be the result of rural Malays moving to the cities and universities. Before the modern Islamic revivalist movement, which began around 1970, the large majority of Malays lived in small towns and villages populated almost exclusively by Malays. In such environs, Malay identity was not an issue. When the

Malays moved into pluralistic environments, they defensively clung to Islam as the last distinguishing Malay ethnic identity marker, since Malay language was now shared by non-Malays, and Malay rural culture was being assimilated into the generic urban subculture (Muzaffar 1987:26).

Thus, the Malay "country bumpkin" leaving the secure confines of his/her safe, homogeneous environment, enters the big, wide urban or university world and

becomes acutely conscious of his own ethnic identity because the atmosphere is ethnically alien. This is especially true of the newly-arrived migrant. In his village where almost everyone shared the same religion and language, he would not have had to think of his identity. In the city, however, he has to begin to define his position vis-a-vis the others. Given the prevailing ethnic dichotomies and the government's pervasive ethnic rhetoric, the migrant slips easily into an ethnic response to his new situation. He begins to express his ethnic consciousness through Islam since by adhering to its rituals and forms, he can develop an exclusive identity that does not require him to establish contact and communication with the non-Muslim inhabitants of the city. In other words, what he does in reality is to build an ethnic cocoon around himself but rationalized and legitimized in the name of Islam. Ethnic identity then is protected by a veneer of religion. (Muzaffar 1987:26)

The question raised by Muzaffar's argument is if Islam is a universal religion that transcends ethnic boundaries and opposes factionalism, how then do we account for the alleged reality that Malaysian Islamization is more sharply dividing Malays and non-Malays and even erecting walls between Malays themselves? Muzaffar hypothesizes that Islamic revivalists, like most people who live in an ethnically diverse society, are subconsciously pushed toward an identity consciousness. But instead of expressing itself in ethnic-cultural terms, it is expressed

through religion. Hence, the Malay non-Malay dichotomy now becomes the Muslim non-Muslim dichotomy. But given the fact that practically all Malays are Muslims and the overwhelming majority of Chinese and Indians are non-Muslims, "it still boils down to a deep attachment to an exclusive conception of identity" (Muzaffar 1987:26-27).

Our study of Malay students in the U.S. deals with the Malay-ethnic vs. Islamic question. We want to discover if Malays see themselves as Malays who are Muslims or as Muslims who are Malays. A major goal of the interviews was to ascertain the Malays' level of commitment to Islamization and the concomitant effect it has on their view of traditional Malay culture and on inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia. We also want to see how the Malays responded to their entry into the United States, a pluralistic society in which, unlike Malaysia, by race and religion they are a small minority. Moreover, did an extended sojourn outside of Malaysia change their views about themselves, their government, Islam and other religions? We now focus our attention more specifically on Malay international students.

CHAPTER 4

International Student Adjustment to Change

"I shall soon be stepping into an unknown world in a foreign country after two years in this college. I am wondering what this world into which I shall be venturing has in store for me. How shall I behave among the people there? Shall I be myself or shall I change?"

--a male Malay student just prior to his going to the United States to complete his university training.

The Malay student profile is based on personal interviews of a select group of Malay students who were enrolled in American universities in the fall of 1992. The interviews have a twofold purpose. One is to add to our picture of who the Malays are, especially concerning their views of the interplay between Islam and Malay culture. The other is to note any changes that may have occurred in their beliefs or practices as a result of their overseas sojourn. The findings are helpful in discovering how we may be able to present a positive Christian witness to this group of Malays who are so influential in shaping their society. With this in mind, it is important to examine the field of international student adjustment to change.

Results of Cross-Cultural Contact

Contact Leads to Positive Attitudes

toward Americans

One of the earlier comprehensive studies is the so-called Gardner Report, issued in 1963 in two forms, one as a report to Congress (Gardner 1963a) and the other as a publication for general distribution, (Gardner 1963b). The study was undertaken

under the auspices of the United States Advisory Commission on Education and Cultural Affairs. Some 2,969 former grantees from 20 countries who had studied in the U.S. between 1949 and 1960 completed questionnaires, and their opinions were compared to those of 1,116 non-grantee leaders in the same countries. The survey concluded that while study in the United States does not bring about a uniformly favorable point of view on all aspects of the American scene, it is particularly successful in promoting mutual understanding and in helping to dispel many misconceptions and ugly stereotypes about American people held by international visitors (Gardner 1963b:37). Although the returned grantees were exclusively those who had studied in the U.S. under State Department-sponsored programs, the results of the early study bear remarkable similarity to those of many other studies of international students in general.

Pool (1965:123) affirms that cross-cultural contact results in "reduction of stereotyping--the shifting of the traveler's images from simple black and white perceptions to more qualified perceptions of the foreign reality." This statement is consistent with the findings of George Coelho (1958:111) and Selltiz, et al. (1963:78) that with time internationals develop a more complex perception and more differentiated attitudes toward Americans and American institutions.

Some studies, especially those on racial prejudice, have viewed exposure as the critical factor in attitude change.¹ Studies of attitudes have found that experience with objects, people, or events tends to lead to more permissive appraisal and less stereotyped attitudes (Frenkel-Brunswick 1958:645). In line with this, James Orr, Jr.'s extensive review of completed follow-up research on international students who studied in American colleges and universities, found that former students considered themselves to have become more flexible in their thinking as a result of their sojourn (Orr 1971:125).

Scores of programs promoting cross-national contact begin with the assumption that contact per se will enhance the favorableness of attitudes toward the nations visited (Salter and Teger 1975:213). One major problem in many of these studies may be the failure to take into consideration the difference between genuine and superficial contact. Allport (1954:264) notes that "only the type of contact that leads people to do things together is likely to result in changed attitudes." This type of "genuine" contact should be distinguished from superficial contact, in which other persons are physically present although the subject does not actively interact with them (Basu and Ames 1970:7).

¹The classic study in this regard is Morton Duetsch and Mary Evans Collins, International Housing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951).

Along these lines, Selltiz and Cook (1962) found that simply the amount of time spent in another country had little effect on the international attitudes of visitors; however, the proportion of free time which had been spent with the host nationals correlated with how favorable the attitudes towards them were. Unfortunately, in the Selltiz and Cook study there was no pretest; so it was impossible to determine whether more interpersonal contact led to more favorable attitudes, or vice versa. Kumagai (1977:44) tested this exact question with regard to Japanese students in the U.S. Her findings clearly indicate that interaction with Americans influences favorability toward Americans more than favorability towards Americans influences interaction with Americans.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that openness toward American values, flexibility in thinking, and adjustment to the U.S. are positively related to the amount of personal involvement with Americans. None of the studies focus specifically on Malay students, but the fact that there is such broad support for this finding, and the indication that similarities between groups of international students outweigh the differences (Spaulding and Flack 1976:74), allow us to assume that the same is true for Malays.

Sewell and Davidson (1956:17) developed a scale of contact of international students with members of the host country. Using this scale in a study of Scandinavian students in the United States, they discovered that the extent of contact with

people in the United States positively contributed to favorable attitudes toward their host country. Gandhi (1974:36), studying Indian students at the University of Minnesota, concluded that those who had more social and cultural contacts with Americans adopted more of the Western lifestyle. Triandis and Vassilou (1967:326) studied maximum, medium, and minimal contact groups, and found a positive correlation between contact and favorability for Greeks in the U.S. In a similar study involving Irish and British students in the United States in 1972, James Davis (1973:69) found that the greater the involvement with Americans, the more positive the students' attitudes toward Americans. Students who reported the least involvement with Americans were the most likely to reinforce or create critical attitudes. Chang (1973:75) found that Chinese international students' attitudes toward the U.S. are positively associated with contact with Americans. Similarly, Basu and Ames (1970:14) found that the formation of attitudes positive to the United States by international students in the U.S. is inversely related to the degree of felt alienation from the mainstream of American culture.

In an early study of interpersonal relations of international students conducted by the Institute of International Education in 1952 (An Analysis of First Reports from Foreign Exchange Students, Academic Year 1951-1952: 1953), it was concluded that having good interpersonal relations with members of the host country is **the** most important factor

contributing to the process of attitude formation toward the United States. Altbach and Wang's review (1989:113) of several studies, which interviewed a total of 969 students, supports the above findings. Those with close American friends felt more satisfied with regard to their U.S. university, and also held the most favorable opinion of the American people.

Contact Leads to Openness

More important for our purposes are the findings that suggest that contact with Americans helps international students become more flexible in their thinking and more open to innovation. Kelman (1962:86) found that friendly interchange between international students and Americans "creates a powerful potential for attitude change in the recipients." It provides the motivation and openness for examining and accepting new information. Likewise, Niyekewa-Howard (1970:72) found that individuals who associate closely with people of the host culture increase their cognitive flexibility and creativity. Sharma and Jung (1985:38) demonstrated that the more a particular group of international students related with Americans, the more they demonstrated cultural pluralism and world-mindedness. Finally, in a study of Malaysian students (not differentiated in terms of race) in New Zealand, it was determined that the biggest factor affecting their flexibility of attitude was their level of participation in the host country (Hamid 1979:270).

Although it is reasonable to hypothesize that genuine contact leads to attitude enhancement, the positive or negative

aspects of the contact experiences are also important. Miller and Bugelski (1948) and Razran (1954), for example, reported that positive and negative experiences can cause corresponding attitude change toward objects having no direct connection with the experience, apparently through a generalization of affect. Thus, under negative conditions, contact might be expected to result in negative attitude change, even if the contact is genuine. Applying the work of Miller and Bugelski, and Razran to international students' experience in the U.S., Salter and Teger (1975:221) came up with results which are consonant with the theory of generalization of affect. Rather than responding in a dimensionally specific way, students generalized their feelings about those dimensions with which they had come into contact to other dimensions with which they had not come into contact. Thus, for example, students who adjusted well to the U.S. and who did not feel isolated from American culture, reported favorable attitudes toward American religious practices, whether or not they had any direct exposure to them, and vice versa (Salter and Teger 1975:218).

Contact Leads to Better Adjustment

A closely related aspect of international students' attitudes toward the U.S. is the degree of the students' adaptation and adjustment to the American culture (Sewell and Davidson 1956:10). Again, we find that a key ingredient here is relationship with Americans. Surdam and Collins (1984:243) note that one of the main factors in successful adaptation of

international students in the U.S. is the amount of leisure time spent with Americans. Deutsch and Won (1963:119) report a relationship between satisfied international students and frequency of social contact with Americans. Similarly, Hull (1978:126) reports that international students who reported broader and more frequent contact with Americans were also more likely to indicate more general satisfaction with their sojourn experience both academically and nonacademically. In a study of 356 international students at Iowa State University from a broad spectrum of countries, Swatakipong (1979:211) found that the level of participation with Americans was closely associated with adjustment. Vaz (1984:131) found that greater international student contact with Americans led to less stress and anxiety in the students. Mickle (1984:176) found that for students from Hong Kong in certain Canadian universities, adaptation is positively correlated to the number of Canadian friends and participation in activities with Canadians. These results were confirmed by Mickle and Chan (1986:33) in a similar study of students from Hong Kong at other Canadian universities. Ramos De Perez (1985:161) found that the two greatest factors affecting the adjustment of Spanish-speaking international students at the University of Cincinnati is their English language proficiency and their social contact with Americans. Meloni (1986:3) reports that students who participate with host families and study-buddy programs (programs in which international students are teamed up

with American student partners) report less adjustment problems than students who do not.

We have seen that interaction with Americans is important for the formation of positive attitudes toward America, social adjustment, and flexibility of thought. Those international students who reported broad and frequent contact with Americans were the most likely to indicate general satisfaction with their sojourn experience both academically and nonacademically.

It is worth mentioning here that when two phenomena are significantly related, that in itself does not indicate which is the cause and which is the effect. There is always the possibility that, in this case, both the amount and nature of contact with Americans, on the one hand, and the dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the experience in general, on the other, are due to something that might best be referred to as the "personality" of the individual international students. Certain types of people may be more ready to make contacts, more successful at it, and also more inclined to look on the bright side of what they experience. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to evaluate this possibility. Nevertheless, it seems clear that contact with Americans is related to a positive sojourn experience. Contact in itself may in fact be one of the most crucial variables influencing an international student's sojourn experience in the United States.

Friendship Factors

Internationals Often Find it Difficult to Befriend Americans

Not only is contact with Americans important for attitude transformation and openness to religious innovation, but international students in general report a desire for American friendships (Altbach and Wang 1989:150). The sad truth is that many find it difficult to befriend Americans and to gain acceptance by them. Meloni (1986:4) reports that among the most common social problems of international students are understanding American social customs, and making friends and acceptance in social groups. Similarly, Amoh (1984:150) found loneliness and negative remarks and attitudes from some American students to be among the major reported social problems of 64 randomly selected newly arrived international students. In a comparative study of Chinese students in universities in the U.S., American students in universities in the U.S., and Chinese students in universities in China, Hsu (1983:112) discovered that international students felt significantly more socially isolated loneliness compared to both American students and students in their native country. Lozada (1970) found that about one-fourth of the international students at Purdue University in 1969 felt dissociated from the mainstream of American life, and general dissatisfaction was expressed with the strength and nature of friendships formed with Americans. Jarrahi-Zadeh and Eichman (1970) report that Middle Eastern and Indian students at the

University of North Carolina felt that American students showed little interest in them. The findings of Miller, et al. (1971:130), based on questionnaires and interviews with East Asian students at the University of Wisconsin and American students in East Asia, revealed that: 1) international students' warm intimate contacts are almost exclusively limited to their co-national group; 2) their relations with host-country nationals rarely go beyond superficial pleasantries; 3) they are discouraged about any prospects for deep cross-cultural friendships.

Many Internationals Prefer Co-nationals
over Americans

Interestingly, while many international students report a desire for American friendships, in actual practice, many of those same students seem to prefer co-nationals as friends (Altbach and Wang 1989:150). In a study (Furnham and Alibhai 1985:718) of the friendship networks of 140 international students from each continent, the data revealed that the students showed a strong preference for co-national friends first, other internationals second, and host nationals last. Leong and Sedlacek (1986:427) discovered that international students are more likely than students from the U.S. to prefer faculty members and counselors and less likely to prefer American classmates for help with all kinds of problems. Shankar (1987:139) reports similar findings in a study of internationals at four American universities. The majority of international students go mainly

to two support groups: their professors and/or to the students who come from their own countries. Very few seek help from American students. Bochner (1985:691) reveals that even international students living at international houses with students from their country as well as with students from the host country, overwhelmingly choose co-nationals as friends.

Studies show that international students from Western industrialized countries tend to socialize more with Americans than do students from non-Western and less-industrialized countries (Tanner 1968:34). Supporting this general conclusion are studies by Antler (1970:51), who finds that international medical residents have more intense social contacts with compatriots than with host country nationals. Klein, Alexander, and Tseng (1971:83) found that more than half of the Asian students studied had not established significant social relationships with Americans during their stay; and those who did not do so considered Americans insincere, superficial, and incapable of real friendship. Some of Klein's student subjects reported no American friends, and some reported themselves to have become "more Asian" as a result of their time in the U.S. Miller, et al. (1971:129) discovered that international students may go so far as to reject co-nationals who form close ties with Americans.

For international students, the choosing of compatriots over Americans, while reporting a desire for American friendships, may reflect a discrepancy between their ideals and their behavior in

actual practice. Preference for co-nationals may, on the other hand, be the reaction to perceived rejection and difficulty in forming friendships with Americans. In either case, the result is that for the majority of international students in the U.S., relationships with Americans are peripheral.

International Students Are Influenced

Little by Americans

Furthermore, international students are influenced little by the lives of individual Americans. In a study of the judgment of others on the self-concept of international students, Lee (1984:131) found that the students perceived the image of themselves held by friends in their home countries as the most important, that held by American students as least important, and that held by others ranking between the two. Mowlana and McLaughlin (1969:512) found that international students develop attitudes about the U.S. primarily from aural media such as radio and television, then from U.S. and foreign publications, and only lastly from personal communication. Basu and Ames (1970:11) support this finding. They report that after-arrival information about the U.S. obtained by international students comes mainly through the mass media: television, newspapers, radio, and movies. Sixty-four percent of the Indian students interviewed reported going to a movie at least once every two weeks, yet, the students' contact with American families was found to be minimal.

International Students Form Ethnic Enclaves
for Mutual Support

Whether it is easier to rely on the familiar, or whether it is the result of unwillingness or perceived unwillingness on the part of Americans to extend themselves to internationals, many, perhaps the large majority, of international students in the U.S. form their own ethnic enclaves. Spaulding and Flack (1976:75) report that one technique much used by international students in coping with adjustment to a strange social milieu is the co-national group. The research shows that such groups offer many positive benefits in helping the international student to cope with the new environment and to keep alive traditional values which later may assist in re-entry into the home culture. It would be interesting to know whether international students are encouraged to rely on co-nationals because their American peers cannot offer friendship of sufficient depth, or whether, having invested their emotional energy in a co-national group, international students have little left over for American friendships. Such groups may be contributing to the frequently mentioned lack of contact between international students and the American community (Spaulding and Flack 1976:74).

Niyekewa-Howard (1970:74), suggests that internationals form co-national groups/cultural sub-communities as a coping behavior utilized to establish emotional security within a culture distinct from their own. She suggests also that such communities discourage contact with Americans. Kang (1971:2) discovered that

eighty percent of the Chinese students at the University of Minnesota create their own small communities, a major function of which is to maintain traditional values and belief systems.

Indian students reveal the same tendency to congregate together.

Ninety percent of those studied by Gandhi (1974:35), also at the University of Minnesota, lived with or near other Indians.

Becker's study (1971:471) of international students from numerous countries, found that many students consciously withdraw into a "safe" environment in an attempt to guard against over-"Americanization." Such withdrawal typically includes the making of invidious moral comparisons between the cultural patterns of the two societies in favor of one's own cultural values.

Others see the phenomenon as a reaction to perceived discrimination. Sabie's study (1975:72) of internationals at eight Kentucky universities found that the students felt discriminated against, causing them to retreat into ethnic enclaves. Suzuki (1979:378) proposed that international students behave like minority groups, and as such, strengthen their own ethnic identity in their struggle to survive in the wider society. Carey and Mariam (1980:129) developed this notion further. They too emphasized that the tendency of international students to withdraw into their own small communities and associate with their own compatriots can be partially attributed to the constant conflict (real and perceived) of values and beliefs to which internationals are exposed by virtue of their minority status.

Similarly, Hendricks and Skinner (1977:124-127) see the ethnic-enclave syndrome as an adaptive social pattern stemming from the legal and social status of the international student as that of an outsider. In attempting to cope with their financial, legal, and social situations in the U.S., international students must operate from the position of the legal and social statuses ascribed to them and over which they have little control. The legal classification "alien" is supportive of the notion prevalent among Americans that foreign students belong elsewhere, that they are extrinsic to the social system in which Americans are involved, and that they are transients to the U.S. society (Hendricks and Skinner 1977:124-125).

In fact, because much of the international student population resides in university dormitories and because they are largely restricted to on-campus employment, the international student in many ways is more intrinsic to the university than are many American students who live and work off campus. Coupled with this is the fact that many international students are in the United States at enormous personal and familial sacrifice, often taking maximum course loads to reduce cost by staying in the U.S. as short as possible. For many American students, conversely, their university experience is not nearly the intensely focused period that it is for international students. Thus, the individual international student tends to operate within a limited social field, which primarily includes people who play

instrumental roles in the student's strategy for coping (Hendricks and Skinner 1977:125).

Size of School Variable

One variable that may affect this process is the size of the school. Selltiz, Hopson, and Cook (1956:51) found that international students in small colleges and towns had greater opportunities for contact and interaction with Americans than did students in large towns and universities. Hagey (1968:158) found that the smaller the school the better the student's adjustment.

A more recent study conducted by Baldassare and Katz (1987:44) (which may be a reflection of a change in American society since the earlier study) appears to contradict the findings of Selltiz, et al. The study suggests that even for international students attending universities located in small towns, there was very little interaction between international students and townspeople. Fewer than one in three international students surveyed knew at least "some" town residents by name. More than half the international students did not recollect either pleasant or unpleasant encounters with townspeople. Moreover, townspeople were generally unaware of the presence of the international students. The majority of contacts that were made were business-related. What makes the Baldassare and Katz study incomparable with those of Selltiz, et al., and Hagey is that Baldassare and Katz looked only at small town settings, regardless of how large the university itself may have been.

Duration of Sojourn Variable

An important aspect of international student adjustment and patterns of behavior is the duration of sojourn variable. Some studies (most notably Mickle 1984, and Kumagai 1977) indicate that international student relations with Americans improve over time. Becker (1971:477), on the other hand, found that the longer students are in the U.S., the more likely they are to withdraw into congenial social niches and live with compatriots rather than with foreigners. How, then, if at all, does time of stay in the United States affect international students' attitudes and perceptions?

U-Curve Phenomenon

The reader of sociological and educational literature devoted to the issue of international students in the U. S. is bound to come across the notion of the U-curve pattern of adjustment and attitudinal changes. First described by Lysgaard (1955:45-51), several subsequent studies critique and expand the hypothesis. In its original version, this hypothesis proposed a sequence of periods and types of experiences common to many international students. The first period, immediately upon arrival, is marked by high expectations, a friendly reception, and the pleasure of discovery, but is soon followed by a period of increasing difficulties during which the student has to cope with a multitude of emerging problems. This low point in the curve ultimately yields to a third period, as departure for home

approaches, in which the student has learned how to function in the host country and thus exhibits a more positive attitude toward the society and environment. Often this more positive stage is reached only during the second year of the sojourn so that many students on shorter courses of study leave at periods of considerable adaptational distress. Day (1968) studied three groups of internationals at Oklahoma State University: those who had been in the U.S. (1) 1-10 months, (2) 11-21 months, and (3) 22+ months. Consistent with the U-curve hypothesis, the middle group reported the least favorable view of the United States (p.112). Chang (1973:73) got the same results for Chinese students, though his time periods differed slightly: (1) 3 months or less, (2) 7-18 months, and (3) 25+ months. It is noteworthy for our interests that Day (1968:112) found his middle group to be the most concerned with religious practice. In a related study, Altbach and Wang (1989:150) found that the students in the middle time period had the least favorable opinion of the American people. Altbach's time divisions were: (1) less than 1 year, (2) 1-2 years, and (3) 2+ years.

Among other studies that generally confirm Lysgaard's hypothesis are those by Heath (1970:66), who found that the U-curve proposition generally applied to students residing in the Berkeley International House, and by Selby and Woods (1966:143), who reported an angular V-curve whereby non-Europeans showed a sharply dropping morale during the early months and a more gradually rising morale in later months of a one-year stay.

Tanner (1968:7) found a U-curve progression operating in friendship patterns. At first international students would make friends with other nationalities, then contact and associate with compatriots, and toward the end of their stay begin to have friends among other nationalities again.

In a comparative study of Indians, Israelis, and Europeans at UCLA, Becker (1968:435) found that the U-curve operated in reverse for students from semi-or underdeveloped countries. Students from these arrived with greater anxieties and exhibited hostile attitudes early and late in their visits, but developed more favorable attitudes toward the middle periods of their sojourn. Becker also discovered that "psychological time," the overall percentage of sojourn elapsed, was more important than actual time, number of months or years, in examining the U-curve phenomenon. Clements (1967:8) in a very limited study of nine students in a summer program, noted marked changes in attitudes toward the U.S. and toward Americans shortly after arrival, but much less change subsequently. Finally, Le Castre (1987:212), in a study of students throughout the State University of New York system, found no support for the reputed U-curve hypothesis.

In summary, with regard to the U-curve hypothesis, recent studies are inconclusive. It has been found to operate in several situations, but not in others, suggesting that it is by no means universally applicable and needs to be further tested with a variety of carefully defined independent variables.

Thus far we have found that close contact with Americans fosters adaptability, cognitive flexibility, and openness to change in international students. We have also found that many such students do not develop close contacts with Americans, but instead cloister themselves into ethnic enclaves. Furthermore, we have determined that duration of stay studies are inconclusive, but that attitude fluctuations are likely to occur through time.

Attitude toward Home Country

We will now consider attitude toward the home country. Although Becker (1971:480) suggests that longer term students (over two years) show less patriotism and nationalistic fervor, most studies show no long-range decline in patriotism. To the contrary, Pool (1965:124) declares that "in many cases the most profound effect of their stay in a strange land is a better appreciation and understanding of their home country - a firmer attachment to its values." He does mention "a minority of cases in which travel alienates the traveler from his homeland," but he concludes that "these conditions of disaffection are far less often realized for the traveler than are the conditions of patriotic reinforcement. Renewed attachment to the homeland is the normal effect of travel." Alsawad's study (1991:123) of United Arab Emirates students revealed that greater exposure to American culture is related to less agreement with traditional values, but that most students revert to observing traditional customs when they return to the United Arab Emirates. Kumagai

(1977:46) found that Japanese students' sojourn experience served to increase their appreciation of American culture and society, but not at the expense of a lowered appreciation of their own culture. The overall findings of such studies align with Markham's report (1967:193) that international students' images of peoples and political leaders in their homelands change only slightly during their stay and, if anything, students become more positive toward their home country.

Change in Religious Perspective

Regarding change in religious perspective specifically, a number of studies offer insight. Wuthnow (1978:20-23) found religious experimentation to be positively related, among other things, to exposure to new ideas, and the opportunity to freely accept new ideas. Religious innovation has also been positively correlated to absence of co-religionist friends (Lofland and Stark 1965:872) and absence of group participation in the previously held religion (Volkart 1964:355).

Concerning international students, of the attitudes which they bring with them upon arrival in the U.S., those pertaining to basic cultural and religious values are the most resistant to change (Spaulding and Flack 1976:35). This is confirmed by Barry (1966:35), whose study of Thai students revealed that religious beliefs and values were the least subject to change over time. Hull (1978:143) though, found a slight increase in change in religious attitude over time spent in the United States. Victor Coelho (1972:74), studying a small group of Indian students in

the Chicago area, found that the longer the students were in the U.S., the less regular and consistent their religious observance became. Gandhi (1974:37) found that Indian students staying in the U.S. for less than two years tend to maintain traditional lifestyles. After four years in the U.S., traditional lifestyles (religion included) decline.

Jewish Israeli students in the United States display some loosening of religious ritual practice, but there is no revolt against the "old way of life" (Kedem and Bar-Lev 1983:387). Egyptians studied by Hegazy (1968:167) revealed greater changes in dress and food habits than in religious and sexual mores, though Antler (1970:26) found that Thai students, while generally maintaining religious beliefs, developed greater freedom in the relationship between the sexes. Becker (1971:480) confirms these trends and suggests that the preservation of basic religious and cultural values safeguards the likelihood of successful re-adjustment upon return.

Focusing on Malays specifically, Von der Mehden (1987:185), as we have seen, concludes that the threat of a pluralistic society, coupled with the influence of a radical, fundamentalist Islam, causes Malay students to become more committed to Islam. Moreover, their international experience and university-acquired skills give them greater sophistication in their ability to propagate Islam back in Malaysia (Von der Mehden 1987:185-186).

Concerning Muslims in general, Haddad and Lummis (1987:22) note that many Muslims in North America develop an enhanced

religious identity. Their Islam is no longer simply an uncritical identification with the wider society, as it may have been for them in their home countries. To strengthen the Islam of Muslim students in the United States, and to promote Islam in the West, the Muslim Student Association (MSA) was founded in 1963 at the University of Illinois, Urbana (Poston 1991:131). Well-funded, highly organized and efficient, this organization has mushroomed to the point where there are now local chapters in every major U.S. campus (Gutbi 1991:14). The MSA establishes mosques, student houses, Islamic service organizations, and publishing houses, and sponsors annual conventions featuring notable Islamic speakers from around the world. Among the many offshoots of the MSA are the American Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE), the American Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), and the Islamic Medical Association (IMA). There is even a Malaysian Islamic Study Group (MISG) (Gutbi 1991:16). The goal of the MSA and its affiliates is to integrate Islam with all aspects of life and to see Islam override every other affiliation (Gutbi 1991:14). It also advocates an emphasis on the values of international Islam as opposed to particular local forms of Islam (Poston 1991:130).

The lofty ideals of groups like the MSA notwithstanding, a considerable number of Muslims in the U.S. become more staunchly Islamic as the result of a specific reaction to the cultural and environmental situation (Poston 1991:126). Poston (1991:126) believes that "these reactions are often not grounded in a

clearly defined Islamic ethos," and that "this occasionally results in a confusion between particular, ethnic, and nationalistic considerations and what may be considered truly Islamic matters." Moreover, Poston (1991:126) contends that most have not been able to "think in terms of a supracultural form of Islam not identified with any specific ethnic background."

Some additional comments remain to be made concerning the likelihood (or unlikelihood) of religious change in Malay students in the United States. The first is that studies indicate that those who major in social sciences are more change-oriented in general than those who major in the natural sciences and engineering fields (Spaulding and Flack 1976:52). Moreover, attitude change has been found to be inversely related to the degree of authoritarianism (defined as a personality trait characterized by a passive acceptance of authority) (Basu and Ames 1970:5). In Hamid's comparative study (1979:270), it was found that Malaysian students in New Zealand were much more likely to fit the authoritarian character than were their New Zealand counterparts. Matheny (1981:5-6) discovered that Arab Muslims in times of transition are far more receptive to religious innovation than are those not in a state of transition.

While Matheny's subjects were not Malays and were not in the United States, there are common elements in that our subjects, like Matheny's, are Muslims in a transitional period. Finally, it is known that education in and of itself tends to foster a sense of openness to new ideas.

Interview Data Collection

The Students

The research methodology for the semi-structured interview of Malay university students requires some detail since it is an empirical study. Although Malay students currently enrolled in American universities come from a cross-section of Malay society, their intensive two-year program in preparation for their U.S. sojourn, and certainly, their U.S. experience itself, make them a distinct class of Malays. While their backgrounds are typical of most Malay youth, their university degrees and international exposure will place them in positions of responsibility and leadership in Malay society upon their return. The interviews will enable us to judge the influence of Malay history, culture, ethnicity, and religion on this important group of Malays. Their firsthand accounts of their beliefs and practices are an invaluable contribution to the findings of the previous chapters.

The interview data dovetail that of the religio-cultural analysis in that they probe the relationship between Malay traditional culture and Islam. They also explore the degree to which contemporary Malay students cling to an exclusivistic Malay ethnic identity and/or orthodox Islam.

The interviews also enable us to examine the extent to which Malay international students change their views as a result of their sojourn in the United States. Specifically, we will see whether their adherence to Islam becomes either strengthened or weakened as a result of their freedom from some of the social

constraints of their home and their exposure to a broader range of ideas. The degree to which they maintain, fortify, or relax their Malay ethnic identity will also be explored. The very fact that they change or do not change in any given area is significant for our understanding of the effects of their cross-cultural sojourn. Also, the cultural, ethnic, and religious factors behind why they change or don't change, and how they change if they do, can provide helpful insights into why they are and have been so resistant to gospel presentations.

To accomplish this, I have interviewed Malay university students at three universities: The University of Kentucky in Lexington, Indiana University in Bloomington, and The University of Missouri, St. Louis. To enable me to observe any changes in beliefs or practices through time, I chose to interview a minimum of 30 students² from each of three categories: those in the U.S. for six weeks or less; those who had been in the States for eight to thirteen months; and those who had been here for at least two years and who would shortly return to Malaysia. These categories correspond to the U-curve writings, which study students at the beginning, middle, and ending of their foreign sojourn. This particular aspect of the research may reveal whether there is any waxing or waning of receptivity during Malay students' time in the U.S., and if, in conjunction with other factors, there are

² Thirty is the commonly understood standard minimum group size for reliability when looking at differences between and among groups.

specific points in time in which they are more or less resistant to change.

Besides the length-of-stay categories, I also divided the students into men, women without a head covering, and women with a head covering. The distinction between men and women tests whether men and women are different in their views and practices.

The further breakdown of the women into two categories is meant to check for differences between less devout and more devout Malay Muslims (for women at least). The head covering worn by many Malay women is the most immediately noticeable identifier of the more devout or fundamentalist Malay women (Anwar 1987:61-71). The men are not likewise divided because there is no widespread corresponding physical marker of Malay men's conformity to Islam.

I personally interviewed 98 Malay university students and received mail-in questionnaires from ten additional students. Because the students who sent me the mail-in questionnaires enabled me to reach the critical number of 30 for each of the three categories (students at roughly the beginning, middle, and ending of their stay), and because the questions they answered were identical to those I asked in the personal interviews, I decided to include their responses with the data I collected from the interviews, giving a total of 108 responses to the questionnaire.³

³ For a complete breakdown of the respondents, see Appendix D.

The Malays I interviewed were typical of many, if not most, of the Malay students in the United States. They had come to the U.S. after already having completed an associates degree in Malaysia at one of several government-sponsored university-level institutes geared to prepare students for transfer to universities overseas. Such students are sent abroad to complete degrees primarily in the various branches of computer science and information systems, business and economics, and engineering⁴-- areas in which Malaysia is particularly interested in developing expertise, and in which opportunities for higher education are as yet relatively limited in Malaysia itself.

The government keeps the students in Malaysia for the first two university years ostensibly to save money. While cost is certainly a factor in opting to keep the students in Malaysia for their associates degrees, the two-year wait is also seen as an important time for the students to mature, hone English and study skills, and to receive strong indoctrination in Islamic teaching.

This last factor, Islamic indoctrination, is deemed essential to prevent slackening of religious observance in the United States, as well as to provide the students with a

⁴We have already seen that Spaulding and Flack (1976:52) found that students who major in the natural sciences and engineering fields are less change-oriented in general than those in the social sciences. This may be one contributor in the makeup of Malay students that makes them more resistant to change.

Yet, the Malay students had little choice in the range of majors if they wanted to keep their scholarships. Consequently, some who study to be engineers or computer scientists could quite possibly have the inner qualities more typically possessed by those in the humanities.

grounding against Christian "proselytizers," especially those who target international students on university campuses. The Malaysian government views Christian witness to international students as an opportunistic preying upon those who are among the most lonely and vulnerable. For this reason, Christian proclamation couched in gestures of hospitality is regarded as especially reprehensible. In line with this, students are sent to various universities in large groups (usually 30 or more a year). While this is due to contractual agreements and relationships with particular universities, it is also done intentionally to provide a mutual support and accountability network against undesirable outside influences, whether they be temptations to throw off Malay moral constraints, or, as we are more directly concerned about, to respond to Christian overtures.

The students I interviewed were government scholarship students from all regions and socioeconomic strata of Malay society. Only the *bumiputera* (Malays and aboriginals) qualify for government scholarships. There are many Malaysian Chinese studying in the U.S., but they all come at their own initiative and at their own expense. The common denominator of the Malay students is academic success in secondary school.

The Interview Process

The interviews took place between late August and early October of 1992. The first group consisted of 36 students who had been in the U.S. for six weeks or less. These were students who were beginning their American university career with the fall

semester of 1992. The second group, those at the middle of their sojourn, consisted of 41 students who had come to the United States in either August of 1991 (for the start of the fall semester) or in January of 1992 (for the spring semester), and thus had been in the U.S. from eight to thirteen months at the time I talked with them. The last group consisted of 31 students who had been in the U.S. for two years or more. Because I was looking for students who were toward the end of their time in America, I was especially interested in those who would be graduating in December of 1992, and returning to Malaysia thereafter. Many, but not all of this group, were planning to graduate in December of 1992.

The means by which I contacted the students for interviews was based on interpersonal relationships and accomplished through friendship networks among the Malays. The process by which I scheduled interviews appears haphazard, but it proved effective.

Initially, I obtained from the University of Kentucky the names and phone numbers of the Malaysian students enrolled for the 1992-1993 academic year. From this list of 200 or so names, I identified approximately 60 Malay names. My plan was to telephone students, explain my project, and ask for an interview at whatever time or place they preferred. There were a handful of students whom I had taught in Malaysia when I was an English teacher in one of the government preparatory programs. Naturally, I tried to find these familiar students first, to see if they could help me gain the confidence of the others.

Unfortunately, I couldn't locate those few students I had known. When I called some other students cold, their responses were less than helpful. They would say, "I'm sorry. I'd like to help you, but I'm too busy. Why don't you try so and so?" When I called "so and so," I'd get the same response.

At this point I thought that I might not be able to get enough personal interviews, and in desperation sent out some of my questionnaires through the mail to see if that approach would be more successful. I mailed 30 questionnaires, including a letter of introduction and self-addressed return envelopes with postage, to a Malay woman I knew who was a student at Indiana University in Pennsylvania. I asked her if she would distribute the questionnaires to Malay students she knew. She wrote back to inform me that she had distributed them, and sent back a questionnaire she had completed herself. To my dismay, only a couple of questionnaires returned shortly. I went back to pursuing personal interviews. Eventually, a total of ten questionnaires trickled in, and as I have noted, were included with the rest of the data.

My next approach was to just go to the University of Kentucky (UK) and hang out where I thought Malay students might frequent. As I approached the King Library at UK, I saw a Malay young woman, easily identified by her head covering, sitting on a bench opposite the library entrance. I prayed, took a deep

breath, and introduced myself and my project. Khadijah⁵ was polite. She seemed to appreciate the fact that my family had lived in her country and that I had not only heard of her small home town, but knew where it was. Right there on the spot in the hot late August sun, I queried her for nearly an hour. During the course of our conversation, two of her friends wandered by, agreed to be questioned, and were interviewed successively immediately after I finished talking with Khadijah.

The remaining respondents at UK were interviewed during the course of the next month. Some of these interviews were arranged by students I had already interviewed. The others were "chance" meetings. I just went to the campus, prayerfully seeking to meet a Malay I hadn't yet interviewed. With God's help and the cooperation of the Malays at UK, by the end of September I had interviewed 41 of the 60 or 65 Malays who were at UK at the time.

The remaining (not-interviewed) Malay students were those whom I could not locate or who were not willing to meet with me. All the UK interviews were conducted in or just outside the UK library.

With the UK pool of Malay students exhausted, I sought to go elsewhere for additional interviews. A Malay from UK gave me the telephone numbers of three women I had taught in Malaysia who were now studying at the University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL). I was told that there were approximately one hundred

⁵All names are pseudonymous to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

Malays at UMSL, so there would be plenty of other potential interviewees. When I tried calling my three former students, only two were still at UMSL, and they both indicated through their excuses that they didn't want to be interviewed. One of these Malays gave me the number of some Malay young men to call. I don't know whether she thought they would really agree to be interviewed or whether she was just passing the buck, but these men, like the women, hemmed and hawed and eventually declined, indicating that they were not interested.

Having had no success over the phone, and apprehensive about calling Malays I didn't know to ask them to do what was, for them as Muslims, suspicious (answer questions about religion from a seminary student working on some kind of Christian project), I decided to initiate my UMSL contacts in the same manner that I had done at UK - just go there and find someone.

Accompanied by my older daughter, who was four at the time, I drove to St. Louis and checked into a hotel that was close to the UMSL campus. The bringing of my daughter was primarily to enable the two of us to spend time together. It was also purposefully related to my project. Malays are family oriented and typically adore children. I trusted that my daughter, who was born in Malaysia, would serve as an icebreaker.

When we reached the campus, like I had done at UK, we made our way to the library. If the campus had one hundred Malay students, I thought it likely that at least one of them would be using the library on a weekday in the evening. We found the

library and scoured it for Malays, but there were none. Bewildered, and on our way out to return to our hotel for the night, I saw a Malay young man who must have entered the library while we were looking around. He looked familiar, like a former student of mine in Malaysia. Before I could make out whether I knew him or not, he noticed me staring at him, immediately recognized me, and hurried to greet me. It was Zul, the student I thought it might be. Zul was surprised to see me and genuinely interested in why I was in St. Louis. I had not known that Zul was at UMSL, only that he was at one of the 90 some American universities approved for Malays by the Malaysian government.

Zul was most helpful. He informed me that half of the Malay students had graduated in the spring and that for some reason, incoming Malay students were not being sent to UMSL. Thus, there were only about 50 Malays left at UMSL, but that didn't matter. He gave me phone numbers and called people himself to set up times for me to meet with people. The Malay web of relations took over from there. In three days I had interviewed 36 of the 53 Malay students at UMSL.

Having my daughter proved to be an asset, especially in one instance in which I interviewed five Malay women in a rental house occupied exclusively by women. My daughter was a tension diffuser in what could have been seen as inappropriate had I, as a male, entered the house alone.

The Malay students at UMSL were exceedingly gracious, giving us meals in their apartments and houses. As they congregated

together, I was finding it difficult to pull students aside to interview them individually. Besides, time was a factor, and since many of the Malays were quite talkative, some of the interviews were exceeding an hour. The best I could do in some cases was to allow two or three together while I asked the questions. I realized that this compromised the anonymity, and thus possibly the honesty, of the responses. My misgivings were allayed, though, by the responses I received in the small groups.

The students did not all parrot the same pat answers, but disagreed with each other, freely challenging one another's positions. What may have been lost by removing students from the safety of being able to answer questions without their peers knowing what they were saying, was gained, in my assessment, by the discussions generated in the small group dynamic. One student's answer would spark a thought in another student, and so on. While the tabulation of neat answers to specific questions was made more difficult, the data I collected in small group settings was sometimes a case of the whole being more than the sum of the individual parts. More information was generated, I believe, by two or three students together, than would have been by the combined information from the same students separately.

The last place in which I conducted interviews was at Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington. The fact that IU was the closest university to me that really did have over one hundred Malay students was an important factor in choosing IU. The clincher was that the Malay woman at Indiana University of

Pennsylvania to whom I had written recommended Indiana University, Bloomington, stating that she had a close Malay friend named Nora who was a teacher at the university and who could put me in touch with many of the Malays. Reluctant to call a friend of an acquaintance about a potentially sensitive favor,⁶ and with a measure of confidence from the Lord's assistance so far, I decided to go to IU without calling Nora. If when I got there I couldn't arrange enough interviews, I could always call her.

My plan was to do exactly what I had done at UMSL. After praying that the Lord would go ahead of me to prearrange meetings and prepare Malays to be open to being interviewed, I would go to the library to find Malay students. I would have those Malays introduce me to others, who would, in turn, put me in contact with still others. I would also bring one of my children - this time my son.

Unfamiliar with the campus, I parked my car on the outskirts of Indiana University and asked where the library was. It was far from where I had parked, but that was fine, because now we could possibly spy a Malay on our walk across campus toward the

⁶I had to be careful as to exactly what to tell the students was the purpose of the interviews. I had to be specific enough to satisfy their curiosity and right to know what the information was to be used for. I told them the truth--that I was interested in learning what Malay students believe and practice and how this may change during their two-year sojourn in the U.S. When they were assured that their responses would be kept confidential, most were happy to cooperate. Those who weren't comfortable with me or my project, or who simply didn't want to be bothered, weren't pressured to talk with me.

library. When my son and I saw no one remotely resembling a Malay, I was becoming more and more discouraged with each step. I thought to myself that I never should have come this far without a more definite lead. I could always call Nora, but what if she were not home? I couldn't afford to stay more than a couple of days.

When we entered the hall of the main floor of the library, there at a large table sat a Malay woman and six or eight Malay men. Always nervous about approaching students I didn't know, but pleased at my find, I introduced myself to the Malays and told of my interests. It turned out that the Malay woman was, of all people, Nora! She was tutoring the others. When the instruction ended, Nora urged her students to cooperate with me and to bring me to their dormitory to get more interviews for me. They dutifully complied.

These all happened to be new students who were all residing in one particular dormitory. They took turns being interviewed in their dorm lobby. As a student finished being interviewed, he or she would go upstairs to send down the next student. In this manner, my last 21 interviews were completed in one weekend.

The weeks of interviews showed God's hand at work in superintending events and providentially arranging meetings. For this I am humbly grateful. The interviews were harder to get and more spread out at UK, when I had more time and easy accessibility. When I needed many interviews in a short amount of time, as at UMSL and IU, the interviews were there.

I am also indebted to the 108 Malays who took time to answer my questions. I was impressed with their maturity and their high level of English proficiency. The latter compensated for my inability to do what would have been better--conduct the interviews in their own language. Moreover, I appreciate the thoughtfulness and candor with which they responded.

I have called the interviews "semi-structured." By that I mean that I followed an interview schedule (see Appendix E) that I had in front of me, but did not always go through the list of questions in order. I did not want the students to feel like they were being grilled or tested. Nor did I want the students to feel like they were each mechanically supplying one piece of information to be compiled and spit out as a statistic. Instead, I strove for informality, wanting each encounter to be conversational. As students answered questions, I hastily sketched down notes, encouraging them to expand on points of interest. Later, I would fill in my notes.

Questionnaire Research Questions

The questionnaire itself appears in Appendix E. The major topics covered (though not the actual questions asked) in the questionnaire are expressed here in research questions (RQ's) and operational questions (OQ's). They are outlined as follows:

RQ1 What are their Muslim beliefs, and how, if at all, have they changed during the two years of study?

OQ1.1 What are their beliefs about propriety in male-female

relationships, and how, if at all, have these beliefs changed?

OQ1.2 What are their beliefs about the extent to which Muslims should emulate the example of the prophet Muhammad (*Sunnah*), and how, if at all, have these beliefs changed.

RQ2 What are their Muslim practices, and how, if at all, have they changed during the two years of study?

OQ2.1 How often do they perform the daily prayers (*salat*)?

OQ2.2 How often do they perform the daily prayers (*salat*) at the mosque?

OQ2.3 How often do they attend the Friday (*Jumaat*) prayers?

OQ2.4 How strictly do they observe the fast during Ramadan?

OQ2.5 How carefully do they observe the Islamic food regulations (*halal*)?

RQ3 What are their views about relations with the state, and how, if at all, have they changed during the two years of study?

OQ3.1 What are their opinions about the Islamic nature of the Malaysian government, and how, if at all, have they changed?

OQ3.2 What are their views about the role of the state in enforcing Islamic order (*Shari'ah*), and how, if at all, have they changed?

OQ3.3 What are their views of the role of the government in promoting Islam in Malaysia and elsewhere, and how, if at all, have they changed?

RQ4 What are their views of their Malay identity in relation to Islamic identity, and how, if at all, have these views changed during the two years of study?

OQ4.1 What is their awareness of the distinction between traditional Malaysian Islamic practice and universal or normative Islamic practice, and how, if at all, has this awareness changed?

OQ4.2 What are their views of the role of the Malay language in Muslim identity, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ4.3 What are their views of the identity of non-Malay converts to Islam, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ4.4 What are their views of the identity of Malays who convert to other religions, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

RQ5 What are their views of the relation between Islam and other religions, and how, if at all, have these views changed during their two years of study?

OQ5.1 What are their views regarding the obligation of Muslims to convert non-Muslims to Islam, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ5.2 What are their views regarding the right of non-

Muslims to convert Muslims, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ5.3 What are their views regarding the government restrictions on granting missionary visas, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ5.4 What are their views regarding whether or not it is preferable for non-Muslims to be Christians or Jews rather than followers of other religions, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ5.5 What are their views regarding whether or not it is better for non-Muslims to practice another religion than to practice no religion, and how, if at all, have these views changed?

OQ5.6 What are their views regarding whether or not non-Muslims should be required to live according to Islamic religious law (*Shari'ah*), and how, if at all, have these views changed?

Regarding research questions one and two, we are not trying to assess the level of belief in the tenets of orthodox Islam. In Malaysian Islam this is a non-issue. All Muslims will ascribe to the belief that God is one and Muhammad is his prophet, that Muslims are required by God to perform certain prescribed prayers, fast the month of Ramadan, give a portion of their resources to the cause of Islam, and make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if they are able. Furthermore, virtually no Malaysian Muslim will deny that the Quran is the

actual word of God, received by Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.

Unlike American Christianity, in Islam, the question of religious fundamentalism⁷ is not a matter of belief, but a matter of practice. Virtually all Malaysian Muslims adhere to the central core of Islamic doctrine. Those who are labelled fundamentalists are those who (1) strive to integrate Islam into every aspect of life, and/or (2) strive to emulate as closely as possible the lifestyle of the prophet Muhammad, and/or (3) strive to spread Islam to less observant Muslims and to non-Muslims.

Another way to classify Muslims is to use Allport's intrinsic/extrinsic scale (1960:33, discussed in Stark and Glock 1968:18). Those whose religious beliefs and practices are for their own sake, have an intrinsic type of religiousness. Those whose beliefs and practices are for the sake of some non-religious benefit have an extrinsic type of religiousness. In the Malaysian context, extrinsic Muslims are those whose inner commitment to Islam may not be well-developed or personally owned

⁷Some scholars reject the use of the terms "fundamentalism"/"fundamentalist" as catchall words with multiple meanings. They note that Islam has no overall organizational structure or universally agreed upon creedal statement, and that devout Muslims express their Islam diversely (e.g., some politically; others through propagation of Islamic teaching; still others through personal holiness) (Denny 1987:117-118). Yet, there is a discernable pattern of belief and practice that justifies the use of the terms "fundamentalism"/"fundamentalist." These elements include belief in the absolute and holistic authority of the Quran, Muhammad's example, and the *Shari'ah*, and that their "creedal and ethical dictates...be publicly recognized and legally enforced" (Lawrence 1989:27, see also Denny 1987:117).

as distinct from the social and legal pressures for Malays to abide by Islamic law and custom. Immersed in an Islamic environment, there may have been no personal choice in regard to their Islamic faith. In practical reality, there was likely no alternative.

We turn now to the actual interview data.

CHAPTER 5

Interview Data and Interpretation

"God help me. . . . Guide me as I step into this new, wide, unknown, strange and foreign country, U.S.A."
--a Malay student just prior to his going to the U.S.
to complete his university training

Relationship with Americans

The first subject in the questionnaire is relationship with Americans.¹ One of the very few points of consensus of the many international student studies is that students who associate most closely with nationals of the host country become more open to change in their thinking and practice. We are here presented with two tasks. The first is to determine the degree to which the Malay students are exposed/expose themselves to Americans. The follow-up task is to see if there are any significant differences between those Malays who maintain a tight ethnic enclave mentality, and those who venture out more into the world of Americans.

The responses to the first item, "It is easy to become friends with Americans," give only the Malay perception of the friendliness of Americans toward Malays. They do not indicate actual friendships, or the Malay desirability, or lack thereof, of friendship with Americans. To put the responses on a measurable scale, I assigned four points to the answer category "Strongly Agree," three points to "Agree," two points to "Uncertain," one point to "Disagree," and zero points to

¹See Appendix F for the response data to most of the questionnaire items.

"Strongly Disagree." The number scores for each response were added and then divided by the number of responses to give an average or mean response. So, a 2.0 response is exactly even, neither on the friendly nor unfriendly side.

The overall score was 2.24, slightly on the agree side. Only two students each strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that it is easy to befriend Americans. The overwhelming majority see Americans as neither very friendly nor very unfriendly. There are some important fine distinctions between respondent categories, though. One is that men perceived Americans as easier to befriend than did women.² This may reflect Muslim culture, in which it is more acceptable for men to become involved in society. Another possibility is that because many Malay women dress unlike their American counterparts, this "strangeness" may make American women reluctant to approach the Malay women.

Another distinction in respondent categories is a possible U-curve phenomenon. The Malays least likely to report Americans as friendly were those who had been in the United States for one year. Those most likely to perceive Americans as friendly, though barely more likely than the two-year group, were the new students (new 2.36, one-year 2.15, two-year 2.32). This may represent an idealistic image of Americans that is subsequently shattered upon actual contact. Lest we make too much of the

²The mean score for men was 2.35; for women who do not wear a head covering it was 2.17, and for those who do, it was 2.13.

difference here, we must note that there is not much difference between any of the three length-of-stay groups.

The widest gap was not between men and women or between new and one or two-year students. The most significant difference here was between the individual universities as a whole. The IU responses average 2.62; PA 2.56; UMSL 2.17; and UK 2.05. What do these differences mean? The IU students were all new students who lived in a dormitory. Four of the ten PA respondents to this question lived in on-campus apartments. None of the UMSL or UK students lived on campus. This leads us to question whether living on campus causes Malays to perceive Americans as more friendly than living off campus does. Isolating the 25 respondents who lived on campus at the time of the interviews, we get an average of 2.76 for those who lived on campus, compared to 2.12 for the 82 respondents who lived off-campus. The indication here is that those who live on campus may mingle more with Americans, while those who live off-campus may be retreating into a Malay-only world. They live isolated from contact with Americans, and then come to perceive Americans as difficult to befriend. Of course, it could be the other way around. Those who live off campus may have chosen to do so partly because they perceive Americans to be unfriendly.

A problem with these findings is that due to the fact that a large percentage of the new students were from IU, and most of the on-campus students were these same IU students, it is not possible to determine assuredly whether it is the fact that they

were new students or that they lived in the dormitory, or a combination of both, that led them to perceive Americans as friendlier than did the other Malays.

As will be the case for much of the interview data, the students' personal comments about the subject of discussion are more revealing than the discrete answers to the questions. Many of the Malays said that Americans are friendly, but that the Malays must make the first move. Several said that Americans are friendly in class, when contact is unavoidable, but that they are unfriendly outside of class. The Malays reported that Americans don't show any prejudice against Malays; most are simply not interested in knowing them.

It was universally held that it is easier for Malays to befriend other internationals, particularly Asians, than Americans. They said that Americans were close to other Americans, but didn't extend themselves to internationals. A few commented that Americans just don't quite know how to relate to internationals because of the cultural differences. Some noted that the difference in dress, especially of Malay women who wear a head covering, may scare off Americans.

American indifference saddens some Malay students. One woman said that she repeatedly tries to initiate friendships with American classmates. She sits next to them in class, but they never sit next to her, and they don't talk to her.

A much more typical response, and one which runs counter to the prevailing picture of internationals in America, is that the Malays themselves are not interested in befriending Americans. One woman commented, accordingly, that "Americans prefer their own kind, but so do we Malays." A young man who said he has no American friends stated outright that it was because he was not interested in knowing Americans. Another said, "We don't want to speak to Americans unless we have to." This student went on to say that there is no reason to want American friends. Malays, after all, have each other. Still another Malay said that the only time he wants to speak to an American is if there is a utilitarian reason to do so, like studying together for a class in which he is the only Malay. When I asked one student if she would like to get to know an American family and spend time in their home, she stated frankly, "To be polite, I would go to an American home if invited, but I don't really care."

Their answers to questionnaire questions eight through ten, (which asked who their best friends in America are, how many Americans they regularly do things with, and how many times they've been in an American home), give concrete evidence of the degree of interaction between the Malay students and Americans. There were 71 one- and two-year students who responded to the questions. Of those 71, 60 listed only Malays as their five best friends in America. Eight of the 11 students who listed at least one non-Malay among their top five friends included one or more Americans among their five closest friends here. All but one of

the 11 listed non-Malay international students as among their best friends. Three of the 11 had one or more non-Malay international students as a best friend, but no American best friends. Finally, there were three Malays who actually included no Malays in their top five friends in America.

Of the 355 persons listed as best friends in America (5 X 71 responses), only 36 were non-Malays, and only 11 of these 36 were Americans. The 25 non-American, non-Malay best friends were other international students. Of these 25, 14 were presumably non-Muslims, including Chinese Malaysians, Singaporean Chinese, Thais, Vietnamese, mainland Chinese, and Japanese. It is noteworthy that these are all Asians. In fact, nine of the 14 were from Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). Eleven of the 25 non-American, non-Malays were likely Muslims, from various Muslim countries. Of these, five were Indonesian. Looking at it another way, 19 of the 25 international students mentioned as among the closest friends of some of the Malays, were from Southeast or East Asia.

Thus, our findings indicate that Malay students in the United States overwhelmingly choose other Malays as friends. The few non-Malay friendships they may make are from their part of the world. Furthermore, a Malay is much more likely to befriend a non-Muslim Asian than a Muslim non-Asian. So, ethnic and national ties are stronger than the worldwide Islamic tie.

A highly significant find is that ten of the 11 Americans listed as best friends, and 33 of the 35 total non-Malay best

friends were best friends of students who were attending one or another of the Pennsylvania universities. None of the Pennsylvania schools had more than a handful of Malay students. This indicates that Malay students in American universities typically form non-Malay friendships only when there is not a sizeable Malay community in place from which to establish relationships. Again, 31 of the 32 one and two-year UK Malays, and 29 of the 30 one and two-year UMSL Malays, had only Malays for their five closest friends in the United States. Only two of these 62 students had a non-Malay best friend.

Related to the previous question is the one which asks how many American friends they have with whom they do things together on a regular basis. Fifty four of the 71 respondents said that there are no Americans with whom they do things regularly. Eight of the 17 who stated that they do things together with one or more Americans, were from the nine Malay respondents from the Pennsylvania schools. This supports our contention that Malays tend to socialize outside of their own group only when there is no large Malay group available. Four of the eight UMSL respondents who said that they do things with Americans regularly mentioned their jobs as the only context in which such interaction occurs, suggesting again, that relationships with Americans often transpire only when the situation makes such interaction practically unavoidable.

It is significant that two-year students (11 of 31) were more likely than one-year students (6 of 40) to report

involvement with Americans. Apparently, there is some increase in involvement with Americans over time.

The responses to question ten (times in an American home) further support our conclusions. Malay students do not generally have many opportunities and do not avail themselves of opportunities to go to American homes. Thirty-five of the 71 respondents said that they had never been in an American home; 54 had been in an American home one time or less; and 60 had been in an American home two times or less. Only one student had been in an American home more than four times. Two-year students were slightly more likely to have been in an American home during the past year than were one-year students.

The size of the Malay community again proved to be the most important variable. Five of the 11 students who had been in an American home three or more times during the previous year were students from the Pennsylvania schools (schools with few Malay students). Put another way, 34 of the 62 UK and UMSL students (students living off-campus and attending schools with large Malay communities), had never been in an American home, while only one of the nine Pennsylvania students had never been in an American home.

The responses from the students at Pennsylvania universities (e.g., five of nine Pennsylvania students had been in an American home three or more times in the previous year, compared to six of 62 UK and UMSL students), show that opportunities to associate with American families may be present. I suspect that most

Malays can find American friends and even be welcomed into American homes if Malays pursue this. My own experience verifies this. In the fall of 1992 my family signed up with the UK international student office to be a host family for an international student. A host family is assigned a student to befriend throughout the school year, and families are encouraged to have their guest student over for dinner, and to include their student in family outings and holiday celebrations. We requested a Malay student, but were given a Chinese Malaysian as a second choice because no Malays had indicated that they even wanted an American host family. There were not enough host families available, though, for all the Chinese Malaysians who requested a host family. I was unable to obtain statistics of Malay and other international student involvement in similar programs in other universities, but I strongly suspect that the Malay non-participation in the host family program is atypical of international students. I attended UK-sponsored host family gatherings such as a picnic and a square dance, and observed the participation of international students from many countries, but never saw a Malay, although Malays are one the largest groups of internationals at the University of Kentucky.

Questionnaire item 11 is also revealing. Not a single one of the 107 respondents to this question was living with a non-Malay. Only one student was living alone. The rest were living with one or more other Malays.

This all supports the findings that Malays university students in the United States have a strong ethnic enclave mentality and thus form their support networks among themselves. When a Malay community is in place, they do not seek to associate with outsiders.

Several students explained to me that the vast majority of Malay students in American universities are at schools which have a Malay population of 35 or 40 or more. Several universities have upwards of one hundred Malays. This is mostly because of Malaysian government contracts and relationships with various U.S. universities, but there is more to it than that. I was told that the Malaysian government does not like to place Malays in universities where there will be only a few Malays. The government wants them to maintain their identity as Malay Muslims, and thus is reluctant to trust them to go it on their own. Furthermore, the students themselves want the security of living with their fellow Malays. They informed me of several Malays who were relatively isolated from other Malays and who were unhappy as such and transferred to universities where there were more Malays.

Not only do Malay international students generally not pursue relationships with non-Malays, but the evidence suggests that there is pressure for them **not** to socialize outside the group. The Malay housing situation at UMSL most clearly demonstrates the ethnic enclave mentality. UMSL has no on-campus housing. All the Malay students live in apartments and rental

houses. On one particular residential street, Malay students were occupying five houses (three of them in a row) on a single block. More than a third of the Malays at UMSL were living on that one block. They shared meals communally, and had converted the basement of one of the houses into a prayer hall. Such were the close Malay ties on that particular block that it was affectionately dubbed "Kampung Melayu" (the Malay Village). One particular student, Zul, confided that he had moved away from that street to get out from under the stifling watchful eye of the residents. He was not free to come and go without his every move being scrutinized. Zul, who is one of the Malays who mixes with Americans more than most, explicitly complained of the fact that the other Malays want to know with whom he associates.

In regard to relationship with Americans, there was no significant difference between men and women, or between women who cover their head and those who don't. I had expected to find that women who cover their head would be more reluctant to associate with westerners.³

³Also, as we will discuss later, I did not observe the animosity I anticipated between Malay women who wear Western dress and those who don't. Zainah Anwar's findings (1987:60-70) suggest that there is a wide rift between these two segments of Malay students, and that friendships do not occur across these lines. Although the Malay women I interviewed associate most intimately with others like themselves, there was considerable social interchange between the two groups. I found that the overall Malay group identity overrides individual differences.

Religious Observance

We move now to the question of religious observance. The international student literature⁴ shows that although there is usually no major revolt against their home religion, international students typically exhibit a lessening of religious observance in the United States. The reverse is often the case, however, for Muslims, especially for those who come from an area of the world in which Islamic orthodoxy may be obscured by folk Islam. Anwar (1987:25, 71-74) found that a number of Malay university students in England became more devout Muslims when exposed to the international Islamic community.

As for the United States, Poston (1991:131-132) calls attention to the aggressive Muslim Student Association, and its offshoots, that target universities to challenge and assist Muslims to become more orthodox and consistent in religious practice. Furthermore, in that immigrants are likely to be university graduates, the overall Islamic community in North America is now the most educated per capita in all the Muslim world, and is therefore less likely to maintain folk accretions to Islam (Haddad and Lummis 1987:5).

Poston (1991:126) and Haddad and Lummis (1987:22) state also that many Muslims in the United States become more strictly

⁴See Hull 1978:143; Coelho 1972:74; Gandhi 1974:37; Kedem and Bar-Lev 1983:387; Hegazy 1968:167; Antler 1970:26; and Becker 1971:480.

observant as a result of a reaction to a cultural or environmental situation. Thrust into a strange and open society in which Muslims represent less than two percent of the total population, they entrench themselves in Islam as a security blanket and identity marker. In a survey of the entire population of Muslims in the U.S. conducted by Haddad and Lummis (1987:32), 45 percent reported to have become more religious in the last four years. Only 12 percent said that they had become less religious. This reflects, to a degree, the general worldwide Islamic resurgence of recent years. More particularly, though, it demonstrates that the United States is an environment which fosters, rather than hinders, Islamic observance among international Muslims. Consequently, I had anticipated that from orthodox Islamic teaching and/or from ethnic boundary maintenance, Malay university students in the U.S. might report becoming more religious in the past year.

My findings were quite unlike the Haddad and Lummis survey of American Muslims, or the Anwar interview responses of Malays in England (1987). Only eight of the 72 students (11%) I interviewed who had been in the United States a year or more claimed to have become more religious in the last year. Only one student said that he became less religious in the previous year. A full 87.5% reported no change. So, by and large, Malay students fit into neither the general Muslim category of internationals, in which many report becoming more religious in the United States, nor the overall international student

category, in which many become less religious away from their home.

Somewhat surprised by this response, I considered the background of these students, and probed one step into their past by adding question number 15 to see if their preparatory program (in preparation for coming to the U.S.) in Malaysia yielded different results. This time, significantly, 30 of 83 total respondents (36%) answered that they became more religious when in their two-year associates degree preparatory program in Malaysia. None of the 83 said that they became less religious at that time. Moreover, a few students who said that they did not become more religious in either the United States or in their preparatory program, volunteered that they had become more religious at a secondary school boarding school.

The two-year university-level programs designed to prepare Malays for transference to American universities are tightly controlled environments in which one of the express purposes is to solidify the students' Islamic knowledge and commitment before they are released to the United States. Along with English and the subjects related to their majors, each student had mandatory five-days-a-week Islamic studies classes throughout their entire associates degree program. Students live together in hostels, curfews are in place, and passes must be obtained for any travel. The five daily prayers and mosque attendance for the men are strictly enforced. In addition, a dress code is observed which specifies hair length for men and requires women to wear loose-

fitting, floor-length dresses. Head coverings are encouraged, though not required.

The end result is that if Malay international students are going to adopt a more strict observance of Islam, it will likely take place before they ever get to the United States. Another important point is that the newly adopted commitment to Islam sticks throughout these students' stay in the United States. Either their Islam is sufficiently intrinsic (internally motivated) to withstand the outward pull from the many and conflicting ideologies and lifestyles available in an American university, or the social pressure (inward pull) from the Malay community in the U.S. is strong enough to prevent Malays from relaxing their Islamic observance, or a combination of both.

Questions 17 and 18 asked about frequency of attendance at mosques or prayer services. Question 17 applies primarily to men, since weekly mosque attendance is obligatory for men only. Women usually pray at home or together in prayer rooms designated for such use, and devout women frequently join *usra* groups (Islamic cell groups) for mutual accountability. Question 18 was designed for women only. To include the frequency of public religious observance for both men and women, I combined these questions in tabulating the data.

As expected, men were more regular in mosque attendance than were women in *usra* attendance. This is because women are not required to attend public prayer gatherings, while weekly mosque attendance is obligatory for men. One interesting find is that

women who wear a *tudung* were only slightly more regular at group prayer services than were women who don't cover their hair. There was virtually no difference at all between one and two-year students. Students who had been in the U.S. for two years or more were neither more nor less regular in prayer service attendance than those who had been in the United States for a year.

Comparing the new students (who reported on their last year in Malaysia) and the one and two-year students, we learn that there is decidedly less public or group observance of Islam among Malays in America than there is for Malay students in the year before coming to the United States. Thirty five of the 36 new students reported to have attended a service at least once a week during the past year, compared to 39 of the 72 students who had been in the United States a year or more.

There is an apparent discrepancy between this response and that of their assessment of whether they became more religious, remained the same, or became less religious in the previous year. Malay students in America clearly attend religious services less frequently than they do in the year prior to coming to the United States, yet only one of 72 students who had been in the United States a year or more claimed to have become less religious in the previous year, and eight students said that they had become more religious. Two of those who said that they became more religious in the past year were actually among those who attended absolutely no religious services in that same year.

In answer to these findings, it must be noted that the new students' consistency in attending prayer services in the year prior to their coming to the United States, probably reflects more the strict surveillance in the preparatory programs than it does the religious observance of Malays in general in Malaysia. The two students who reported becoming more religious while attending no public prayer gatherings were women who also stated that there was no *usra* (cell group) functioning at their university. In fact, a number of students volunteered that their attendance at religious gatherings had slipped since coming to the U.S. because there is simply less availability of such services here.

While some students complained of social constraints to be strictly observant Muslims in the United States, more expressed that they felt less social pressure in the U.S. than in Malaysia to attend the Friday services at the mosque. In Malaysia the *muezzin's* call to prayer is broadcast for all to hear, and Muslim businesses and schools stop. Particularly in all-Malay rural areas, a Malay man in Malaysia has nowhere to go on a Friday afternoon but to the mosque.

What I think we find in the United States is that, for some Malay students at least, their Islam is becoming more internalized. Without stating it in so many words, some students indicated as much. Several said that living in a country in which Muslims are a small minority has caused them consciously to examine who they are. In Malaysia, many of the women, for

example, would stand out if they did **not** dress conservatively. Here in the U.S., they are conspicuous (especially in the summer) if they **do**. Whereas what formerly made them blend into the crowd (e.g., wearing a head covering), is precisely what makes them different in the United States. So, covering one's hair now becomes much more a conscious choice.

In Malaysia, Islamic dress shows ethnicity--it identifies one as a Malay, as opposed to a Chinese or Indian. In the United States, Islamic dress shows religion--it identifies one as a Muslim, as opposed to a non-Muslim. To belabor the point, the typical American who sees a Malay student wearing a head covering will think "there goes a Muslim," not "there goes a Malay." While we will discuss this more when we get to the subject of appropriate Islamic dress, many women said that they feel that wearing a head covering carries with it a big responsibility here to represent Islam well.

The next gauge of religious observance is the *salaat*, the mandatory five daily prayer times. Here, again, the new students prayed considerably more consistently during their last year in Malaysia before coming to America than did the one and two-year students in the previous year in the United States. Twenty-seven of the 36 new students (75%) prayed five or more times a day in Malaysia, while only 36 of the 72 non-new students (50%) prayed five or more times a day in the United States. There was also a drop between the students' first and second years in the United States. None of the 41 one-year students, but six of the 31 two-

year students, prayed less than once a day. The most consistent prayers were the women who cover their hair. Here there is a clear difference between women who wear a *tudung* and those who do not. Less than half of the women who don't wear a *tudung* (14 of 34 - 41%) performed the mandatory five daily prayers, while a full 94% (29 of 31) of those who wear the *tudung* prayed five or more times a day. Men prayed with about the same regularity as the women who don't wear the *tudung*. In that these prayers are a relatively private matter, the women who wear head coverings may have a more intrinsically motivated Islam than do the others.

The overall level of observance of the five daily prayers of Malay internationals in the United States is rather impressive. As we have seen, a full half of them go through the great inconvenience of praying the five mandatory prayers (each of which must be performed at a prescribed time) in a society that doesn't make room for the prayer times. To do so, students must fit class, work, and meal schedules around the prayer times. Fifty eight of the 72 non-new students (81%) reported praying more than once a day, and, surprisingly, only six (8%) said they prayed less than once a day.

The results of the question about the fast of Ramadan (question 20) are quite enlightening. All but one student reported to have observed the most recent Ramadan strictly. It turns out that the keeping of the fast is the bottom line indicator of whether one is identifying oneself as a Muslim or not. Approximately half of the Malays in the United States do

not pray five times a day, and about half do not attend a public Islamic gathering every week, and, as we soon shall see, not all abide by the *halal* dietary prescriptions. Yet, virtually all keep Ramadan strictly. The only student who did not observe Ramadan, answered letter "d", indicating that he paid little attention to keeping the fast. In other words, he did not even make an attempt to identify with the fast. This student is a young man who by his own admission was not living a Muslim lifestyle by any stretch of the imagination. He was not trying to fool anyone.

Ramadan functions the same way in Malaysia itself. Observing the fast is the minimum expected of all observant Muslims. It is the one pillar of Islam in Malaysia for which Muslims are commonly arrested for not keeping. This is not to say that all Malays in Malaysia fast during Ramadan, but it is the one prescription that they dare not openly defy.

In Ramadan observance we have the perfect blend of Islam and Malay ethnic identity. The fast is a very public and sensory object lesson of the separateness of Malays from the non-Malays. The observing of the fast, the communal meals at the breaking of the fast each evening, and the joyous celebration of the ending of the fasting month, unite virtually all Malays, whatever their religious commitment otherwise. In fact, *Hari Raya* (the Big Day), the holiday celebrating the ending of the fast, is the Malay Christmas, the time when extended families spare no expense to decorate their homes, exchange gifts, and enjoy special

holiday foods. In many ways, Malay Muslim and ethnic identity are mutually reinforced in and around Ramadan.

The daily prayer times also serve as public Malay identifiers. The calls to prayer fill the air. Malay factory workers are released from the ranks at designated times to pray together in prayer rooms. Yet, there is generally not the Malay societal compulsion to pray that there is to keep the fast. To pray or not is left to personal conviction. The fast, on the other hand, is treated as a time when the Malays display a united front of their common Islamic faith. The fast is Malay Islamic communal solidarity in its fullest expression.⁵

A final question of religious observance is the Islamic prescriptions on what is permissible for consumption. The Malay word for this, borrowed from the Arabic, is *halal*. The most obvious prohibitions are intoxicants, and pork and its by-products. Rodents, reptiles, insects, and animals with claws or fangs are also not permissible. What makes it hard for a strict Muslim to accept meals from Americans is that even acceptable meat, such as poultry or beef, must be bled and slaughtered in a certain manner. The most strict Muslims will not even eat

⁵The way Malays observe Ramadan in the United States reinforces Malay solidarity at least as much as it does their commitment to Islam. From what I was told, the students break the fast together each evening with other Malays, and not with the Islamic community in general. *Hari Raya Puasa* (the Big Day of the Fast - celebrating the conclusion of Ramadan) is celebrated more as a Malay holiday than a Muslim holiday. Malays gather in each other's homes to socialize and enjoy special Malay holiday foods.

anything that has been prepared in utensils that have ever been used to cook non-halal food.

The keeping of *halal* regulations is an area in which the students demonstrated a fairly high level of commitment. Fifty five of the 72 students (76%) who had been in the States a year or more reported to have eaten only *halal* food during the past year. Women who wear a *tudung* were clearly the most strict observers of *halal*, while women who don't cover their head were the least observant.

There was a significant drop in keeping of *halal* through time. Virtually all the new students kept *halal* in the year before coming to the United States. There was some lessening in *halal* observance during the students' first year in the U.S., and even less careful observance of *halal* regulations during their second year in America. While it is clear that Malay international students in the United States do not maintain *halal* observance quite as strictly as they do in Malaysia, it is not clear that there is any lessening over time while they are in the U.S. The difference between the one and two-year students is likely explained by the fact that only five of the 31 two-year students interviewed were women who cover their head, compared to 20 of the 41 one-year students. The more careful observance by one-year students may, therefore, be just another reflection of the strictness of women who cover their head.

The major determinant of the students' level of observance of *halal* food regulations is accessibility. The students take a

pragmatic approach. When *halal* food is easily available, Malays maintain a strictly *halal* diet. When it is not, they follow a diet that most closely approximates *halal* stipulations. This was borne out by the markedly distinct findings for each of the three universities at which I conducted interviews. The students at the University of Missouri in St. Louis were quite strict about eating *halal*. They made it clear that except for a very few who had gone "wild" in America and were not even attempting to give the appearance of living as Muslims, they all ate only *halal* foods. They explained that they did their grocery shopping at a Pakistani store in town, and that they also made regular trips to Chicago to get the right foods.

Their strictness was evidenced also in their responses to my asking them what they would do if they were invited to an American home for dinner. The majority response was that they would not accept such an invitation, or that they would go to visit, but not to eat. Some were less rigid, stating that they would eat non-*halal* food in an American home in order not to offend their hosts. One such respondent allowed that "once in a while its OK not to eat *halal*." One student sought to reconcile his convictions about what to eat with his desire not to offend, by saying that if an American family invited him for a meal, he would tell them in advance what he could not eat.

Unlike the UMSL students, those at Indiana University in Bloomington were not keeping *halal* in the United States. As we recall, the IU Malays interviewed were new students who were

living in a dormitory. They reported to have observed a strict *halal* diet in Malaysia, but now, in that they were on university cafeteria meal plans, it was more or less impossible to keep *halal*, short of going completely vegetarian. They noted that a very few did observe *halal* rather strictly, putting up with the inconvenience and expense of getting meat from the one *halal* shop, which was "too expensive" and far from their dormitory. The rest, giving up on eating *halal* in the cafeteria, at least abstained from pork and alcohol.

The University of Kentucky Malays generally fell in the middle between the UMSL Malays' and the IU Malays' keeping of *halal*. Again, students took a pragmatic approach. Some said that when they're at home in Lexington, they eat *halal*, but they don't bother when they're travelling. One man said that he never knowingly eats non-*halal* food, but if he's served something, he doesn't check it out. Others expressed that it's hard here in America. They do their best, even reading ingredients on food products, but "you can't always know, so you just eat." One woman said that during her first eight months in the United States she was very particular, but got tired of it, and now eats anything that is not pork or alcohol. A couple of others were also content to limit their dietary restrictions to the minimalist approach of not consuming pork or alcohol. Even the few students who have thrown off Islamic constraints, at least refuse to eat pork. Even the one student who did not observe Ramadan, and said he never prays, would not consume pork or

alcohol. Finally, there were several of the UK Malays who kept *halal* strictly. For this reason, they would never accept an invitation to dinner at an American home.

Obviously, one wishing to befriend Malays will have to be sensitive to their convictions about diet. Cities and universities with sizable Muslim populations will have places where *halal* food is sold. For the strictest Malays, a family may need to purchase new cooking utensils to be used exclusively for non-*halal* cooking.⁶

Questions 22 and 23 ask about the necessity of mosques in Islam. My goal here was to see how critical the actual physical structure of the mosque is to Malay internationals. Inherent in this question is the importance of corporate prayer and worship for Malay men. I was also interested in discovering if an extended sojourn in a non-Muslim society would cause some Malays to lessen their identification of Islam with its corporate, societal, or "institutional" nature. Without all of the Islamic structures (mosques, prayer halls, Islamic schools, calls to prayer, and governmentally-sanctioned prayer times) supplied in Malaysia, would Malays in the United States change their

⁶Though not mentioned in the interviews, dog ownership by Americans may also prevent Malays from accepting hospitality from a person or family. Malays view dogs as spiritually unclean. Some Malays will tolerate dogs in their presence but will not touch the dogs. Others put up with situations in which dogs are kept out of sight or out of doors. Strict Muslims may be uncomfortable in a room in which a dog has been present, even if the dog is not there at the time. Sensitive Christians wishing to befriend Malays, must, of course, keep this consideration in mind.

understanding or practice of Islam? Would the lack of societal facilitation of Islamic practice cause them to be less observant in the United States? Or, might the reduction in structures and the decrease in opportunity for corporate worship cause some to internalize a faith that might have been based on external conformity to societal expectation?

I received 99 responses to this question. Seventy four said that mosques are very important in keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith; 23 said that mosques are quite important; and 2 said that mosques are somewhat important. No one said that mosques are of little or no importance.

There was a change from year to year. Thirty one of the 35 new students (89%) said that mosques are very important in keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith, compared to 25 of 33 one-year students (76%) and 18 of 31 two-year students (58%). Women with a head covering showed the greatest shift over time. Still, this does not represent a dramatic shift in thinking, for virtually all the students said that mosques were at least quite important for keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith. Many students qualified their answers by saying that mosques are essential for men, but not for women.

Can a Muslim man be a good Muslim without attending a mosque? Here again, there was a change through time. Only 11 of the 36 new students (31%) either agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible for a Muslim man to be a good Muslim without

attending a mosque. Fifteen of 33 one-year students (45%), and 22 of 31 two-year students (71%) agreed or strongly agreed.

In that Islam is not identified with or mediated through the society in which they now find themselves, and that Islamic observance cannot as easily be enforced here as in Malaysia, Malay students may for the first time be faced with non-observance of Islam as a realistic option. A few, in fact, abandon Islamic observance (though, as we shall see, not Islamic belief). Most maintain their level of commitment to Islam, with, perhaps, less consistency in practice, due primarily to the difficulties of observing Islamic prescriptions strictly (e.g., eating *halal* food) in many places in the United States. Some, though, faced with less societal demands to enforce Islam, and fewer opportunities for corporate expression of Islam, become more personally or individually devoted to Islam. It becomes more internalized. This may explain why students increasingly see mosque attendance as not absolutely essential.

Breaking down the responses between men, women who wear a head covering, and women who don't, it is surprising to find that it is the women who wear a head covering who are most likely to allow for the fact that a Muslim man can be a good Muslim without attending a mosque (see App. F, p.526, Q#23). Nineteen of the 31 women who wear a head covering (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that this was possible. Only seven (23%) indicated that mosques are essential. Conversely, 19 of 37 men (51%), and 12 of 32 women who don't wear a *tudung* (38%), consider that one cannot be

a good Muslim without attending a mosque. This one finding may indicate that those who submit to the external dress requirements, rather than having an extrinsic motivation to adhere to Islam, have a more personal, intrinsic faith. They do not see Islam as necessarily mediated through the mosque. It's not that they see the mosque as unimportant. To the contrary, Malay women who cover their head were by far the most likely to answer "a" (Very Important) to question 22 ("How important do you think mosques are in keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith?"). Though they see mosques as very important, they recognize that the bottom line is one's personal devotion to God.

The students' comments indicate that one's motivation is the critical factor. Several students stressed that heart attitude is all important. They explained that some people go to the mosque to be seen, or to impress, or out of obligation, but that such people receive no spiritual benefit. The general feeling was that, yes, a person could be a good Muslim without attending a mosque, but that the very fact that a man would choose not to attend a mosque, would indicate that he was not a good Muslim. In other words, going to mosque won't make one righteous, but no righteous man would not go to mosque.

The students stressed that mosque attendance is "required," "compulsory," "a must," and that although it is possible, it is very difficult to be a good Muslim without the corporate prayer and teaching of the mosque. Interestingly, some students felt that in the United States, they need mosques all the more. They

actually said that mosque attendance is less crucial in Malaysia than it is in the United States. That is because mosques are important for the maintenance of faith. The United States has more distractions and temptations to lure one away from religious observance. Thus, mosques are especially critical here.

One point of tension for the students that came out again and again in the interviews was the students' insistence that many things were "required" or "obligatory," but that there is no "compulsion" in Islam. It was first stated with regard to mosque attendance. A student who caught himself saying that Friday mosque attendance is "compulsory," changed the word to "required," so that he could remind me that there is "no compulsion" in Islam. Many of the students who told me that one thing or another was required, immediately came back with "but there is absolutely no compulsion in Islam." One student who expressed that Malays must be Muslims, turned around with the line that there is no compulsion in Islam. When I pressed them on this, they were never able to explain this double talk. It is clear that in Malay Islam, there is in fact "compulsion" (Why else would Malays be arrested for breaking the fast, or beaten for changing faiths?). Their insistence that Islam has no compulsion came across as unvarnished propaganda in an attempt to dissuade themselves and outsiders from believing the obvious.

Interview item 24 asked if Islam should be observed strictly, moderately, or adjusted to the surroundings. Here, the men were most likely to say that Islam should be observed

strictly (37 of 43--86%). There was no significant difference between the groups of women, though one might expect the women who generally observe Islam less strictly (those who don't cover their head) to be less likely to say that Islam should be observed strictly. Here we discover, as will be reinforced in later findings, that Malays basically all believe in (or at least say they believe in) the tenets of Islam. As we mentioned earlier, fundamentalism in Islam, unlike in Christianity, is a matter of practice and not belief. Malays who don't practice Islam strictly, even those who don't observe any of its prescriptions, do so for various reasons, but not because they question the Quran or the authority of Muhammad.

The responses to interview item 24, when broken down into length-of-stay categories, suggest a degree of the U-curve phenomenon, in which students near the beginning and end of their stay exhibit like qualities which are distinguished from the characteristics they demonstrate during the middle of the sojourn. Why, then, might some Malays view the strict observance of Islam as important at the beginning and end of their stay, but less so during the middle? I suggest that this is so because at both the beginning and end they are responding to the expectations of Malaysian society. At the beginning, they are expressing the feelings of the world they just left, and at the end of their stay they are psychologically adjusting to reentry into that society. At these two times, they see themselves as indistinguishable from Malay Muslim society in Malaysia. In the

middle, they are Malays, and they are Muslims, but they are functioning in a vastly different, non-Muslim, pluralistic world.

It is not surprising, then, that one-year students were the most likely to say that the observance of Islam should be adapted to its surroundings.

The students thoughts on this subject, again emphasized heart attitude and motive. Furthermore, though the pillars of Islam emphasize external compliance with a specified form, many do not feel constrained to adopt one standard Islamic lifestyle. Some representative student comments are as follows: "Islam must be flexible. It must change with the times and circumstances." "We are free to adjust our relationships (referring to social intermingling of the sexes), but must fulfill our individual responsibility to pray, fast, etc." "We must adapt to the environment. We don't want to be seen as weird." Several noted that extremes are bad. This is a typically Malaysian attitude, where years of adjustment to the close contact between Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs, have led to a fear of anything that may rock the boat, and have raised tolerance to the supreme virtue.

Along these lines, many of the Malay students hold lofty ideals for worldwide Islamic expansion, but in practice, the bottom line is pragmatism. Not recognizing the contradiction between their "theory" and practice, some who foresee an eventual Islamic world utopia, do not advocate Malaysia becoming an Islamic state because that would be insensitive to the non-

Muslims in Malaysia, and cause unnecessary tension. After all, one has to give and take to make a religiously diverse country operate smoothly.

Going back to an earlier observation, several who admitted that they do not observe Islam strictly, emphasized that they are aware that they are at fault for not doing so. None verbalized the slightest tinge of doubt of the teachings of Islam, or even hinted that the requirements of Islam are unreasonable. Whenever their practices were at variance with the teachings of Islam, there was no question as to which needed changing. One young man who had given up praying and all other means of identification with Islam, and had gone "wild" by identifying with the American rock culture (earrings, skull T-shirt, long hair, and all), said, "I know I'm wrong in not following Islam, but I'm not perfect yet. Maybe when I'm older and have children, I'll become faithful." A young woman with similar "wayward" ways told me that Islam should be observed strictly. "I know this, but I'm not strong enough. It must come from the heart or it's not valid. I don't want to be hypocritical."

Those who answered that Islam should be observed moderately, typically said that religious observance should be up to the individual. They said that every Malay Muslim must be fully educated about Islam, so they can adopt a style of Islam that is based on knowledge, but fits their personality and circumstances. In other words, everyone must be educated in Islamic truth, but

each person's particular application of that truth is an individual matter.

On the matter of Islamic observance in the United States, several students, particularly women, said they felt more conscious of their Islam here because they are different. This goes along with our suggestion that the removal from the Islamic environs of Malaysia, causes some to more personally, consciously identify with Islam. In Malaysia, they are like the fish who can't see the ocean for the water.

This is not to say that in the United States there is no social control for Malays to observe Islam. Some, at least, have found it ironically the opposite. A former student of mine who was at the University of Missouri, confided that in Malaysia it was easier to get lost in the crowd. Here he is expected by his government and peers to represent Islam. Using the fish analogy once more, in Malaysia he was just one of an ocean of fish. At St. Louis, the Malay community is a much smaller, self-contained fish bowl. In the U.S., he has no anonymity, and he feels like the Malays are always keeping tabs on each other, to make sure that no one leaves the flock, (or should we say "school", as in school of fish?), or misrepresents Islam. Another student expressed the same sentiments. "In Malaysia, I could date anyone. Here, they scrutinize every move. I'm not supposed to date here. They (the other Malays) are so strict." We are reminded here of the student who moved from the Malay street for

the very purpose of getting out from under what he perceived as stifling surveillance.

To summarize Malay religious observance on the United States, we begin by recounting that most Malays do not become significantly less or more religious in America than they were in Malaysia. The relatively few who do change are likely to become more religious. There may be some decrease in actual religious observance, but that is due more to the practical difficulties in the United States of strictly adhering to Islamic prescriptions, than to any lessening of belief. Speaking of belief, the comparatively limited opportunities for corporate religious expression of Islam in the United States, and the relaxing of societal pressures to conform, cause some Malays, at least, more consciously and personally to accept the teaching of Islam. A twist to this last observation is that even though there is no societal or legal compulsion for Malays in America to conform to Islamic practice, there is strong peer-group pressure for them to conform (possibly to compensate for the fact that societal pressures are removed), as well as an ethnic enclave mentality that causes some to retreat into the safe and familiar confines of Islam as a means of shielding themselves from the temptations and conflicting ideologies of the broader American society.

The minimally acceptable level of identification with Islam is the keeping of the fast of Ramadan. Prayers and mosque attendance vary, but virtually everyone observes Ramadan. The communal nature of the events surrounding Ramadan serves as a

Malay ethnic reinforcer. Furthermore, while there is considerable variation among Malay students in level of observance of Islam, belief in the "truth" of Islam is a constant, regardless of one's discipline or resoluteness in living according to such teaching.

Islamic Orthodoxy

Proceeding to the subject of Islamic orthodoxy, interview questions 25-27 address the question of the Malays' adherence to basic standards of Islamic sexual propriety. Question 25 relates to relations between the opposite sex for all who are not related either by marriage or by a *mahrem* ("prohibited" degree of relationship, i.e., near blood relatives with whom marriage is prohibited) relationship. Men and women are enjoined to avoid any unnecessary mixing. Men are "not to look deliberately and with interest at women's attractions, to be 'friendly' with them, or to have any physical contact with them whatsoever, but to keep the interaction strictly straight-forward and direct" (Haneef 1985:155). Men and women alike are to behave with "shyness, reserve and modesty" in each other's presence (Haneef 1985:157). Moreover, attention from any member of the opposite sex other than one's spouse in the form of free talk, compliments, playfulness, suggestive comments, touching in any form (including handshaking and patting on the back) . . . is insulting, degrading and very much disliked" (Haneef 1985:158).

The Malay international students are well aware of this teaching. A powerful counterbalance is in operation, though, in

that in traditional Malay society, women enjoyed great power and autonomy, and were active and visible in all social settings. Karim (1992:5) states that "the most obvious characteristic of adat is its overall pervasive norm of 'bilaterality' of reducing hierarchical differences based on gender." Karim believes that the Islamic teaching on the separation of the sexes (which she believes functions to exclude women from positions of status) was merely the reinforcement of the pre-existing Middle Eastern patriarchal social order in which women were already markedly subordinate (Karim 1992:225). Malay standards for women's socialization with men should be seen against the wider historical and cultural background of Malay society. The introduction of Islam to Malaya did not alter the social pattern. "In early Malay history, the Islamization of the Malay states did not reduce women's power in any significant way and indeed in colonial history appeared to be a source of power for women by granting them an intellectual base for political activity" (Karim 1992:xiii).

With the tension between traditional Malay social norms and the teaching of Islam in mind, we return now to questionnaire item 25. The responses fell heavily on the side of Islamic teaching (see App. F, p.527, Q#25). Ninety five of the 108 students (88%) strongly agreed that non-related Muslims of the opposite sex should not be alone together. Adding the four who responded with "agree," 99 of 108 (92%) either agreed or strongly

agreed. None strongly disagreed with the statement in number 25, and only seven (6.48%) disagreed.

There was little difference between the responses of the men or either category of women, though men showed a slightly higher percentage of agreement with the statement. A significant difference was found between the new and non-new students. Every last one of the 36 new students strongly agreed with the statement in item 25 ("A Muslim man and woman who are not related to one another should not be alone together"). The one and two-year students were a little more tentative, with a few students in each group stating that it is all right for men and women to be alone together. Evidently, for some Malay students, time in the United States causes them to question the teaching that it is always wrong for men and women who are not related to be alone together.

Islam teaches that humans are weak and that the sexual drive is an extremely powerful urge that will "naturally seek to express itself freely" when given the chance (Haneef 1985:158). Nine students conveyed this belief to me through the apparently popular Islamic axiom that if a man and a woman are alone together, there is automatically a third party present in the person of Satan. A number of students who strongly agreed that men and women should not be alone together confessed that sometimes they break the rule. "After all," they exclaimed, "I am only human." One man complained that "it's hard to follow this rule always in modern times."

Several students agreed with this rule in principle, but offered exceptions, such as it's all right to be alone together if you are studying together. Several others said that it's all right "if you can control yourself." Similarly, others qualified the rule by stating that it depends on each individual. For some couples it is wrong to be alone together; for others it is not.

A revealing phenomenon was uncovered starting with the responses to item 25. Some students would speak the Islamic viewpoint on a particular issue by stating that "as a Muslim, I believe . . .", and then step aside from that and say something like, "but, in my opinion . . ." For example, a young woman from the University of Kentucky said that "I know it is wrong for guys and girls to be alone together, but, in my opinion, it depends on what you're doing. If you have self-control, it's OK." In spite of the fact that most of the students will at least say that they agree with what Islam teaches, when those teachings cut against the traditional social grain, there is, in fact, ambivalence about how to conduct oneself.

The variety of responses to and interpretations of straightforward Islamic teaching is evidenced in the responses to items 26 and 27 of the questionnaire, which pertain to Islamic dress codes, particularly for women.⁷ Suzanne Haneef (1985:169) spells out the rules for Islamic dress:

⁷Item 26 reads, "Muslim women should not go out on the streets unless their hair and arms are covered and their skirts are well below their knees." Item 27 asks, "What constitutes appropriate dress for Islamic men and women?"

What is required is that a woman should be completely covered except for her hands and face (although the face may also be covered for greater modesty if desired), and that her dress should conceal her form, be loose and non-transparent, and not of a kind to attract attention by its beauty; moreover, cosmetics, perfume and jewelry (with the exception of what ordinarily shows such as a ring) are not to be worn in public.

For men, "modesty requires that the area between the navel and the knees not be exposed in front of anyone, including other males, excepting one's wife. The clothing of men should not be tight or sexually provocative, nor should it resemble the dress of women" (Haneef 1985:171).

Nagata (1984:83) observed that the most immediately identifiable sign of *dakwah* (revivalist) Islam is clothing style, particularly for women. A Malay student interviewed by Anwar (1987:62) noted that when she wore Western dress, she was a "pariah" to the devout Muslims. When she donned the mini-*telekung* (prayer shawl), popularly known as the *tudung*, she "immediately became 'holy' and belonged to the group." Anwar sees the head covering as the shibboleth that distinguishes members of one group of Malay women from those of the other. She, in fact, found strong enmity between the two camps. Those who conformed to the Islamic dress code condemned the others as wantonly spurning God's commands by fraternizing with the evils of Western society. On the other side, those who did not follow the Islamic code, labeled those who did as self-righteous, hypocritical kill-joys.

With this in mind, expecting to find a mutual antagonism between the two groups of women, I approached this topic with special interest. Surprisingly, there was virtually no difference in the responses of the two groups. The women who do not cover their hair, overwhelmingly acknowledged that Muslim women should not go out in public without long skirts and their hair and arms covered. Though not statistically significant, there was actually a higher percentage of women who don't wear a head covering who either agreed or strongly agreed with the strict interpretation of the Islamic dress code (94%), than there was of those who do cover their hair (90%). Overall, 92 of the 108 students strongly agreed and ten agreed with the statement in item 26, while only three disagreed.

Looking at this from the length-of stay divisions, there is no demonstrated progression toward or away from the strict Muslim position. If anything, there is a slight U-curve phenomenon, with one-year students showing a little greater likelihood of veering from a strict interpretation of the Islamic code.⁸

As with much of the interview data, the students' personal interjections on the subject proved most enlightening. That this is an especially "hot" topic was shown in the fact that items

⁸A "mere" 90% of the one year students agreed with the statement in item 26 (Muslim women should not go out unless their hair and arms are covered and their skirts are well below their knees), compared with 97% of both the new and two-year students.

number 26 and 27 (which ask about appropriate dress), generated the most response of any subject in the questionnaire.

We have noted that most of the students answered that they strongly agreed that Muslim women should not appear in public with any part of themselves exposed except for face and hands. Some students added that this is the only acceptable position for one who claims to believe in the words of the Quran. Yet, such a rigid stance was exceptional. Many of the students, though not daring to question the rules, qualify them to such an extent as to make the rules, in effect, superfluous. Furthermore, there was much less legalism than I had anticipated, and less uniformity of thought.

With a few notable exceptions, most of those who don't cover their hair said they felt no animosity from those who do. Most of those who do cover their hair showed no disdain towards those who don't. A few expressed that the non-complying women are responsible to conform to what they know to be right (i.e., dress according to Islamic prescriptions), but most who comply with the Islamic standard stressed that it was something that each woman had to decide for herself. As one woman put it, "I can't judge those who don't wear it (the *tudung*). Another woman who wears a *tudung* said, "It's OK for some women to go out with their hair uncovered. It depends on the personal convictions of the individual."

It was some of the men who tended to be more legalistic on the question of dress. It was, after all, the men who were most

likely to agree that women should not go out without full Islamic attire. A few criticized the women who don't follow the guidelines strictly. The women's reaction to this was an "easy for you to say." For them to comply fully with the Islamic dress code in the United States is immediately to mark themselves as different, even strange, in their classes. The men have only not to expose themselves between their navels and their knees. Otherwise, anything goes. One basically non-observant bright young Malay woman who met me for an interview in a sleeveless blouse, said that "the girls (those who are observant) are more accepting (of her). The guys are sometimes more rejecting. Maybe that's because the girls understand better what I'm going through."

In most cases the less-observant women not only reported no ill-will from the women who conformed more closely to the Islamic dress code, but said they respected and even admired such women. The big question remains, then, as to why those who don't cover their hair, dress as such when they themselves agree that Islam requires them to do so, and some even say that they admire those who do. The nearly universal response of the women who don't wear a *tudung* is that it is better to do so, but that they aren't quite ready yet.

The head covering for women (my rough estimate is that about half of the Malay women I've seen in the United States cover their head) is recognized by the Malays as the point of no return for entering into an Islamic lifestyle. To decide to cover one's

head in the Islamic fashion is to make an unmistakable statement. It is the rubicon that when crossed commits a person to an irrevocable course of action. As one woman commented, "If I start to wear a *tudung*, I can't turn back. I will wear it forever." Another said, "I'm not ready to accept the responsibility. When I'm ready, I will (wear a *tudung*).". An attractive Malay woman with black leather jacket, tight jeans, black boots, and flowing black hair (who strongly agreed with the Islamic dress code) stated that some day she will be more strict. Another non-observant Muslim young woman assured me that one day she will wear a *tudung*, but, again, she's not ready. Still another explained further that wearing a *tudung* is supposed to be accompanied by not only changed behavior, but a changed attitude. "Those who wear it are expected to live an exemplary life. If you can't live up to it, you shouldn't disgrace Islam." In nearly identical language, as if parroting a script, a different woman said, "The *tudung* represents an example. If you can't live up to it, you shouldn't disgrace Islam." Another young woman who shared this viewpoint, said that after she is married, and especially by the time she has children, she will wear a *tudung*. She will then be responsible to be an example and teacher to her children. One woman I interviewed confided that she was at that very time in inner turmoil over this issue. She said that she knew that she must wear a *tudung*, and that she was considering doing so. She also knew that it would mean shifting to a

different company of friends, and she wasn't sure if she could fit in with them and their lifestyle.

My impression of these responses was that some of the women were genuinely and humbly wrestling with the seriousness of the issue. Some of these had parents who prefer that they not cover themselves, and by so doing become "fanatical." For others, the words "I'm not yet spiritual enough," rang out a false humility that was more a pious-sounding excuse for their unwillingness to remain within the confines of women's Islamic social propriety. As one woman (who follows strict Islamic dress requirements) put it, "Nobody is expecting anyone to be perfect, but they know the rules."

Again, nearly all the women say they agree with the Islamic dress code. Those who don't abide by it say that one must first reach a certain level of spiritual or religious maturity before one dresses the part. To do otherwise is to disgrace the dignity of the standard. Those who wear the *tudung* look at it differently. They do not claim to have "attained" any more than anyone else. Their approach is that one's duty is simply, immediately, and unquestioningly to obey, and then do one's best to live up to the standard that one has assumed. One woman said that to dress properly actually helps one to have the right behavior and attitudes.

A common thread spoken of by many is motive or heart attitude. Malays recognize this as the core issue, and are quick to point out that external compliance in and of itself is

meaningless. As one person remarked, "If a girl doesn't want to wear a *tudung*, there's no reason to. It does no good if worn with the wrong attitude." Similarly, a woman who dresses according to the letter of the law, said, "Some who wear it are not sincere; it is just for show." Still another said, "If you don't wear it (the head covering) for the right reason, it's wrong."

A young woman who makes no attempt to abide by the Islamic standard of dress, opined that the Malay women she respects the most are those who wear a *tudung*, and who are "totally committed to Islam." Those she respects the least are, interestingly, also women who wear a *tudung*, but they are those who wear it to put on airs of religiosity, or to fit into a certain crowd. A different young woman said that many wear a head covering out of pressure, or fear of shame and embarrassment, and would rather not wear one. For such women, the strict observance does them no spiritual good.

Another viewpoint was that if one wants to be a good Muslim woman, wearing a head covering is necessary, but not sufficient. By this understanding, to be a faithful Muslim, a woman must cover her hair **and** have the right heart attitude. External compliance is necessary, but it must be accompanied by proper motive.

The responses, overall, bring to light again the tension between the Islamic path that Malays know to follow, and cultural Malay Islam which does not walk the "straight and narrow" road.

The result is that many Malays have become artful dodgers of a law the absolute truth of which they adamantly affirm. Islamic fundamentalism has made it impossible to challenge directly the tenets of Islamic revivalism. Yet, even many of the most devout Muslim Malays aren't willing to write off their less observant compatriots. Several students who strongly affirmed the Islamic dress code, said that in the end it's up to each individual to dress as she or he pleases. One young woman expressed this contradiction and ambivalence in response to my questioning her on whether or not she was under obligation to abide by the Islamic code. Her exact words were, "A Muslim woman **must** wear a head covering." And then, after a brief pause, she added, "But it's really up to you." Likewise, another student said, "Islam teaches that it (covering one's hair) is required, but it's the individual's prerogative. It's a must, but Islam doesn't force." A woman who does not wear a *tudung* emphasized, "It's definitely not OK for me not to wear a veil, but I'm still a Muslim because outside of the five pillars there is leeway in Islam."

A few of the women, independent of each other, volunteered that Islam teaches that for every hair a woman exposes, Satan builds a house in hell for her mother. "Do you really believe this?", I asked one without a *tudung*. "Yes," she responded. "Are you **actually** condemning your mother to extra time in hell?" "Yes." What does your mother think about this? "She doesn't care. She's even less strict than I am."

The Malays affirm a standard to which they don't abide. Verbal commitment to Islamic teaching is absolutely critical; adherence to such teaching is a matter of individual choice. Many of the Malay women I interviewed, confessed when we got to this topic that they were technically dressed improperly. They knew it, but it wasn't any big deal. Others offered their own version of the dress code. Some said that the critical element was to wear a long, loose-fitting dress. Some said the essential part was covering their hair. With this rule satisfied, many wore jeans and blouses, or form-fitting, brightly colored floor-length dresses. Expressing a typical Malay pragmatism, one young man said regarding Malay dress, "We have to be flexible. This is American society. We have to try to fit in. We don't want Islam to be seen as weird."

Overall, there is not a uniformity of thought regarding interpretation of Islamic requirements. There is general agreement as to the "truth" of Islamic teaching, but ample room is left for Malay cultural expressions of Islam that do not align with a strict, fundamentalist-style Islam.

Knowledge of Islamic Orthodoxy

The items under the heading "Knowledge of Islamic Orthodoxy" were designed to test if pre-Islamic elements that traditionally have been practiced within Malay Islam are, in fact, recognized by the students as extra-orthodox, and if they are, if the students accept such practices as legitimate for them as Muslims. These questions, thus, also address the issue of whether Malay

Islam is continuing to make room for Malay expressions of Islam that run counter to strict Islamic orthodoxy.

The first item we will consider is the *bersanding* (the public sitting together of bride and groom on a raised dais) portion of the traditional Malay wedding ceremony. The student responses indicate that they clearly understand that this is not Islamic (see App. F, p.528, Q#28). Moreover, contrary to Anwar's findings (1987:25,71-74),⁹ the Malay students do not gain a more orthodox understanding of Islam as a result of their American experience and resultant contact with fundamentalist Middle Eastern Muslims. The incoming students came with a full understanding that the *bersanding* has pre-Islamic roots. In fact, the new students were the ones most convinced that the *bersanding* is non-Islamic.

The eye-opener here is that while nearly all the students believe the *bersanding* is non-Islamic (most, in fact, recognize it as of Hindu origin), a majority of the students do not object to the practice (see App. F, p.529, Q#29). Those least likely by far to object to it are women who don't wear a head covering. The most likely to object to it are the women who do. This indicates that women who don't feel compelled to obey the Islamic dress regulations, are more likely to allow for non-Islamic and even anti-Islamic elements under the Islamic umbrella.

⁹See also Poston 1991:126, and Haddad and Lummis 1987:22).

Although the majority (57%) do not object to the *bersanding*, a full 39% do object to it, and the remaining few are undecided. The fact that 39% object to the *bersanding* is significant in light of the fact that as recently as 1971, we have record that the traditional Malay wedding ceremony, though replete with Hindu symbolism, was unquestioningly and universally observed by the Malays (Ryan 1971:52).

The fundamentalist Islamic resurgence is asserting itself strongly. Those who object to the *bersanding* object to it for different reasons, but all on Islamic grounds. Some see its Hindu roots as incompatible with Islam. Others reject its showiness and "wasteful spending" as contrary to Islamic prudence and moderation. The most common objection to the traditional Malay wedding, though, is that it "exposes" the bride's beauty to the public, and allows for the improper mixing of the sexes.

Quite a few students suggested compromises that would allow for the continuance of the *bersanding*, but in more Islamically palatable forms. Some believed the ceremony would be acceptable if specifically Hindu elements were excised. The problem of ostentation and expense could be assuaged, according to some, if spending were kept to "reasonable limits." Finally, several of those who objected to the *bersanding* on the grounds of non-Islamic dress and inappropriate mixing of the sexes, suggested that the *bersanding* could properly be observed for relatives only, or at least, that the bride wear Islamic dress instead of the traditional wedding outfit. The point is that most of those

who object to the *bersanding*, don't want to part with a beloved Malay ceremony if they can help it, but would prefer to remove from it whatever they deem makes it objectionable.

Any more, the full-blown traditional Malay wedding ceremony is rare.¹⁰ Modernization and urbanization are threatening the rural Malay, communal lifestyle, and, of course, Islamization is challenging pre-Islamic cultural practices. Yet, with regard to the wedding ceremony at least, family ties and Malay tradition are surviving the challenge. Several of the students who objected to the *bersanding* said that they would, nevertheless, agree to one if their families wanted it. One very devout Muslim young woman put it this way, "It's not good, but it has been a custom in our society. So, in order not to hurt my parents' feelings I will have a (traditional) wedding ceremony." One student expressed that although the *bersanding* contains non-Islamic elements, it is right to observe it if one's family wants it. The *bersanding* is a lesser evil than that of countering one's family. A number of students suggested that it is unIslamic to go against the wishes of one's family. Following this understanding, "it's good to have a *bersanding* to honor and please your family." Four others valued the ceremony because it reinforces community ties. Thus, "Strictly speaking it's wrong, but it's not bad because it is a community tradition."

¹⁰Years ago weddings lasted up to a week. Now they are often conducted within a single day.

Still others, who are guided by Islamic teaching to believe that if Islam is against it, it simply cannot have redeeming qualities, are willing to buck Islam on this matter. "I want a *bersanding*. I know it's not right, but it's only once in a lifetime." Of those convinced the ceremony is wrong, a majority said that they would do it, either to please family, or simply because they want their moment of glory.

There is a clear tension here between age-old customs and a new style of Islam that is seeking to uproot many such customs. Yati and her boyfriend Ismail pensively and openly expressed the difficulty they were having in reconciling things they feel are harmless (like Ismail's earring) or even beautiful (like the *bersanding* or Malay traditional dance) with Islamic rules that say these things are wrong. Speaking of the *bersanding*, Yati sighed, "I know it's wrong, but it's such a beautiful tradition." It is an indication of the unchallenged position of Islam that Yati and Ismail don't at all question that Islam is right. They believe it is displeasing to God to dress as they do and to desire a traditional wedding. On earth they "don't see the big picture," and accept that God's reasons must be as good as they are inscrutable. Many thus live with the cognitive and emotional dissonance of believing themselves to be displeasing God, but lacking the willpower or discipline to do otherwise.

Item 30 asks about the relatively minor practice of staining a bride's fingertips with henna. The practice originated in pre-Islamic Malay Hinduism as a means of protecting from evil

spirits. Most students (74 of 87) recognize that this practice does not come from Islam, though two students believed it is of both Hindu and Islamic origin, and five students felt that it does come from Islam. Six students said they had no idea whether it was of Islamic origin or not. Although most of the students understood that the henna staining ceremony is not from Islam, only a few students knew of its Hindu roots. Some of the students knew so little about this practice that they had no opinion, indicated by the 22 responses (25%) of "Undecided" as to whether or not they object to the ceremony.

The seven students (8%) who did object to the ceremony did so because of its meaning of seeking protection from a source other than God, or because, in their opinion, it is better to exclude extraneous, "showy" or "fancy" elements from Islam. Fifty eight students (67%) did not object to the ceremony. Most of these felt it was neutral, neither bad nor good. As one student said, "It's not *haram* (forbidden); it's just cultural." A few believed that it is a good thing to do because henna is good for one's nails, and a few believed that the ceremony is good because, as one put it, "It has long been a custom in our society."

The responses indicate that traditional practices are losing their meaning and importance. Relatively few of the individuals cared one way or the other about the henna staining ceremony. Most had no idea why it was done, and some stated that it is not as common as it once was. The rest were either opposed to it on

religious grounds, or else in favor of it because they believe it is good to maintain societal customs, expressing again the Malay culture versus universalistic Islam tension. One more observation of note is that, as with the traditional wedding ceremony, the Malay women who don't wear a *tudung* had the least objections to this non-Islamic practice, while those women who wear a head covering were the most likely to object.

All 108 students responded to the question (item 32) about the direction in which a dead Muslim is to be placed in the grave. Only one student did not know the Islamic teaching on this matter. All of the rest knew that a dead body is to be buried with its face turned toward Mecca.

Items number 34 and 35 concern the Malay practice of "confinement" in which mothers remain inside the home for rest and recuperation for approximately 40 days after the birth of each of their children. It is not of Islamic origin, but stems rather from ancient Asian custom. In spite of this, six students strongly agreed and another six agreed that Islam prescribes a confinement period. Fifteen said that some, but not all of the elements of the confinement are mandated by Islam. Thus, about a fourth of the students (26 of 107 respondents to this question) felt that the confinement comes from Islam at least in part. An additional ten were uncertain as to whether or not the confinement period is called for by Islam. This is interesting in that it reveals that a sizable proportion of Malay students may be so associating their culture with Islam that they

automatically assume that whatever is Malay and is not counter to Islam must be of Islamic origin.

The new students were clearly the most likely to view the confinement period as extra-Islamic, contradicting as before, the findings that Malay students become more orthodox as a result of their stay in the United States (see App.F. p.531, Q#34).

In this case, of the divisions of sex and head covering, it was the women without head coverings who understood best that the confinement is non-Islamic. This bolsters my belief that the less observant women are not less knowledgeable than their more observant counterparts.

As a whole, the students did not object to the observance of a confinement period (see App. F, p.531, Q#35). The few who were against it took the purist view that if Islam doesn't commend it, it shouldn't be done. By far the majority opinion, though, was that if Islam doesn't condemn it, it is acceptable. Most felt that a confinement period is at best healthy, and at worst harmless. A few mentioned that although a time of confinement is good, some Malays incorporate primal religious practices, such as putting leaves of a certain kind on the womb to ward off evil spirits. That such practices are unacceptable does not call into question the confinement itself. Only one respondent felt that keeping tradition for the sake of tradition is wrong. The more popular view is that tradition is good if not explicitly contrary to Islam.

We move on to the office of *bomoh*, or spirit doctor/herbalist/medicine man. No other subject deals more directly with the issue of universal Islam versus a traditional Malay Islam which wedded religion and custom. The person of the *bomoh* is the very embodiment of the old-school Malay Islam. Along with the use of herbs, *bomohs* employed divination and magical incantations in their curative processes. Such practices are clearly outside Islamic orthodoxy, but until recently were unquestioned by Malay Muslims. The *bomoh* historically enjoyed a high status in Malay society, and at the village level was a close companion to the *ulama* (religious specialists). So closely was Islam tied with traditional Malay spirit religion that the roles of *bomoh* and of the *imam* of the village mosque were often assumed by one and the same person. As Islam advanced in the Malay peninsula, *bomohs* incorporated Islamic prayers and Quranic verses in their incantations.

The students' response to questionnaire items 36 and 37 show that orthodox Islam has made enormous strides in challenging the old belief system, but that, at the same time, many Malays give credence to the realm of divination in which Islam prohibits involvement.

To the question of whether *bomohs* help to promote true Islam, over half of the students answered that some do and some don't, depending on whether or not they use the Quran in their healing procedures. These students said that there are good and bad *bomohs*. The bad ones summon *jinn* (spirits) to get

information, and deal in black magic. The good ones use the Quran, believing certain verses have power, for example, to heal disease, cure infertility, or ward off evil spirits. One curative technique is to dissolve the ink from a Quranic verse in water, and then have the patient drink the water. For a majority of the students, such magical use of the Quran is not considered heterodox. Furthermore, although there was disagreement, most students believe that there are more non-Islamic or bad *bomohs* than there are good ones, but that more and more *bomohs* are using the Quran, and thus becoming Muslims in good standing.

Only seven students answered with an unqualified "Agree" that *bomohs* promote true Islam, and none responded with "Strongly Agree" (see App. F, p.532, Q#36). Eight were undecided, 27 disagreed, and ten strongly disagreed that *bomohs* promote true Islam. The interesting thing is that this apparently doesn't matter, for 51 students either agreed or strongly agreed that *bomohs* are a benefit to society (see App.F, p.532, Q#37).¹¹ *Bomohs* are practitioners, and for many students, the source of their (the *bomoh's*) power and their religious allegiance are irrelevant. Consequently, there were students who believe that *bomohs* do not promote true Islam, but are, nevertheless, a benefit to society. In general, the students felt that *bomohs* are a benefit to society. The 20 students who did not believe *bomohs* are beneficial, did not all believe *bomohs* are harmful. A

¹¹Women who wear a *tudung* stood out as having a more unfavorable view of *bomohs* than did Malays in general.

few of these, influenced by western naturalism, simply disbelieve in the spirit realm, and thus see the *bomoh*'s methods as ineffective, except for the power of suggestion. One young woman commented as such, "Bomohs always work for my grandmother because she believes in all that kind of stuff." Most of those who think *bomohs* are not beneficial, however, believe them to be harmful, because, according to them, they cause people to look for help to sources other than God.

The most revealing find is not what the students say they believe about *bomohs*, but what they actually "do" about them. Not one of the students I interviewed had ever gone to a *bomoh*. *Bomohs* are not a relevant part of the world represented by the students I questioned. They gave stories of grandparents or great aunts who solicited help from *bomohs*. One student had a great grandparent who had been a *bomoh*. None had personal experience with *bomohs*, or even had a friend who had been to a *bomoh*. When I asked a young man who said *bomohs* do good, if he would ever go to a *bomoh*, his response (which was typical of many others) was, "I wouldn't want to mess with that spiritism stuff."

As recently as 1971, Ryan (1971:71) wrote that the traditional healers such as the *bomohs*, though fast losing their influence, were still the medical practitioners of first resort. Islamic orthodoxy, and, in this case, especially secularism, have joined forces to squelch centuries-old traditional Malay beliefs and practices. Most of the students, in fact, gave information

about *bomohs* quite tentatively, freely admitting a general ignorance of these matters.

The students were on even more unfamiliar territory when it came to the question of spirits and of a soul substance or vital life force (items 38-40 on the questionnaire). For millennia, the peoples of Malaya have believed that all objects, whether animate or inanimate, have a *semangat* (soul or vital force). The coming of Islam did not alter this belief. At least as late as 1970 (Endicott 1970:50), it appears that it was virtually universally accepted by Malays that all objects have *semangat*. Von der Mehden (1987:183) reported in 1987 that, although Islam taught against it, a substantial portion of the rural population as well as less educated urban migrant Malays maintained this belief.

As we have mentioned, the Malays believed in an elaborate network of spirits: good, bad, and neutral, which had to be placated to ensure benefit and avoid disaster. Islam teaches the existence of angels and *jinn*,¹² but generally denies the existence of the innumerable spirits, specters, fiends, demons, vampires, ghosts and were-tigers of traditional Malay folklore. Traditional Malay primal religion taught that unusually shaped trees, rocks, and other such objects held a high concentration of *semangat* (vital force) and were thus the locus of various

¹²*Jinn* are intelligent spirit beings who, endowed with freedom of choice, can be either good or bad. Evil or *kafir* (infidel) *jinn* try to lure human beings away from submission and obedience to God. Good (Muslim) *jinn* do the opposite.

spirits. Places of mystery, like swamps, jungles, caves, and mountains were believed to be the habitation of spirits, and prayers and/or offerings had to be offered to the spirits when one crossed into their territory. This brings us to items 38 and 39 of the questionnaire.

Do younger generation Malays still believe that spirits reside in various places, such as swamps and jungles? The answer is mostly "yes" (see App. F, p.533, Q#38). Sixty respondents strongly agreed that spirits do reside in various places. Twenty-one others responded with "Agree." Another 11 were undecided, ten disagreed, and six strongly disagreed that spirits inhabit various places.

Women without a head covering were the most agreeable to the notion of spirits residing in certain locations. They were also the ones who were most likely to believe that special care must be taken not to offend these spirits. For some Malays, their reluctance to adopt the orthodox Islamic lifestyle is possibly due in part to a clinging to an old belief system that is at odds with orthodox Islam.

A few decades ago, hardly a Malay would have questioned the existence of territorial spirits. That a full fourth of the respondents were at best unsure that such spirits exist indicates that a monumental worldview change is taking place. Furthermore,

a majority of those who do believe in the spirits, do not believe special care must be taken not to offend them.¹³

This is not to say that belief in the spirit realm is a thing of the past in Malay culture. To say that there is no need to try not to offend the spirits, is not the same as saying that some Malays do not, therefore, make special efforts to appease the spirits. As one Malay put it, "We're not supposed to give the spirits a second thought. Allah will take care of them. But it's automatically on our minds. We're conditioned to be worried about spirits." Another student said that there is no need to make special offerings to try to appease the spirits, but people do it just in case.

There is, as the questionnaire responses indicate, a general acceptance of the realm of the spirits, though this is for most of the students a matter of intellectual ascent rather than personal experience. Thus, most of the Malay students believe in spirits, but don't bother with them or think about them enough to feel that they need to be attended to. For nearly all of the students I interviewed, the spirit realm is simply not of vital concern. For those who are more secular minded, the spirit realm is, for all practical purposes, nonexistent. "Most people aren't

¹³As for the question of whether territorial spirits exist, the most common response was "Strongly Agree," followed in descending order by "Agree," "Uncertain," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." The response was completely inverted for the question that special care must be taken not to offend these spirits. Here the most common response was "Strongly Disagree," followed by "Disagree," "Uncertain," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree" (see App.F, p533, Q's#38,39).

afraid that spirits will hurt them. Most don't think about them. People believe they exist, that's all." For the more devout Muslim Malays, their strong belief in the sovereignty of God has removed from them as well the daily burden of dealing with the spirits. Thus, "If you are strong in religion, there is no need to think about the spirits." Similarly, "There are other beings created by God, but we aren't to bother with them. They can't harm us unless God wills."

The question as to whether or not all things, animate and inanimate, possess a soul-substance or vital life force, addresses again the issue of the degree to which orthodox Islamic teaching is supplanting traditional Malay beliefs. It is in regard to this very belief about the nature of the world, the fundamental primal religious belief that all things are energized or "alive" with a special life force, that we see the greatest change in the direction of orthodox Islamic belief. How much of the change is due to the recent influence of secular naturalism is unclear, but certainly belief in Islamic orthodoxy is gaining ground. That this is the case is signified by the fact that many of the students were caught off-guard by this subject, stating that they had never really thought about it. The very word *semangat* has lost its meaning for some. They said that it means only "spirit" or "enthusiasm," as in "team spirit." Others suggested alternative words for the concept of soul. For all, their thinking on this subject was fuzzy. Thirty-one students had no opinion on this matter and were thus labeled "Undecided."

Only four students believed that all objects have *semangat* (see App.F, p.534, Q#40).¹⁴

There was about an even number of students who completely dismissed the idea of *semangat* for non-humans as there were students who supposed that *semangat* inhabits non-humans, but that inanimate objects cannot possess it. Of these latter, about half believed *semangat* was confined to humans and animals, while another half allowed that *semangat* extended to plants as well.

With regard to the concept of *semangat*, a worldview wedge has clearly been driven into the minds of younger generation, well-educated Malays at least. Some expressed that old folks and villagers in particular believe in *semangat* very strongly. Yet, for the Malay students in the United States, like the world of the spirits, the belief in *semangat* is at best irrelevant to their daily concerns. One student summed it up as follows, "It's God's business. We don't concern ourselves with these things."

¹⁴None of the students who believed all objects have *semangat* were new students, suggesting that students do not develop more orthodox beliefs while in the United States. If anything, it is the other way around. (The fact that none of the new students believed all objects have *semangat* may be an indication that Islamic teaching in Malaysia is making headway year by year. The new, younger students had been exposed most recently to Malaysian Islamic teaching.) The one-year students were the most likely to accept the concept of *semangat*, indicating a possible U-curve phenomenon in which students in the middle of a sojourn, and thus psychologically the most distant from Malaysia, are more likely to veer from an orthodox position. In this case, the disproportionate amount of one-year students who wear a veil was not a factor because neither group of women was less or more likely to believe in the concept of *semangat*.

Universal Islam Vs. Malay Nationalism
and Tradition in Malaysia

We move now to the practical, nitty gritty outworkings in society on Malay Muslim belief. Their lofty rhetoric of the absolute "rightness" of Islam aside, how willing are they to call for the full implementation of Islam when Malaysian inter-ethnic relations, Malay tradition, and Malay ethnic exclusiveness are at stake? To begin with, do Malay students agree that to restore God's rule and inaugurate a true Islamic social order, Western-inspired civil codes must be replaced by Islamic law, which is the only acceptable blueprint for Muslim society (item 41 of the questionnaire)? Malays are polarized on the question of the importance of Malaysia becoming a Muslim state. Items 41 and 42, the two that deal the most specifically with this issue, got the largest number of responses in both the "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" choices (see App. F, pp.534-535, Q's#41,42).

Actually, many more strongly disagreed (66) than strongly agreed (18) that Western-inspired civil codes must be replaced by Islamic law. There were three times as many students who thought it not necessary to replace Western-style governments, as there were who believed Western civil codes must be replaced by Islamic law.

More students also believed that Malaysia should not become an Islamic state, though here the majority was much smaller (see

App. F, p.535, Q#42).¹⁵ Evidently, there are those who want Malaysia to become an Islamic state, but who do not believe it is necessary to do away with Western-inspired civil codes for this to happen.

The students on both sides of the issue showed a sensitivity to the pluralistic context of Malaysia. They understand that the immediate implementation of Islamic law would set off the inter-ethnic powder keg. Consequently, those in favor of establishing a new Islamic order, cautioned that it must be done slowly and incrementally. One woman said, "Malaysia is on the way (to becoming an Islamic state), and that's good, but it will be a long, gradual process."

Those who do not want to see Malaysia become an Islamic state, the majority of the respondents, believe it would be bad for a religiously pluralistic country like Malaysia. Some said that they don't like what they see happening in the state of Kelantan, where PAS (the Islamic Party of Malaysia)--dominated fundamentalists are beginning to enforce strict Islamic law on everyone. A number were actually so bold as to express opinions which they understood to be contrary to Islam. One man said that he believes that Islam requires that Muslim citizens work for the establishment of an Islamic government, but that he doesn't want that because it would be bad for Malaysia. Likewise, a woman

¹⁵Fifty eight answered "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that Malaysia should **not** become an Islamic state. Thirty six answered "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree," indicating that they do think that Malaysia should become an Islamic state.

said that she knows that Islam requires the implementation of Islamic law whenever Muslims are in the ascendancy (as they are in Malaysia), but she believes that if Malaysia became an Islamic state, people of other religions would suffer. I questioned the woman on this point to make sure we both understood what she was saying. "Are you saying that something that Islam calls for would actually be a bad thing?" She answered, "Yes." I followed up on this by asking, "Wouldn't it be true, according to your understanding of Islam, that if the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia lived under Islamic law, they would really be better off, though they may not see it that way." Unhesitatingly, she answered that it would not.

This woman's forthright willingness to challenge Islam is nothing short of amazing. It shows that the Malays are not all cookie cutter replicas of the same exact Islamic mold. Her open criticism of Islamic policy is clearly exceptional. Yet, the student answers as a whole reveal that when it comes down to a choice between the official Islamic party line and expediency, a majority of the Malays opt for expediency. As one young man put it, "Western legal systems should be replaced by Islamic ones, but it depends on the situation."

Item 43 seeks to determine how far the fundamentalist Malays are willing to push Islam on all Malaysians. Some, in fact, call for all Malaysians to live according to the *Shari'ah* (see App. F, p.535, Q#43). The majority of the students, though, even of those desirous of an Islamic state in Malaysia, believe that non-

Muslims should **not** be required to adhere to the *Shari'ah*.

Betraying a contradictory sort of logic, one young man said that Muslims are required to obey the *Shari'ah* laws, but that non-Muslims should not be, because "there is no force in Islam."

Item number 44, which asks whether the *Shari'ah* law should be left as is, or if it should be more strictly or less strictly enforced, is designed to see which is the stronger force among the Malay students, the fundamentalist faction, or the more moderate Malays. Here, in contrast to the two former items, the more strict Islamic answer, the one calling for a stricter enforcement of Islamic law, was the majority response (see App. F, p.536, Q#44). Seventy students said the *Shari'ah* should be more strictly enforced, compared to 38 who said that it should be left as is. None said that the *Shari'ah* should be less strictly enforced.

A tying together of questionnaire items number 41 through 44, those concerning the implementation of Islamic law in Malaysia, shows that, although there is considerable polarization of opinion, a majority of the students do not want to see Islamic law replace civil law in Malaysia. Congruent with this, a majority of the students do not believe that *Shari'ah* law should be forced upon non-Muslims. On a more personal level, most of the Malays believed the *Shari'ah* should be more strictly enforced among Muslims. The overall effect of the responses appears to be that the students are calling for a limited Islamic resurgence. They want the Malay Muslims to practice Islam more devoutly, but

they do not want Islam forcibly to cross the line into the non-Muslim peoples and thus upset the delicate inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia.¹⁶

Another way of looking at this is to see it as the Malays pulling the draw strings tighter around themselves, reinforcing Malay ethnic identity and exclusivism by enforcing Islam for Malays only. This Malay-equals-Islam-and-Islam-equals-Malay mentality makes it hard for outsiders to get into the Malay world, and it also makes commitment to Islam all the more important for Malays.

The next topic (questionnaire item 45), participation in traditional cultural practices,¹⁷ was another, along with the issues of appropriate dress and the traditional wedding ceremony, which was of pressing interest to the students and thus generated much response. The general, overall response is that Malays

¹⁶In all four questions related to the implementation of Islamic law, Malay women who wear a head covering took the strictest Islamic position, while those women who do not wear a head covering took the least fundamentalist position. This indicates that the obvious is true; those who wear Islamic dress are more likely to support implementation of Islam, and those who dress more Western are less likely to be in favor of strict enforcement of Islamic law.

¹⁷The practices mentioned in the questionnaire include the *makyong* play, the *joget* dance, and the *main pantai* festival. The *makyong* play is a form of drama which includes music, dancing and narrative. Its roots are in Hindu tales brought directly from India or by way of Java. The *joget*, also of Hindu origin, is danced to music similar to the South American rumba or samba and is full of improvisations. The *main pantai* (beach play) festival is a beach festival that marks the beginning of the fishing season. The original intent of the festival was to make offerings to the spirits of the sea so that they will protect and aid the fishermen.

should not participate in such practices (see App. F, p.536, Q#45). This is interesting in light of the Malaysian Tourism Department's current promotion of just such practices and the resultant revival of traditional dance especially. It shows the far reaching impact of Islamic teaching on the lifestyle of younger generation Malays.¹⁸

The Islamic influence, which has been strong enough to challenge the legitimacy of centuries-old, traditional practices, has taught younger generation Malays what they must believe, but it has by no means changed the way many of them actually feel about certain Malay traditions. The students' responses, overall, reveal a cerebral commitment to Islam, while maintaining an emotional attachment to much that has long been a part of Malay culture.

This attitude is exemplified by three Malay young women who all agreed unhesitatingly that a good Muslim would not participate in or condone traditional Malay dance. Yet, they each had something more to say. Haslina restated her understanding that "Islam says it's wrong," but then confided,

¹⁸Ironically, women who don't wear a head covering were more likely to say they oppose participation in traditional cultural practices than were their counterparts who do cover their hair (see App.F, p.536, Q#45). This is even stranger considering that the women who actually perform such practices come from the ranks of those who do not observe the Islamic dress code. The student interviews revealed that many of those who participate in traditional forms of cultural expression actually believe such practices to be wrong for Muslims. This underscores my contention that less observant Malay Muslims are often not less knowledgeable of Islamic teaching or less committed to the "truth" and "rightness" of Islam.

"Personally, I see nothing wrong with it." Fatimah, though acknowledging that, according to Islam, such practices should be ended, stated that it would be a tragedy if these things did die. After all, it is good to preserve culture. Min considered Malay dance to be beautiful, and admitted that she was confused that some "good" things are forbidden by Islam. None of the three young women could articulate why Malay dance is harmless and even good, yet forbidden. They all fumbled for words to try to reconcile this. They could not solve the dilemma or explain their viewpoint to my satisfaction.

Others had a definite understanding of why certain practices are forbidden. For some, association with religious spiritism is what marks some practices as off-limits. This is especially true of Malay festivals, which are, in the words of one student, "concerned with spirits, not with God." This contention is meaningless to some Malays, for whom such traditional practices have long since lost their association with the spirit world, and are practiced instead as a modern-day revitalization of what is perceived to be the traditional Malay culture. Such practices now serve mainly as Malay identity markers in the midst of a rapidly modernizing society in which rural ways are eroding. In either case, the Islamic purists see such practices as inimical to the implementation of an Islamic lifestyle.

Others reject traditional Malay practices for the reason that they often involve an inappropriate display of women (as in

dance). Similarly, some believe traditional cultural practices are wrong because they lead one away from concentration on God.¹⁹ One woman said that "all these are a waste of time, and promote hedonism."

A recurrent theme running throughout the student responses was that humans are weak, frail, and easily subdued by temptation. They expect to fail often. In their minds, fleshly desires will always run wild if given half a chance.²⁰ Anizah, an extremely devout Muslim woman, confessed, after stating that dancing is wrong, "I like to watch it. I can't control my desire. No one is perfect. Only Muhammad is perfect." Likewise, another strictly observant woman said that she too likes to watch Malay dance and drama. After all, "no one can devote oneself to Islam thoroughly. We are all weak humans." Still another, claiming to speak for the majority of Malays, said: "It (traditional dance) is against Islam, and we know we can't mix cultural practices with Islam. But we're only human, and so we like it." A not-so-observant Muslim young woman said that if she were more "spiritually prepared" she would be against

¹⁹At this point, several volunteered that it is the music itself that is dangerous. They stated that whenever one gets caught up or lost in music, it is wrong.

²⁰In Islam, there is no sanctification, no becoming holy, no overcoming the human bent toward sin (though "sin" is defined as human weakness rather than as a character flaw or as rebellion against God). In Islam, human weakness is corrected by submissive obedience and by right guidance, not by regeneration or Spirit empowerment.

traditional dance. She added that the very fact that it's forbidden makes it more appealing.

This same young woman said that Islam teaches that traditional dance is wrong, but that she believes it is acceptable to do it on occasion because "we need to be light-hearted and have fun once in a while." This quote introduces what I call the Malay relativization of Islamic commands. Many of the Malays state that Islam's laws are absolute, and then go on to make individual exceptions to the rule. In effect, they say that as a general rule, such and such is required or forbidden, but then make the rule relative to each particular situation. Many of the students who categorically denied that traditional cultural practices are acceptable, went on to state cases in which such practices are permitted, or at least excusable. Thus, traditional dance is wrong unless done among one's family. Or, it is all right if one doesn't "get carried away." Alternatively, it is acceptable if it promotes tourism and thus boosts the economy. Another example is that traditional dance is wrong, except when done to celebrate special occasions.

Others, in a similar vein, seek to privatize what in Islam is meant to be binding on the whole community and expressed through the group collectively. We are reminded here that the majority of students desire greater personal spiritual discipline, but do not want to see Islamic law implemented in Malaysia. Back to our discussion of traditional dance, a few students said that Malay dance is wrong **for them**, but that they

would hesitate to say that it is wrong for all Malays. Conversely, there were those who said that dancing is wrong in general, but that since it doesn't distract them from their faith, for them it is all right.

The next item for discussion, *silat* (questionnaire items 46 through 48), the traditional Malay martial art, is related to the above discussion in that it is a cultural practice that pre-dates Islam. *Silat* is distinct from the others mentioned in that the most popular form incorporates Islamic elements and consciously identifies itself as Islamic. Yet, *silat* is meant to go far beyond physical skills to include *ilmu kebatinan* (spiritual knowledge). Even today, the more advanced stages of self-defense and combat involve the evocation of a pantheon of spirits. Such helping spirits are effectively integrated with Islam by the use of opening and closing *silat* events with verses from the Quran. The following citation shows that spiritism is the underlying force beneath even the so-called Islamic *silat*:

All forms of *ilmu kebatinan* (spiritual knowledge) require the use of *jampi* or magical spells derived from animist and Hindu sources, with or without the use of sacred verses from the Koran. These Koranic verses usually serve as a kind of symbolic reinforcement of the magical technique of evocating (*seru*) spirits. They exist as introductions and endings to the spells, symbolically integrating and legitimizing a forbidden (*haram*) system of ideas with the orthodoxy of Islam. The evocation of spirits revolves around the notion that the souls (*semangat*, *roh*) of famous warriors of the past may be transferred into present human life forms, thereby enabling the person to obtain the same extraordinary qualities of physical/spiritual excellence of the dead warrior. (Rashid 1990:75)

I wanted to find out if the Malay students associate *silat* with Islam, and if so, whether or not they think it promotes "true" Islam. If the use of Quranic verses as magic formulas, as employed by *silat*, is considered a proper use of the Quran, and thus congruent with Islamic orthodoxy as they understand it, then the students are clinging to an *adat* (custom)-based, syncretistic Islam.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents did, in fact, believe that *silat* supports or promotes Islam (see App. F, p.538, Q#48).²¹ Most of the rest were undecided. The few who disagreed that *silat* supports Islam did not all believe that it is anti-Islam. Most of these believed it to be no more than a physical discipline. The very few who contended that *silat* and Islam are at odds, did so on the grounds that *silat* often involves women in unholy proximity to men, and immodestly clothed. For this reason, women with head coverings were generally less in favor of *silat* than were the other groups, while women without a head covering had the least objection to *silat*.

For the reasons already mentioned, a few were against the participation of women in *silat*. No one was opposed to men practicing *silat*. "What could possibly be wrong with *silat*?", they asked in surprise. It promotes physical conditioning, self-discipline, and self-defense, all regarded as praiseworthy in

²¹Because I added this item after I was well into the interviews, only 45 students were asked if *silat* supports Islam.

Islam, according to them. If that weren't enough, the use of the Quran is its official imprimatur.²²

We have been dealing with the Malay students' understanding of the compatibility of certain specific cultural practices with Islam. We now consider the question of Malay culture as a whole (questionnaire item number 56). Has universal Islam advanced enough in Malaysia for Malay students actually to question their very cultural identity? Put simply, do the students believe that Malay culture is against true Islam? Only one student stated that Malay culture is categorically incompatible with Islam (see App. F, p.542, Q#56). Five students answered that they agreed, but did not strongly agree that this was the case. On the other side of the spectrum, none strongly disagreed and only two disagreed with the statement that Malay culture is against Islam. The remaining one hundred students were somewhere in between.

As we have observed, Malaysian society is sending mixed messages about the importance of Malay traditional ethnic identity. The Islamic resurgence movement brings with it an ideology that condemns ethnic particularism. Yet, the Islamization campaigns have helped spur reactionary religious

²²There are many devout Malay Muslims who seek to abide by the Quran and *Hadith*. Yet, the Quran is more adored than it is read and studied. (Very few Malays understand Arabic, though they pronounce the characters). The uncomprehending recitation of the Quran can produce a spiritual high, and is believed to be meritorious. Even the most observant Malay Muslims accept the use of the Quran as a kind of talisman (though they wouldn't articulate it as such), by which spells may be counteracted, diseases cured, enemies weakened, and spiritual powers gained.

revivalism among all the major Malaysian religions (Ackerman and Lee 1988:55-60). Such religious fervor is fueled in part by an effort by Malaysia's non-Muslim minorities to bolster their own cultural and religious identities, which they perceive as being threatened by a Malay religious onslaught. The result is a vicious circle of defensive entrenchment in ethnic-empowered and empowering religion. Add to this the fact that "Malay traditional culture" and the Islamic religion are competing for the position of supreme Malay identity marker in a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing society.

Twenty five students (23%) admitted that they had never given the topic much thought, and were basically clueless as to the compatibility of Malay culture and Islam. Many students responded by giving percentages of what is acceptable and what is not. For example, a student might say that Malay culture is 70% all right and 30% bad. Twenty nine students (27%) believed Malay culture to be divided about fifty-fifty between acceptable and non-acceptable elements. Thirty two students (30%) said that most of Malay culture is fine, compared to 14 (13%) who said that most is not compatible with Islam. Taking all the responses into account, approximately one-fifth of the students think that Malay culture is mostly incompatible with Islam; one-half are unsure or believe it is half good and half bad; and one-third think that Malay culture is mostly compatible with Islam.

The student responses reveal a striking ambivalence on this issue. There is clearly no consensus.²³ One woman commented that "Much of Malay culture is unacceptable. That's why it's hard for Malays to fully accept Islam." Until the matter is resolved in the minds of Malays, Islam will be used both to threaten and establish Malay identity.²⁴

Malays are divided, even confused, as to whether Malay culture is against true Islam. What about nationalism? Do Malay students believe that the spirit of universal Islamic community calls for a weakening of nationalistic interests? Here again, the Malays are polarized, but far more likely to believe that

²³Evidently identifying culture as specific external forms, women who wear a head covering were markedly more likely than any other group, to believe Malay culture is incompatible with Islam. It is also the case that new students were less inclined than one- and two-year students to view their culture as antithetical to Islam.

²⁴Most of the Malay students interpreted culture as the external elements, such as dress, traditional dance, drama, and ceremonial functions, things that might be exhibited at a cultural show for tourists. If this is what they see as Malay culture, then Islam will always be at odds with their understanding of their culture. There will always be those who hold on to these traditional practices as sacrosanct and view their demise as the loss of Malay ethnic distinctives vis-a-vis the faceless mass of industrialized, urbanized humanity. The more orthodox Malays will jettison such cultural trappings, believing that the world Islamic community calls them to forego ethnic particularities.

Culture in the broader sense of the total framework of a given people cannot be erased so easily. Malay culture, in the form of values, family and sexual roles, social relations, and worldview, is not threatened by Islam. Although Islam demands conformity to an external system (times and mode of prayer, fasting, dress, and mental assent to certain basic theological tenets), in order for it to thrive in any society, it must, in fact, adopt to the deeper level cultural patterns. Therefore, Islam can bend to fit Malay culture, leaving the essentials of Malay culture fully intact.

nationalism does not oppose Islam (see App. F, p.538. Q#49). In fact, 57 of the 98 responses to the statement "Nationalism (*rasa kebangsaan*) is opposed to the spirit of Islam" were "Strongly Disagree," and another 21 were "Disagree." On the other side of the issue, only ten students responded with "Strongly Agree," and two with "Agree."²⁵ Eight were undecided.

It is noteworthy that all twelve of the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses were from women who wear a head covering. All who believed that nationalistic interests are inimical to the goals of Islam were women who wear conservative, Islamic dress. There is a type of devout, fundamentalist Malay Muslim who is not interested in promoting Malay welfare as such, but is truly impartial in its Islamization goals. Why none of the equally devout men interviewed responded with this block is a mystery. Perhaps there are more Malay women than men whose Islam is intrinsically motivated to the point that Malay concerns are truly subservient and even contrary to the interests of worldwide Islam. Or perhaps this reflects the fact that women do not hold high political posts in Malaysia, and thus are less inclined to have nationalistic interests.

Islamic lifestyle and standards of dress are by no means, however, indicative of one's stance on this matter. There were many *tudung*-clad women who strongly agreed, but even more who

²⁵This means that approximately 80% of the students do not believe that nationalism opposes Islam, compared to only about 12% who do.

strongly disagreed with the assertion that nationalism opposes Islam. Many felt that Islam promotes nationalism. Some went so far as to say that nationalism "goes hand in hand with Islam," meaning that Islam operates and carries out its purposes through the vehicle of the nation state.

Some believed that nationalism is good to the degree that the country is Islamic. They cautioned that love for one's nation must never supersede one's love for Islam. Islam must be one's primary allegiance. Others, who earlier stated that Malaysia should not become an Islamic state, also believed that nationalism is supported by Islam. For them, Islam encourages any people to have pride in their country. They see pride in their Malayness, regardless of its relationship to Islam, as good and Islam-approved.

The issue of nationalism (*rasa kebangsaan*--literally, love of nation/country) led some students to bring up the related, but not identical, concept of "*rasa kemelayuan*" (love of Malayness, or ethnic pride).²⁶ Whereas a large majority of the Malays were in favor of nationalism, they were evenly divided on the issue of ethnic pride. Both sides use Islam to back up their position. In fact, they both appeal to Muhammad and Arabic culture. Those who see Malay ethnic pride as supported by Islam, argue that Muhammad's sentiments that he was proud to be an Arab and loved the Arabic language and culture are an example for all that love

²⁶After learning of *rasa kemelayuan*, I questioned the remaining 26 interviewees on this subject.

of one's own people and language are appropriate. The opposite view is that Muhammad was mandating that the Arabic-Islamic culture is to be emulated by Muslims everywhere, and that individual cultural peculiarities should be set aside in favor of worldwide Islamic unity and even uniformity.

In a nutshell, some link nationalism with ethnic pride and reject both as opposed to the spread of universal Islam. Others see nationalism as supportive of Islam, but ethnic pride as counter to Islam. Still others accept both nationalism and ethnic pride as fully compatible with Islamic principles.

A major force in explaining the role of Islam is the interactive relationship between religion and ethnicity to most Malays. According to the Constitution, "Malay means a person who professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom" (Malaysian Constitutional Documents 1962:124). At this point, it is important to note the general and sturdy acceptance among Malays of the concept of the identity of Islam with being Malay. Observers over the decades have regularly commented on this relationship. Writing of literary responses, T.S. Chee (1975:87) states, "Religion or the belief in Islam is not the end result of rational analysis, but a symbol of Malayness." Sharon Siddique (1972:27) wrote that to become a Malay and to become a Muslim are inseparable, and Manning Nash (1974:253) said of the rural Malay, "Religion in the context of Kelantan is an interesting cognitive term. For

Malays, it is not separable from ethnic identity or cultural heritage. In Kelantan, Malay equals Muslim."

Has the resurgence movement of the past two decades changed this thinking by emphasizing the universal community of Islam that transcends ethnic and nationalistic distinctives? For Malays now, does Malay still equal Muslim? Also, does an extended stay in the U.S. contribute to a "de-ethnicizing" of Islam in Malaysia?

The answer to the first question (based on the student responses to item number 50 of the questionnaire) is that it appears that a wedge is being driven between Malayness and Islam, separating the two at least in theory in the minds of most Malay students. Eighty seven of the 108 students (81%) either agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible to be a Malay and not be a Muslim (see App. F, p.539, Q#50). In fact, the "Strongly Agree" choice, which was chosen 74 times, was by far the most popular response. Many students followed up their answer by saying that Islam is a religion; Malay is a race, putting Malayness and Islam in clearly separate categories.

Although most of the students believed that with a very few exceptions, all Malays are Muslims (Some believed there were no non-Muslim Malays), one Malay ventured that almost 1% of Malays are not Muslim.²⁷ A couple of the more devout students opined

²⁷As small a percentage as 1% is, it is a gross overestimation of the number of Malays who do not claim to be Muslim. Certain fundamentalist Muslims in Malaysia greatly exaggerate the success, and thus the threat of Christian evangelism among Muslims, in order to stir the populace against Christianity.

that not even all Malays who say they are Muslims are really Muslims. God alone knows who are the truly faithful from among the Malays who identify themselves as Muslim. So, fundamentalist Islam has brought the believer versus unbeliever distinction right inside the Malay Muslim camp.

There remains still the hard-line minority who insist that Malayness and Islam are inseparable. These claim that Malays who convert to another religion cease to be Malays. Two students went so far as to claim that the biggest sin for a Muslim is to convert.²⁸

What factors influence Malay students' thinking on this matter? Does an American sojourn make Malays less likely to correlate Islam with Malayness? The students' responses indicate that this does not happen at all. It was the new students who had the highest percentage (86%) of respondents who believed it is possible for a Malay not to be a Muslim. Next were the one-year students (80%). The two-year students were the least likely to agree (74%) that a Malay could be a non-Muslim and still be a Malay. For the students I interviewed, in general, the less time they were in America, the more universal their Islam. Thus, it was not something they learned in the United States. If anything, the U.S. sojourn causes Malays to become increasingly entrenched in an ethnic enclave mentality that guards Malayness

²⁸This is counter to Islamic theology, which declares that the supreme sin is *shirk* (idolatry, the association of anything with God).

at all costs, and associates Islam with Malay ethnic identity and interests. The new students' response may indicate an opposite trend in Islamic teaching in Malaysia.

Another twist to this subject is that women who wear a veil (placing them among the most observant Malay Muslims), were clearly less agreeable than the students overall to the notion that one could be a Malay but not be a Muslim. This tells us that the most fundamentalist Malays do not necessarily adopt a more universal, less ethnicity-bound, Islam. It may well be that the reverse is more often the case.

Having established that most of the Malay students admit that it is **possible** to be a Malay and not be a Muslim, we discover that there is not such widespread agreement that Malays should then be free to choose whatever religion they wish. Questionnaire item number 51 addresses this issue.

The students' responses were strongly polarized. Forty students chose the "Strongly Agree" response to the statement that a Malay should be free to choose whatever religion she or he wishes.²⁹ The next most common response was "Strongly Disagree," chosen by 32 students (see App. F, p.539, Q#51). The student length-of-stay divisions, and the sex and head covering divisions responded in the exact pattern that they did for the previous question. The longer the students were in the United States, the less likely they were to believe that Malays should be free to

²⁹This is, to me, a surprisingly large number of students to state that the religious options for Malays should be open.

choose their religion. Also, the women who wear a head covering were less likely than average to believe Malays should be free to choose.

Many of those on the "should-not-be-free-to-choose" side stated simply that a Muslim cannot change religion. Others, holding a more ethnic-based position, said that Malays were meant to be Muslims because they were born Muslims.³⁰ One student, following similar logic, said, "Malays must be Muslims because we're Muslims traditionally."³¹

A majority of the students stated that Malays should be free to choose their religion. After all, as I heard time and again, "there is no compulsion in Islam." This finding should not be interpreted, though, to mean that Malays are in fact free to opt out of Islam, or even that these Malay students themselves would even allow for such an occurrence in actual practice. Though the students are convinced, or, at least, intend to give the impression, that Islam affords them total freedom, they qualified their answers to this question to such an extent as to deny conversion from Islam as a live option.³²

³⁰Many of these same students drop this line of reasoning when it comes to those of other faiths. Those born into a strong non-Muslim religious tradition are not justified in remaining so when presented with the option to convert to Islam.

³¹This student conveniently ignored the fact that Malays remained predominantly Hindu for eight centuries after Muhammad, and have a non-Muslim religious heritage that is much longer than their Islamic one.

³²A couple who said that Malays are free to choose and that there is no compulsion in Islam, went on to explain that when a

Some said that Malays have free choice, but that it would be "very wrong" to leave Islam. Several who conceded that, in theory, a Malay could or should be free to change religions, stated that it is absolutely absurd to think that a Malay would ever even consider doing so. It's possible, but unthinkable. When I asked students what they would do if one of them ever left the Islamic fold, they stated emphatically, after assuring me that it would never happen, that they would not and could not tolerate such apostasy. Such a person would be an outcast, and subject to verbal and physical "correction" until the person came to his or her senses and re-embraced the true path. Thus, it is obvious that, even for those who opt for choice, there is no freedom allowed.

It is clear then that there is no leeway for Malays in religion. There is an assumed connection, in fact if not in theory, between Malay identity and Islam. In Malaysia itself, this connection is largely in tact, for with relatively few exceptions, the Islamic population is coterminous with the Malay population.

Do the Malays desire to guard this exclusive identification of Malay ethnicity with Islam, or do they seek a more inclusive, universal Islam which would extend itself to engulf other peoples? Questionnaire item 52 asks whether they think Islam should be propagated so that it becomes as much the faith of the

Malay marries a non-Muslim, the Malay **cannot** convert, and the non-Muslim **must** convert.

Chinese and Indians as it has been for the Malays. In the most general terms, most any Malay would idealistically say that Islam eventually will spread throughout all the nations of the earth. Malays, moreover, pride themselves in being full-fledged and active members of the worldwide Islamic community. Getting down to the nitty-gritty of face-to-face ethnic relations in Malaysia, though, Malays aren't quite so sure that they want to embrace their Chinese and Indian compatriots. The student responses demonstrate that there is no Malay consensus here (see App. F, p.540, Q#52). Malays are, as a group, divided over this very issue. The largest response, 50 (46%), actually disagreed that Malays should "evangelize" the Chinese and Indians in their midst. Yet, 28 (26%) strongly agreed that such propagation of Islam is essential, and another ten responded with the less emphatic "Agree".³³ Seventeen students were undecided on this question, indicating, again, a high degree of ambivalence. One quite devout young man embodied the Malay position by saying, in response to the question of whether Islam must be propagated to

³³ Here, as in several other responses, the women who wear a head covering were the most committed to a strict implementation of Islam (in this case, the propagation of Islam to others), and the women without a head covering were the least strict. This does not necessarily mean that the women without a head covering have a more exclusive, ethnic-based Islam. It is more likely that the less observant Malays are less committed to the spread of Islam simply because Islam is not as important to them as it is to those who are more devout.

the Chinese and Indians, "'Religiously speaking, yes. Socially and culturally, it is not a good idea.'"³⁴

Another point is that all the students, regardless of their answer to this item, expressed a cultural sensitivity, conditioned as they are by long-standing inter-ethnic relations. Even the most adamant about the necessity of the spread of Islam to the Chinese and Indians, cautioned that it must take place gradually, through time, and that conversion to Islam must be preceded by teaching, based on understanding, and never coerced.³⁵

We have just seen that Malays are divided on the importance of extending Islam to the non-Malays in Malaysia. What of non-Malays who do become Muslims? Are they then considered Malays? The historically close connection in Malaysia between being Malay and being Muslim is seen in the fact that Muslim converts were said to "*masuk Melayu*" ("enter Malayhood"). Are Malay ethnicity and religion still so inseparably linked? The answer (based on item 53 of the questionnaire) is a resounding "no." Only seven students (6%) believed that converts become Malays, compared to 99 (92%) who did not believe so. There were only two undecided students (see App. F, p.540, Q#53). All seven of the students

³⁴It is amazing, even shocking, that a Malay Muslim, and a devout one at that, would suggest that what Islam calls for (its propagation to all people) would be less than ideal in actual practice.

³⁵The Malays held a general assumption that the truths of Islam are so self-evident and compelling that no rational person would reject Islam if she or he understood it well.

who believed Muslim converts become Malays, and one of the two undecided, were two-year students. On the other end of the spectrum, all 36 of the new students answered "Strongly Disagree" to the proposition that non-Malay converts to Islam become Malay. This suggests, as we have found before, that Malay university students in the United States do not develop a more universal, less narrowly ethnic-based Islam as a result of their overseas experience. If anything, it works the other way around.³⁶

Back to the initial question of identification of ethnicity with religion, the vast majority of students responded to item 53 by saying, "Of course not. Islam is a religion; Malay is a race." One perceptive student, who understands that ethnicity and religion are separate, said that in reality, Malaysian converts to Islam do ultimately become Malay. She explained by pointing out that a Chinese convert, for example, will marry a Malay (because converts must marry Muslims and nearly all Muslims are Malays), and subsequently adopt a Malay lifestyle. Eventually the convert will become more Malay than Chinese, and will be identified as one within the Malay community. So, in actual practice, for many in Malaysia, conversion to Islam does still mean to "*masuk Melayu*" ("enter Malayhood"). Yet, the Malay students' conscious separation between ethnicity and religion is a dramatic shift from Malay thought a generation or so ago.

³⁶Regarding the sex and head covering divisions, there was no major difference in response between these three groups of students.

A related issue is the question of whether or not Malaysian converts to Islam should receive *bumiputera* benefits. *Bumiputera* (literally "sons/princes of the soil") is the designation given aborigines and Malays, and connotes indigenous status. Those labeled *bumiputera* are eligible for educational scholarships, university and civil service positions, and low-interest loans that are not available to other Malaysians. The question here is whether the Malay students want special status to be granted to all Muslims equally, regardless of race or ethnicity, or whether they wish to preserve Malayness as uniquely special. Here, most opt for the latter, though a sizable minority believe that converts to Islam should, indeed, receive *bumiputera* benefits (see App. F, p.541, Q#54).

There are two possible interpretations of this data. One is that the Malays are putting their ethnic interests above all else and do not want anyone else, including non-Malay Muslims, entitled to the status that has long been the domain of the Malays. The other possible interpretation is that the Malays are again demonstrating that they know that ethnic and religious referents are independent, and as such, do not believe religion should be a factor in determining benefits offered on the basis of ethnicity. In line with this reasoning, several students suggested that if Chinese converts were to be given special privileges, it would be unfair to the rest of the Chinese. Whatever the motives for denying *bumiputera* status to non-Malay Muslims, the bottom line is that Malayness, rather than Islam per

se, remains the criterion for most-favored government status in Malaysia.³⁷

Another matter concerning the relationship of Malay with Islam is the question of whether the Malay students believe non-Muslim religions should not use *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay language) in their religious publications. The background to this question relates to the Malaysian national language policy. In the late 1960's, the Malaysian government began replacing English with *Bahasa Malaysia* as the medium of instruction in the public school system, and as the language of use in the civil service and judicial system. The non-Malay population balked at the implementation of the Malay language, but pro-Malay forces prevailed and the Malay language has steadily gained ground to replace English as the language of wider communication.

While the use of *Bahasa Malaysia* was encouraged and even enforced in nearly all sectors of society, in recent years the government has begun placing restrictions on its use in non-Muslim religious publications. As a means of protection against the alleged propagation of non-Islamic religions among Muslims, the sale and distribution of the *Alkitab* (the Malay Bible) have been greatly restricted, and certain states have enacted laws

³⁷Nagata (1974:340) demonstrates that Islam at times cuts across ethnic divisions, but has never been able to span the Chinese-Malay gulf. Similarly, Lee (1986a:72) shows that the government agencies responsible for Malay welfare adopt strategies to differentiate non-Malay Muslims from Malay Muslims (Such as making it illegal for non-Malays to take Malay or Arabic names) in order to control non-Malay access to Malay privileges.

prohibiting the use of various Arabic-based religious words by non-Muslims. These words, which Christians point out were used prior to the time of Muhammad, and are thus not the product or exclusive domain of Islam, include, among many others, such words as *Allah* (God), *Injil* (Gospel), *iman* (strong belief/trust), *nabi* (prophet), *rasul* (apostle, disciple, messenger of God), and *wahyu* (revelation through a vision or dream).

What this boils down to is an attempt to screen out all non-Muslim associations from religious expressions commonly used by Malays. In business, education, government, etc., non-Malays are forced to adopt the Malay language; in religion alone they are forced not to. This applies as well to Christian indigenes and other non-Muslim, non-Malays whose primary language is Malay. These are being asked to use a language other than their heart language (Malay) to express concepts closest to their hearts (religion).

Do our Malay university students believe that the Malay language should be, among the Malaysian religions, the exclusive domain of Islam? The answer here is that nearly all of the students do not believe so (see App. F, p.541, Q#55).³⁸ Most, in fact, were unaware that there are any restrictions on the use of

³⁸As in several other responses, the women who cover their head took the most hard-line Islamic position, and were thus the most inclined to believe that non-Muslims should not use *Bahasa Malaysia* for religious purposes. The more western-dressed women were the least likely to suggest that *Bahasa Malaysia* should be used only by the Islamic religion. Therefore, the more devout Malays, as expected, are the most likely to guard Muslims against non-Islamic religious encroachment.

the Malay language. They said things like, "It's good for them (those of other religions) to use it (*Bahasa Malaysia*)," and "The government encourages the use of *Bahasa Malaysia* in all instances." Only two students suggested that, although it is the right of all peoples of any religion to use the Malay language, some Malays would not like it if Malay was used by non-Muslims in religious contexts. In short, the Malay students do not seem threatened by the use of Malay in non-Muslim religious expression. This shows that most of them do not side with the Islamic fundamentalists on this issue. The segment of the Malay population represented by our interviewees, young Malays with a high level of English education and international exposure, appears to be open-minded on the question of Malay language use.

The next two items on the questionnaire also test the degree to which the Malay university students I interviewed align with the more fundamentalist Islamic faction in Malaysia. The first of these questions (item 57) asks if the students think that UMNO (The United Malay National Organization), the Malay ruling party, should try to make the Malaysian government more Islamic. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy. There are Islamic courts, but they remain subservient to British-based civil law. In that Islam calls for no separation of "church" and state, and that Islam in Malaysia is considered to be above being challenged, it is not surprising that a majority of the students said that UMNO should try to implement an Islamic government, or at least make

the current system more Islamic (see App. F, p.542, Q#57).³⁹

What is perhaps more telling is that a full quarter of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were uncertain as to whether UMNO should promote Islam.

The following question (item 58) asked if the students are satisfied with UMNO's level of commitment to promoting Islam. Being the ruling party through the tumultuous first decades after Malaysian independence, UMNO had of necessity to walk a tightrope between non-Malay demands and Islamic extremists. Consequently, UMNO historically has been viewed as the Malay party of accommodation, in contrast to PAS (the Islamic Party of Malaysia), which has wholeheartedly pressed for the full Islamization of the Malaysian government.

PAS criticizes UMNO for being too compromising and secular. UMNO, in turn, portrays PAS as extremist and out of touch with the realities of a pluralistic society. Recent government Islamization campaigns have diffused some of PAS's criticism of UMNO and have made the parties less polarized. Yet, government critics contend that UMNO's move in the Islamic direction is no more than a politically motivated concession to the challenges of PAS. In general, then, those satisfied with UMNO's level of commitment to promoting Islam will tend to be more moderate

³⁹Not surprisingly, the women who wear a head covering were the biggest proponents of government implementation of Islamization. Length of stay had no apparent effect on student views of this issue.

Muslims, while more fundamentalist Malay Muslims will be dissatisfied with UMNO in this regard.

The student responses show a great deal of diversity of opinion and uncertainty concerning the students' assessment of UMNO. Of the 71 responses to this question, the most common answer, picked by 25 students (35%), was "Uncertain" (see App. F, p.543, Q#58). Those satisfied with UMNO and those dissatisfied with UMNO were exactly equally divided with 23 students each. Also equally represented were comments that UMNO's recent moves in the direction of Islamization were sincere on the one hand, and politically motivated on the other.

The students expressed a marked cynicism about Malaysian politics and its interplay with Islam. In their view, politicians of every persuasion are tainted by the thirst for power, and use Islam for their own ends. PAS leaders, though more radical Muslims, are regarded as no more pure than the rest. One student spoke for many when he said, "Is UMNO sincere? I don't know. I don't care. What do you expect from politicians? The end result is what is important."

The students, in summary, are positioned on every point along the spectrum of whether or not they are satisfied with government Islamization. Many want Islamic reform. At the same time, many do not want the inter-ethnic tension that such reform would arouse. When it comes to their own multi-ethnic, multi-

religious society, a majority favor the more moderate, accommodationist UMNO-style Islam to the more radical PAS.⁴⁰

Proselytization

The next general topic covered in the interviews is proselytization. How committed to the spread of Islam are the Malay university students? On the other side of the coin, how tolerant are they of other religions' efforts to spread their faiths? Do the students think missionaries should be allowed in Malaysia, and do they believe the Malaysian government freely grants missionary visas?

They were first asked if Muslims should try to inform non-Muslims about Islam, and then asked if they should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam. As for the first and more moderate proposition, the students were in virtually universal agreement (83 "Strongly Agree", 24 "Agree", one "Undecided") that Muslims should inform non-Muslims about Islam. The new students were the most emphatic about this (34 "Strongly Agree", 2 "Agree"), followed by the one-year students (31 "Strongly Agree", 10 "Agree"), and lastly, the two-year students (18 "Strongly Agree", 12 "Agree", one "Undecided"). The two-year students were also slightly more tentative than the others in the assertion that Muslims should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam. Possibly the U.S. sojourn has some effect in causing Malays to be less aggressive in imposing Islam on others. By and large, though,

⁴⁰There were no significant differences among the student divisions regarding UMNO's implementation of Islam.

the students were united in their belief that Islam should be taught to non-Muslims. The students contended that Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the world, and that westerners especially have misconceptions about Islam.⁴¹

Though there is also overall agreement that Muslims should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam, some dissent was expressed (see App. F, p.544, Q#60). Surprisingly, six persons actually disagreed and one person strongly disagreed with the statement that Muslims should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam. Perhaps trying to live down the Muslim jihad image, the students cautioned against extremism. No less than 20 students who were in favor of Muslims attempting to convert non-Muslims, added immediately that there must be no force. Some students included that they do not want to feel pressure on their side either; i.e., they do not want to be expected themselves to try to convert non-Muslims.

As with so many issues, the Malays are simultaneously being pulled in opposite directions. Islam has coached them to seek to spread Islam. Tenuous and often tense relations with the Malaysian Chinese have coached them to be tolerant and seek harmony in order to preserve national unity. One student

⁴¹Von der Mehden (1983:18-31) has demonstrated that Americans are, in fact, largely ignorant of Islam. The worldwide Islamic movement is preempted by militant extremists insofar as the media are concerned and so the militants tend to define the Islamic resurgence for the American people. "Certainly, the movement in Indonesia and Malaysia is totally unknown outside the academic and corporate communities" (Von der Mehden 1983:28).

expressed the Malay ambivalence by saying that religiously speaking, Malays should try to convert the Malaysian non-Muslims to Islam, but that socially speaking, they should not.⁴² Another student, with blatant inconsistency, said at one point that Islam must and will be spread throughout the whole world, but later that it should not be propagated among the Chinese and Indians of Malaysia. As a general principle, a large majority of the students state unreservedly that Islam should be spread, but when it comes to face-to-face relations with their non-Muslim compatriots, some have a different story.

Moving to a more sensitive subject, we consider the students' views on whether or not it is acceptable for non-Muslims to convert Muslims to their faiths (questionnaire item 61). In a surprising display of tolerance, many more of the Malay students agreed than disagreed that it is acceptable for non-Muslims to try to convert Muslims (see App. F, p.544, Q#61). There were as many "Strongly Disagree" as "Strongly Agree" responses (31 each), showing sizable proportions of the students on opposite poles of opinion regarding this question, but there were, overall, 68 on the agree side of the continuum, compared to only 38 on the disagree side.⁴³

⁴²Here, again, we see a startling admission that what Islam calls for would not be the best solution in the Malaysian setting.

⁴³Of the head covering and sex divisions, only women wearing a *tudung* (head covering) were more likely to disagree than agree that it is acceptable for non-Muslims to try to convert Muslims. Among the length-of-stay divisions, only the two-year students leaned more toward believing non-Muslims must not try to convert Muslims. This is consistent with their stance on the previous two items, in

The belief by many that non-Muslims may try to convert Muslims does not signify an openness to Muslim conversions. Muslim converts, in the students' own estimation, would be social pariahs. To abandon Islam would be to commit the most heinous offense imaginable against the Malay community. The students who grant non-Muslims the right to try to convert Muslims, do so with the belief that such efforts would be fruitless, for "No Muslim who has a strong belief and a clear understanding of Islam will convert." The truth of Islam is so incomparably superior to all competing truth claims that no one who understands Islam would ever accept anything so comparatively inferior. The students, echoing their Islam teachers, state that Muslims are encouraged to consider counter truth claims because they help Muslims see the "Truth" more clearly when contrasted with the error inherent in all other religions. Moreover, the students claim that they are encouraged to learn about other religions so that they can understand others better.

The above claims of Malay Muslim openness are, in my opinion, so patently false in reality that it borders on the absurd that even the Malays could take such contrived claims

which they were less enthusiastic than new and one-year students about Muslims informing others of Islam and converting them to Islam. Maybe the time in the United States caused some to be all the more cautious about rocking the interreligious boat, regardless of the direction of persuasion. Possibly the American aversion to evangelism (brought on by the view that religion is confined to the realm of values or personal opinion, and as such, all positions must be tolerated, but none claimed as True in an absolute sense), particularly as evidenced in American academia, has rubbed-off on the university-educated Malays.

seriously. Malays are guarded from religious interaction with non-Muslims (especially Christians) with stark paranoia. Malay inquirers of Christianity are so hounded by their peers as to squelch all contact with Christians. Malay university students in the United States have even been transferred by their government to different schools precisely to avoid the kind of contact with Christians that involves open inquiry. It is true that Malays study non-Muslim religions, but they are permitted only to learn from Muslim teachers and through Islamic filters. Such "learning for understanding" is strictly to provide pat answers to questions raised by other belief systems, in order for the Malays to know exactly why they, as Muslims, are right.

Despite the above, the fact that a majority of our students believed that Muslims are legitimate targets of proselytization, is in itself significant, and places many of the students outside the camp of the most hard line fundamentalists who seek to stifle all non-Muslim religious expression.⁴⁴

Questionnaire item 63 tests Malay religious tolerance by asking whether non-Muslim missionaries should be allowed to propagate their faith in Malaysia. The students responded along the same lines as they had on the question of whether non-Muslims may try to convert Muslims, with approximately two-thirds

⁴⁴There is, to be sure, a double standard. As we have seen, Malays believe Muslims may try to convert non-Muslims. They are equally accepting of non-Muslims proselytizing non-Muslims. Yet, more than a third of the students stated that it is strictly unacceptable for non-Muslims to try to convert Muslims.

believing missionaries should be allowed, and one-third believing they should not (see App. F, p.545, Q#63).

Many who stated that missionaries should be accepted, qualified their response by saying that they should not be allowed to approach Muslims. Such a large qualification makes the Malay students, again, change their position when it comes to their own specific situation. They're willing to concede, as a general principle, that non-Muslims have a right to proselytize Muslims, but, restrict that right when it comes to non-Muslims approaching them.

The next question was designed to see if the Malay students are aware of the fact that their government, with a few token exceptions, no longer grants missionary visas.⁴⁵ Malay university students in the United States, exposed as they are to English and international relations, are in a position to be more attuned to Malaysian government policies regarding non-Malaysians than would be the average Malay.

The question (item 64) asks, "Does Malaysia freely allow such people (missionaries) to come to Malaysia?" Thirty-two students gave a very confident "yes", and an additional ten said

⁴⁵For years the Malaysian government has taken an increasingly restrictive stance on the admission of missionaries into Malaysia. Since independence, missionary quotas have been steadily lessened, and maximum lengths of stay have been imposed. As a rule, missionaries were not expelled. Rather, as visas expired and veteran missionaries left Malaysia, they were not allowed to be replaced. Gradually, the missionary force shrank to practically nothing.

"yes, except in Kelantan."⁴⁶ (see App. F, p.546, Q#64). These students stressed, mistakenly, that there is complete freedom of religion in Malaysia. Peering through rosy, government-propaganda-filtered glasses, they're oblivious to the actual state of affairs. Thirteen students, with a clearer view of reality, understood that Malaysia does not freely accept missionaries. The remaining 53 students said that they did not know. Five of these guessed that Malaysia does allow missionaries, and eleven guessed that Malaysia does not. Thirty-seven simply had no idea.

One might expect that the students who have been in the United States for a while would, perhaps through contact with Christians, have picked up on the fact that Malaysia restricts Christian work in Malaysia. This, it turns out, is not the case. Actually, the two-year students were the least aware of what is true. The American sojourn does not appear to provide the Malay students with a more informed view.

Overall, then, most of the Malay students believe their government imposes little if any restrictions on missionaries. However, it is not a matter about which they are deeply concerned or have given much thought. In general, they believe non-Muslims should be free to proselytize, but when it comes to themselves, many believe Malays should be off-limits.

⁴⁶Kelantan is the northeast Peninsular Malaysian state that is largely controlled by fundamentalist Muslims.

Basic Knowledge of Other Religions

We have also seen that the Malay students maintain that they are encouraged to study other religions and consider for themselves their truth claims. This next section seeks to determine just how knowledgeable the Malay students are of the basics of the major non-Muslim religions in Malaysia. We are especially interested in their understanding of Christianity and if their stay in the United States results in greater understanding of what Christianity actually teaches.

The students were asked four questions about Hinduism (Numbers 65-68), three about Christianity (69-71), and two about Buddhism (72-73). I was interested not in what they do and do not know about Hinduism and Buddhism, but only if they know significantly less or more about Christianity than about the other religions.

I wanted to find out what they know about basic Christian understanding of the Trinity, salvation, and the person of Jesus. In this case, I was especially interested in learning whether their knowledge of these subjects grows through their American experience. Does their exposure to American society, in which Christians and Christian information are readily accessible, help the Malay students to correct previously held misconceptions about what Christians believe?

The questions were too few and the sample too small to draw anything more than the most tentative conclusions from the data. The students had very nearly the same percentage of correct

answers for the questions relating to each of the three religions. Overall, the women who wear a head covering (signifying that they are devout Muslims), were the most well-informed about the beliefs of other religions, while women who dress more Western, and who thus tend to be on the more moderate end of the Muslim continuum, were the least knowledgeable. Regarding Christianity specifically, the Western-dressed women were still the least well-informed, but the men were as knowledgeable as the more devout women.

Keeping in mind the tentative nature of our findings, as for the question of correcting misconceptions, the new students, ironically, had the highest percentage of correct responses to the questions about Christianity. There are too many variables to pin down a hard conclusion, but it seems evident that the time in the States does not contribute to a greater understanding of Christian belief.

Let us now look at the specific points under question. The first item asked the students to identify the persons of the Trinity from the following options: a) God, Mary, and Jesus, b) God, Mary, and the Holy Spirit, c) God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, and d) don't know. Nearly half of the students chose option "a", believing the Trinity to consist of God, Mary, and Jesus. The most correct answer was the next most commonly chosen, followed by "don't know", and lastly by choice "b" (God, Mary, and the Holy Spirit), (see App. F, p.546, Q#69).

Ten of the 23 women wearing a head covering who responded to this item, correctly identified the Trinity. That was the best record. The least informed were the women who do not wear a head covering. Only three of 24 such women could identify the persons of the Trinity. In total, 56 of the 77 students who answered this question, could not correctly identify the persons of the Christian Trinity.

Did length of stay in the United States make a difference here? It may have. Thirty percent of the one- and two-year students answered correctly, compared to only 23 percent of the new students. A point of caution here is that the one-year students, who were the best informed on this issue, had a disproportionately high percentage of women who wear a head covering, and so the results of the one-year students may well be more a reflection of the knowledge of the more devout Muslims than they are of length of stay.

Of the three questions on basic Christian belief, the Malays were the most knowledgeable about who Christians believe Jesus to be. Questionnaire item 70 asks, "According to Christians, Jesus: a) was a great prophet, but not God, b) was born when God procreated with a woman, c) was God in human form, d) don't know." Forty-one of 76 students chose correctly. Twenty-two students said they didn't know; eight chose "a"; and five chose "b" (see App. F, p.547, Q#70). Here, it was the men who were the most likely to answer correctly. The responses of the two women groups were virtually identical. As for the length-of-stay

variable, it was the new students who had the highest percentage of correct answers.

The last question about what Christians believe, proved to be the most difficult for the Malay students. Questionnaire item 71 says, "According to Christians, salvation/paradise is gained through: a) belief in Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, b) doing more good things than bad things/ trying to be a good person, c) reciting the words of Jesus, d) attending church, e) don't know."⁴⁷ The most chosen answer was "e" (don't know), followed by "b" (doing more good things than bad things/trying to be a good person) (see App. F, p.547, Q#71). Only 16 of 87 students understood that Christians believe that salvation is gained through Jesus' death on the cross. Eleven students said Christians believe salvation comes from church attendance. Lastly, five students thought Christians believe that reciting the words of Jesus leads to salvation. As with the question about the Trinity, women wearing a head covering had the most correct answers, while women without a head covering were the most misinformed.⁴⁸ As was the case in the question about

⁴⁷The Malays, interestingly, did not understand the word "salvation," and so I usually had to substitute the word "paradise" in its place. The Christian concept of sin, and therefore the need for salvation, was foreign to the students I interviewed. Generally, then, the students were clueless as to the heart of the gospel message.

⁴⁸Overall, for the three questions, the more devout Muslims knew more of what Christians believe than did those who are less devout.

Jesus, the new students actually were the most well-informed, and the one-year students the least.

For all of their talk of Islam encouraging Muslims to understand the religious beliefs of non-Muslims, it is eye-opening to discover that only 16 of 87 students, students with English education and exposure to the West, had picked up that Christians believe Jesus' death on the cross is central to salvation. Malay international students are more likely to think that Christians believe that salvation is earned by doing good works. Such a student is also likely to believe that Christians believe the Trinity is made up of God, Mary, and Jesus.

The truth is that living in the United States apparently does nothing to correct these misconceptions. For the combined three questions about what Christians believe, the new students were right 39% of the time; one-year students were right 25% of the time; and two-year students answered correctly 32% of the time. I reiterate that the student sample is too small and the variables are too many to make hard conclusions, but it seems clear that Malay students in the United States are not availing themselves of opportunities to learn about Christianity, and Christians are not penetrating into the world of the Malays.

Religious Preferences

The next section concerns not what the Malays **know** about non-Muslim religions, but what they **think** about them. Because I am interested in Christian evangelism of the Malays, I wanted to know how the Malay students regard Christianity relative to other

religious options. At one point, the Quran states that Christians are nearest in affection to the faithful, and that God will count them among the righteous (Sura 5:82-85).⁴⁹ Do the Malays regard Christianity as better than other non-Muslim religions because Christianity and Islam share Abrahamic roots and because Christianity is monotheistic? Alternatively, do Malays regard Christianity as worse than other religions because of the historic conflict between Christianity and Islam, and/or the pro-Israel stance taken by many Christians, and/or the fact that, in Malaysia at least, Christianity has been much more aggressive in evangelism than have been the other non-Muslim religions? Also, do Malay students get a greater or lesser appreciation of Christianity as a result of their stay in the United States, or do their religious preferences remain unchanged?

In the students' ranking, Christianity fared quite well relative to the other non-Muslim religions in Malaysia. Christianity was ranked first overall, followed in order by a tie between Hinduism and Buddhism, then Judaism, Sikhism, traditional spirit religion, and no religion. There were 22 different combinations of student rankings of the order of personal preference of the religions (see App. F, p.548, Q#80). The most common response, chosen by 31 of the students, was that

⁴⁹This must be balanced, of course, with verses such as Sura 5:51, which labels Christians as wrongdoers and warns Muslims against taking them as friends, and which Muslims generally believe abrogates the sentiments in 5:82-85.

all religions are the same and that it is only bad to have no religion. Only two students stated that, of the options given, it is best to have no religion. This is because, according to them, a person with no religion has a clear mind and can more easily accept the truth of Islam. Such a person has less false teaching to reprogram.

Many more students were of the opinion that if one is not a Muslim it is still better to have religious belief than not to. Several students, in fact, made surprisingly open-minded statements about the good in all religions, some even implying that non-Muslim religions fill the role for non-Muslims that Islam does for Muslims. As one student said, "All religions are the same. Every religion is a guideline that limits passions and controls improper desires." Similarly, another student interjected, "I think all religions teach people to be better persons. It is just up to the individual to choose."

The students, as a whole, ranked "no religion" as the worst option. Malaysian traditional spirit religion (primal religion), though usually considered better than no religion, was far behind the other religions in the students' preference.⁵⁰ Fifteen students did consider traditional spirit religion as bad as having no religion, and five students actually felt that

⁵⁰Seven students considered primal religion as better than no religion, but not on par with the "universal" religions.

practicing primal religion was worse than having no religion at all.⁵¹

As mentioned, a majority of the students answered that, with the exception of primal religion for many, all religions are basically equal.⁵² By far, the majority of these indicated that all religions are good and benefit those who adhere to their teachings. Only a handful of students made a point of stating that all the non-Muslim religions are the same in that they are equally in error for rejecting the truth of Islam. According to these students, Islam alone fulfills human need and prepares its followers for paradise.⁵³

I was surprised that more Malays did not capitalize on this opportunity to contrast Islam favorably with other religions. Thirteen students, though, declined to rate the non-Muslim religions. This may be interpreted to mean that 13 students did not want to give the non-Muslim religions the dignity of putting

⁵¹This is because, as these students observed, primal religion is amoral, and the manipulation of power is sometimes used for harmful ends.

⁵²Sixty-eight of the 95 students (72%) who responded to this question, indicated that all the options were the same, or that all were the same with the exception of no religion and/or traditional spirit religion.

⁵³Two students said that early Judaism was true, and an additional couple of students said that both early Judaism and early Christianity were true. These students believe that Judaism and Christianity today are in error, along with all other non-Muslim religions, because they reject Muhammad as the final prophet.

them in any order of "preference." These students expressed discomfort at even discussing other religions.

Very few students gave Christianity a low ranking relative to the other options. In fact, a couple of students opined that, apart from Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, there are no belief systems that fit into the category of religion. Of the 95 responses, Christianity was considered equal to or better than the other options 89 times.

Significantly, all six of the persons who rated Christianity second or worse, were women who wear a *tudung*. Of these, three women placed Christianity, along with Judaism, as the worst option, and one woman ranked it above only no religion and primal religion. The woman in this last case said that her ranking was based on the level of devotion and commitment of the devotees to their religion. Christians, she felt, are half-hearted in their dedication.⁵⁴

Although sharing the same affinities with Islam that Christianity does, Judaism was not linked with Christianity. Overall, it was ranked beneath Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, and superior to only Sikhism, traditional spirit religion, and no religion. The students' low ranking of Judaism

⁵⁴Others expressed bewilderment at the number of Christians who put little into their faith. While some of this is a misperception based on the misconception that Christianity's lack of regimented external expression means a lack of religious zeal, there is enough genuine lack of practice of spiritual disciplines by many American Christians to make these students' observations an indictment against and challenge to the church to live in such a manner that others take notice of our love and good deeds.

is a direct reflection of the Malays' identification with the Arab Muslim world and its antipathy toward Israel.

Through time, the students' view of Christianity did not change. Christianity was the most favored religion by both the new students and those who had been in the United States a year or more.⁵⁵

These findings confirm our previous conclusion that, for most Malay students, an extended American sojourn does little if anything to change their knowledge of or attitude towards Christianity. Furthermore, if they make any distinction between non-Muslim religions, they are likely to say they prefer Christianity above the others. The history of Christian-Muslim relations in Malaysia, as well as my own experience with Malay university students, dictate that this is not due to sympathetic understanding of Christianity, or goodwill and affection toward Christians compared to persons of other religions. The high rating of Christianity stems from the fact that Malays understand Christianity in its ideal or pristine form (in their estimation) to be closer to Islam than is any other religion.

As I have said, this does not make Muslims relatively fond of Christianity, but makes some of them particularly dislike Christianity because they view it as a reprehensible perversion

⁵⁵The only change over time was that the students tended to have a higher view of Judaism the longer they stayed in the United States. My guess is that, being removed from the strongly anti-Israel bias of the Malaysian media causes some Malay students to see the Jews as less of an enemy.

of the truth, much as Christians view cults which have a Christian face.

What is even more important in shaping the Malays' view of Christianity is that they see Christian-Muslim relations as clearly adversarial. Here is where the legacy of the early colonial Christian crusading mentality continues. Moreover, the Malay students are conscious of the worldwide competition between Christianity and Islam. In their minds, the battle lines are drawn between precisely these two religions. This came up repeatedly in student comments and examples. When I would ask someone, "What would you think if your friend changed religions?", invariably the student would reply, "If my friend became a Christian . . ." When I asked whether they thought it was acceptable for a non-Muslim to try to convert a Muslim, they automatically thought in terms of Christian proselytization. When I talked about expatriate missionaries, they mentioned only Christians. Buddhism and Hinduism, though larger in Malaysia than is Christianity, do not represent the challenge that Christianity does.

Christianity and the United States

The last paragraph leads naturally to the question of whether the Malay students believe Christians are against Islam and the Muslim world (questionnaire item 84). The student responses show that they do indeed believe that Christians are against Islam (see App. F, p.551, Q#84). Of the 103 respondents to this question, only four did not think that Christians are

anti-Islamic. With ten undecided, the remainder were equally divided between responses of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree."

The survey results indicate a change through time in the students' view on this matter. The new students were much more decided than were the two-year students in their belief that Christians are against Islam.⁵⁶ Even though Malay students in the United States as a whole do not, as we have determined, venture out much from their Malay ethnic enclaves, their exposure to Christians and/or Christian institutions is sufficient to alter their view of Christians, if not their understanding of Christian teaching. If such superficial interaction with American Christians results in a slightly more benign view toward Christians, it seems justifiable to surmise that if American Christians were more intentional in befriending Malay students, Malays would likely be even less inclined to see Christians as adversaries.

Two related questions were whether the Malays believe Jews are against Islam and whether they believe there is a Judeo-Christian conspiracy against Islam and the Muslim world. The Malays believe that Jews, even more so than Christians, are against Islam (see App. F, p.551, Q#85). As for the question of a Judeo-Christian conspiracy against the Muslim world, there is no consensus among the Malay students. Most, however, either

⁵⁶The same was true of the Malays' view toward Jews. Exposure to American society appeared to soften the Malay position that Jews are against Islam.

claim not to know, or lean toward doubting that Jews and Christians, though both against Islam, are deliberately working together to undermine the Muslim world (see App. F, p.552, Q#86).

Seeking to identify with the Arab world in its conflict with Israel, the Malays carry an animosity toward Jews that they don't towards Christians.⁵⁷ Generally, the Malay students believe that Christians are against Muslims in that both are competing for the hearts of millions worldwide. Malays believe that Christians view Muslims as their rivals, but that they usually do not dislike individual Muslims per se. "Jews, on the other hand, "are totally against Muslims." Another student said that it is obvious that Jews and Christians are against Islam, but that Jews are more so.⁵⁸

A couple of students used this question of Christian-Muslim relations to upbraid Christianity for its "high pressure" tactics. One Malay young woman, whom I will call Norli, told of a Muslim girl who "lost her mind" as a result of going to a

⁵⁷The irony here is that the average Malay will never meet a Jewish person, and that even most Malay international students in the United States cannot recognize Jewish surnames or distinguish American Jews from non-Jews.

⁵⁸A few expressed consternation at what they consider to be a Jewish-inspired, United States bias against the Arab world, and an uncritical loyalty to the nation of Israel. Christians desiring to befriend Malays and to build bridges of understanding between Malays and themselves, must carefully work through their stance on the Jews and the modern nation-state of Israel.

church in Kentucky. Norli reported that the girl did not want to convert, but gave in to the relentless pressure from a nun.⁵⁹

To save her soul, the convert was then tirelessly "assisted" to renounce Christianity and return to the Islamic fold. Norli's final comment was a vehement accusation against Christians for using force, especially considering the fact, in Norli's insistence, that Muslims never use force.⁶⁰

Related to the issue of relations with the Muslim world is the question of whether the Malay students see the United States as a Christian country, and thus regard the foreign relations and domestic problems of the United States as the direct outworkings of Christian influence (see questionnaire items 81-83). Does the inextricable bond between Islam and the state in Islamic countries cloud the Malays from making distinctions between what

⁵⁹Norli's mention of a "nun" in a church that was not, as it turns out, Roman Catholic, betrays her less than complete understanding of the situation. Norli is typical of Malays in that she cannot distinguish between even the most clear divisions within Christianity, such as that between Protestantism and Catholicism. Many assume all church services to be of the nature of a liturgical Roman Catholic mass. This is because, for many, the only Christian service they have witnessed is a nationally televised Roman Catholic Christmas high mass at a cathedral in Kuala Lumpur (the only Christian telecast in the entire year).

⁶⁰Of course it never crossed Norli's mind that the tireless "assistance" in restoring the convert to Islam, was a form of coercion likely unmatched by any Christian attempts at proselytization of Malay university students. Furthermore, the equating of Christian conversion with "losing one's mind," coupled with the immediate and extreme measures to prevent any converts from following through with their decision, make it difficult to believe that even the Malays themselves can believe their own emphatic statements that Malays have complete religious freedom, and that there is no coercion in Islam.

is and is not influenced by the church in American society? In other words, do the students regard American culture and Christianity as roughly synonymous?

A majority of the students were, in fact, able to distinguish between Christianity and the dealings of the United States (see App. F, pp.549-550, Q's#81-83). Yet, nearly a third of them did believe that the United States is a Christian country. Interestingly, less of them (20 out of 103, or 19%) believed that Christian teaching strongly influences the United States. The same percentage attributed the moral weaknesses of the United States to Christianity.

The students' comments, which fleshed out the bare-bones survey responses, revealed surprisingly positive sentiments toward Christianity. We must not forget, though, the sizable minority who do hold Christianity accountable for the flaws in the American system. A number of students maintained that the moral weakness of the United States is one evidence that Christianity is weak. Christianity, in their view, suffers from an inherent inability to instill and enforce moral character in its adherents.

It was considerably more common, however, for the Malays to blame the moral shortcomings of American society, not on Christianity itself, but on a lack of serious commitment to Christianity by Christians. As one woman put it, "The moral weakness (of the United States) is not due to a lack in Christianity, but to a lack of Christianity." After all, said

one woman, "It's not the fault of the religion if its followers do not uphold its teachings." Furthermore, said another, "The reason the U.S. has moral problems is because Christians don't practice their religion." One young man, with an Islamic "church"-state mind-set, said that the problem with the United States is that the United States government fails to enforce Christian morals.

One thing some of the Malay students said they learned from their time in America is that there are more Christians in the United States than they had previously thought, but that Christianity is apparently a very small part of their lives. Aniza, a devout Muslim young woman, stated that before she came to America, she thought that most Americans don't believe in God. This she reasoned from what she believed to be the low moral standards of the United States, evidenced in part by the subject matter that dominates much of the American media, particularly television and films. No country with a sizable percentage of God-fearing individuals, she explained, would promote such "trash" worldwide. She has since been surprised to discover that most Americans do believe in God. She finds it almost inconceivable that so many can call themselves Christians, and not go to church, or otherwise demonstrate their faith.

Aniza's criticism of American Christianity is partly unfair, based as it is on the Muslim understanding that religion is primarily public. Where she is right is her observation that American Christians too often equate personal faith with

privatized faith. While the Malay students consider Christianity to be beneficial because of its moral code, they blame individual Christians for not living up to their own code. It's a shame that Christians themselves haven't made a better impression on the Malays, and that the Malays did not encounter Christians who represented well their own faith to the Malays.

Summary

We have found that, unlike most internationals, Malay students do not generally desire American friendships, but prefer rather to retreat into an ethnic enclave. Malay students in America are also atypical of many Muslim students in that they typically neither loosen nor strengthen their commitment to Islam while in the States. All maintain strict orthodox Islamic belief, while, due to the limited opportunities in the United States, many observe Islamic prescriptions somewhat less thoroughly than they did in Malaysia. Their position in a society that does not enforce Islamic rules, though, often causes them more personally to internalize their Islam. Furthermore, the influences of orthodox Islam coupled with modern secularism have caused the students to abandon much of the adat-based pre-Islamic accretions inherent in traditional Malay folk Islam.

The students live with a tension between Malay ethnic exclusivism and universal Islam. While, in general terms, they applaud the ideals of world Islam, when it comes to practical down home issues, they opt for preserving ethnic distinctives.

Finally, the Malay students know little of the beliefs of non-Malay religions, and do not appear to learn about Christianity, or be influenced by it during their stay in the United States.

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusions, and Suggestions

How can we tie this all together? What can we learn from the history of Christian-Malay relations, the interplay of Malay ethnicity and religion, and the interviews with Malay university students that will help us in attempts at evangelizing the Malays?

Negative Christian Legacy

The history of the colonization of Malaysia and the church's involvement therein have left a firmly grounded legacy that continues to mitigate against positive Christian witness. At first glance, this may not seem to be the case. To check my hypothesis about the negative effects of past Christian-Malay relations, especially in regard to the church's close association with colonial policies, I asked several of the Malays I had interviewed what they thought of the successive colonizers. Surprisingly, the students knew few of the specifics of the past occupations, and claimed not to give thought to the past. Currently, the Malays are, to be sure, exceedingly forward looking as they advance toward their much publicized *Wawasan 2020* (2020 Vision) mutual goal of full industrialization by the year 2020 ("Entering a New Era" 1993).¹ What the students do articulate is that the British record was mixed, but that

¹Young, business-oriented politicians are fast replacing old-guard traditionalists.

overall, it was negative because it opened Pandora's box of destructive Western moral influences, and left rural Malays (who were most of the Malays) in a backward position relative to the immigrant communities.

Christianity's Identification With Colonialism

While the Malay students express only vague notions of past colonial rule, and some even claim that since it is past, it no longer colors their thinking, beneath the surface, the Christian colonial legacy dictates attitudes toward Christianity. The history of Christian-Malay relations left an indelible mark in the following ways: (1) Through its identification with Western colonialism, Christianity became associated with the West; (2) Christianity was seen as adversarial to Islam in general and to Malay interests in particular; (3) Christianity was identified with immigrant peoples, especially the Chinese; and (4) Ethnic distinctions were promoted, pitting for their very survival, the Malays and Islam against the immigrant people groups and their imported religions.

The first legacy, the identification of Christianity as Western, is a stigma that increasingly works against the likelihood of the church being seen in a favorable light. Malaysia, just 37 years an independent nation, is seeking to forge its own identity in the world community. As such it is looking to traditional Malay values (more accurately, its selective interpretation or "invention" of the ideal Malay past),

as well as to East Asian models of development (most notably Japan), to serve as the bases for development (Tsuruoka 1991:53).²

The Malay ideal past includes above all else the conviction that Malay society grew to greatness on the foundation of Islam, and that Malay greatness now and in the future must proceed from Islam. It is significant that the golden age of the Malays was the 15th century Muslim Melakan Sultanate, and that the event that ended this glorious era was the coming of the cross-bearing Portuguese Christian crusader-traders. Thus began, in the Malays' eyes, four and a half centuries of Malay subservience at the hands of Christian imperialists.³ Only now, Malays are crawling out from underneath such a burden, and are in no disposition to include Western symbols (Christianity included) as symbols of the dawning of the new golden age of the Malays.

²Few Asian states have embraced Japanese investment as openly as Malaysia. The initiator of this relationship is Prime Minister Mahathir, whose "Look East" policy, first expressed in 1981, urged Malaysians to adopt the example of their East Asian neighbors as a model for development.

³Malay writers are loathe to concede the benefits brought by British rule, and the security British civil authority brought to a Malay world fraught with continual internecine warfare between rival Malay chiefdoms. Nor do they give due credit to the infrastructure the British built, including improved sewage, sanitation, water purification, medical treatment, transportation, communications, judicial system, and education. What is important here is that current Malay historians judge the successive colonial rules as one-sidedly exploitative, resulting in the Malays being on the short end of land and resource allocation relative to the immigrant communities, and the wresting of rightful Malays leadership from Malay hands.

Rather, Islam is touted as a healthy counterbalance to the shallow materialism and anxieties of Western industrial consumer economics (Vatikiotis 1993b:23).

In short, Christianity has to live down a legacy of imperialism, Western identity, opposition to Islam, and association with immigrant communities in competition with Malays for limited resources and power. Thus, when a Christian cross-cultural witness encounters Malays, she or he is not merely starting with a blank slate, but with a great debit to be overcome.

Insufficient Christian Witness

The history of Christian-Malay relations also reveals that, although Christian missionaries have lived in Malaysia at least since the 16th century, there has never been a large-scale, sustained effort to evangelize the Malays. Furthermore, in the rare instances when Malays were thoughtfully approached with the gospel over a period of time, there was always at least some favorable response (as in the work of Thomsen, the Keasberrys, Shellabear, and the Blasdells). Whenever the Malays have been or are exposed to loving and respectful presentations of Christ from a trusted Christian witness, there has been and is evidence of receptivity. The problem is not hardness of heart, but gaining a hearing through the defensive walls of Malay social cohesion. Once this can be accomplished, the real problem then will not be

evangelism, but creating a sense of identity as followers of Jesus without losing their ethnic identity.⁴

Malay Identity: Ethnic Exclusivism

Vs. Universal Islam

Just what does Malay identity entail, anyway? Where are they on the ethnic-Malay versus universal Islam continuum, and where is the trajectory pointing? Mutalib (1990:153) postulates that Malayness is characterized by a subconscious dialectical tension between two mutually interdependent terms of identity for Malays--their close-knit Malay ethnic community on the one hand, and their membership in the universal, non-ethnic Islamic community on the other. Though these may be at times contradictory, they both ultimately serve to unite the Malays and function as rallying points in moments of perceived non-Malay threat. Although Islamic teaching decries ethnic exclusivism, the ethnic and religious divisions in Malaysia are such that Islam is employed to emphasize Malay distinctiveness over against other peoples and faiths. Thus, Malays are championing a Malay ethnic exclusivity and an Islamic identity simultaneously. Although, as we will observe later, Malay exclusivity may be subsiding due to common Malaysian international economic goals, and Islamic revivalism has leveled off, there is no indication

⁴This is, of course, due to Christianity's association with everything deemed inimical to Malay welfare. It is compounded by the fact that Malaysian Christianity has assumed completely Western forms that have been unintentionally tailored not to fit Malays.

that either Malay ethnic exclusiveness or Islamic identity will weaken substantially. Certainly, Islam, though not of a fundamentalist variety, is seen as part and parcel of Malayness.

Colonial Rule Set the Tone for Malay Islam

The fact that Islam has emerged as the primary Malay identity marker, and the type of Islam promoted by the government, also have their roots in the colonial legacy. As we have seen, the imposition of colonial rule removed Malay leaders from the actual corridors of power, despite British legitimization of their traditional titles. This process encouraged Malay leaders to assume increasingly enhanced and centralized roles in Islamic affairs because Islam was one of the few spheres in which Malays were left with a measure of autonomy.

The Malay elite were afforded a modern, Western education. Their secular education, coupled with their exposure to nationalistic Islamic developments in Egypt and other regions of the Islamic world, had the effect in Malaya of promoting Islamic nationalism and reform couched in appeals made in the name of science, progress, advancement, and secular education. Reformers spoke of the virtues of Islamic rationalization and the necessity of eradicating the "backward" (i.e., pre-Islamic [primal religious/Hindu-Buddhist]) elements of Malay culture to help in bringing Malays and Malayan Islam into the modern era.

Colonial policies also had the effect of creating previously unknown distinctions within the all encompassing concept of adat.

Specifically, the British bolstered selective aspects of *adat* (such as legal matters of proprietorship and inheritance) and prohibited or ignored others.

The relegating of certain dimensions of Malay culture to secondary status was due in large part to a single 1910 monograph written by two British civil servants, C.W.C. Parr and W.H. Mackray, entitled Rembau: One of the Nine States: Its History, Constitution, and Customs (Peletz 1993:70). The book was commissioned by the British government to understand local customs relating to land tenure, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The authors sought to elucidate what they understood Malay *adat* to be (i.e., customary law). Unfortunately, they failed to understand that customary law is just one aspect of *adat*, which includes all of Malay culture, from food gathering and preparation, to house building, to social etiquette, to religious ritual, magic, mythology, shamanism, and healing.

The limited scope of Parr and Mackray's treatment of *adat* is consistent with the colonial British interest in the political and administrative domains. Anything to do with religious matters, whether Islamic or pre-Islamic rituals, healing arts and divination, was excluded from the authors' rather detailed and "authoritative" discussion of *adat* (Peletz 1993:72). It's not that these non-jural aspects of *adat* were beyond the scope of British concern. They were, in fact, of great interest to

colonial scholars but were regarded as outside the realm of custom, that is, customary law. They were usually described separately under magic or religion--or relegated to appendices--rather than in books on Malay custom.

Religious and other non-jural dimensions of *adat* gradually acquired inferior status (contributing to the secularization and eventual separation of *adat* from religion), partly because Parr and Mackray's book came to be regarded by colonial officials, indigenous leaders, and villagers alike as the definitive work on *adat*. Parr and Mackray's book and other such texts were disseminated widely and assumed the status of holy writ, to the extent that a high ranking Malay official recently stressed, "It's not *adat* if it's not in that book"! (Peletz 1993:73). What is included in the text has come to be defined as *adat* and what is left out of the text (ritual, religion, mythology) is excluded from, or marginalized within, the concept of *adat* (Peletz 1993:73).

This is extremely significant when one realizes the moral force and social relevance of *adat* as a unifying, broadly hegemonic construct. The removal of the spirit realm from *adat*, an enormously prominent part of pre-British *adat*, has helped to strip the realm of spirits (the "excluded middle"⁵) from modern

⁵Paul Hiebert (1982) introduced the term "excluded middle" to refer to the realm of supernatural but this-worldly beings. It is excluded in that it has been neglected in Western theological study.

Malay notions of Islam. Thus we find a predominantly rationalistic, "secular" Islam in Malaysia.

The colonial legacy also unwittingly helped create a national consciousness based on Islam. The British narrowed the *adat* concept to be more secular than ever before, but ironically, they also made *adat* more in keeping with orthodox Islam,

for many previously sacrosanct dimensions of *adat*--for example, essentially pre-Islamic rituals associated with shamanism and various types of local spirit cults--have been relegated, by some villagers at least, to the dust bins of history and culture by being reclassified as *kepercayaan* ("[mere] belief", "superstition"). (Peletz 1993:77)

Consequently, many younger generation Malays see *adat* as an archaic collection of beliefs and practices that are irrelevant at best and inimical to modernization and Islamic development at worst.

The empowering of state-controlled Islamic administrative hierarchies that began under colonial rule led to more centralized and rationalized implementation of Islamic religious law. Colonial rule (as seen in Chapter 2) also more clearly demarcated ethnic divisions and heightened ethnic antagonisms which divided people groups along religious and economic lines. Development strategies of the post-colonial government (e.g., the New Economic Policy [NEP] implemented in 1971) only exacerbated ethnic distinctions by making ethnicity--whether one is a Malay or a non-Malay--the criterion for allocating government loans and subsidies and other limited commodities such as university scholarships and contractor's licenses (Peletz 1993:80). These

policies, which have highlighted the distinctions between Malays and non-Malays, have likewise heightened religious differences.

The NEP also caused class antagonisms within the Malay community, by creating a Malay middle class and enriching a few, yet leaving many Malays even worse off than before.

Disillusionment with the government's commitment to modernization through capitalism and Western modes of development helped fuel the Islamic resurgence throughout Malaysia of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Islamic revivalists claimed that the Malay ruling party had sold out to local Chinese and Indians, as well as foreign capitalists, and to a courting of westernization (following colonial patterns) which had contributed to Malaysia's underdevelopment, continued dependence on foreign markets, and to its decadence and spiritual bankruptcy (Kessler 1980; Milner 1986).

Islam as a Vehicle of Dissent

This sketch helps us begin to understand that the Malaysian Islamic revival was as much political as it was spiritual. Reacting to a Western-styled Malay leadership, faltering in the aftermath of the devastating race riots of 1969, young reformers found in Islam the major ideology of dissent. Islam, as sacrosanct, and thus not subject to attack, was the perfect vehicle through which to promote reform. Revivalist (*dakwah*) organizations of all varieties sprang up, with the common denominator of being anti-West. Islamic ideals of justice and

equity were appealed to to bolster the Malays' position vis-a-vis the other Malaysian ethnic communities (Mutalib 1990:21).

Moreover, the sharp religious delineation between Muslim and *kafir* (infidel) made it a moral responsibility for the Malays (those who are ethnically and spiritually fit) to rule their own nation, for only the rightly guided could guide rightly.

This is not to imply that genuine Islamic revival had not occurred. Religious resurgence can be measured in increased mosque attendance and participation in daily prayers, as well as in the popularity of conservative Islamic dress, especially the head covering donned by many Malay women. Yet, much of this Islamic activity can be attributed at least in part to the cataclysmic sociological upheaval of the Malays in rapidly shifting from a millennia-old village lifestyle to a multi-ethnic, industrialized urban world. As Malay woman journalist Suhaini Aznan (1991a:18) points out;

Not everyone took the *purdah* (veil) for religious reasons alone. Some young women, living on their own for the first time, wore it to discourage male attention. Others gave in to peer pressure. And subsequently, many recent migrants to the city joined the *dakwah* movement as a mark of Malay solidarity against the unfamiliar, aggressive multi-ethnic milieu the found themselves in.

Malay academic Rahman Said (1993:21) concurs that the Islamic revival was fundamentally a vehicle for political reform aimed at uniting Malay interest in upgrading the position of the Malays relative to the other Malaysian peoples. Said contends

that in the 1970s "Islam was a good horse to ride," but that now its usefulness has been spent.

World Islam, with its renewed image of success, gave the Malays an identity of which to be proud, a moral code with which to fill the void left by secular materialism, and a vision and ballast with which to navigate the Malays into a new, post-colonial golden age of greatness.⁶ The revivalist (*dakwah*) movements left a heightened standard of Islamic belief and practice, as well as an ideology of universal, supra-ethnic Islam. Yet, as Malaysian sociologist Ackerman and Lee (1988:45) emphasize, Malay Islamic consensus was primarily cultivated to promote Malay ethnic distinctives. Above all else, Islam provides a symbol of unity for all Malays (Ackerman and Lee 1988:43).

Not Fundamentalist Islam

A number of factors reveal that Malaysia is not moving in the direction of Islamic fundamentalism. Malay leaders who formerly bowed to peer pressure, have in the past few years returned to more secular ways. "Muslims seem to have reverted to what used to be a more familiar expression of the religion--a comfortable, Malay village-style approach to Islam, rather than a zealous, fist-waving Middle-Eastern display. Islam here was never, in any case, militant" (Aznam 1991a:18).

⁶Malaysia is, in fact, cultivating world Islamic ties. This is evident in its acceptance of Bosnian Muslim refugees, and its welcoming of Iraqi oil officials and Bangladeshi laborers.

Aznam (1991a:18) observes that the trappings of a modern, "decadent" West, are no longer considered un-Islamic: "Not since the early 1980s has anyone been heard to have tossed out the TV set, living room furniture and fine china in favour of sitting on the floor and eating in groups of five or more from a large dish heaped with food, Arab-style."

The government itself has discouraged the swing in the direction of organized Islam. While the government, dominated by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), protects the status of Islam and promotes its teaching and practice, its appeal is to the individual consciousness rather than to obligatory Islamization.

The Malay leadership is consumed with present and future economic growth and internal development. The current economic boom is of incomparable significance to all of Malaysian life. It is bringing unprecedented change to the Malay world. Having joined the ranks of the so-called "Super Seven,"⁷ Malaysia is no longer the sleepy little low-income, low-production-cost developing country many imagine it to be. "It has, for example, become the world's leading exporter of computer chips and is the third largest producer of semi-conductors after Japan and the U.S." (Suter 1993:302).

⁷Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia are all nations that have transformed themselves in recent years from Third World status by setting international records for economic growth.

The United Nations Development Program publishes a Human Development Report, in which human development is measured in terms of longevity, knowledge, and living standards. The 1991 edition listed Malaysia among the 53 nations ranked as having attained high human development. Even more significant is the survey of changes in the Human Development Index over time, which evaluates national progress between 1970 and 1985. Malaysia ranked number two of the 160 nations studied. Economically, 1994 was the seventh consecutive year of 8% or higher growth (Tanzer 1994:60).

Malaysia is charging forward toward its goal that by the year 2020, in the words of Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad:

Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient. (quoted in Suter 1993:302)

These words are not those of a fundamentalist Islamic autocrat, but rather emphasize openness and material prosperity. Indeed, Datuk Ismail Ibrahim, former Arabic language lecturer and director of a new Islamic think-tank, the Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding (known as IKIM after its Malay acronym), has been charged with molding an Islamic work ethic that pays as much attention to material success in the present world as to spiritual rewards in the next (Vatikiotis 1993c:32).

IKIM is ostensibly responsible for fostering understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. Yet, many observers see the institute mainly as "A new and bold attempt by the government to combat resistance to progressive economic thinking among the seven million Malaysian Muslims" (Vatikiotis 1993c:32). University of Malaya economist Jomo K. Sundaram believes Mahathir needs IKIM to justify his agenda of social and political modernization within his own Malay-Muslim constituency. "'He needs to provide Islamic legitimacy for what he wants'" (quoted in Vatikiotis 1992c:32). Specifically, he needs to deflect the criticism from elements within Malay Islam which shun modern thinking as Western, and therefore not compatible with Islamic principles.

Prime Minister Mahathir's track record reveals that he consistently courts Islam just enough to diffuse criticism from his more devout Muslim detractors, but is ultimately concerned more with political than spiritual gain. It appears that IKIM is his vehicle for staying within the bounds of Islamic orthodoxy by reinterpreting that orthodoxy. For example, citing the Quran to argue the case for a better work ethic, IKIM has explained that hard work can be defined as *jihad* or holy war in the Islamic context (Vatikiotis 1993c:32).

Mahathir is moving incrementally away from a conservative Islamic position. In the past, Mahathir echoed conservative Islamic views to counter opposition from PAS, the Islamic party.

He established the Islamic Affairs Department, which, in turn, initiated Islamic banking, and aggressive Islamic education campaigns. Under Mahathir's administration, Malaysian Islamization has advanced remarkably, absorbing much of the PAS agenda and thus effectively crippling PAS politically by removing its main reason for being. Now it appears that the Islamic Affairs Department, Mahathir's own creation, has itself become too conservative for Mahathir. IKIM can thus be seen as the new alternative to the existing Islamic Affairs Department. In the name of Malaysian progress and participation in world economics, Mahathir has for the first time been so bold as to say that for Islam to keep up with modern times, it may be necessary to question orthodox views (Vatikiotis 1993c:32).

Mahathir's position is not hard to determine. As an aging long-term politician, he is a known figure. What of the next generation of Malay leadership?

UMNO has increasingly couched its ambitions in the rhetoric of the need to cling to religious values. Non-Muslim Malaysians are concerned that the present emphasis on spiritual values could in the future prove to be an emphasis on Islam alone. Stoking these fears is the knowledge that the deputy president of UMNO, Anwar Ibrahim, a former leading radical Muslim activist, is almost certain to become Malaysia's next prime minister.

Seeking to allay such concerns, Said (1993:21), himself a Malay Muslim, places Anwar Ibrahim in the "liberal modern Muslim"

camp, stating that Anwar is not excessively religious. Said believes that in former days Anwar tapped into the high tide of Islamic resurgence to promote his pro-Malay agenda. Several analysts, Said included, feel that the revivalist Islamic surge has since subsided, and, that being the case, revivalist Islam will no longer be Anwar's vehicle for conveying his interests. It is noteworthy here that current observers no longer refer to Anwar as a radical Muslim, but, uniformly speak of him as essentially pragmatic (Said 1993:21; Mitton 1993:23; "A New Generation" 1993:29).

Anwar Ibrahim's own statements show that he is intentionally positioning himself outside the radical *dakwah* camp. He has criticized fundamentalist Muslim governments for disallowing public debate and self-criticism (Bowring 1991:56). He has expressed public disagreement with Iran's treatment of Salmon Rushdie (though he covered himself by assuring that he personally believes Rushdie to be in the wrong) (Mitton 1993:22-23). (Here, again, we find the trend toward making Islam a matter of personal conscience not to be blanketly imposed.) Though some of it may be dismissed as merely conciliatory pre-election rhetoric, Ibrahim stresses the importance of freedom of expression and the need for tolerance of all peoples and religions. He has made statements that distance him from Malay-Muslim extremists, such as his announcement that it is insensitive to build mosques in predominantly non-Muslim areas, or his belief that special

benefits given to people by virtue of their being Malay, will eventually need to stop so that Malays can learn to compete on equal footing (Mitton 1993:23). Ultimately, Anwar is forward looking and internationally-minded. He understands that total Malaysian development must go beyond the homogenous Malay community. For Anwar and the new generation of young Malay political leaders,⁸ economic progress and development override exclusively ethnic concerns.

There are even hints that UMNO may relax its Malay ethnic bias. The popular chief minister of Penang state and member of UMNO's 25-member Supreme Council, Ibrahim Saad, speaks of welcoming into UMNO currently ineligible groups with historical roots in the country, such as the Melaka Portuguese, suggesting that UMNO might eventually become the United **Malaysian** National Organization ("A New Generation" 1993:27). While it is unlikely that such a move is in the foreseeable future, the very fact that it was articulated is amazing. Such statements, says academic Rustam Sani, "would never have been uttered even five years ago" ("A New Generation" 1993:27).

In response to a question about his views on the proper mix of Islam and Malaysian politics, Anwar Ibrahim commented, "While

⁸Riding Anwar's coat-tails, three young Malay rising stars and Anwar supporters, swept the three seats for UMNO vice president in the November 1993 election (Said 1993:19). Together they epitomize today's highly educated and articulate, outward looking Malays ("Two Men and Their Party" 1993:29). Malaysia is undergoing a rapid changing of the guard, in which the old guard traditionalists are being replaced with young blood.

we believe that Malaysia should be seen as a successful, vibrant, active Muslim community, we should not be in any way forced into thinking in terms of the narrow confines of religiosity subscribed to by many extremist groups" (Mitton 1993:23).

Before further prognosticating about the future face of Malaysia, let us take note of other signs that the revivalist movement has peaked and that Malays are opting for a moderate form of Islam.

Although the Islamic resurgence of the 1970s witnessed the dawning of the donning of Arab-style women's headdress,⁹ in the mid-1980s the Malaysian government actually banned the full *purdah* (clothing covering the entire face) from use in all schools and civil service arenas. A celebrated case in which a government clerk sued the government for firing her for wearing the *purdah* to work (she was a fundamentalist Muslim for whom it was against her religious and moral convictions to appear in public uncovered), upheld the government's bar on the *purdah*. The justice, himself a Muslim, ruled that the government can enforce a dress code even at the expense of restricting the religious practice of some of its officers ("Behind the Black Veil" 1992:33). What is even more telling is that the verdict was applauded by a top Malay *mufti* (religious counsel), as well

⁹The *telekung* or *tudung* (head scarf) adopted by many Malay women in the wake of the revival is not a traditional Malay piece of clothing. Women covering their head was not a return to a previously popular conservative Muslim style of dress. Rather, it represented a new level of Islamic conservatism in Malaysia.

as by the dean of the Islamic Faculty at the National University of Malaysia ("Behind the Black Veil" 1992:33), indicating the moderate position taken by leading Malay Muslim authorities.

An obvious blemish on any image the Malaysian government may portray of Islamic piety is the fact that Malaysia operates a multi-billion dollar legalized gambling business. Gambling is so vibrant, in fact, that the Malaysian stock exchange's gaming sector more than quadrupled from 1990 to 1993 (Tanzer 1994:58).

Considering that gambling is taboo under Islamic teaching, it is curious that it is allowed in a country in which a Muslim majority dominates the government. The Malays have found a way to keep their noses clean and yet benefit from the gambling. Rather than outlaw gambling (and lose its profits) or operate it itself, the Malay-dominated government privatized gambling and taxes it heavily. This transfers a good portion of the wealth from the Chinese, who dominate gambling, to the majority Malays. The point here is that for the Malay policy makers, money talks louder than strict Islamic scruples,

Speaking of money, Malay critics of UMNO say that current Malay leaders are obsessed with enriching themselves and the country at the expense of fidelity to Malay values. Some even contend that Malay politicians' chief interest in Islam lies in the links it provides in the hope of becoming a major force in Middle Eastern markets (Tsuruoka 1993a:62). In Malaysia's dash for economic growth, UMNO is worried that fundamentalist Islam

could damage Malaysia's international image¹⁰(Vatikiotis 1992a:29; Suter 1993:303).

The fundamentalist revival has indeed made an indelible mark, calling all Malays to a higher standard of ethical and moral purity. As we have found in the student interviews, the revival has resulted in Malay Muslims becoming more knowledgeable of Islamic orthodoxy and feeling more personally aware of and accountable for their own spiritual state. It has not resulted, though, in a general push to replace civil law with Islamic law.

Comparing my student interviews (conducted in 1992) with Zainah Anwar's (1987) interview data, which ranges from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, we see a dramatic change with respect to the *dakwah* issue. Anwar reports (1987:60-76) great animosity

¹⁰There is still a sizeable conservative Muslim minority, represented politically by PAS (The Islamic Party). In fact, the government has not obstructed the introduction of *hudud* (Islamic criminal law) in Kelantan, the only state PAS controls. Mahathir's concession to the Kelantan state government is interpreted as a political ploy to give PAS just enough rope to hang themselves (Vatikiotis 1992a:28-29). Two other political parties, the DAP (the Chinese dominated Democratic Action Party), and Semangat 46 (a breakaway faction of the mainstream United Malay National Organization), have forged an uneasy alliance with PAS in hopes of countering UMNO. Since both the DAP and Semangat 46 espouse multiracial policies, the actual implementation of strict Islamic criminal law may be frightening enough to force them to break with PAS, and thus scatter the opposition alliance.

While there may be good political reasons for Mahathir to allow this suppression of the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of religion and its commitment to Malaysia as a secular state, some UMNO leaders are concerned about the image it conveys to Malaysia's current and potential business partners. As one leading UMNO official said, "The problem is the world doesn't know the difference between Kelantan and the rest of Malaysia" (quoted in Vatikiotis 1992a:29).

between *dakwah* and more liberal Malay Muslims. An intra-ethnic cultural war was taking place among the Malays. Enemy lines were drawn over whether or not one covered one's hair.

Having read Zainah's findings, I anticipated similar response from my interviewees. To that end I asked pointed questions, for example, about what conservatively clad Malay women thought about their more secular cousins' exposing of heads and limbs. To my surprise, I uncovered no such animosity, but rather a mutually respecting live-and-let-live attitude. Anwar (1987:62) had reported that Western dressed Malays made friends more readily with non-Malays than with Malays who wore Islamic dress. My students, however, did not follow this pattern. Anwar's Malays broke friendship over differing views of Malaysian Islamization. The politics of "mosque"-state relations was an explosive issue. My students, overall, had barely given the subject a thought. When pressed for an opinion, most of the students I interviewed supposed that Malaysia would actually be worse off under the full implementation of Islamic law. Most are toward the more moderate or liberal end of the Muslim spectrum. The *dakwah* movement is no longer an issue for them. To be a *dakwah* (revivalist Muslim) or not, used to have political and social implications. Now it just tells how religious one is.

As a whole, the Malays are not moving toward stricter Islamization. In fact, the Mahathir administration seems intent on keeping religion out of politics. As if to broadcast this

from the highest minaret, Malaysia recently banned the ultra-conservative Al Arqam sect and arrested its leader, Mr. Ashaari Muhammed. It is equally significant that the administration reportedly received merely "facile censure" for the crackdown ("Pre-Emptive Strike" 1994:26). Decrying Iran as economically backward and diplomatically isolated, UMNO wants to keep Islam at arms length from the actual machinery of government operations.¹¹ Malaysia wants to appear tolerant and open-minded, and is seeking to downplay its Muslim side in order to sell itself to the world. Malays are adopting higher personal standards of Islamic orthodoxy, but are not pushing for the creation of an Islamic state.

We reiterate that in Malaysia there is an increase in universalistic Islam, but that such Islamic awareness, paradoxically, also serves to strengthen Malay ethnic exclusiveness.

Identification with Worldwide Islam

The former is demonstrated in Malaysia's proud identification with worldwide Islam in its eschewing of Western colonial influences. Malays share with their Islamic allies a

¹¹While it is true that the Malaysian government is not moving toward the implementation of Islamic law, we must not take this to mean that Islam's influence is declining. Quite to the contrary, Islam is increasing de facto by virtue of its association with the ever increasing dominance of the Malay people. For example, a recent zoning plan for an area of Malaysia which is 65% non-Muslim calls for 677 new centers of Muslim worship as compared to 235 new centers of non-Muslim worship by the year 2010 (NECF Prayer Digest 1994).

sense of destiny. They feel their Islamic dream is happening. An example of Malay gut-level identification with fellow Muslims is the fact that during the Gulf War, even though the Malaysian government officially supported the United Nations-sanctioned coalition against Iraq,¹² the Malay people felt compelled as Muslims to sympathize with their Muslim Iraqi brothers fighting a secular power (Vatikiotis and Aznam 1991:20). Another example is that the Malays automatically assume the Bosnian conflict is a Western-backed conspiracy against Muslims.

Islam as a Symbol of Malay Ethnic Identity

In fact, the success of world Islam fuels Malay nationalistic pride. Malaysia's phenomenal economic success is seen as an indication of the superiority of Islam, as Malays believe their economic superstructure to be founded on Islamic principles.

More than anything else, Islam promotes ethnic distinctions in Malaysia by providing a symbol for Malays to rally around against non-Malay threats to Malay hegemony. Malays unite with other Muslims against non-Muslims, but more fundamentally, they unite with themselves against all others.

Traditional Symbols of Malayness Weakening

The Malays are forging a new identity. While they look to the past for images of the ideal Malay character (hence the

¹²The Malaysian government voted in favor of UN Resolution 678, the resolution justifying the allied action.

recent love affair with traditional Malay art forms based on an idyllic rural lifestyle), the Malays are irretrievably losing the *kampung* (village) world to the forces of urbanization and inter-global telecommunications. Traditional Malay *adat* is a symbol with decreasing actual substance.

The most striking example of this is the 1993 Malaysian constitutional amendment removing the sultans' immunity from prosecution.¹³ Although it is of relatively minor political significance, it is of enormous symbolic importance. The monarchy is, after all, the Malays' most visible link to their past. The amendment represents a demythicization of the royals. The guardianship of Malay supremacy and the protectorate of Malay rights, religion, and language have shifted from the monarchy to UMNO ("A Monarchy Thus Updated" 1993:1). The state is becoming the new arbiter of the Malay conscience.

Another example of the triumph of pragmatism over symbolism is the government's recent reintroduction of English in tertiary education (Vatikiotis 1993a:18). For over two decades, Malaysia

¹³Malaysia's sultans had damaged their venerability by spendthrift habits and a proclivity for gambling, drinking, and other vices. The Malaysian Sultan of Johore's fatal assault on one or more hapless attendants provided an opportunity for Mahathir to press for limiting the monarchy's powers (Tasker, Vatikiotis, and Delfs 1993:20).

The erosion of the status of the Malay royalty is seen in the fact that a decade ago Mahathir failed to rally the public behind a move to limit royal power, but enjoyed popular support for the 1993 amendment (Vatikiotis 1992a:16).

has promoted Malay as the national language.¹⁴ For the politically dominant but culturally sensitive Malay community, the Malay language has long been one of the leading symbols (second only to Islam) of Malay ethnic and national identity, while English is popularly associated with colonial rule (Vatikiotis 1993f:38).

The Malay literati strongly oppose any concessions to English, regarding it as a sell-out to the Chinese and Indian Malaysians ("Speaking of English" 1992:41). The government counters that the Malay-only policy has caused a decline in English language proficiency among the Malays, which is resulting, in turn, in a loss of Malay competitiveness in the private sector. Here, again, in the contest between Malay ethnic nationalism and pragmatism, pragmatism wins.

In fact, the Malay political leadership is championing the reintroduction of English. Prime Minister Mahathir has even labeled the Malays who are calling for more use of Malay at the expense of English, "fanatics" who risk undermining the nation's development prospects (Vatikiotis 1992c:31). For the forward-looking Malay leadership caught up in the heady vision of full industrialization, money talks louder than Malay.

¹⁴Under the Constitution, *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay) is the official national language. The last batch of Malaysian secondary students schooled in English graduated in 1981. Since 1969, Malay has been the medium of instruction in all grade schools except a fraction that are Mandarin or Tamil.

Societal Upheaval

What is especially noteworthy about Malaysia's economic success is "the speed and brashness of its transformation of the exotic into the modern and materially chic" (Vatikiotis 1992d:27). Malaysia is industrializing, urbanizing, and economically homogenizing at a breathtaking pace. One observer has referred to the rapid transformation as a disconcerting and "indiscriminate shedding of tradition" (Vatikiotis 1992d:27). The Aliran monthly, a social-consciousness publication, wrote an article entitled "The Ugly Malaysian," describing the predominant ideology of Malaysia as a "crass pragmatism" based on a "me first" attitude.

Journalist and social commentator Michael Vatikiotis (1992d:27) believes that, ironically, it is precisely these traits that are holding Malaysia's plural society together. The various ethnic groups are setting aside traditional boundary markers in pursuit of the higher, common goal of national prosperity. Says Vatikiotis (1992d:27), "It is a form of collective selfishness."

Together Malaysians aspire to the Malaysian dream, a suburban house and two cars. What worries the more reflective Malaysians is the reverse implications of the 2020 Vision--what Malaysia will not be in the meantime. It is troubling that many Malaysians no longer vote for political ideals. The issue of

human rights has taken a back seat to the glittering prospect of long-term economic growth.

Increasingly Authoritarian Government

Malaysia's non-Malays are justifiably concerned over the increasingly authoritarian trend of UMNO, the Malay ruling party.¹⁵ Recent examples include Prime Minister Mahathir's willingness to detain opponents under the Internal Security Act (A measure enacted in 1960 to contain communist insurgents, the ISA allows for imprisonment of up to two years without trial).¹⁶ Mahathir is not adverse to invoking the Official Secrets Act, which proscribes the unauthorized publication of government information, and the Sedition Act, which prohibits the discussion of issues which could "promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or classes of the population of Malaysia" (Sedition Act, Article 3).

A loose interpretation of the Sedition Act enabled UMNO to suspend for several months of 1987 the Star, a major English-medium newspaper which gives prominence to Chinese concerns and which is occasionally critical of the government. Also suspended

¹⁵See Crouch 1992:21-30 for a history of UMNO's reliance on authoritarian means of control.

¹⁶In October and November of 1987, 106 people were arrested under the guise of their being a threat to national security. Among those arrested were leaders of opposition political parties, leaders of Chinese educational bodies, government critics, members of environmental groups opposed to Malaysia's aggressive deforestation and displacement of indigenes, and Christian social welfare activists.

were an independent-minded Malay weekly, and a Chinese newspaper. The Act is so loosely defined as to inhibit critics from raising issues which may then be interpreted as within the scope of the Act.

Criticism from without is also silenced as issues of foreign publications (such as the Asian Wall Street Journal and the Far Eastern Economic Review) which contain editorials critical of Malay leadership are withheld from circulation.

Most information is filtered through the UMNO controlled media. The leading English-medium and Malay-medium newspapers are owned by an UMNO-owned group of companies (Gomez 1990:61-69), and all three Malaysian television stations are either directly or indirectly controlled by UMNO.

Following a series of court judgments unfavorable to the government, and triggered by a court order for the release of a Mahathir political opponent detained under the ISA on the grounds that the detention was made without just cause, Mahathir succeeded in cajoling the ruling Sultan to have the Lord President (Chief Justice) of the Supreme Court dismissed on trumped up charges of "gross misconduct." Dr. Mahathir went on to engineer an amendment to the Constitution in March 1988 which limits the powers of the judiciary (Crouch 1992:26). Mahathir was able to team up with the sultans in their mutual dislike for the probing arm of the justice system. Mahathir later turned around and (as we have seen) successfully pushed for limitations

on royal authority. The net result is that UMNO and the Prime Minister have emerged with even weaker checks and balances on their power.

Allegations of government misconduct lead not to investigations of the charges, but to a punishment of the accusers. A case in point is the Malaysian government's announcement in February 1994 that it will no longer award contracts to British companies because of allegations by British journalists that Prime Minister Mahathir had accepted bribes ("Malaysia May Bar Journalists" 1994:A4).

Mahathir is particularly incensed by criticism from the West regarding charges of human rights abuses and restrictions of personal freedom. He has unmistakably asserted that Western concepts of democracy and human rights do not fit the Asian context ("Entering a New Era" 1993:21; Crovitz 1994:20). In addition, in the interest of political stability and inter-communal harmony, he has expressed his desire for more centralization of power ("Entering a New Era" 1993:23).

It is just such unchecked power, coupled with increased control over dissent that concerns non-Malays in Malaysia. They are also unhappy about the Malays' desire to exclude non-Malay elements from Malay culture.¹⁷

¹⁷For example, plans for a Chinese cultural center were blocked by UMNO, which took it as a challenge to Malay dominance (Aznam 1991b:16).

If nothing else, Malaysian demographics are pointed toward ever increasing Malay dominance. The Malay percentage of the total population has climbed from about 45% in 1961 to approximately 58% today. Furthermore, as Malays are still having large families, and the other Malaysians are limiting themselves to one or two children per couple, there is every indication that the Malay majority will grow larger.

Prime Minister Mahathir views his society as becoming more Malay and more Muslim (Vatikiotis 1993b:23). Although Mahathir and his protege, Anwar Ibrahim, note that religious toleration is basic to Islam and will be upheld by the government, there is little recourse for Christians or other non-Muslims who feel their free expression is being curtailed in the name of societal stability. Not strong enough to change things on their own, the non-Muslims' only trump card is international opinion. Malaysian tourism is based on the image of a carefree tropical paradise, not an oppressive Muslim regime. The same is true for international business relations.

In short, the successes of worldwide Islam and of the Malays are combining to strengthen Malay ethnic pride. Moreover, although there is some crossing of ethnic boundaries in the common urban mix, and in the national cooperation for international economic prowess, the Malays have come out with increased power to strengthen their position vis-a-vis competing ethnic groups. We have also observed that fundamentalist Muslims

form no more than a vocal minority in Malaysia. The Malay leadership, and the majority of the Malay populace, prefer a more relaxed, live-and-let-live Islam. The Malay Islamic consensus is being utilized not for the implementation of an Islamic state, but as a symbol of Malay unity and identity, and as a preserver and promoter of Malay ethnic distinctives.

Prospects for Malay Evangelism

The Malays' tight identification with Islam, and their increasing control over all spheres of Muslim life, do not bode well for prospects of Malay evangelism. Since the state (ethnic Malayness) and religion (Islam) are mutually validating, is it even conceivable from a Malay's perspective for a Malay to be a Christian?

Social Change Increases Openness

One might argue that the Malays are not as yet a ripe harvest field. Perhaps we should direct our attention to more fertile soil. True, the landscape looks bleak, but there is another picture. The aforementioned technological and economic gains are affecting phenomenal social changes touching every corner of Malay life. The Malays' international thrust, and especially the proliferation of international media brought on by technological advances, have opened the Malays to an electronic information and entertainment explosion, which is exposing the Malays to outside influences to a degree far surpassing anything in colonial times. Just one example is that in 1993 rap music

dominated the Malaysian popular music scene (Cheah 1993:20). Despite government efforts to dissuade Malaysian youth from "emulating decadent Western culture," rap music pulsates through shopping malls, night spots, and innumerable walkman headsets, while government-promoted traditional music finds little audience beyond the confines of tourist-infested cultural shows (Vatikiotis 1993d:32).

Everything from education to living conditions to occupations is changing overnight. The age-old Malay *kampung* (village) world in which relationships are extremely tight and interconnected, is being metamorphosed into a city world of disconnected individuals. The clearly defined roles and strictly prescribed behavior of the *kampung* are being exchanged for anomie. Serious crime and drug abuse are new to the Malays.¹⁸

Now is the first time the Malays have experienced a sharp discontinuity from the past. Never before was it common to hear, as it is now, rueful expressions such as: "A few years ago it wasn't like this."

For prospects of Christian evangelism of Malays in Malaysia, the societal upheaval is a big positive. It is common knowledge that times of transition are the most conducive to receptivity to

¹⁸Yusof (1976) reported that urban environments provide an anonymity that makes it easy to escape the influences of religious leaders. If that was the case in 1976, when Kuala Lumpur had barely 500,000 people, it seems all the more likely that it is the case now that Kuala Lumpur is climbing into the millions.

new ideas (Spaulding and Flack 1976:35, Matheny 1981:5-6). Surely God's Spirit is moving in and through this social change.

Hindrance to Openness

Yet, Malays display not just apathy, but active resistance to Christian witness. Our student interviews revealed that Malay students are generally not interested in befriending any Americans, let alone Christians. In fact, there are numerous accounts of individual Malays being physically prohibited from meeting with Christians with whom they have engaged in religious dialogue. So strong is the peer pressure for Malays not to associate with anything Christian, that a campus minister who oversees a rather large ministry to international students, reported that the Malay students are the single one body of international students who will not even come to purely social events that even Muslim students from other countries attend.

Some would argue that it is evidently not God's time for the Malays, or at least that since other people groups are responsive, and since we have limited resources, we should invest our energies in more receptive populations. In his classic treatment on resistant populations, Donald McGavran (1980:262) argued that "resistant lands should be held lightly." While I agree with McGavran that we must be careful and courteous in gospel presentations to such people, I am calling not for a "light" gospel presence, but a concerted effort to evangelize the Malays. True, we must be circumspect in our approach, but this

does not necessitate holding back personnel and resources. This very reasoning of responsive versus non-responsive populations is exactly the argument used by colonial church leaders a century ago as to why they were bypassing the Malays and concentrating on the immigrant communities. Must the Malays wait another century before we deem them worthy of our resources? Besides, the research has demonstrated that sustained efforts to reach Malays **did**, in fact, bear fruit. Furthermore, we have also shown that what little gospel message most Malays ever heard was introduced through military aggression, packaged in Western forms, encased in colonial imperialism, sustained by economic exploitation, and associated with peoples who were, for the most part, ungodly by Muslim standards. The Malays have never really heard the gospel. Any people in their position would have been resistant to the Christian message as they witnessed it.

Perhaps it is good that the church in Malaysia has no political clout, and is associated with no worldly power base. Malays need to see the gospel lived out among them. They need to see Jesus "incarnated" in selfless, loving Christians. Now is not the time to bail out. Now is the time to stick it out until the radiance of Jesus is reflected in Malay faces.

Malays are Not Closed People

An important point to make at this juncture is that we must not interpret Malay receptivity by our own standards. For one thing, Islam itself does not encourage inquiry. Islam is not to

be investigated; it is to be believed and obeyed. That Islam alone is true is simply to be accepted. Malays are taught that to question religious truth is by definition to reveal a lack of faith. Christian education, in contrast, allows for critical questioning without accusations of abandonment of one's faith.

Malays are not free to express uncertainties about Islam or to inquire publicly into Christianity or any other religious belief system. Indeed, their entire academic system has traditionally been based on rote memorization, which conditions them not to be inquisitive (Bunge 1985:118-122). Moreover, their close group identity, unlike American individualism, makes it virtually unthinkable that a Malay would openly disrupt the social cohesion by espousing ideas strongly counter to those of the group. This all mitigates against outward dissent, but it does not necessarily show the condition of the heart. In other words, a particular Malay's evident lack of interest in Christianity reveals nothing more than the fact that a Malay is not free to express interest.

Malays must talk the party line. Yet, our student interviews show clearly that they sometimes are not consistent with what they **say** they believe. This was so prevalent in the interviews as to make it almost axiomatic. Recall, for example, that the students uniformly called for worldwide Islamization, but privately balked at the thought of imposing Islamic law on their Chinese Malaysian neighbors. They expressed full agreement

with Islamic standards of dress, but then found excuses for why it wasn't necessary for them to dress as such. Also, they recognized pre-Islamic religious elements as contrary to Islamic orthodoxy, yet allowed for such practices in certain instances. Again, seeming Malay resistance may be due to societal pressures to conform to the Islamic standard.

Considering the great social barriers against conversion to Christianity, it is amazing that there are as many converts as there are. The vulnerable position of Malay followers of Jesus and of Christian witnesses to Malays forbids me to disclose any specifics about their numbers or whereabouts. It will have to suffice to say that there are substantiated reports of increasing numbers of Malays making and holding commitments to Christ despite family and societal ostracism, death threats, and in a few cases, torture.

I'm not free to relay specific instances of Malay openness and inquiry, other than to say that they are occurring. To illustrate the fact that a measure of spiritual hunger and dissatisfaction with Islam is there, I will say only that when an introductory Christian correspondence lesson was mailed to a randomly-chosen group of Malays a number of years ago, the response far exceeded the expectations of any of those involved in the mailing. In the privacy and secrecy of a correspondence-course format, many Malays were interested in learning more about who Christians believe Jesus to be.

Going back to the student interviews, we remember again that the Malays, unlike most internationals, felt no desire to befriend Americans. Moreover, the prospects of an invitation to an American home were not particularly appealing to them. They seemed content, even intent on, keeping to themselves. My own interaction with Malay students shows that that is only part of the story. While Malays tend to be cautious and reserved to outsiders, I and other Christians can testify that when one is known and trusted by Malays, they are exceedingly gracious and hospitable. Furthermore, while Malay international students may not pursue relationships with Americans, when one has gained their respect, they are more than willing to receive hospitality from an American. One small example of this is their response to an invitation to a Thanksgiving dinner in our home. I personally invited three of the Malay student interviewees, telling them that they were welcome to bring a friend. On Thanksgiving Day, 17 Malays showed up for dinner.

Lest our enthusiasm run wild, it must be noted that when word of any actual verbal Christian witness to Malays gets back to the Malay group as a whole, the witness is blacklisted, and would-be inquirers are prevented by peers and even the Malaysian government from making any further contact with the Christian witness.¹⁹

¹⁹This concern to shield Malays from even hearing a Christian witness is Malaysian government supported and is found both in Malaysia and the United States. In Malaysia, the government threatens with arrest any individuals who encourage Muslims to

Suggestions for Malay Evangelism

Christian Witness is Possible

Admittedly, there are formidable obstacles to witnessing to Malays, even in the United States. Still, Christians in America can do much more than is being done. Regrettably, very little is being done, and it is due more to apathy than to fear of rejection. Every year for the past dozen or more years, God has brought thousands of Malays to our doorsteps. Yet, the Malays themselves report that most Americans express no interest in knowing about them. A few Malays who did try to initiate friendships with Americans were met with coldness.

It may be that anyone identified as Christian clergy, or anyone representing a church, campus ministry, or other Christian organization, cannot hope to establish a friendship with a Malay in the U.S. Even with professional Christian workers excluded, that still leaves most of the rest of us. Christian students, families of students, university staff, neighbors of Malays, and workers in businesses that Malays frequent, can all extend themselves to Malays. A friendly "Hello" is more than some Malays ever get from Americans.

convert ("Govt. Warns of ISA Against Those Who Instigate Muslims to Renounce Islam" 1992:3B). Right here in the U.S., the Malaysian government sponsors special programs for Malay students aimed at improving their knowledge of Islam and at countering opposing truth claims. Such programs were initiated in response to reports of Malay conversions to Christianity ("KL to Run Religion Course for Muslim Students Overseas" 1992:4B).

Most Malays will appreciate the interest shown by an American who does simple things like remember their names, or ask about their families or country. Americans learning and remembering Malay holidays is also meaningful to Malays.

Many Malays will accept invitations (even if only to be polite) to dinner or to a family outing, or to the observance of an American or even Christian holiday if an American has shown friendliness and kindness.

Even if one never gets beyond a casual acquaintance with a Malay, a positive witness is made if Malays know a person to be a Christian and yet caring. At the very least, followers of Christ can be associated with something positive. Christians who show respect for Malays and their religion, and who do not stereotype Muslims will be an anomaly to Malays. The more Christians they meet who are like this, the more their own prejudicial stereotypes about Christians will begin to fade.

There is actually much common ground. I found that I have much more in common spiritually with most Malays than I do with most Americans. We share a devotion to God and a desire to please him, as well as a commitment to a moral code that is largely absent from American society.

It makes an indelible impression on Malays if they see Christians as people of prayer, humility, and sincere devotion to God. Christians who exhibit a godly joy, walk in holiness, and

who speak of assurance of forgiveness and of an actual friendship with God, are often the envy of their Malay Muslim friends.

In addition, Malays in the U.S. will take back to Malaysia whatever impression they gained of Christians, good or bad, while they are here. A Malay engineer in Malaysia spoke with the highest regard for what he called the "real" Christians in America. He was one of those relative few who witnessed Christian love in action while he was a student in the United States.

What can be said about Americans extending themselves to Malays in the United States also applies to Americans in Malaysia or other countries with Malays. Malays may not always allow for a verbal witness, but if one models Christ before them, and is seen as a pious person,²⁰ preconceived notions of what Christians are like will be challenged.

²⁰I believe it is important for a Christian witness to the Malays to approximate Malay ideals of piety. Such ideals are embodied in the person of the Malay *guru* (teacher) of the traditional Islamic schools (see Winzeler 1975:97-99). The number one characteristic of a man close to God is that he is modest (I use masculine terminology because all Malay religious teachers are men). A man of God won't encourage people to come to him for assistance. He will never promote himself. In fact, the closer he is to God, the more he shies away from the public eye. How, then, must certain big name Christian evangelists come across who rent large halls and even stadiums, and who are proceeded months in advance by promotional crews?

Somewhat akin to the Buddhist monk, the ideal Islamic holy man has overcome material desires and leads a life of simplicity, free from the hectic pace of modern society. Yet, he is not a hermit, isolated in some monastery, but is integrally involved in the daily life of the villagers he serves. This description so contrasts with the average Christian worker in Malaysia (especially Western cross-cultural witnesses), that it is a wonder that Christian

It is especially inexplicable to Malays when they confront someone who has read the Quran and is knowledgeable about the teachings of Islam, but who is a Christian. The Malays, as Muslims in general, have been taught that the truth of Islam is so self-evident that no rational, sane individual would reject it once it is known. They don't know what to do with a devout, God-fearing Christian who knows Islam. They imagined that no such animal could possibly exist, and now they are facing one.

I have witnessed this bewilderment from Malays as they queried a certain individual as to why, after he had understood Islam, he did not then decide to become a Muslim. The person's calm, non-argumentative explanation of his faith in the supremacy of Jesus (he did not criticize Islam or Muhammad) left the Malay inquirers with nothing to say. His testimony was greatly enhanced by the fact that he had won the respect of his Malay co-workers by being hardworking, dependable, and thoroughly honest.

Try Not to be Adversaries

This same Christian co-worker also sought to appreciate the Malay perspective on issues that divide the ethnic communities in

workers are not even more misunderstood by Malays. Far too many live above the level of the people in exclusive high-rise condominiums or in spacious bungalows, separated physically and socially from the average Malay. And what is the life of the Christian leader in Malaysia if not busy and hectic?

Finally, traditional Islamic teachers were believed to possess *berkat* (mystical powers), by which they healed the sick, repelled sorcery, and were privy to knowledge inaccessible to ordinary human insight. This speaks of the importance of witnesses to Malays to be Spirit-empowered individuals who are well attuned to the spirit realm.

Malaysia. Such an approach is necessary for a Christian witness to Malays. Christians must strive to overcome the adversarial relationship that exists between Christians and Malays in Malaysia. The close association between ethnicity and religion in Malaysia means that ethnic distinctions accentuate religious ones.

Since, in Malaysia, Malay equals Muslim, and non-Malay generally equals non-Muslim, any governmental concessions to Islam are seen by non-Malays as ethnic assertivism. Resistance to such assertiveness, in turn, appears anti-Islamic, rather than merely anti-Malay (Barracclough 1983:972). Put another way, the alignment of religion with ethnicity injects a highly emotive element into communal relations.

We recall that under British colonial rule, the immigrant Chinese and Indian populations were separated from the Malays, rather than encouraged to intermingle and cooperate. The post-independence Malay-dominated government has continued a course of action that places Malays and the other ethnic groups in competition rather than cooperation. Policies designed to raise the socio-economic level of the Malays relative to the other peoples have given Malays business, employment, and educational opportunities not afforded the others. The result is that the Chinese and Indians are in perpetual struggle to provide for themselves benefits that are freely awarded to Malays simply by virtue of their being Malay.

The Malaysian Christians who are Chinese, naturally identify with the Chinese community and support efforts to bolster Chinese rights. Thus, at every turn, Chinese Christians find themselves pitted against their Malay compatriots. (The same is true of the Indian Christians and the Indian community). There is no love lost between the Chinese and Malays. My association with a large, mainly Chinese church in Malaysia taught me that, sadly, the Chinese Christians are not exceptional here. I recall a conversation around the table of a Chinese noodle restaurant late one morning. I and the six or eight Chinese church members at the table had just come from a special Malaysian Independence Day prayer service at our church. I listened as my Chinese Christian friends one by one complained of increasingly high-handed Malay politics and self-serving Malay politicians. When I asked if any of them were going to go downtown for the Independence Day festivities, they fairly bristled at the thought of joining the Malays in celebration.

Many Malaysian Christians hide their lack of effort to witness to Malays behind the excuse that religious proselytization is outlawed in Malaysia. I have even heard some confess that they would just as soon not see Malays become Christians and enter the church. "After all," they explained, "the church is the one sphere in which we maintain control. If many Malays came into the church, eventually they would assume leadership positions, and we would be subservient to them again."

More than a few times I had fellow parishioners ask me, knowing I taught English to Malays, if my students were, as they expected, not very bright. As a Chinese taxi driver informed me during my very first week in Malaysia, "Malays are born stupid."

Because of the historic enmity between Malaysia's two largest ethnic communities, conventional wisdom has it that Chinese Christians are not well suited to evangelize the Malays (Livingstone 1993:79; Browne 1936:75). I take issue with such thinking. It is true that Malays in general are not fond of the Chinese in general, but I have known Malays who were fond of individual Chinese people. I believe that if Malaysian Chinese Christians would unconditionally love their Malay acquaintances, it could be an all the more powerful testimony to the Malays of the transforming power of Jesus.

A few concessions on the part of Malaysian Christians to Malay Muslim sensitivities could be an important first step toward breaking down animosity. An obvious example, but one virtually ignored by Christians, is the Chinese affinity for pork. Another is the keeping of dogs as pets. Still another is dress. Christian women in Malaysia understandably (considering the climate) wear shorts and sleeveless dresses. Perhaps the giving up of externals that are offensive to Muslims would make the Christian community more approachable to Malays. Such concessions represent major lifestyle adjustments for some. Yet,

our commitment to remove all offenses to the gospel save the cross, must supersede our personal rights or comforts.

A Need for Understanding

Getting back to our desire for Christians to be pro-, rather than anti-, Malay, as Marmaduke Dodsworth (1928a:67) understood of Malay evangelism back in 1928, "sympathy for their problems and an understanding of their thinking is absolutely necessary." Unfortunately, the pro-Islamic Malaysian government places the church in the position of having to fight for its very survival. In opposing the government, the church opposes Malays. Since the church is always fighting Malays, it's no wonder Malays see Christians as adversaries.

Although the church cannot afford to back down on its resistance to government restrictions on non-Muslim religious liberties, it must develop a greater sensitivity to the concerns of the Malays. The church needs to sympathize with the Malays for the wrongs which the Malays suffered at the hands of Western, "Christian" colonialists. It must understand the Malay perspective on the real and perceived injustices done to the Malays.

A Social Gospel Too

In seeking to be sensitive to Malay concerns, we must more clearly articulate the sociopolitical implications of the gospel. The societal upheaval left in the wake of Malaysia's pell-mell race to industrialization is causing the Malays to scramble for

spiritual values as a ballast. Understandably, they are looking to Islam for stability and moral guidelines as Malay society reshapes itself.

The unfortunate thing here is that Christianity is not seen as having anything to contribute on issues of development, issues which are of vital concern to Malay leadership. The Western Christian tradition has so dichotomized the gospel into the "two realms" of church and state, that Christians tend "to focus almost exclusively on the spiritual side of the biblical message" (Schlorff 1993:179). Christian witnesses to Muslims rightly try to explain the revelatory nature of God, and the sinfulness of humankind and our need of redemption, yet issues of social justice, the environment, and people-friendly means of development are topics about which Malays believe Christianity to be silent. Moreover, Malays see in Islamic tradition (and in Hinduism and Buddhism for that matter) more safeguards against unbridled materialism than has ever been demonstrated in Christianity as a whole in Malaysia.²¹

Scratch Where It Itches

In his insightful book Diffusion of Innovations, Everett Rogers (1983:316) points out that innovations must be client-centered, rather than innovation-oriented, focusing on the

²¹In Singapore especially, but in Malaysia as well, Christians represent a disproportionate number of English-speaking persons with tertiary education and well-paid employment (O'Grady 1990:47). Christianity was and is associated with wealth, position, and westernization.

clients' problems. In other words, in Malay evangelism we should not concentrate on the abstract/theological level, but on issues of day-to-day concern. Likewise, Rogers (1983:23) informs us that innovations are received most readily when they are not complex. Furthermore, practical, concrete, "how-to" knowledge is most important at the trial and decision stages (Rogers 1983:168). Thus, in Malay evangelism, we should be asking not so much "How can I convince my friend of the superiority of Christ?" but "What felt needs does my friend have that Christ can receive glory through meeting?"

Unregenerate Westerners who have no particular aversion to Christian doctrine, typically come to a personal faith in Christ not through theological argument, but through a loving Christian friend presenting Jesus to them at a point of need or crisis. This being the case, how much more so must Malay Muslims, who believe Christian teaching to be a dangerous perversion of the truth, be approached lovingly at their points of need?

One potential area of need that surfaced in the student interviews is for spiritual help in daily problems and in times of crisis. Orthodox Islam, along with Western secularism, have removed from the younger generation (in practice if not in theory) the realm of the spirits. Whereas, a generation ago, Malays routinely consulted mediums, employed spells and amulets, visited shrines, prayed to saints, and invoked the assistance of innumerable spirits, today they increasingly have nothing to turn

to for practical day-to-day concerns. Orthodox Islam, in discouraging the use of powers lesser than Allah, and in presenting a God who is inscrutably unknown and unaffected, one not "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," has created a spiritual void in many.

I believe this is to our advantage. It calls for witnesses who are comfortable with the spirit realm; those who can operate in the power gifts of the Spirit. Folk Islam lends power to Islam. Malays have not seen such power in Christianity. Hungry for demonstrable assurance of supernatural intervention, Malays are beginning to return to the old folk practices. Christians must be spiritually prepared.²²

²²A handful of the Malay students I interviewed who were basically non-observant Muslims volunteered why they were so. They said that they believe in God's standards of behavior, but that those standards are too high for them to attain by their own effort. They also expressed that external conformity to rules is nothing more than an empty shell if not accompanied by a proper attitude. They confessed that they found in Islam no power to enable them to reach Islam's lofty standards, and that even if they could eventually muster the self-discipline to tow the religious line, they would still be unchanged on the inside, though perhaps more prideful on account of their accomplishments. This, at least, was their perception of those Malays who did manage to uphold the religious code.

In fairness, I must point out that the vast majority of the Malays would take issue with the above stance, believing that the non-observant Malays in question were using the difficulties of the Islamic rigors as an excuse not even to try to do what they knew to do. The majority of the Malays would argue that the obedience to God's commands, the submission to his revealed will, was the necessary start toward righteousness, and that the very effort put forth was a sign of a proper attitude.

Still, the view of the handful provides a glimpse into the spiritual power void felt by some Malays at least.

Again, spiritual battles cannot be won by human reasoning. In fact, I would venture that most Malays' attachment to Islam is more emotional than it is cerebral.²³ Their very being as Malays is wrapped around the Islamic view of God and Muhammad. Challenges to their notions of God, Muhammad, or the truth as revealed in the Quran, are met with immediate defensiveness which drives them deeper into their convictions (Goldsmith 1982:114-115).

Jason Yoder (1994:344) recounts that, as with the Christian creeds and the doctrine of the Trinity, personal experience always precedes theological formulation. Muslims need to see what Jesus can do before they can begin to give him his proper place theologically.

Along these lines, Rogers (1983:18) notes that most who adopt an innovation base their decision on the subjective evaluation of those who have tried it. In other words, they look for someone to model the innovation for them. In Malay

²³This is exemplified in Quran recitation, which is popular among the more devout Malays. The participants report a sense of well-being and a spiritual high through an uncomprehending chanting of their Arabic holy book.

Another factor that makes theological argument ineffective, no matter how convincing, is the fact that loyalty to the Malay cause, right or wrong, supersedes abstract truth. A famous Malay story tells of an innocent Malay who consented to go like a lamb to the slaughter rather than permit the taint of disloyalty to rest upon his house (Wilkinson 1924:39). In another early tale, a man loyal to an unjust ruler who propagated a lie is favored over one who stands up for what he knows to be true at the expense of the ruler's reputation. This underscores our contention that abstract formulations of theological truth are secondary to emotional attachment to Malay identity markers.

evangelism, it is usually too risky to identify those Malays who have chosen to follow Christ, if, indeed, there are any to be found. Thus, in most instances, the Christian cross-cultural or cross-ethnic witness must be the model.

It is also important for us to realize that the solidification of a person's conversion experience is a process rather than an instantaneous act (Rogers 1983:163). At every step, we must provide teaching and close contact with those who have proved the gospel to "work" in their lives.²⁴

A modeling of the life of Christ, and a consistent, unconditional love for Malays over the long haul is needed. Malay evangelism requires much sowing and watering. As a friend of Malays once told me, "Those who succeed (in Malay evangelism) will not be those with exceptional ability, but those who persevere." Sadly, we are little, if at all, beyond the condition Browne (1936:54) observed in 1936 when he said, "It is evident that the efforts made on behalf of the Malays have not been sufficiently intensive or continuous to give any expectation of success."

²⁴Here is where involvement with other Malay believers in Jesus is crucial for Malay converts. They can share their struggles with those who understand them best and have experienced those same struggles. They can see demonstrated concretely before them that it is indeed possible for a Malay to be a follower of Jesus and remain a Malay.

Tap into the Power Source

We noted earlier that the Malays are undergoing profound social upheaval. The supposition when dealing with people in transition (such as Malay international students or the Malays in the rapidly changing Malaysian society) is that they are more open to change (Matheny 1981:5-6). We would expect people in such situations to be more inclined to shift spiritual allegiance--to follow Christ. Yet, this does not appear to be the case with Malays as a whole, and it is certainly not demonstrated by Malay students in the United States. Conventional means of evangelizing international students (Bible studies, discussions, talks, films, and even hospitality and friendship) aren't penetrating the Malay wall. Necessary though these are, such means are not sufficient to get past the blinders. Perhaps the point of entry must be through something other than the intellectual. To reach the Malay heart, we must go through the realm of the spirit.

It is assumed among evangelicals that all forms of Christian ministry, including evangelistic endeavors, must be undergirded in prayer. Yet, beyond this awareness, front line Christian cross-cultural witnesses to Muslims, including those who are devoting their lives to the Malays, are increasingly calling for an awareness of the dynamics of what has come to be known as

spiritual warfare.²⁵ Spiritual breakthroughs resulting in heightened gospel receptivity and even Christian conversion among Malays are attributed at least in part to clearer understanding of the forces of evil, their influence on certain peoples and institutions, and ways of countering such opposition.

Concomitant to this is the rediscovery that the spiritual effectiveness of the witness depends upon the spiritual life (i.e., holiness) of the witness. Just as actions in the physical realm have consequences in the physical realm, spiritual actions effect changes in the spiritual realm. For example, as a humble apology can tear down the relational walls between two individuals, so individual and corporate repentance can remove barriers to the workings of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ As mentioned earlier, a facility in the operations of the spirit realm, including an openness to the power gifts of the Spirit, is important in Malay evangelism.

²⁵It is beyond the scope of this writing to sort through the issues involved in the field of spiritual warfare. An avalanche of writing on this unresolved and controversial subject is pouring forth. Thomas McAlpine's Facing the Powers is an excellent short introduction to the major Christian traditions' varying perceptions of the forces of evil. Some of the major, more practical oriented works include Dawson 1989, Frangipane 1991, Jacobs 1991, Kraft 1994, Wagner 1991,1992, and White 1990, 1993.

²⁶See Dawson 1989:80, 1991:139; Harper 1988:56; Kraft 1994:60; Orr 1938:50; Silvano 1994:238; Wagner 1992:137-138, 177; and White 1990:118, 127-128, 168, 1994:209-210.

Essentials for a Malay Christian Theology

When doing theology for Malay evangelism, church planting, or discipleship, we need, of course, to address the central themes of the Christian understanding of the nature of God, humankind, sin, and salvation. Beyond these fundamentals, though, there are five additional areas in which we need to apply biblical principles to the Malay world. First, as discussed, we need a strong theology of the spirit realm. Second, we must speak to the issues of "development," technology, urbanization, and how these relate to families and communities. Third, we must be more communal and less individualistic than is typical of Western Christianity. Fourth, we must address relations with other peoples and other religions. Fifth, we must consider how Malays can incorporate the history of God's people (Israel and the church, both of which are seen as enemies of the Malays), and treat it as their own.

Contextualization Efforts

Contextualization can help correct Malay misunderstanding and undo some of the harm from past misrepresentations of Christianity. Adopting forms more akin to Malay Muslim culture will certainly help Malay converts more naturally and wholeheartedly express their devotion to Christ. In a thought provoking article entitled "Dynamic Equivalent Conversion for Tentative Muslims Believers," David Teeter (1990:306-312) postulates that Muslims can develop a growing appreciation of

Jesus while they remain practicing Muslims. Using a "conversion as process" over against a "conversion as decision" model, Teeter believes Muslims can gradually grow to a salvific knowledge of Christ without the explosive crisis (and the attendant social fallout) of "converting" to Christianity. In Teeter's understanding, there can be such a thing as a "Muslim follower of Jesus" who remains in good standing with her or his family and Muslim community (Teeter 1990:304).

Teeter's approach is both helpful and not helpful when applied to the Malays. Positively, it focuses our attention on a centered set, rather than bounded set (Hiebert 1978), framework in which a person moving toward Christ may be closer to the kingdom of God than a person who has made a commitment to Christ, but is drifting away. It helps us recognize that most people's salvation experience is better described as a gradual process than a one-step decision. It also highlights the biblical teachings that Christ-like actions supersede mental assent to doctrinal formulas.

David Teeters field-tested his model, with initial success, through a drop-in center in Bethlehem, where Christians discuss the Bible and the Quran with Muslims curious enough or interested enough to come (Teeters 1990:307). In the Malay situation, unlike in Bethlehem, this approach would not get off the ground. Any such outreach run by Christians would be seen by Malays as an outpost for Christian proselytization. Furthermore, the approach

of discussing the Quran, and even using the Quran as a "bridge" to belief in the supremacy of Jesus, would be viewed as nothing more or less than a reprehensible ploy by Christians to deceive the vulnerable, less-than-fully-grounded Muslims into abandoning their faith. Moreover, any Malays who might be interested in learning about Jesus--those inclined to go to such a drop-in center--would likely be physically prohibited from doing so, such is the Orwellian control Malay society has over its members.

Nor would Malays accept "Muslim followers of Jesus." Malay Muslims would immediately call them on that. Do they believe in the creed? Is the Quran the final authority? Is Muhammad the last and supreme prophet of God?

Despite the difficulties, I am quite hopeful that a Malay church can eventually thrive in Malaysia. On the question of contextualization, the Christian gospel is actually better suited for the Malay culture than is Islam. Unlike Islam, the gospel is not a "touch not, taste not" system, but a proclamation of grace. Sincere Malay Muslims live under the burden of a cognitive and emotional dissonance. For example, as our interviews revealed, they are told that the music and dance they love is wrong, and that they must not allow themselves to become absorbed in it.

Malays, as are the tribal peoples of Malaysia, are musically inclined. Malay speaking Kadazan and Iban Christians of Sabah and Sarawak use dance naturally in worship. Forcing the Malay psyche into the Islamic mold is, in certain spots, an

uncomfortable fit. Another example is that much of Malay society was matriarchal, but has had to adapt to a male-oriented Islamic code. Malays do bend the Islamic structure to adapt to Malay culture, but it is also necessary for Malay culture to bend to align with Islamic form. In Christianity, the forms are fluid, honoring any culture by expressing itself through that particular culture's forms. A unique, tailor-made Malay church can embody Jesus' life, and become one more expression of the multi-faceted kingdom of God.

Other suggestions for Malay evangelism are that Christian witness to the Malays must involve, in order of importance: (1) a life of piety and devotion to God, (2) verbal testimony to the lordship of Jesus, and (3) power encounter. This is predicated on having established a relationship of trust and being a genuine friend to the Malays. Furthermore, everything from start to finish must be upheld in prayer, for ultimately, the battle will be won in the spiritual realm.

The great cause for hope for the establishment of surviving and thriving Malay churches is that persistent prayer has and is being offered up to God on the Malays' behalf. For years, in the early part of this century, a band of men and women in England and Malaya known as the Malay Prayer Fellowship prayed for God to open Malay hearts to the gospel (Browne 1936:77-78). Today, similar groups are united in prayer for the Malays. Ongoing prayer networks are multiplying throughout Malaysia and

elsewhere. Some 400 intercessors from a broad spectrum of Christian denominations attended the 2nd National Prayer and Intercessors' Retreat in Malaysia from February 23-25, 1995. Prayer homes (homes dedicated solely to intercessory prayer), prayer chains, and prayer groups, many of which are focusing on the Malays, are mushrooming throughout Malaysia. Furthermore, a love for the Malays is being birthed in the Malay church, evidenced in part by the establishment of compassionate ministries to the poor, disadvantaged, and abused. There is a growing realization that the Spirit of God can penetrate the Malay heart, and many Christians are praying to that end. Their prayers are yet to bare fruit. Surely, it is only a matter of time before Benjamin Keasberry's 1875 death-bed prediction comes true as the Malays come to acknowledge and worship the Savior.

Appendix A
Sources

(Literature Pertaining to the History and Culture of the Malays and Their Southeast Asian Context, Particularly Related to the Colonial Period and Including Christian-Malay Relations.)

The most thorough work on the general history of Southeast Asia was written by D.G.H. Hall (1981). Other important histories of Southeast Asia are by Bastin (1967) and Bastin and Benda (1968).

As for Malaysia in particular, the standard modern history is by Andaya and Andaya (1982). This provides a useful broad background and includes limited references to Christianity. Another significant history of Malaysia is by C. Mary Turnbull (1981), who has a special interest in 19th century Malaysia, which is the critical time period for the early missions which were established under British colonial rule. Of smaller scope (as the title indicates), but highly readable, is Miller's A Short History of Malaysia (1966). Though he ignores Christianity entirely, Miller writes concisely and gives useful summaries. Finally, the articles in Wang (1964) by Lamb, Bassett, and Turnbull provide insightful sketches of Malay history.

As we narrow our focus to the history of Christianity in Malaysia, we start with volumes I,II,III,VI, and VII of Latourette's classic A History of the Expansion of Christianity (1937-1945). Substantial works on the church in Asia are Hoke (1975), Hodder (1890), Neil (1948), and Anderson (1968). Moffett (1992) especially, but also Latourette (1937,1938) cover the early

spread of the church in Asia. Colless (1969) is the foundational study on pre-Portuguese Christianity in Malaya. England (1990) updated the work of Colless.

Roxborough's 1989 concise outline history of the church in Malaysia is a good introduction to the people, missions, and issues in Malaysian church history. Another useful survey is Flemming's Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, the Church in a Racial Melting Pot (1968). By far the most thorough writing on Malaysian church history (though it excludes non-Protestant missions) is Herron's A History of the Protestant Christian Churches in West Malaysia and Singapore (1977). Sng (1980) is the best one-volume church history for Singapore and much of Malaysia.

In addition to the general church histories, there exist numerous denominational histories and histories of various missionary societies. One of the best sources of information on the London Missionary Society (LMS) work in Malaya is the firsthand accounts of LMS pioneer in Malaya, William Milne in Memoirs of the Rev. William Milne (Morrison 1824). Morrison added occasional remarks to his compilation of Milne's written documents. Tomlin's (1844) compilation of missionary journals and letters provides another source. One can also glean from O'Sullivan (1984) and Bird (1982). Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (1970) gives a rare view of how some missionaries were seen by their Malay teacher.

The major histories of the pre-independence Anglican Church in Malaysia are Ferguson-Davie (1921), Henrich (1934), Loh (1964), Pascoe (1901), and Thompson (1951).

A perceptive analysis of the formative years of the Methodist mission in Malay is found in Barclay (1956). Oldham (1907 and 1913) and Thoburn (1892 and 1894) are especially helpful in that they are firsthand accounts of the two founders of Methodism in Malaysia. Nathalie Means (1935) is a fine account of the first 50 years of Malaysian Methodism. Doraisamy (1982) is a good, longer history. Women in the Methodist Church in Malaysia (1985) is also useful.

Thiran (1990) is the only complete history of the Christian Brethren in Malaysia. "The Story of One Hundred Years of the Lord's Blessings" (1964) covers the Brethren Church in Melaka.

Band (1948) treats the history of the English Presbyterian Church worldwide. Marcus (1955) is a brief history of the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia. Johnson (1988) is the most thorough work on Presbyterianism in Malaysia and Singapore. Though it principally deals with one particular church in Singapore, it also covers many aspects of the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia and Singapore.

F.G. Lee (1963) is a short history of the Catholic Church in Malaysia. Cardon (1939) provides an account of the years 1511-1888. St. Francis Xavier's letters during the Portuguese years in

Melaka are recorded in Coleridge (1872). The definitive work on Xavier with considerable detail on Melaka is Schurhammer (1980 and 1982). Williams (1985 and 1988) discusses the Catholic Church's relationship with colonialism.

The most helpful journal, which covers all aspects of British colonial rule from its inception in 1824 to Malaysian independence in 1957 is the Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. It continued after independence under the slightly different title of the Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. The United Empire also focuses on the British colonies. Other journals providing firsthand accounts of British colonial Malaya are the F.M.S. Government Gazette, Selangor Journal, Straits Echo, Malay Weekly Mail, Planter, Journal of the Incorporated Society of Planters, and the Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia.

Articles by missionaries and church leaders in Malaya appear in the International Review of Missions, The Moslem World, the Journal of the Annual Meetings of the Boards of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Malaysia Message. The Malaysia Message was published from 1891 to 1953, when it became the Methodist Message. It is a valuable source of information on Protestant churches generally.

A significant source is British colonial government reports. These include Malayan constitutional documents, colonial office

papers, annual reports for several of the Malay states, and other works published by the Malayan Government Printing Office.

Arguably the most influential figure in British colonial Malaysia was Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham. Swettenham, whose attainments in colloquial Malay were exceptional, served in Malaya for 34 years, from 1871-1904. He was a Resident (official advisor and overseer) of the state of Selangor, and then Perak, and in 1895 became the Resident General (the chief federal officer) of the newly federated states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang. From 1901-1904 Swettenham ruled as the High Commissioner of the Malay States and Governor of the Straits Settlement, the local head of the entire colony. Swettenham's several books (see Bibliography), government reports, and journal entries are invaluable.

Another leading early colonial administrator was Sir Hugh Charles Clifford, who spent 20 years in Malaya (1883-1902). He succeeded Swettenham as Resident of Perak and later became Governor of North Borneo. Like Swettenham, Clifford wrote prolifically about the life of the Malays and colonial Malaya.

Malayan civil servant Sir Richard Olaf Winstedt was one of the greatest Malay scholars of all time, and in colonial times was rivaled only by missionary William Shellabear. Winstedt wrote regularly for the Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal

Asiatic Society. His numerous books (see Bibliography) remain among the most useful in understanding Malay life.

Another distinguished Malay scholar, R.J. Wilkinson wrote at around the turn of the century of Malay customs and beliefs. Authors Bird (1883), Ireland (1905), Warnford-Lock (1907), Wright and Cartwright (1908), Wells (1928) and Peet (1934), among many others, provide personal sketches of life in Malaya.

Charles Allen (1983) and John Butcher (1979) give invaluable information on the life of the British in Malaya. Allen makes a few references to religion, but Butcher is oblivious to the importance of the churches for expatriates.

Finally, there are a few Malay sources of information on Malay history and the coming of the Western powers. The most important are two of the all-time classics of Malay literature, the Sejarah Melayu; Malay Annals (1970) and the Hikayat Abdullah (Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir 1970). The Sejarah Melayu; Malay Annals, written in the 16th century and comprising legends based on historical events, is an account of the rise of Melaka and the Melakan Sultanate (1403-1511). It is invaluable in its Malay portrayal of Malay history and of the coming of the Portuguese. The Hikayat Abdullah (Abdullah's History), originally published in 1843, is the monumental 19th century writing of a Malay scholar who worked as a Malay language

translator and language teacher to British administrators and missionaries. Among his pupils were LMS missionaries Claudius Thomsen and Benjamin Keasberry, and no less than the founder and first governor of Singapore, Sir Stamford Raffles.

Another important Malay work is an autobiographical account by Abdul Majid, The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man (Roff 1978). Abdul Majid gives an insider's look at Malay life, including Islamic observance, from 1887-1927. In addition to the above, Bastin and Winks (1966) is a compilation of selected historical readings by Malays and non-Malays.

Table 1Monthly Family Budgets in 1930: European
and Asiatic Standards

<i>Item</i>	<i>European Standard</i>		<i>Asiatic Standard</i>	
	<i>Details (only some items)</i>	<i>\$ p.m.</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>\$ p.m.</i>
1. Food	Market and cold storage—130	167.00		72.90
2. Drinks and Tobacco	4 bottles whisky, 2 gin, etc.—36.03; 12 tins cigarettes	47.63		3.60
3. Servants' Wages	Boy—30, cook—30, <i>tukang air</i> —20, <i>kebun</i> —20, <i>amah</i> —35, <i>syce</i> —35, <i>dhobi</i> —12	182.00	1 servant—10, <i>dhobi</i> , barber, etc.	20.00
4. Light and Water		30.00		6.55
5. Transport	Petrol for 25 miles/day—25.16	53.47	By bus	11.04
6. Depreciation of car		42.50		—
7. Education	School for child in Singapore—13; child at prep. school in U.K.: tuition—120; doctor, travel, clothes, etc.—57	190.00		12.70
8. Clothes	(for three in Malaya)	80.00	<i>Baju, sarungs</i> , etc.	13.00
9. Clubs		61.00		—
10. Rent	(6% of salary)	48.00		30.00
11. Widows' & Orphans' Fund	(4% of salary)	32.00		—
12. Miscellaneous	Dentist, life insurance, holidays, books, etc.	26.40		6.21
Total	Salary of 800 p.m., + 10% temporary allowance, + 10% married allowance	960.00	Salary of 160 p.m., + 10% temporary allowance	176.00

Source: Compiled from data in *Report of the Commission on the Temporary Allowances* (Singapore, 1931).

Appendix C

Sources

(Sources on Malay Religion, Culture, Ethnicity, and Politic)

From Malay writers we have the Sejarah Melayu; Malay Annals (1970) which was written in the 16th century of the life of Melaka, especially of the royal court, during the 15th and early 16th centuries. The Hikayat Abdullah (Abdullah's History) (1970), originally published in 1843, gives direct reports of all aspects of life of early 19th century Malaya. Roff's The Wandering Thoughts of a Dying Man (1978), which records Abdul Majid's reflections from 1887-1927 about life and death, provides insight into Malay religious practice. An interesting source of pre-colonial Malay values and ethics in the 15th century epic poem "Death of a Warrior," which explores the relationship between blind loyalty to Malay rulers and loyalty to truth. Here we find the seeds of the historic Malay tension between allegiance to traditional authority and allegiance to Islamic law.

We also glean information about Malay religious practice from the accounts of British colonial administrators, such as Sir Hugh Clifford, Sir Stamford Raffles, and Sir Frank Swettenham. Swettenham (1900a) gives a lengthy description of Malay religious practice.

Traveler Isabella Bird's (1883) impressions of 19th century Malays are interesting. Of special pertinence are her observations about Malay Islamic practice. Allen (1983) is a compilation of journal entries and letters by British expatriates in Malaya in the first half of this century. Several of the entries offer glimpses into Malay religious practice. Numerous Christian missionaries in Malaya give early descriptions of Malay Islam. Among these are Thoburn (1884) and Oldham (1914), the founders of Methodism in Malaya, Legge (1898), Cherry (1907 and 1923), Tisdale (1913), Wheeler (1928), Browne (1936), and Marrison (1957).

The writings of Malay scholars Cole (1945), Wilkinson (1923 and 1957), and Provencher (1978) deal specifically with Malay customs and beliefs. Cole and Wilkinson spent much of their lives in Malaya, and wrote from personal observation. Winstedt's The Malays, a Cultural History (1950) is a standard work on the subject. Ryan's more concise The Cultural History of Malaysia (1971) is also helpful. Karim (1992) contains several articles about various aspects of traditional, pre-Islamic Malay culture. Kahn (1992) is another excellent source on Malay culture. Finally, Hamid (1964) is a fine, brief survey of Malay religion and culture.

Besides chapters on traditional Malay social-political worldview, Osman (1985) also includes a study of Malay folk

tales. Winstedt (1923) and Wilkinson (1924) each wrote about Malay literature and folklore. C.C. Brown (1969) is a compilation of Malay proverbs. Folk tales and proverbs give insights into Malay values.

The best works on Malay magic are Winstedt (1951) and Endicott (1970). Both show how elements of magic were incorporated into Islam. Banks (1983) discusses Malay beliefs about spirits in his thorough treatment of Malay kinship systems. Coming down to the present, De Koninck (1992) discusses the effect of modernization on Malay kinship networks. Mauzy (1987) also discusses modern Malay cultural changes. Conkey's (1992) description of Malay funeral rites shows that, with all the modernization and Islamization, the beliefs of traditional spirit religion remain strongly entrenched. Conkey is one of many who examine the interaction of Malay folk religion with Islamic law.

This brings us to the complex relationship between Malay ethnicity and Islam. The issues of Malay identity and culture, Islamic observance and Islamic revivalism are so overlapping and interconnected as to make discreet categorizations impossible. The list of sources is by no means exhaustive, but merely highlights the key works on each particular topic.¹

¹As for Islam in general, Denny (1985) is the best introduction to Islam. Denny (1990) is also useful in that it focuses on Islam in its cultural setting. Cragg (1985) is excellent in helping Christians understand Islam. Maududi (1977) is a good insider's (Muslim) source for gaining an understanding

The definitive history of Islam is Hodgson's three-volume The Venture of Islam (1974). The Cambridge History of Islam (1970) by Holt, Lambton, and Lewis is also significant, as is Lapidus' A History of Islamic Societies (1988). Voll (1982) is a fine history of Islam through modern times, especially the political history of Islam in the last two centuries.

To begin to help us see Southeast Asian expressions of Islam, and more particularly, Malay Islam, and to note commonalities with and divergence from Arabic expressions, the following sources are invaluable. Israeli (1982) writes about Islam in Asia. Lawrence (1989b) discusses Islam in South Asia, and both Johns (1987) and Peacock (1989) are excellent articles about Islam in Southeast Asia. Hooker (1983), Ibrahim, Siddique, and Hussein (1985), and Abdullah and Siddique (1986) are collections of articles about Islam in Southeast Asia. Provencher (1982) traces Islam in Malay history and Islam in contemporary Malay culture. Yegar (1979) explores the nature of Malayan Islam in the British colonial era. Jomo and Cheek (1992) write specifically of Malaysia's Islamic movements.

Although he doesn't cover the most recent trends in Malaysia, Roff (1967) remains the definitive work on the historical developments in Malay Islam, nationalism, and ethnic

of Islam. Musk (1990) is a thorough treatment of the major features of Islamic folk religion.

identity since the coming of the British. The interplay of ethnicity and religion in Malay identity is a primary interest in our study. Perhaps the most significant work on this subject is Judith Nagata's The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam (1984).

Mutalib (1990) is another substantial work on Malay ethnicity and Islam. Mutalib discusses the relative strengths of what he calls the "Islamic pull" and the "ethnic pull" of Malay identity. Voll (1982), Milner (1986), and Ackerman and Lee (1988) are others who explore the subject of Malay ethnicity and religion. Nagata (1974) and Von der Mehden (1987) are also about ethnicity and religion and the selection of ethnic identity in a pluralistic society. Though not specifically about Malaysia, Chew (1992) discusses ethnic integration in racially pluralistic societies. Kahn and Loh (1992) is a compilation of articles about Malay traditional culture and Islam, Malay-style Islam versus universal Islam, and Islamic demands versus the necessity for pragmatism in a pluralistic society.

Another concern is the question of Islamic reaction to modernization and Western secularism. Donohue and Esposito (1982), Esposito (1983), Haddad (1983), and Peacock (1978 and 1989), all address the issue of Islamic response to modernization.

A related area, and one which is of great interest to us in that it has direct bearing on Malay identity and on efforts at

Malay evangelism, is the recent popularity of Islamic revival movements in Malaysia. Bruce Lawrence's Defenders of God (1989a) is a well-written examination of fundamentalism and its relationship to nationalism and modernization. Faruki (1983) and Dekmejian (1988) give the bases of Islamic revival and general descriptions of what Islamic resurgence entails. Haddad, Voll, and Esposito (1991) is an excellent source on the history and types of Islamic revival movements. Muzaffar (1987) contains sketches of Islamic resurgence worldwide.

Government politics enter deeply into any discussion of Islamic revivalism. Hunter's The Politics of Islamic Revivalism (1988) is an important source here. Milner (1983) writes of Islam and the Muslim state. Milne (1967 and 1980) and G. Means (1976) are helpful for an understanding of the Malaysian political system in general. Bakar (1986) discusses the relationship between Islam and Malay nationalism. Sanneh (1991), a brief but insightful article about Islam and nationalism, has bearing on the issues of Malay ethnic nationalism versus international Islam. Noer (1983) covers the political dimensions of Islam worldwide and in Malaysia specifically. Bannerman's (1988) discussion of the role of the *shari'ah* (Islamic law) in pluralistic societies is applicable to the Malaysian situation. Wilmot (1984) gives a Malay view of the importance of Islam for

the whole of Malaysian society. Kessler (1992) explains the changing nature of Malay political culture. Barraclough (1983) shows the relationship of the Malaysian government to Islamic revival movements.

Esposito (1991b) and Nagata (1987) show the evidences for and the effects of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. Nagata (1984), Von der Mehden (1988), Nash (1991), and Jomo (1991) provide thorough descriptions of the history, character, ideologies, distinctives, and interrelationships between the various Islamic revival movements in Malaysia, and their relationship to Malaysian politics. Based on interviews with Malay university students in England, Anwar (1987) is particularly pertinent to our empirical study in that it specifically covers Islamic revival movements among Malay university students.

Also relevant to my student interviews is Poston (1991 and 1992), who writes of Islamic revival movements in the West. Gutbi (1991) writes of Islamic organizations in the U.S., including those targeting university campuses. Haddad (1987) discusses the question of how Muslims in the U.S. should practice Islam. Von der Mehden's (1983) "American Perceptions of Islam" gives insight into why American Christians may be reluctant to befriend Muslims.

APPENDIX D
Malay Students Interviewed

Breakdown by Sex

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
UK	13	14	14	Total UK = 41
UMSL	16	12	8	Total UMSL = 36
IU	10	8	3	Total IU = 21
PA	4	0	6	Total PA = 10
<hr/>				
Total	43	34	31	Overall = 108
Total men-43		Total women-65		

Breakdown by Sex and Length of Stay (UK)

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
New	5	3	1	Total new = 9
1 Year	2	3	12	Total 1 year=17
2 Years	6	8	1	Total 2 yrs.=15
<hr/>				
Total	13	14	14	Total UK =41
Total men-13		Total women-28		

Breakdown by Sex and Length of Stay (UMSL)

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
New	2	2	2	Total new = 6
1 Year	8	8	4	Total 1 year=20
2 Years	6	2	2	Total 2 yrs.=10
<hr/>				
Total	16	12	8	Total UMSL =36
Total men-16		Total women-20		

Breakdown by Sex and Length of Stay (IU)

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
New	10	8	3	Total new =21
1 Year	0	0	0	Total 1 year= 0
2 Years	0	0	0	Total 2 yrs.= 0
<hr/>				
Total	10	8	3	Total IU =21
Total men-10		Total women-11		

Breakdown by Sex and Length of Stay (PA)

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
New	0	0	0	Total new = 0
1 Year	0	0	4	Total 1 year= 4
2 Years	4	0	2	Total 2 yrs.= 6
<hr/>				
Total	4	0	6	Total PA =10
Total men-4		Total women-6		

Breakdown of New Students

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
UK	5	3	1	Total UK = 9
UMSL	2	2	2	Total UMSL = 6
IU	10	8	3	Total IU = 21
PA	0	0	0	Total PA = 0
<hr/>				
Total	17	13	6	Total new = 36
Total men-17		Total women-19		

Breakdown for One-Year Students

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
UK	2	3	12	Total UK = 17
UMSL	8	8	4	Total UMSL = 20
IU	0	0	0	Total IU = 0
PA	0	0	4	Total PA = 4
<hr/>				
Total	10	11	20	Total 1 year=41
Total men-10		Total women-31		

Breakdown for Two-Year Students

	Men	Women without head covering	Women with head covering	
UK	6	8	1	Total UK = 15
UMSL	6	2	2	Total UMSL = 10
IU	0	0	0	Total IU = 0
PA	4	0	2	Total PA = 6
<hr/>				
Total	16	10	5	Total 2 yrs.=31
Total men-16		Total women-15		

APPENDIX E
Malay Student Questionnaire

1. How long have you been in the U.S.?
2. You are: ☐ Male
 ☐ Female
3. Where are you from in Malaysia?
4. Where did you go to school/college/university before coming to the U.S.
5. At which university are you now studying?

RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICANS

6. It is easy to become friends with Americans.
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Uncertain
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
7. List the nationality/race of your five best friends in Malaysia.

 - Questions 8-10 are not for new students -
8. List the nationality of your five best friends in America.
9. How many American friends do you have with whom you do things together on a regular basis?
10. During the past year, how many times have you been in an American home?
11. Here in America, where and with whom do you live?
12. Here in America, where and with whom do you eat?
13. If you have a job, where and with whom do you work?

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

14. In the last year, would you say that you have:
 ☐ a. become more religious
 ☐ b. remained about the same
 ☐ c. become less religious

15. If you went to a two-year university-level program (such as ITM or MSM) before coming to the U.S., would you say that you:
- ☐ a. became more religious when in the program
 - ☐ b. remained about the same
 - ☐ c. became less religious when in the program
16. Generally, how religious do you consider yourself?
- ☐ a. very religious
 - ☐ b. quite religious
 - ☐ c. somewhat religious
 - ☐ d. not very religious
17. About how often on the average did you attend a prayer service or Islamic class at any mosque/Islamic center during the past year?
- ☐ a. never
 - ☐ b. just during *Ramadan/Hari Raya Puasa* (and maybe one or two other times)
 - ☐ c. about once every other month
 - ☐ d. about once a month
 - ☐ e. about twice a month
 - ☐ f. once a week usually
 - ☐ g. two or more times a week
18. During the past year, did you attend an *usra* (Islamic cell group)? How often?
19. About how often on the average did you pray (perform *salaat*) during the past year?
- ☐ a. five or more times a day
 - ☐ b. more than once a day, but less than five times a day
 - ☐ c. about once a day
 - ☐ d. a few times a week
 - ☐ e. about once a week
 - ☐ f. less than once a week
20. Which of the following is true of you concerning last *Ramadan*?
- ☐ a. I observed *Ramadan* strictly
 - ☐ b. I observed *Ramadan* most days
 - ☐ c. I observed *Ramadan* some days
 - ☐ d. I paid little attention to keeping the fast
21. About how often did you eat *halal* food during the past year?
- ☐ a. always
 - ☐ b. usually
 - ☐ c. sometimes
 - ☐ d. not usually
 - ☐ e. rarely or never

22. How important do you think mosques are in keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith?
- ☐ a. very important
 - ☐ b. quite important
 - ☐ c. somewhat important
 - ☐ d. of little or no importance
 - ☐ e. I have no idea

23. One can be a good Muslim without attending mosque
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

24. Islam:
- ☐ a. should be observed strictly
 - ☐ b. should be observed moderately
 - ☐ c. The observance of Islam should be adjusted to the surroundings.

ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY - Give your own opinion!

25. A Muslim man and woman who are not related to one another should not be alone together.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
26. Muslim women should not go out on the streets unless their hair and arms are covered and their skirts are well below their knees.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
27. What constitutes appropriate dress for Islamic men and women?

KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAMIC ORTHODOXY - Give your own opinion!
Please feel free to explain your answers or to give additional comments.

28. According to Islam, a wedding ceremony is supposed to include the *bersanding* (the public sitting together of bride and groom who reign that day as queen and king of their community).

Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

29. If not explicitly taught by Islam, do you object to this practice?

30. According to Islam, weddings should include the *berinai* ceremony (the staining of the bride's fingers and nails with henna).

Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

31. If not explicitly taught by Islam, do you object to this practice?

32. According to Islam, a dead body should be placed in the grave with its face turned towards the direction of Mecca.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

33. If not explicitly taught by Islam, do you object to this practice?

34. According to Islam, a confinement period (a time when the mother remains at home) should be observed by a mother after the birth of her child.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

35. If not explicitly taught by Islam, do you object to this practice?
36. *Bomohs* (traditional healers/diviners/medicine men) help to promote true Islam.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
37. *Bomohs* are a benefit to society.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
38. There are spirits that reside in various places, such as swamps and jungles.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
39. Special care must be taken not to offend these spirits.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
40. There is *semangat*, a soul-substance or vital force, in all things, including inanimate objects, plants, animals, and human beings.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

UNIVERSAL ISLAM VS. MALAY NATIONALISM AND TRADITION IN MALAYSIA
Give your own opinion!

Please feel free to explain your answers or to give additional comments.

41. To restore God's rule and inaugurate a true Islamic social order, Western-inspired civil codes must be replaced by Islamic law, which is the only acceptable blueprint for Muslim society.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
42. Although Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, Malaysia should not become an Islamic state.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
43. Non-Muslims in Malaysia should not be required to live according to the *Sharia'ah*.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
44. For Muslims in Malaysia, the *Sharia'ah* law:
 - ☐ a. should be more strictly enforced
 - ☐ b. should be less strictly enforced
 - ☐ c. should be left as is
45. It is OK for a Malay Muslim to participate in traditional cultural practices such as the *makyong* play, the *joget* dance, or the *main pantai* festival.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Uncertain
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
46. Are you opposed to men participating in *silat* (traditional martial art)?
47. Are you opposed to women participating in *silat*?

48. *Silat* supports Islam
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
49. Nationalism (*rasa kebangsaan*) is opposed to the spirit of Islam.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
50. It is possible to be a Malay and not be a Muslim.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
51. A Malay should be free to choose whatever religion he or she wished.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
52. In Malaysia, Islam must be propagated so that it becomes as much the faith of the Chinese and Indians as it has been for the Malays.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
53. A Malaysian Chinese or Indian who converts to Islam becomes a Malay.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

54. Malaysian converts to Islam should receive *bumiputera* benefits.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
55. In Malaysia, non-Muslim religions should not use *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay language) in their religious publications.
56. The assertion of Malay cultural identity is incompatible with Islamic principles (Malay culture is against true Islam).
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
57. UMNO (The United Malay National Organization - the ruling party) should try to implement an Islamic government in Malaysia. (One of the purposes of UMNO should be to try to make the Malaysian government more Islamic.)
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
58. UMNO is doing a good job at implementing Islamic principles in Malaysia. (You are satisfied with UMNO's level of commitment to promoting Islam.)
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

PROSELYTIZATION - Give your own opinion!

Please feel free to explain your answers or to give additional comments

59. Muslims should try to inform non-Muslims about Islam.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
60. Muslims should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
61. It is OK for non-Muslims to try to convert Muslims to their faiths.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
62. It is OK for non-Muslims of one religion to try to convert non-Muslims of another religion to their faith.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
63. Non-Muslim expatriate missionaries (non-Muslim religious leaders from other countries) should be allowed to live in Malaysia and to teach their religion in Malaysia.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
64. Does Malaysia freely allow such people to come to Malaysia?

BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

65. According to Hindus: (choose as many as you like)
☐ a. God is absolutely separate and distinct from creation
☐ b. there is only one Absolute Reality (the essence of everything is the same)
☐ c. God is a person
☐ d. don't know
66. According to Hindus, being born into a low position: (choose as many as you like)
☐ a. is a chance happening
☐ b. is the just consequence of one's previous lives/karma
☐ c. is the will of a personal God
☐ d. don't know
67. According to Hindus: (choose as many as you like)
☐ a. time and the universe are cyclical (there is a never-ending cycle of birth-death-rebirth)
☐ b. the world is progressing from the time of creation to a final judgment
☐ c. the gods/God created the universe out of nothing
☐ d. don't know
68. According to Hindus, the ultimate goal of life is to: (choose the one best answer)
☐ a. attain release from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth
☐ b. reach heaven, a paradise of delights
☐ c. be good enough to become a god
☐ d. don't know
69. According to Christians, the Trinity consists of: (choose only one)
☐ a. God, Mary, and Jesus
☐ b. God, Mary, and the Holy Spirit
☐ c. God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus
☐ d. don't know
70. According to Christians, Jesus: (choose one)
☐ a. was a great prophet, but not God
☐ b. was born when God procreated with a woman
☐ c. was God in human form
☐ d. don't know

71. According to Christians, salvation/paradise is gained through: (choose only one)

- ☐ a. belief in Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice for sin
- ☐ b. doing more good things than bad things/trying to be a good person
- ☐ c. reciting the words of Jesus
- ☐ d. attending church
- ☐ e. don't know

72. According to Buddhists: (choose as many as you like)

- ☐ a. Buddha is God, and became a man
- ☐ b. Buddha was a man who reached spiritual enlightenment and is now regarded by many Buddhists as divine
- ☐ c. Buddha is the eternal creator of the universe
- ☐ d. don't know

73. According to Buddhists, salvation/paradise is gained through: (choose only one)

- ☐ a. seeking release from human desire
- ☐ b. obedience to the commands of God
- ☐ c. faith/belief/trust in God and devotion to him
- ☐ d. don't know

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

74. With which of the following do you agree:

- ☐ a. It is better to be a Hindu or a Buddhist than to have no religion.
- ☐ b. It is better to have no religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
- ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to have no religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
- ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to have no religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.

75. With which of the following do you agree:

- ☐ a. It is better to be a Christian than to have no religion.
- ☐ b. It is better to have no religion than to be a Christian.
- ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to have no religion than to be a Christian.
- ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to have no religion than to be a Christian.

76. With which of the following do you agree:
- ☐ a. It is better to be a Hindu or a Buddhist than to be a Christian.
 - ☐ b. It is better to be a Christian than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
 - ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to be a Christian than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
 - ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to be a Christian than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
77. With which of the following do you agree:
- ☐ a. It is better to be a Hindu or a Buddhist than to practice traditional spirit-religion.
 - ☐ b. It is better to practice traditional spirit-religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
 - ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to practice traditional spirit-religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
 - ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to practice traditional spirit-religion than to be a Hindu or a Buddhist.
78. With which of the following do you agree:
- ☐ a. It is better to be a Christian than to practice traditional spirit-religion.
 - ☐ b. It is better to practice traditional spirit-religion than to be a Christian.
 - ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to be a Christian than to practice traditional spirit-religion.
 - ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to be a Christian than to practice traditional spirit-religion.
79. With which of the following do you agree;
- ☐ a. It is better to practice traditional spirit-religion than to have no religion.
 - ☐ b. It is better to have no religion than to practice traditional spirit-religion.
 - ☐ c. It is neither better nor worse to practice traditional spirit-religion than to have no religion.
 - ☐ d. I am uncertain as to whether or not it is better to practice traditional spirit-religion than to have no religion.
80. Rank the following in order of your own personal preference:
- ☐ Buddhism
 - ☐ Christianity
 - ☐ Hinduism
 - ☐ Judaism
 - ☐ no religion
 - ☐ Sikhism
 - ☐ traditional spirit-religion
- If possible, give reasons for your ranking.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE U.S.

81. The United States is a Christian country.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
82. The teachings of Christianity strongly influence the U.S. government.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
83. The moral weaknesses of the U.S. can be attributed to Christianity.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
84. Christians are against Islam and the Muslim World.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
85. Jews are against Islam and the Muslim world.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
86. Christians and Jews are partners in a Judeo-Christian conspiracy against Islam and the Muslim world.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Uncertain
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX F
Questionnaire Data

Q #14 In the last year would you say you have:

- _____ a. become more religious
_____ b. remained about the same
_____ c. become less religious

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	3	22	1	26	
women(-)	0	21	0	21	
women(+)	5	20	0	25	72

Time in country

1 year	3	37	1	41	
2 years	5	26	0	31	72

Q#16 If you went to a two-year university level program before coming to the United States, would you say that you:

- _____ a. became more religious when in the program
_____ b. remained about the same
_____ c. became less-religious when in the program

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	5	27	0	32	
women(-)	4	22	0	26	
women(+)	13	12	0	25	83

Time in country

New	3	12	0	15	
1 year	12	27	0	40	
2 years	7	22	0	29	83

Q#17 & 18 About how often on the average did you attend a prayer service or Islamic class at any mosque/Islamic center during the past year?

- ☐ a. never
☐ b. just during Ramadan/Hari Raya Pausa (and maybe one or two other times)
☐ c. about once every other month
☐ d. about once a month
☐ e. about twice a month
☐ f. once a week usually
☐ g. two or more times a week

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	Total	Group Total
men	2	3	0	0	1	33	4	43	
women(-)	7	0	2	0	6	19	0	34	
women(+)	3	2	0	1	7	16	2	31	108

Time in country

New	0	0	0	0	1	33	2	36	
1 year	8	1	2	1	6	21	2	41	
2 years	4	4	0	0	7	14	2	31	108

Q#19 About how often on the average did you pray (perform Salaat) during the past year?

- ☐ a. five or more times a day
☐ b. more than once a day, but less than five times a day
☐ c. about once a day
☐ d. a few time a week
☐ e. about once a week
☐ f. less than once a week

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	f	Total	Group Total
men	20	14	4	3	0	2	43	
women(-)	14	12	6	0	0	2	34	
women(+)	29	2	0	0	0	0	31	108

Time in country

New	27	6	2	1	0	0	36	
1 year	21	12	8	0	0	0	41	
2 years	15	10	0	2	0	4	31	108

Q#20 Which of the following is true of you concerning last Ramadan>

- ☐ a. I observed Ramadan strictly
☐ b. I observed Ramadan most days
☐ c. I observed Ramadan some days
☐ d. I paid little attention to keeping the fast

Respondent	a	b	c	d	Total	Group Total
men	42	0	0	1	43	
women(-)	34	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	31	0	0	0	31	108

Time in country

New	36	0	0	0	36	
1 year	41	0	0	0	41	
2 years	30	0	0	1	31	108

Q#21 About how often did you eat halal food during the past year?

- ☐ a. always
☐ b. usually
☐ c. sometimes
☐ d. not usually
☐ e. rarely or never

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	37	4	2	0	0	43	
women(-)	23	10	1	0	0	34	
women(+)	30	1	0	0	0	31	108

Time in country

New	35	1	0	0	0	36	
1 year	36	4	1	0	0	41	
2 years	19	10	2	0	0	31	108

Q#22 How important do you think mosques are in keeping Muslims in the Islamic faith?

- ☐ a. very important
☐ b. quite important
☐ c. somewhat important
☐ d. of little or no importance
☐ e. I have no idea

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	27	8	1	0	0	36	
women(-)	19	12	1	0	0	32	
women(+)	28	3	0	0	0	31	99

Time in country

New	31	3	1	0	0	35	
1 year	25	8	0	0	0	33	
2 years	18	12	1	0	0	31	99

Q#23 One can be a good Muslim without attending a mosque.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	3	14	1	3	16	37	
women(-)	7	8	5	3	9	32	
women(+)	7	12	5	3	4	31	100

Time in country

New	8	6	3	2	17	36	
1 year	4	11	6	6	6	33	
2 years	5	17	2	1	6	31	100

Q#24 Islam:

- ☐ a. should be observed strictly
☐ b. should be observed moderately
☐ c. The observance of Islam should be adjusted to the surroundings.

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	37	1	5	43	
women(-)	25	5	4	34	
women(+)	23	5	3	31	108

Time in country

New	30	4	2	36	
1 year	25	6	7	41	
2 years	27	1	3	31	108

Q#25 Muslim men and women who are not related to one another should not be alone together.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	40	1	0	2	0	43	
women(-)	31	0	0	3	0	34	
women(+)	24	3	2	2	0	31	108

Time in country

New	36	0	0	0	0	36	
1 year	34	2	1	4	0	41	
2 years	25	2	1	3	0	31	108

Q#26 Muslim women should not go out on the street unless their hair and arms are covered and their skirts are well below their knees.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	39	3	1	0	0	43	
women(-)	28	4	0	2	0	34	
women(+)	25	3	2	1	0	31	108

Time in country

New	29	6	0	1	0	36	
1 year	33	4	2	2	0	41	
2 years	30	0	1	0	0	31	108

Q#28 According to Islam, a wedding ceremony is supposed to include the bersanding.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	0	0	2	0	41	43	
women(-)	0	0	0	0	34	34	
women(+)	1	0	1	5	24	31	108

Time in country

New	0	0	0	0	36	36	
year 1	0	1	3	36	41		
2 years	0	0	2	2	27	31	108

Q#29 If not explicitly taught in Islam, do you object to the bersanding?

- ☐ a. Yes
☐ b. No
☐ c. Uncertain

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	19	20	3	42	
women(-)	6	28	0	34	
women(+)	17	13	1	31	107

Time in country

New	15	20	1	36	
1 year	15	25	1	41	
2 years	12	16	2	30	107

Q#30 According to Islam weddings should include the berinai ceremony.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	3	0	5	1	24	33	
women(-)	0	0	0	0	26	26	
women(+)	2	0	3	5	18	28	87

Time in country

New	0	0	0	1	14	15	
1 year	2	0	5	3	31	41	
2 years	23	0	3	2	23	31	87

Q#31 If not explicitly taught in Islam, do you object to the berinai ceremony?

- ☐ a. Yes
☐ b. No
☐ c. Uncertain

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	2	22	9	33	
women(-)	0	18	8	26	
women(+)	5	18	5	28	87

Time in country

New	0	10	5	15	
1 year	5	24	12	41	
2 years	2	24	5	31	87

Q#32 According to Islam a dead body should be place in the grave with its face turned towards the direction of Mecca.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	41	0	2	0	0	43	
women(-)	34	0	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	28	3	0	0	0	31	108

Time in country

New	36	0	0	0	0	36	
1 year	37	0	4	0	0	41	
2 years	30	0	1	0	0	31	108

Q#34 According to Islam a confinement period should be observed by a mother after giving birth of her child.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	5	2	10	4	22	43	
women(-)	0	0	8	6	20	34	
women(+)	1	4	6	5	14	30	107

Time in country

New	1	0	2	10	23	36	
1 year	1	5	12	3	19	40	
2 years	4	1	10	2	14	31	107

Q#35 If not explicitly taught by Islam, do you object to this practice?

- ☐ a. Yes
☐ b. No
☐ c. Uncertain

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	6	33	4	43	
women(-)	1	33	0	34	
women(+)	1	26	2	29	106

Time in country

New	0	36	0	36	
1 year	1	35	4	40	
2 years	7	21	2	30	106

Q#36 Bomohs help to promote true Islam.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	0	4	25	12	2	43	
women(-)	0	3	26	5	0	34	
women(+)	0	0	13	10	8	31	108
Time in country							
New	0	0	32	4	0	36	
1 year	0	7	17	12	5	41	
2 years	0	0	15	11	5	31	108

Q#37 Bomohs are a benefit to society.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	10	18	9	6	0	43	
women(-)	15	18	14	1	0	34	
women(+)	0	0	13	10	8	31	108
Time in country							
New	0	0	32	4	0	36	
1 year	6	17	11	6	1	41	
2 years	4	4	15	6	2	31	108

Q#38 There are spirits that reside in various places such as swamps and jungles.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	20	12	4	4	3	43	
women(-)	24	5	1	4	0	34	
women(+)	16	4	6	2	3	31	108

Time in country

New	19	12	2	3	0	36	
1 year	22	3	9	5	2	41	
2 years	19	5	0	2	4	31	108

Q#39 Special care must be taken not to offend these spirits.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	4	7	5	9	19	43	
women(-)	7	4	5	9	9	34	
women(+)	0	2	8	8	13	31	108

Time in country

New	3	2	3	16	12	36	
1 year	2	9	10	6	14	41	
2 years	6	2	5	4	14	31	108

Q#40 There is semangat, a soul-substance or vital force in all things including: inanimate objects, plants, animals, and human beings.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	2	0	10	16	15	43	
women(-)	0	0	12	15	7	34	
women(+)	1	1	9	11	9	31	108

Time in country

New	0	0	4	21	11	36	
1 year	2	1	19	12	7	41	
2 years	15	0	8	7	15	31	108

Q#41 To restore God's rule and inaugurate a true Islamic social order, Western-inspired civil codes must be replaced by Islamic law, which is the only acceptable blueprint for Muslim society.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	6	2	4	5	26	43	
women(-)	0	0	2	2	30	34	
women(+)	12	5	2	2	10	31	108

Time in country

New	3	0	0	5	22	36	
1 year	9	4	0	3	25	41	
2 years	6	3	2	1	19	31	108

Q# 42 Although Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, Malaysia should not become an Islamic state.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	22	1	1	6	13	43	
women(-)	23	4	1	2	4	34	
women(+)	2	6	2	9	12	31	108

Time in country

New	12	7	2	2	2	36	
1 year	14	4	2	11	10	41	
2 years	13	2	1	3	12	31	108

Q#43 Non-Muslims in Malaysia should not be required to live according to the Shari'ah.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	28	10	2	2	1	43	
women(-)	27	7	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	4	6	8	4	9	31	108

Time in country

New	23	7	2	2	2	36	
1 year	19	7	7	3	5	41	
2 years	17	9	1	1	3	31	108

Q#44 For Muslims in Malaysia, the Shari'ah law:

- ☐ a. should be more strictly enforced
☐ b. should be less strictly enforced
☐ c. should be left as is

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	29	0	14	43	
women(-)	14	0	20	34	
women(+)	27	0	4	31	108

Time in country

New	11	0	25	36	
1 year	34	0	7	41	
2 years	25	0	6	31	108

Q#45 It is OK for Malay Muslims to participate in traditional cultural practices such as festivals, drama, and dance.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	0	5	2	11	25	43	
women(-)	0	3	0	14	17	34	
women(+)	25	5	1	4	19	31	108

Time in country

New	0	7	2	12	15	38	
1 year	25	3	1	7	28	41	
2 years	0	3	0	10	18	31	108

Q#46 Are you opposed to men participating in Silat?

- ☐ a. Yes
☐ b. No
☐ c. Uncertain

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	0	30	0	30	
women(-)	0	25	2	27	
women(+)	0	14	0	14	71
Time in country					
New	0	30	0	30	
1 year	0	17	0	17	
2 years	0	22	2	24	71

Q#47 Are you opposed to women participating in Silat?

- ☐ a. Yes
☐ b. No
☐ c. Uncertain

Respondent	a	b	c	Total	Group Total
men	3	27	0	30	
women(-)	0	25	2	27	
women(+)	4	10	0	14	71
Time in country					
New	4	26	0	30	
1 year	2	15	0	17	
2 years	1	21	2	24	71

Q#48 Silat supports Islam.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	5	8	3	3	1	20	
women(-)	6	8	5	0	0	19	
women(+)	0	2	1	2	1	6	45

Time in country

New	6	10	7	3	0	26	
1 year	2	1	0	1	1	5	
2 years	13	7	2	1	1	14	45

Q#49 Nationalism is opposed to the spirit of Islam.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	0	0	4	7	30	41	
women(-)	20	0	1	8	17	26	
women(+)	10	2	3	6	10	31	98

Time in country

New	2	0	2	6	26	36	
1 year	5	2	4	5	21	41	
2 years	3	0	2	6	10	21	98

Q#50 It is possible to be a Malay and not be a Muslim.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	31	4	3	0	5	43	
women(-)	27	4	0	0	3	34	
women(+)	16	5	4	1	5	31	108

Time in country

New	26	5	4	0	1	36	
1 year	30	3	3	0	5	41	
2 years	18	5	0	1	7	31	108

Q#51 A Malay should be free to choose whatever religion he or she wishes.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	20	7	4	3	9	43	
women(-)	13	5	1	6	9	34	
women(+)	7	6	2	2	14	31	108

Time in country

New	24	2	4	1	5	36	
1 year	10	10	2	3	16	41	
2 years	6	6	1	7	11	31	108

Q#52 In Malaysia, Islam must be propagated so that it becomes as much the faith of the Chinese and Indians as it has been for the Malays.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	12	2	6	22	1	43	
women(-)	4	2	4	23	1	34	
women(+)	12	6	7	5	1	31	108

Time in country

New	5	0	9	22	0	36	
1 year	15	7	5	12	2	41	
2 years	8	3	3	16	1	31	108

Q#53 A Malaysian Chinese or Indian who converts to Islam becomes a Malay.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	4	0	1	5	33	43	
women(-)	2	0	0	0	32	34	
women(+)	0	1	1	6	23	31	108

Time in country

New	0	0	0	0	36	36	
1 year	0	0	2	7	33	42	
2 years	6	1	1	4	19	31	109

Q#54 Malaysian converts to Islam should receive *bumiputera* benefits.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	4	5	5	2	27	43	
women(-)	0	2	5	0	27	34	
women(+)	11	6	5	3	6	31	108

Time in country

New	3	0	7	0	26	36	
1 year	6	6	3	2	24	41	
2 years	6	7	5	3	10	31	108

Q#55 In Malaysia, non-Muslim religions should not use *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malayan language) in their religious publications.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	1	1	1	4	36	43	
women(-)	0	0	0	1	33	34	
women(+)	2	2	5	6	16	31	108

Time in country

New	0	0	0	2	34	36	
1 year	2	1	5	6	27	41	
2 years	1	2	1	3	24	31	108

Q#56 The assertion of Malay cultural identity is incompatible with Islamic principles. (Malay culture is against true Islam.)

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	0	2	18	16	0	36	
women(-)	0	10	23	8	0	41	
women(+)	1	7	13	10	0	31	108

Time in country

New	0	2	18	16	0	36	
1 year	10	10	23	8	0	41	
2 years	1	7	13	10	0	31	108

Q#57 UNMO (The United Malay National Organization - the ruling party) should try to implement an Islamic government in Malaysia. (One of the purposes of UNMO should be to try to make the Malaysian government more Islamic.)

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	10	4	3	4	2	23	
women(-)	9	5	2	4	0	20	
women(+)	21	4	1	2	0	28	71

Time in country

New	8	1	2	2	0	13	
1 year	19	3	1	6	0	29	
2 years	13	9	3	2	2	29	71

Q#58 UNMO is doing a good job at implementing Islamic principles in Malaysia. (You are satisfied with UNMO's level of commitment to promoting Islam.)

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	3	2	14	4	0	23	
women(-)	2	6	4	7	1	20	
women(+)	3	7	7	5	6	28	71

Time in country

New	3	0	5	2	3	13	
1 year	3	7	7	10	2	29	
2 years	2	8	13	4	2	29	71

Q#59 Muslims should try to inform non-Muslims about Islam.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	39	4	0	0	0	43	
women(-)	19	15	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	23	7	1	0	0	31	108

Time in country

New	34	2	0	0	0	36	
1 year	31	10	0	0	0	41	
2 years	18	12	1	0	0	31	108

Q#60 Muslims should try to convert non-Muslims to Islam.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	23	15	0	4	1	43	
women(-)	19	15	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	18	9	2	2	0	31	108

Time in country

New	22	12	0	2	0	36	
1 year	26	12	1	2	0	41	
2 years	12	15	1	2	1	31	108

Q#61 It is OK for non-Muslims to try to convert Muslims to their faiths.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	11	17	2	2	11	43	
women(-)	11	14	0	1	8	34	
women(+)	9	6	0	4	12	31	108

Time in country

New	8	18	0	3	7	36	
1 year	18	9	1	2	11	41	
2 years	5	10	1	2	13	31	108

Q#62 It is OK for non-Muslims of one religion to try to convert non-Muslims of another religion to their faith.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	25	17	1	0	0	43	
women(-)	27	7	0	0	0	34	
women(+)	12	10	7	2	0	31	108

Time in country

New	23	12	1	0	0	36	
1 year	20	15	5	1	0	41	
2 years	21	7	2	1	0	31	108

Q#63 Non-Muslim expatriate missionaries (non-Muslim religious leaders from other countries) should be allowed to live in Malaysia and to teach their religion in Malaysia.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	17	8	4	3	11	43	
women(-)	18	6	4	0	6	34	
women(+)	13	3	2	7	6	31	108

Time in country

New	17	3	4	0	12	36	
1 year	13	8	5	6	9	41	
2 years	18	6	1	4	2	31	108

Q#64 Does Malaya freely allow expatriate missionaries to come to Malaysia?

- ☐ a. yes
☐ b. yes, except in Kelantan
☐ c. not sure but I think so
☐ d. don't know
☐ e. not sure, but I don't think so
☐ f. no

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	f	Total	Group Total
men	9	6	1	14	9	4	43	
women(-)	8	4	2	14	1	5	34	
women(+)	15	0	2	9	1	4	31	108

Time in country

New	5	2	0	19	8	2	36	
1 year	13	6	2	8	3	9	41	
2 years	14	2	3	10	0	2	31	108

Q#69 According to Christians, the Trinity consists of

- ☐ a. God, Mary and Jesus
☐ b. God, Mary and the Holy Spirit
☐ c. God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus
☐ d. don't know

Respondent	a	b	c	d	Total	Group Total
men	15	2	8	5	30	
women(-)	15	1	3	5	24	
women(+)	7	2	10	4	23	77

Time in country

New	18	4	7	2	31	
1 year	13	1	8	3	25	
2 years	6	0	6	9	21	77

Q#70 According to Christians, Jesus

- ☐ a. was a great prophet, not God
☐ b. was born when God procreated with a woman
☐ c. was God in human form
☐ d. don't know

Respondent	a	b	c	d	Total	Group Total
men	2	1	21	7	31	
women(-)	3	2	11	6	22	
women(+)	3	2	9	9	23	76

Time in country

New	2	0	23	7	32	
1 year	4	2	9	10	25	
2 years	2	3	9	5	19	76

Q#71 According to Christians, salvation is gained through:

- ☐ a. belief in Jesus' death on the cross as a sacrifice
☐ b. doing more good things than bad things/trying to be a good person
☐ c. reciting the words of Jesus
☐ d. attending church
☐ e. don't know

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	7	12	3	4	12	38	
women(-)	2	7	1	6	7	23	
women(+)	7	6	1	1	11	26	87

Time in country

New	7	15	0	2	8	32	
1 year	3	6	2	2	16	25	
2 years	6	4	3	7	6	26	87

Q#80 Rank order the following according to your own personal preference:

- _____ Buddhism
- _____ Christianity
- _____ Hinduism
- _____ Judaism
- _____ no religion
- _____ Sikhism
- _____ traditional spirit-religion

13 wouldn't answer

18 all are the same

14 all are the same except no religion is worse

3 all are the same except no religion and spirit religion are the worst

2 all are the same except spirit religion and no religion are the worst

6 - Christianity/Judaism best . . . no religion worst

2 - Christianity/Judaism/Spirit religion are the best . . . no religion worst

1 - Christianity/Judaism best . . . nor religion and spirit religion are the worst

1 - Christianity best Judaism 2nd . . . all else are the same

3 - all are the same . . . Christianity/Judaism are worst

2 - no religion is best spirit religion 2nd . . . all else are the same

1 - Christianity/Judaism best Hinduism 2nd . . . all else same

2	Christianity 1 Judaism 2 Buddhism 3 Sikhism 4 Hinduism 5 Spirit Religion 6 No Religion 7	2	Christianity 1 Buddhism 2 Hinduism 3 Sikhism 4 Spirit Religion 5 No Religion 6 Judaism 7	1	Christianity 1 Buddhism 2 Hinduism 3 Spirit Religion 4 Sikhism 5 Judaism 6 No Religion 7
1	Christianity 1 Judaism 2 Buddhism 3 Hinduism 4 Sikhism 5 Spirit Religion 6 No Religion 7	1	Christianity 1 Judaism 2 No Religion 3 Sikhism\Hinduism 4 Buddhism 6 Spirit Religion 7	1	Christianity 1 Hinduism 2 Buddhism 3 Sikhism 4 Judaism 5 Spirit Religion 6 No Religion 7

1	Buddhism 1	1	Hinduism 1	1	Spirit Religion 1
	Christianity 2		Sikhism 2		Hinduism 2
	Hinduism 3		Buddhism 3		Buddhism 3
	Judaism 4		Judaism 4		Christianity 4
	Sikhism 5		Christianity 5		Judaism 5
	Spirit Religion 6		No Religion 6		Sikhism 6
	No Religion 7		Spirit Religion 7		No Religion 7

Q#81 The United States is a Christian Country.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	4	11	1	18	8	41	
women(-)	3	3	0	16	12	34	
women(+)	2	7	2	12	5	28	103
Time in country							
New	2	4	0	11	19	36	
1 year	4	12	2	18	3	38	
2 years	3	5	1	17	3	29	103

Q#82 The teachings of Christianity strongly influence the U.S. government.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	3	6	7	15	10	41	
women(-)	0	4	2	20	8	34	
women(+)	2	5	7	12	2	25	100

Time in country

New	15	7	5	18	5	38	
1 year	2	5	4	18	9	38	
2 years	2	3	7	11	6	29	105

Q#83 The moral weakness of the U.S. can be attributed to Christianity.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	3	4	9	15	10	41	
women(-)	2	4	4	12	12	34	
women(+)	0	7	7	1	13	28	103

Time in country

New	0	1	8	6	21	36	
1 year	2	5	9	16	6	38	
2 years	3	9	3	6	8	29	103

Q#84 Christians are against Islam and the Muslim world.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	20	17	2	2	0	41	
women(-)	14	15	3	2	0	34	
women(+)	11	12	5	0	0	27	102

Time in country

New	22	12	2	0	0	36	
1 year	17	19	2	0	0	38	
2 years	6	13	6	4	0	29	103

Q#85 Jews are against Islam and the Muslim world.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	24	14	1	2	5	41	
women(-)	20	12	2	0	0	34	
women(+)	13	10	5	0	0	28	103

Time in country

New	28	7	1	0	0	36	
1 year	17	19	2	0	0	38	
2 years	12	10	5	2	0	29	103

Q#86 Christians and Jews are partners in a Judeo-Christian conspiracy against Islam and the Muslim world.

- ☐ a. strongly agree
☐ b. agree
☐ c. uncertain
☐ d. disagree
☐ e. strongly disagree

Respondent	a	b	c	d	e	Total	Group Total
men	15	6	13	13	8	51	
women(-)	2	1	11	9	11	24	
women(+)	4	13	7	2	2	28	103
Time in country							
New	2	7	8	4	15	36	
1 year	3	10	10	13	2	38	
2 years	2	3	13	7	4	29	103

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