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Demography is both destiny and social structure. Understanding the patterns and dynamics of population reveals key directions of social change and describes the way a society is organized. This is demonstrated amply by Professor Saw Swee-Hock’s magisterial *The Population of Malaysia*.

First published in 2007, Professor Saw’s account has proven an indispensable resource to policy makers and social scientists alike. It is crucial for understanding modern Malaysia, but also to bringing Malaysia effectively into comparative analyses. This last is all the more important because Malaysia is an increasingly prominent country in Southeast Asia and on the global stage. Indeed, one might suggest more broadly that the demography and social science of Southeast Asia has become more globally significant as the region develops and increases its global economic participation and leadership, and as it integrates in pursuit of both security and prosperity.

Moreover, Malaysian population dynamics are not simply a local example of general global trends. Malaysia has very specific population patterns that add distinctive purchase to comparative accounts. Its blend of internal and external migration, for example, and the relationship of this to ethnic and religious identities, labour force and economic growth, and national integration shed light on global issues but also help to give the country its own identity — and to some extent issues to address.

As Professor Saw shows, Malaysian population patterns are the result both of planning — including explicit population policies —
and unplanned social dynamics. Professor Saw situates these in historical and indeed geographical perspectives that are both useful. Understanding the ways in which Malay, Indian and Chinese populations have interrelated with each other and the land and the organisation of production and trade over centuries is crucial background to understanding not just ethnic or religious patterns today, but basic demographic patterns like population distribution and labour force participation.

In its new addition, Professor Saw’s account remains both an authoritative source and an accessible overview. It has been brought up to date with new data and new insights. I am happy to recommend it.

Craig Calhoun  
Director  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
September 2014
Preface

This book, a project of the Malaysia Study Programme in ISEAS, is a sequel to my earlier book on *The Population of Peninsular Malaysia* published in 1988. The book was based on materials derived from the early population censuses and other related sources pertaining to the eleven states in West Malaysia. It was not possible for me to include Sabah and Sarawak at that time because of the paucity of comparable data for these two states in East Malaysia. The situation improved significantly following the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 when a wide range of pan-Malaysia statistics began to be made available from the four Population Censuses conducted in 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2000 and from other sources dealing with births and deaths, marriages and divorces, labour force, etc. The emergence of favourable conditions have allowed me to complete in 2006 an entirely different book covering the whole country, and hence *The Population of Malaysia* as the new title.

The second edition of the book has been substantially revised and expanded to take advantage of the new data that can now be obtained from the latest Population Census conducted in 2010 as well as from other relevant sources since the original version was published. One of the major changes introduced was the splitting of the original chapter on Fertility and Mortality into two separate chapters, each subject being discussed in greater detail as more information is at our disposal. The last chapter on Future Population Trends has also been revamped to include the results of the latest official population projections. The chapter on External Migration, a topic that has a lasting impact on the population dynamics of the multi-ethnic country, has been enlarged to include more materials. Finally, a Foreword written
by Craig Calhoun has now been included. I hope readers of the new edition of the book will find it more useful and illuminating.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of numerous institutions and individuals for helping me to access the research materials. My thanks go to the University of Malaya Library, the National University of Singapore Library, ISEAS Library and the London School of Economics Library where I visited during my frequent trips to London. My special thanks go to the Malaysian Department of Statistics for willingly supplying the necessary statistics and information. I would like to thank Tan Chin Tiong, Director of ISEAS, for his support and hospitality, and Ng Kok Kiong, Head of ISEAS Publications Unit, for overseeing the publication of the book. To Craig Calhoun, Director of the London School of Economics, my grateful thanks for penning the Foreword. Needless to say, any opinions and shortcomings in the book are my own.

Saw Swee-Hock
August 2014