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Indians in Malaysia: The Social and Ethnic Context

The large-scale migration of Indians to Malaya throughout the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century led to the creation of a distinctively Malaysian Indian society. One of the most conspicuous features of this community is the sharp division between the minority upper classes — the middle, professional and commercial classes — and a majority working class which comprises over eighty per cent of Indian Malaysians.¹ In general it may be claimed that this disjunction has its origins in the differing circumstances of each class's migration to Malaysia. Thus the descendants of "labour" recruitment — those who were contracted under indenture, kangany or other labour schemes, to work in the plantation estate sector or within government utilities — now make up an underclass which continues to fill a range of labouring and unskilled occupations within modern Malaysia. Conversely, the background of the middle and upper classes can generally be traced to "non-labour" migratory streams; that is, their forbears were those Indians who were appointed to clerical and technical positions in colonial Malaya, or who established themselves in professions and business.² Most "non-labour" Indians maintain their social distance from "labour" Indians, and in some instances may even deny all bonds of common ethnicity.³

While the earliest Indian labour throughout the colonial period was furnished by transported convicts,⁴ the overwhelming majority of Indian workers who arrived in Malaya between 1840 and 1910 were recruited under a system known as indenture. The colonial preference for South Indian labour was informed by an official perspective which viewed the “Madrassi” as docile and easily managed. Indeed, the supposed “cringingly servile” Tamil was portrayed both as an alternative and as a counterweight to the potentially ambitious and assertive Chinese worker.⁵ In his landmark study, K.S. Sandhu estimates that in this period a total of 250,000 indentured labourers were contracted to work in Malaya.⁶ These were mainly landless agricultural labourers drawn from the lower and *Adi Dravida* (Dalit) castes.⁷ The British government terminated the recruitment of Indian indentured labour to Malaya in 1910.⁸

Indenture was initially supplemented and then finally superseded by kangany recruitment. The kangany was a field foreman, a “coolie of standing”, a member of a “clean” caste who enjoyed a good reputation, and who was not only charged with the task of recruiting labour to work on estates, but as foreman was required to supervise those he had engaged. The kangany recruited within his own district (*taluk*) of origin in India, thus selecting a workforce composed of those whose customs and traditions he understood.⁹ On the basis of available data, Sandhu estimates that between 1865 and 1938 a total of 1,186,717 Indian migrants arrived in Malaya under kangany auspices.¹⁰

Kangany recruitment produced a far greater flow and a more consistent supply of labour than that achieved under indenture. It also resulted in a far more socially diverse workforce. While approximately one third of kangany labourers were drawn from *Adi Dravida* castes the remainder represented the general spread of Tamil caste groups below Brahman level, including members of higher castes.¹¹ Kangany recruitment finally ceased in 1938, when, following disputes over wages paid to Indian labour, the Government of India placed a ban on the emigration of assisted labour to Malaya.¹²

Throughout the years leading to World War II, the flow of kangany labour was augmented by two additional migratory streams, namely *independent assisted* and *non-assisted workers*. The former comprised that group of labourers who had volunteered, independent of the kangany system, to enter contractual employment in Malaya, or to whom the Malayan colonial authorities extended financial and other forms of support.

The number of independent assisted workers rose substantially throughout the 1920s, and by 1925 accounted for twenty-eight per cent of the total number of Malayan-funded labourers.¹³ Non-assisted migrants were those who funded their own travel and who sought work following their arrival in Malaya.¹⁴ Despite the lack of official support, there was a steady flow of non-assisted migrants from the 1890s onwards.¹⁵

Throughout this period there were other streams of Indian migration to Malaya. Both government and commercial sectors required the support of a trained English-speaking workforce which possessed a range of specialist skills. This was not immediately available in Malaya, either among the indigenous Malays or the immigrant labouring communities, and thus had to be procured from abroad.¹⁶ The expansion of the Malayan economy attracted other groups — merchants, financiers, skilled labour — who saw personal and professional advantages in working in colonial Malaya. These groups included Ceylonese Tamils (also known in Malaya as “Jaffna” Tamils because of their district of origin), who were recruited by British officials to serve as clerical personnel within the government service and on the estates;¹⁷ educated Malayalees and young professional Tamils; Nattukottai Chettiars, a caste of businessmen and financiers who comprise one of the traditional banking and trading communities of India; Sikh and Punjabi Muslim police and security personnel; and various traders of both North and South Indian background, and including Parsis, Hindus and Muslims.¹⁸

At the time of *Merdeka* (independence) in 1957, Indians numbered 858,616 people, of which 62.1 per cent were of local birth. Indians constituted 12 per cent of the population.¹⁹ The Federation of Malaya Census Report noted that Indian migration to Malaya had been “of an ephemeral character with approximately 4 million entering and 2.8 million leaving the country between 1860 and 1957”. The report further observed that “much of the 1.2 million net immigration appears to have been wiped out by disease, snakebites, exhaustion and malnutrition”.²⁰

The history of Indians under British colonialism in Malaya was one of oppression and, in the case of the labouring classes, brutalization. Workers recruited under both indenture and kangany auspices were subject to repressive regulation, constant invigilation, and harsh and often capricious discipline. Both systems bore a striking resemblance to slavery in that they established complete domination over the labourer and treated him or her as a mere instrument in the process of production. The rigidity of

contractual obligations and the willingness to enforce them stripped the worker of all but a bare minimum of personal rights, denied him or her even the most basic occupational mobility and firmly placed the worker under the absolute control of those who paid his or her wages.²¹ The Indian labourer was enclosed in a self-contained and isolated world and subject to a regime of permanent impoverishment and physical and psychological oppression; a regime which discouraged independence of thought or any sense of personal integrity.²² The labourer and his or her family dwelt in substandard accommodation, both on estates and in government "lines"; lacked proper medical care; was exposed to the risk of disease; was often malnourished; and was subject to a range of social problems, including poor childcare, limited educational opportunities, and a high incidence of alcoholism, gambling, violence and suicide.²³

Throughout the entire colonial era, the occasional impulses to reform and self-organization, especially those which aimed at general uplift within the broader community, were subject to swift and generally decisive official retaliation. Thus the reformist agenda of the Central Indian Association of Malaya, the first effective Indian political party, formed in 1936, which sought to promote Indian unity and to advance measures to improve the lot of the labouring classes was countered with the implacable hostility and intransigent opposition of the colonial administration.²⁴ The subsequent Klang Valley strikes of 1941 were resolved, not through negotiation or mediation, but rather through the agency of military force, coupled with mass arrests and deportations.²⁵ While the wartime politics of Indian nationalism, nurtured during the period of the Japanese Occupation, and largely driven by the charismatic personality of nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, created an evanescent unity, manifested in the Indian Independence League and its military wing, the Indian National Army, the veterans of both organizations were subject to the vengeful animosity of the returning British.²⁶ Post-war reform movements such as *Thondar Padai* (Youth/Volunteer Corps) were designated as subversive and subsequently proscribed,²⁷ while Indian attempts to create a viable trade union movement were defeated by the combined determination of British colonial authorities and the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) to extirpate sites of perceived leftist radicalism.²⁸

Despite their oppressed and brutalized past, Indian Malaysians appeared to have every reason to welcome Merdeka in 1957. Independence, it was assumed, would offer the opportunity to participate as fully enfranchised citizens of a relatively prosperous country. The leadership

of the Malayan Indian Congress had struck a “bargain” with UMNO and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), which, while conceding a suite of Malay privileges and recognizing certain Malay symbols and aspects of Malay culture as the normative template of the new nation, seemed to allow non-Malay communities a chance of educational and vocational advancement and economic reward. Indians were assured that their political representatives enjoyed close relations with the powerful ruling parties of the governing Alliance, and that the structures of the Alliance would guarantee the interests of all citizens, irrespective of ethnic background or class.²⁹

However, independence did not result in social or vocational mobility or even relative economic advancement. The bulk of the Indian population continues to constitute an oppressed, exploited and marginalized underclass, lacking political or economic power, and until the rise of the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) and the election of 8 March 2008, remained seemingly invisible to Malaysian policymakers.

The so-called Malaysian economic miracle, the wealth creation and social mobility which have benefited certain sectors of Malaysian society, have largely bypassed other sectors, including the vast bulk of the Indian community.³⁰ It is possible to identify four basic causative factors which have contributed to Indian disadvantage. The first is the unending culture of poverty and privation; the unrelenting oppression and marginalization suffered by the wider Indian community; the prolonged brutalization and subjugation of colonialism, followed by post-Merdeka relegation to electoral, economic and political irrelevance. Secondly, Indian leadership, both political and industrial, has been generally uninspired, disunited, often self-serving and largely powerless. Thirdly, Indians in Malaya have lacked both the financial resources or active entrepreneurial skills which might have created a generic commercial or mercantile ethos within the broader Indian community.³¹ And, finally, the Indian community remains fissured, rent by long-standing discordancies of caste, regional and linguistic background, but most noticeably split between the Indian educated classes and the working population.³²

Race and Religion

The general position of the Indian community has been complicated by the “neo-colonial”³³ racial ideologies which have become deeply inculcated in the political and cultural life of contemporary Malaysia. These ideologies

had their origins in colonial Social Darwinist racial theories. Colonialist discourse posited an indigenous “Self” as backward, tradition bound, engaged in subsistence agriculture, and requiring protection from the more energetic and predacious “Other”.³⁴ This colonialist construct was inscribed after World War II as a largely defensive ideology of “Malayness”,³⁵ and the concomitant privileging of the claims of those officially proclaimed indigenous,³⁶ a process aided by the British–UMNO suppression of alternative visions of a more inclusive Malaya.³⁷ The politics of colonialism, and the reification of an indigene/non-indigene bifurcation, had the effect of continually reinscribing ethnic boundaries, thus reinforcing ethnic polarization and distrust. Malaysian political discourse remains fundamentally structured by issues of “race”, and the negotiation of daily life is predicated upon notions of inherent racial difference.³⁸ Indeed, proposals for greater inclusivity are viewed by many political agents as not only subversive of official ideologies, but also a potential threat to national integrity.³⁹

Malay political paramountcy was entrenched in the wake of the traumatic racial riots of 13 May 1969. The UMNO leadership introduced a raft of measures which made it clear that it would tolerate no challenge to its political primacy or that of key Malay institutions of state. The constitutional agreement of 1957 was enshrined as a binding racial contract, and public discussion on a range of issues was prohibited. These included querying the official status of the Malay language, the role and standing of the sultans, the position of Islam as the state religion, and the citizenship rights enjoyed by “immigrant peoples”, including their legitimate claims to participate in the administrative and economic structures of the country. Non-Malays would no longer be permitted to question the constitutional “contract”.⁴⁰ These enactments were supplemented by the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP), enunciated within the context of the Second Malaysian Plan of 1971–75 and devised to address the contentious issue of Malay poverty. The NEP was formulated on the premise that the economics of private enterprise and open competition had disadvantaged Malays (as well as some other sections of the population), and that the equitable sharing of the benefits of economic expansion could only be assured by direct government intervention.⁴¹ In essence, the NEP sought through a process of vigorous affirmative action to attain for Malays and other indigenous groups, to be now generically known as *Bumiputeras* (or “sons of the soil”), a thirty per cent share of corporate assets by 1990.

This target was to be subsumed within a policy structure which promoted the dual objectives of the eradication of poverty regardless of race and the elimination of the identification of race with economic function.⁴² The UMNO leadership envisaged the NEP as a necessary but strictly temporary measure which would be rescinded once its main objectives had been achieved.⁴³

The initial promise that the NEP would eradicate hardcore poverty regardless of race did not translate into practice. It was perhaps inevitable that imperatives dictated by political communalism would triumph over those of social justice.⁴⁴ Obligations to the indigent within non-*Bumiputera* communities were easily evaded. The aggregation of "races" as composite wholes meant that average incomes could be used as a template to gauge the fortunes of entire racial communities, thus avoiding a more nuanced approach to identifying overall levels of poverty among the broader Malaysian population.⁴⁵

In the years since the 1969 racial riots and the introduction of the NEP, Malaysia has witnessed a far-reaching and often contentious reassessment of the role of Islam. This has produced an exhaustive and frequently acrimonious debate about the place of Islam within the structures of the modern Malaysian state, as well as a comprehensive re-evaluation of religious practices.⁴⁶ Far from proving a unifying force, the redefinition of Islam has revealed deep and sometimes bitter divisions among Malays.⁴⁷ The Islamic revival has stimulated parallel renaissances in all other religious communities.⁴⁸

The constitutional settlement of 1957 incorporated both Islam and *adat* (custom) into the definition of Malay ethnicity, and enshrined Islam as the official religion of Malaya.⁴⁹ However, it was stressed that while no person would be permitted to proselytize "among persons professing the Muslim religion", the Malayan state would be secular and would guarantee freedom of religious belief.⁵⁰

One of the most potent impulses which has underscored the Islamic resurgence has been that of religion as a signifier of Malay identity. While Malays have generally regarded Islam as coterminous with "Malayness",⁵¹ until 1969 religion was merely one of several components of Malay ethnic identity. The constitutional amendments of 1971 and the cultural policies of the same year,⁵² clearly established aspects of Malay ethnicity (other than Islam) as the fundamental organizational principles around which the modern Malaysian nation was to be constructed.

In an ethnically charged environment in which notions of Malayness and Malay statecraft were to be regarded as normative, Islam could be regarded as the final bulwark of Malay exclusiveness and thus as a basis for political mobilization.⁵³ This has become increasingly significant with the displacement of a great body of that which comprised traditional *adat*, often of pre-Islamic and usually Indic origin, and thus discarded as un-Islamic.⁵⁴ Within Malaysia the universalism of Islam has been refracted into a particularistic form which may be employed as means to both define and insulate Malayness. While this particularism may be called upon to demarcate Malay Islam from that of other Muslim communities,⁵⁵ in relation to other communities Islam becomes a potent ethnic marker, and Islamic symbols, rituals and practices become means of emphasizing and buttressing Malay distinctiveness.⁵⁶ In more extreme instances, Islam may be erected as a barrier to interaction and as an expression of superiority to other communities.⁵⁷

The politics of both race and religion were exacerbated during the prolonged prime ministership of Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981–2003). Adopting a post-dated Social Darwinist concept of “race” and intrinsic racial difference, long abandoned by social scientists,⁵⁸ Mahathir promulgated an inflexible ideology of Malay modernism which greatly expanded the Malay political agenda and placed Islam at the centre of Malay politics.⁵⁹ In the process, Mahathir transformed UMNO from a grass-roots political organization into a party constructed around networks of politico-economic patronage, cronyism and business interests.⁶⁰ Benjamin Barber has observed that when religion enters the political sphere it is invariably employed to advance the politics of nationalism.⁶¹ Mahathir’s privileging of the Islamic establishment and the “religious right” drove an aggressive Malay nationalism which deepened ethnic polarization between the putative Malay/Muslim indigene and the non-Malay/non-Muslim “other”.⁶²

Plantation Culture

In 1993, S. Arasaratnam argued that the shared experiences of working-class Indians from the time of indenture and kangany recruitment had crystallized into a “plantation-oriented culture”, representing the worldview of a neglected and marginalized underclass, and characterized by stasis and underachievement.⁶³ Arasaratnam averred that this culture

was marked by meagre educational attainment, low income, a general absence of intergenerational vocational mobility, and burdened by an array of deep-seated and intractable social problems. Moreover, this culture had developed its own paradigmatic impulses which, unless broken, threatened to lock the Indian labouring classes into a permanent underclass.⁶⁴

Scholars have noted that the history of the Indian poor in Malaya/Malaysia now extends over 170 years, and encompasses up to seven generations of working-class families. Merdeka, greeted with such high expectations, failed to usher in the anticipated rewards. In retrospect it may be viewed as portentous that in order to gain a representative voice for Indians within the ruling structures of an emerging Malaya, the Malayan Indian Congress, the largest Indian political party, was compelled to abandon its policies of inclusive reformism to accord with the ideological agenda of the communally based and conservative UMNO–MCA Alliance.⁶⁵ The politics of communalism and the concomitant aggregation of “racial” communities as composite wholes ensured that the problems of the Indian poor would remain submerged and thus ignored.⁶⁶ Perceived indifference to the plight of the Indian poor was impressed upon the collective Indian consciousness by the fragmentation of many estates and the summary dispossession of the largely Indian workforces,⁶⁷ and the citizenship crisis following the 13 May incident, which threatened many Indians with “repatriation” to India and rendered others stateless.⁶⁸ The implementation of the NEP and the consequent contraction of social, vocational, economic and educational opportunities for non-*Bumiputeras* closed potential avenues of advancement to many Indians.⁶⁹ The lowly standing of the community appeared to be confirmed by the 2001 Kampong Medan incident, in which organized Malay attacks upon Indians were not only officially attributed to Indian provocation but failed to produce an open investigation, prosecution of any of the instigators, or the payment of compensation to victims.⁷⁰

In recent years there has been a continuous migration of labour from rural to urban areas, a movement initially sparked by fragmentation, and later augmented by mass evictions from estates.⁷¹ The rural–urban migration did not result in any improvement of the economic standing of the Indian working classes, and did not contribute to intergenerational economic or vocational mobility. Indeed, many observers consider that over the past forty-fifty years the condition of the Indian indigent has actually deteriorated.⁷² The migration created a large pool of Indian labour,

minimally educated and lacking work skills, who were compelled to occupy positions that were basic, repetitive and poorly remunerated, and which offered little or nothing in the way of training or vocational advancement.⁷³ Indian workers generally found that their wages were insufficient to keep pace with rises in the cost of living. Financial pressures forced most to rent shoddy housing; at best rather inadequate high-rise flats, but often slum or squatter dwellings.⁷⁴ The combination of low educational attainment, high unemployment, low-waged work and poor housing has contributed to a spiralling Indian crime rate.⁷⁵ It could thus be argued that the plantation culture of chronic underachievement and stagnation, inculcated over generations of subjugation, of subordination to rigid and unyielding control, and physical and psychological oppression which robbed the Indian worker of the qualities of innovation and independence, was now being replicated within urban Malaysia.⁷⁶

Nor have those trapped within the plantation culture been able to look to their more affluent compatriots for leadership and support. In general the social gulf between middle- and upper-class Indians remains as deep and fixed now as it has throughout the entire history of the modern Indian presence in Malaya/Malaysia.⁷⁷ Writing in 1993, D. Jeyakumar observed that many middle- and upper-class Indians expressed disgust and shame at the miserable state of the Indian underclass, and “often feel impatient and angry with the Indian poor caught in this subculture of poverty”.⁷⁸ My own fieldwork suggests that this situation remains largely unchanged.

Hindraf

It is perhaps not surprising that religion was the site from which the Indian underclass launched its challenge to Malaysia’s political establishment. While Indians had many causes for resentment — the failure of the Malaysian Indian Congress to represent their interests; the continuing evictions from estates; the disturbing number of Indian deaths in police custody — it was ultimately the perceived excesses of the Islamic authorities and the disrespect shown towards individual Hindus and Hinduism more generally that were to serve as the catalysts for translating long simmering frustrations into action.⁷⁹ During a series of well-publicized incidents, Islamic officials seized the remains of individuals whose families identified them as practising Hindus; forced the conversions of, or attempted forced conversions of, people who claimed to be Hindus; and tore asunder long-

established families in the name of religion. These episodes, each of which created deep distress and anguish as well as anger within the broader Hindu population (and which engendered anxiety and alarm among Malaysia's non-Muslims), occurred against a backdrop of the repeated destruction of Hindu temples, many of which had served communities of devotees for well over a century.⁸⁰

While the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) was founded in the period 2003–4,⁸¹ the organization only emerged as a major force within the wider Indian community in 2007. Hindraf's wider significance lay in the fact that its agenda rapidly expanded beyond religious issues to embrace a far broader platform which included demands for structural and economic reforms as well as thorough investigation of systemic failures (for example, custodial deaths). The Indian poor, still socially defined by their ascribed lowly status in terms of a colonially derived racial and vocational hierarchy,⁸² seemingly reduced to irrelevance by Malaysian political processes, and often referring to themselves as "forgotten people",⁸³ as second-class citizens in the land of their birth, were making a statement of intent, a determination to escape from the shackles of the "plantation culture". In this respect it is noteworthy that Hindraf moved beyond Hinduism and that its calls for social justice attracted the involvement of Indians of other religious beliefs.⁸⁴ The subsequent abandonment of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition in the elections of 8 March 2008 was a further gauge of Indian discontent.⁸⁵ But it also revealed that the regime of "benign neglect" was no longer to be tolerated, and that henceforth support for Barisan Nasional would be conditional. Indian alienation was acknowledged by incoming prime minister Najib Razak who in addition to offering gestures of goodwill took a series of measures to address Indian concerns.⁸⁶

The reality of an Indian community largely entrapped within a generic culture of poverty and chronic underachievement, and subject to the imperatives of Malay-Muslim discourse, has influenced scholarly discourse regarding the popularity of Thaipusam in Malaysia. As we noted in the Introduction, many accounts, including those of usually perceptive scholars,⁸⁷ suggest that participation in the most robust forms of worship, including the kavadi ritual, is restricted to working-class devotees, and forms a wider and perhaps cathartic response to their oppression, and in particular to Malay-Muslim dominance. These claims will be evaluated in later chapters of this book.

Notes

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4. Kernial Singh Sandhu, "Tamil and other Indian Convicts in the Straits Settlements 1790–1873", International Conference of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, 1966.
5. Kernial Singh Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of their Immigration and Settlement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 56–58.
6. Ibid., p. 81.
7. Ibid., p. 82.
8. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830–1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 315.
9. J. Norman Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy and Administration: A History of Labor in the Rubber Plantation Industry in Malaya 1910–1941* (New York: J.J. Augustin Inc., 1960), pp. 7–9; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 18–19.
10. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, p. 96.
11. Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia*, pp. 24–26.
12. Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy*, p. 213; Selvakumaran Ramachandran, *Indian Plantation Labour in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majeed & Co., 1994), p. 68; Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, p. 108.
13. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, p. 115; Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy*, p. 55.
14. Parmer, *Colonial Labor Policy*, p. 55.
15. Ibid.; Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, p. 115.
16. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, pp. 67, 122.
17. Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia*, p. 33.
18. Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya*, pp. 117–29; Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia*, pp. 33–35.
19. K.J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 1.
20. *Federation of Malaya Census Report* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1957).
21. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, p. 17; Lydia Potts, *The World Labour Market: A History of Migration*, trans. Terry Bond (London: Zed Books, 1990), p. 64.
22. D. Jeyakumar, "The Indian Poor in Malaysia: Problems and Solutions", in

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23. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, pp. 199, 208–9; Selvakumaran, *Indian Plantation Labour*, p. 57; Ravindra K. Jain, “South Indian Labour in Malaya 1840–1920: Asylum, Stability and Evolution”, in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1840–1920*, edited by Kay Saunders (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 164.
 24. In response to representations made by Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of Singapore, the Undersecretary of State for the Colonial Office on 14 May 1941 approved “firm handling of subversive elements” (London: *Strikes by Indian Labourers*, File L/P&J/8/264, Collection 108/21G, Oriental and India Office).
 25. *Negotiations between Indian and Malayan Governments Concerning the Protection of Rights of Indians in Malaya 1939–1941* (London: File L/P&J/8/260, Collection 108/21D, Oriental and India Office); Selvakumaran, *Indian Plantation Labour*, pp. 232–33.
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 29. Rajeswary, *The Indian Minority*, p. 199; Mavis Puthuchear, “Indians in the Public Sector”, pp. 335–36; Rajeswary Amplavanar-Brown, “The Contemporary Indian Political Elite in Malaysia”, p. 238; Chandra Muzaffar, “Political Marginalization in Malaysia”, p. 220; all in *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, edited by K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).
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43. Ooi Kee Beng, *The Reluctant Politician*, pp. 215–17.
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45. Selvakumaran, *Indian Plantation Labour*, p. 310.
46. Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk, 1987), p. 10; Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam: Modern Religious Radicals and Their Roots* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), p. 55; Gordon P. Means, *Political Islam in Southeast Asia* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), p. 85.
47. Jomo K.S. and Ahmad Shabery Cheek, "Malaysia's Islamic Movements", in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, edited by Joel Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia/Allen and Unwin, 1992), pp. 79–80; Maznah, *Politics of the NEP*, p. 132; Zainah, *Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 88–90.
48. Susan E. Ackerman and Raymond L.M. Lee, *Heaven in Transition: Innovation and Ethnic Identity in Malaysia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988), pp. 154–55.
49. Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Islam, Civil Society and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia", in *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, edited by Nakamuro Mitsuo, Sharon Siddique, and Omar Farouk Bajunid (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), p. 61.
50. *Federation Constitutional Proposal, Legislative Council Proposal No. 42 of 1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers, 1957), pp. 8–9.
51. Mohamad Abu Bakar, *Islam, Civil Society and Ethnic Relations*, p. 63.
52. Lim Teck Ghee and Albert Gomes, "Culture and Development in Malaysia", in *Multiethnic Malaysia: Past Present and Future*, edited by Lim Teck Ghee, Alberto Gomes, and Azly Rahman (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009), pp. 233–34; Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah, "Introduction", in *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia* (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia/Allen and Unwin, 1992), p. 13; John Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of UMNO and PAS* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books [Asia] Ltd., 1980), p. 238.
53. Zainah, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 80–81; Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, p. 223. Ahmad Fauzi comments, "Given the legally coterminous position between Islam and Malayness in Malaysia, it is hardly surprising that politicians of all divides have manipulated Islam as a political tool to realize their racial agendas" (Ahmad Fauzi, *Islamic Education*, p. 76).
54. Maznah, *Paradoxes of State Islamization*, p. 19; Ahmad Fauzi, *Islamic Education in Malaysia*, p. 76.

55. Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, pp. 187–88.
56. Zainah, *Islamic Revivalism*, pp. 80–81.
57. Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987), p. 30.
58. Ooi Kee Beng, *Done Making Do: 1 Party Rule Ends in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), p. 44.
59. Clive Kessler, “The Abdullah Premiership: Interlude or End Game?”, in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia*, edited by Bridget Walsh and James V.H. Chin (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013), pp. 71–72.
60. Jason Tan, “Malaysian Culture under Abdullah”, in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia*, edited by Bridget Walsh and James V.H. Chin (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013), p. 410.
61. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad Vs McWorld: Terrorism’s Challenge to Democracy* (London: Corgi Books, 2005), p. 165.
62. A.B. Sulaiman, *Sensitive Truths in Malaysia: A Critical Appraisal of the Malay Problem* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013), p. 298; Andrew C. Wilford, “Every Indian is Burning Inside”, in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia*, edited by Bridget Walsh and James H.V. Chin (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013), p. 223. Given Mahathir’s role in expanding the presence of Islam within Malaysian public life, it is somewhat ironic to note his recent public criticism of the didactic zeal of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim), a body that was created under his leadership (Izra Abdul Rahman, “Dr Mahathir: Jakim Imposing ‘its version of Islam’”, *The Star*, 20 November 2015).
63. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, “Malaysian Indians: The Formation of an Incipient Society”, in *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, edited by K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), p. 193.
64. Jeyakumar, *The Indian Poor*, p. 421.
65. Rajeswary, *The Indian Minority*, pp. 172–75; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, “Political Attitudes and Political Organization among Malayan Indians 1945–1955”, *Jurnal Sejarah* 10 (1971/72): 5; Muzaffar, *Political Marginalization*, p. 219.
66. Muzaffar, *Political Marginalization*, p. 219.
67. Selvakumaran, *Indian Plantation Labour*, pp. 260–61, 305; Paul W. Wiebe and S. Mariappen, *Indian Malaysians: The View from the Plantation* (Delhi: Manohar, 1978), p. 38; Arasaratnam, *Indians in Malaysia*, pp. 154–56; Muzaffar, *Political Marginalization*, p. 222.
68. Selvakumaran, *Indian Plantation Labour*, pp. 274, 304–5.
69. Rajeswary, *The Contemporary Indian Political Elite*, p. 250.
70. For a full description of the Kampung Medan incident, see Andrew Willford, “Ethnic Clashes, Squatters and Historicity in Malaysia”, in *Rising India and*

- Indian Communities in East Asia*, edited by K. Kesavapany, A. Mani, and P. Ramasamy (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); S. Nagarajan and K. Arumugam, *Violence against an Ethnic Minority in Malaysia, Kampung Medan, 2001* (Petaling Jaya: Suaram, 2012).
71. Ramachandran, *The Malaysian Indian*; K.S. Susan Oorjitham, "Economic Profile of the Tamil Working Class in Peninsular Malaysia", *Jurnal Pengajian India* 5 (1993), p. 102; Muzafar Desmond Tate, *The Malaysian Indians: History, Problems and Future* (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2008), p. 129. For a detailed analysis of the social impact of mass evictions, see Andrew C. Willford (in collaboration with S. Nagarajan), *Tamils and the Haunting of Justice: History and Recognition in Malaysia's Estates* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).
 72. This is based on interviews conducted in 2010 and 2011. However, in the mid 1990s, even S. Samy Vellu, leader of the Malaysian Indian Congress, and a Senior Minister in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, would claim that "Indians were more marginalized and alienated than ever before" (Gomez and Jomo, *Malaysia's Political Economy*, p. 168).
 73. K.S. Susan Oorjitham, *Economic Profile*, p. 102.
 74. R. Rajoo, "Indian Squatter Settlers: Rural-Urban Migration in West Malaysia", in *Indian Communities in South East Asia*, edited by K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), p. 485; K.S. Susan Oorjitham, "Urban Indian Working Class Households", *Jurnal Pengajian India* 4 (1986): 76. For more recent studies, see S. Nagarajan, "Marginalisation and Ethnic Relations: The Indian Malaysian Experience", in *Multiethnic Malaysia: Past Present and Future*, edited by Lim Teck Ghee, Alberto Gomes, and Azly Rahman (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Centre, 2009); S. Nagarajan, "Indians in Malaysia: Towards Vision 2020", in *Rising India and Indian Communities in East Asia*, edited by K. Kesavapany, A. Mani, and P. Ramasamy (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).
 75. Jayasooria, *Malaysian Issues and Concerns*, p. 242.
 76. Oorjitham, *Economic Profile*, pp. 104–5; Jeyakumar, *The Indian Poor of Malaysia*, pp. 419–20; Oorjitham, *Working Class Indians*, p. 507.
 77. Ramachandran, *The Malaysian Indian*.
 78. Jeyakumar, *The Indian Poor*, p. 419.
 79. K. Kabilan, "The Indian Dilemma: Sucked Up and Spat Out", in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia*, edited by Bridget Walsh and James V.H. Chin (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013), p. 198; Willford, *Tamils and the Haunting of Justice*, p. 236.
 80. These incidents are detailed in Carl Vadivella Belle, *Tragic Orphans: Indians in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015), pp. 397–405.
 81. Nagarajan, *Marginalization and Ethnic Relations*, p. 387.

82. Rajesh Rai, "'Positioning' the Indian Diaspora: The Southeast Asian Experience", in *Tracing an Indian Dilemma: Contexts, Memories, Representations*, edited by Parvati Raghuram, Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Brij Maharaj, and Dave Sangham (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), p. 48.
83. Muzaffar, *Political Marginalization*, p. 228.
84. Personal Field Research.
85. Barry Wain, *Malaysian Maverick: Mahathir Mohamad in Turbulent Times* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 329; Ooi Kee Beng, *Arrested Reform: The Unmaking of Abdullah Badawi* (Kuala Lumpur: Research for Social Advancement, 2009), pp. 44–55; James Chin and Chin Huat-Wong, "Malaysia's Electoral Upheaval", *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2009): p. 73.
86. Edmund Terence Gomez, Johan Saravanamuttu, and Maznah Mohamad, "Introduction: Malaysia's New Economic Policy: Resolving Inequalities, Creating Difficulties", in *The New Economic Policy in Malaysia: Affirmative Action, Ethnic Inequalities and Social Justice*, edited by Edmund Terence Gomez and Johan Saravanamuttu (Singapore: National University of Singapore/Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), p. 16.
87. Fred W. Clothey, *Ritualizing on the Boundaries: Continuity and Innovation in the Tamil Diaspora* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), p. 196; Alexandra Kent, *Divinity and Diversity: A Hindu Revitalization Movement* (Singapore and Copenhagen: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies/NIAS Press, 2007), pp. 174, 179.