

Ethnic Differences and Economic Change in a Local Malaysian Setting

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It has long been recognized that ethnic complexity in Malaya (West Malaysia) has an important economic dimension, that different ethnic sectors tend to be predominantly associated with one or another facets of the economy—though statements about such associations often take the form of overly-broad generalizations. It has also long been noted that the ethnic composition of the country, and the ethnic organization of its economy are phenomena which derive from developments which occurred during British colonial rule; and therefore that as processes of change began to take effect in the post-independence period, economic and other aspects of ethnic relations would be altered. Silcock (1965), for example, discussed the effects of industrialization on ethnic relations and suggested that such processes were likely to lead for a number of reasons to increased ethnic competition, at least before any long-term settlement was achieved, and Swift's (1967) observations about tendencies toward land concentration among Malays suggest similar conclusions. Again, however, while the validity of statements about such tendencies would seem to have been born out by subsequent developments they were made in the first place in the absence of much sociological information about ethnic organization and processes of ethnic change at the local level.

Finally, the above observations were made before the onset of political and economic changes which came in the wake of the west coast post election ethnic riots of 1969—a watershed in Malaysian political and, evidently, economic development. In the period following these conflicts the national government announced new policies meant to bring about more rapid if not immediate ethnic economic change in Malaysian society. A major goal was the elimination of poverty in all ethnic sectors, though since it was known that Malays as a whole were economically inferior to at least the Chinese as a whole it was assumed that some considerable shift in economic power from one group to another would take place. Insofar as it is possible to evaluate what has actually occurred at this point the main thrust of government policy has been to greatly intensify efforts to promote Malay economic advancement and to gain some measure of Malay economic power at all levels up to

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and including that of international corporations—the goal being specifically 30 percent Malay ownership of all business in the country. On the other hand less concern seems to have been shown about the problem of poverty or declining economic bases among economically marginal or distressed sectors of non-Malay populations. It would in these respects be a mistake to confuse apparent government policy with its implementation, or the implementation of policy with the actual thrust of social and economic change. The government does however appear to have considerable power to affect the economic interests and prospects of ethnic groups, and without question it has affected the way that these groups have come to view one another in relation to themselves.

In this paper I undertake two tasks. First, I intend to summarize the results of several periods of fieldwork in which I have been able to gather fairly detailed information on the ethnic composition of an east-coast Malayan town and district, particularly on the ethnic division of labor.¹⁾ Second, I shall attempt to outline patterns of economic change affecting the different ethnic sectors and the community in general, including those which have developed in the wake of the 1969 national governmental and political reorganization. The specific area under discussion forms a central part of the Kelantan rice plain of far Northeastern Malaya. Pasir Mas is the administrative capital and major market center of a district of the same name which stretches from the Kelantan River to the border of Thailand, which is 145 square miles in area and which has a population slightly in excess of 100,000. The town itself (population 11,000) is located on a large bend in the river, about 11 miles by road from the state capital of Kota Bharu, about 10 miles by road from the nearest point on the Thailand border and about 16 miles by road from the nearest border entry point. The town is linked by rail, as well as road, to both the border complex of the towns of Rantau Panjang, (Malaysia) and Golok (Thailand) which straddle the Golok River, and to the state capital and the West Coast of the peninsula. As the first town beyond the major east-coast border complex the town tends not only to be a center of local but also of trans-border trade, the point through which large quantities of goods—rice, livestock, fruits, cloth and clothing—from Thailand pass legally and illegally into Malaya, some destined for local Kelantan markets, some to move southward to the major markets of the west coast.

Surrounding the town on three sides, and across the river on the fourth side as

1) Portions of this paper are based upon two years of research carried out in Kelantan in 1966-67, 1971 and 1975, principally in Pasir Mas district. The earlier research was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Research Advisory Board of the University of Nevada, Reno. Research in 1975 which yielded much of the particular data which this paper reports was sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. For a related discussion of the area and subjects, see Nash, 1974, and Winzeler, 1975.

well, are agricultural lands of several types. Although the Kelantan plain is primarily a rice-growing region, agricultural land holdings are mixed. Along both immediate sides of the river itself where soils tend to be porous, padi lands are not found; formerly coconut and areca nut palms were grown extensively here, and to some extent in other areas as well, but during the Japanese occupation most of these trees were cut down, and today the riverside is planted in rubber, mixed orchards and gardens. Back from the river rice lands begin, interspersed also with rubber holdings and mixed orchards and gardens. Wet rice was formerly grown once a year using only rainfall as a source of irrigation, but beginning in the late 1950s government irrigation schemes were put into operation which permitted double cropping throughout much of the region around the town. Before double cropping began offseason rice lands were used mainly for grazing water buffalo and cattle. Double cropping in fact brought or has been associated with a series of rural ecological and economic changes, including the introduction of new offseason crops, and new agricultural techniques, which continue at the present.

While the Pasir Mas area is situated at least partly within a zone of agricultural settlement which has a history extending back to the twelfth century or earlier (Mahmud, 1970) the age of the town itself is difficult to establish. While it is likely that there were long market centers in the general area, perhaps called by the same name, flooding and the shifting bank of the river (which has brought some shift in the location of the town twice within the memory of the inhabitants) have often doubtless disrupted continuity which might have otherwise existed. In any event, the town as it has developed over the last fifty years owes its existence to the building of the railroad in the second decade of this century and to its subsequent establishment as a district capital, the former bringing an increase in trade, the latter bringing government offices and schools.

As interesting as they appear to be in a number of respects, neither this town in particular nor Kelantan in general would seem at first to be regions to which one would be attracted to study problems of ethnicity. While the population of Malaya as a whole (to use the general census categories and to omit the lesser groups) is approximately 53% Malay, 37% Chinese, and 10% Indian or South Asian, the population of Kelantan is 92% Malay, while that of Pasir Mas district is over 95% Malay. Nor is the Malay population of the town or district itself heterogeneous in the way that it often is elsewhere in Malaya. Yet as far as it is from the national (that is West-Malaysian) norm such a town is ethnically interesting and significant for several reasons. First, although the region generally represents one extreme in ethnic composition it is an extreme which is typical of much of the east and especially the northeastern regions of the country, one that is balanced by an opposite west-coast

extreme of large Chinese and Indian populations, rather than a widely prevailing mean pattern. Since Malaya as a whole is characterized not only by ethnic diversity but also by an extremely unequal distribution of ethnic sectors among the major geographic areas of the country, there is a need to understand the national pattern from these various regional perspectives rather than only from that of the major west coast, non-Malay population centers which have, up to now, been the main focus of studies of Malayan ethnicity. Second, although the non-Malay sector of the population is relatively small, particularly for the district as a whole but also for the town, (which is 86% Malay) it includes a range of ethnic groups which are specialized in their economic orientations. Moreover, the range of ethnic groups present in the town and in the rural sector of the district divides into several types—groups which are urban and business oriented, and groups which are rural and agricultural, on the one hand, and groups which are Moslem and groups which are non-Moslem, on the other—in such a way as to make for some interesting if limited tests of propositions about ethnicity and ethnic relations in Malaya and elsewhere (Winzeler 1975). Finally, it is possible to see in the ethnic fabric of the region threads of continuity with earlier periods, as well as patterns of change. Certain of the non-Malay groups in the region have been present for relatively long periods of time before the colonial take-over in 1910 and thus had to come to terms with the indigenous Malay sector in a way and to a degree that the ethnic groups which arrived later during the colonial period did not.

The Pasar

In considering the commercial organization of the town it is useful to start with the usual distinctions between the shop house sector and the open market (*pasar*), though it is also necessary to go beyond this and take note of further distinctions and intermediate types that exist. The main part of the open market, which is largely though by no means completely a food market, is located near the center of town; there is also a fresh fish market which, until recently, was a part of this main market but which had been moved to the old main market site on the bank of the river. In addition to these two official markets there are also numerous smaller marketing centers and single vendors operating throughout the town. These include vegetable and fruit sellers who sell outside of the main market and at the train station, itinerant medicine hawkers, “five foot” sellers (*penjual lima kaki*) who spread tools, charms, trinkets, or cloth along a stretch of sidewalk or road, women who sell morning rice dishes or afternoon snacks at roadside shelters, tooth pullers, several butchers and a number of bicycle-cart food and drink sellers. The personnel who sell in the open

market are known as *pereah*, though this term means most specifically the small-scale trader who buys in the village and then sells in the market, or to another market seller. This term also applies to the many women involved in the small-scale trans-border trade and those who travel around selling cloth from house to house. The total numbers of such sellers, who operate outside the main market, are probably equal to or greater than those who sell within it. They have not however been included in figures presented here (see Table 1).

The Shop House Sector and Intermediate Types

The shop house sector, on the other hand, consists of two-story buildings, housing stores, warehouses, restaurants, coffee shops, and tailors, goldsmiths, watchsmiths, bakeries, barbers, "*perm parlors*" and so forth. The great majority of the businesses are family operations though most of them also employ clerks, laborers or apprentices, who are not family members, as well.

While the distinction between the shop house sector and the *pasar* is all important, among other things from the perspective of ethnicity, there is also an important intermediate range of business operations, ones which are larger than those of the *pasar* but smaller than those of the central shop house sector. There is in the first place a secondary shop house sector consisting of a number of clusters of businesses located along the main roads leading out of town. Most of these are one-story rather than two, with the family quarters located behind rather than above the business area. The spacial distinction between the main shop area and this one is a fairly natural one at all points except for one—near the river—where any particular line of differentiation drawn would have to be arbitrary. In addition to the fact that the businesses in the secondary areas tend to be smaller, they represent a narrower range of types: coffee shops, provision shops (often combined, as in rural areas), tailors, barbers and repair shops predominate, while the more highly capitalized businesses—e.g., gold jewelry and electric appliances—are not found.

The second intermediate business type is that of what are known locally as *kedai pati* or "pigeon coop" shops—wooden-stall structures which are located along one main road and which are vulnerable to being washed away when the river rises above the banks and floods the town. These are small ramshackle buildings which do not contain living quarters, although sometimes a stall operator will sleep there or, if not, one of the workers. The greatest portion of the *kedai pati* are food stalls which specialize in one or another type of snack or dish—though a number also serve as storehouses and distribution points for rice and other commodities brought from Thailand through the train station that is located immediately behind them.

Ethnic Groups

The largest and economically most important of the non-Malay ethnic groups of the town are the Chinese. Present in the state for centuries, the Chinese do not exactly form a single ethnic group or even a single ethnic sector. There is in the first place some differentiation along ethnolinguistic lines of the sort found throughout Southeast Asia generally; six dialect groups are extensively represented in the town business sector, and members of several more are present as well. The significant ethnic distinction however is not between dialect groups but rather between the long settled rural Chinese, all of whom are Hokkien speakers, and the more newly arrived—mainly 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation town-dwelling Chinese, only some of who are Hokkien. These two sectors do in fact tend to form (in a sociological sense) separate ethnic groups between which marriage is not frequent and feelings are often characterized by ambivalence or hostility. The more newly arrived town Chinese tend to think the rural Chinese are not “really Chinese” while the latter tend to see the urban Chinese as aggressive intruders, rather in the same way that the Malays do. Both groups have in fact undergone much acculturation since their arrival in Kelantan—though the rural Chinese have probably undergone much more change in this respect—but the patterns have been very different. The rural Chinese have been influenced extensively by rural Kelantanese Malay and to some extent Thai society and thus have taken on speech, personality, and social forms which strongly resemble those of these other Kelantan village inhabitants. The urban Chinese, on the other hand, have been influenced by both Western and local Malay cultural forms of the sort characteristic of Kelantanese town Malay society and by those modern, partially western but still very Chinese cultural institutions found among Malaysian overseas Chinese society generally—Chinese medium western-style schools, trade, religions, and dialect associations.²⁾

There is, however, a complication here in that while this distinction between the two Chinese ethnic sectors is basic, among other things in regard to the economics of ethnicity in the region, some of the Chinese who dwell in town derive from the rural, long settled, communities. These “urbanized” rural Chinese which represent about a fourth of all the Chinese shop keepers in town seem to have an ethnic status somewhat between that of a dialect-group sort and that of the urban immigrant-

2) With the possible exception of the older members of immigrant generations all Chinese in Pasir Mas are at least reasonably fluent in elementary Malay, as are the members of all other non-Malay ethnic groups. The rural Chinese and the rural Thai are fluent in local Kelantanese Malay instead of (or as well as) the national standard.

rural long-settled sort. In this paper I have treated them as a separate ethnic, rather than as separate dialect-like, group.

South Asians and Middle Easterners

Far smaller in numbers than the Chinese are several different South Asian ethnic groups, nearly all of whom are Moslem, from present day India and Pakistan. Moslem traders and merchants from these regions, and from the Near East, are traditional figures in the Kelantan plain as they are elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Indians in business in Pasir Mas derive largely from two regions, from the Northern state of Utar Pradash—specifically from the Azamgar region—and the Malabar coast (Kerala state). Most of the remainder are, like the latter, South Indians, specifically Tamil speakers from Madras. The Malays refer to the North Indians (and sometimes to the South Indians as well) as “Bengali”—though none of them are Bengali speakers, and to the South Indians—especially Tamils—as “*Keling*” though this tends to be a derogatory term. Though some have been long settled in the town as earlier immigrants or as second generation citizens, the Indians more than any other ethnic type tend to be transients or only partially settled inhabitants; many hold only work permits or temporary visas which have to be renewed periodically by returning to India. A number of shop keepers support families in India while many of the Indian workers are in town only for limited terms of employment. Some of these are relatives or acquaintances from the same area as their employers; all such employees live on the premises of the business—coffee shops, bakers or provision shops—and cook and eat communally.

In addition to the North Indians who are all Urdu speakers and the South Indians who are either Malayali or, in a few cases, Tamil speakers, there are also several Punjadi shopkeepers of Pakistani origin, and in the past there were larger numbers of itinerant Pakistani (and Afgahni) cloth and gemstone peddlers (known as “Kabul men” or *Tok Seh*) who operated in the region. The latter left the area in the early 1930’s after their trading licenses were revoked because of brawls with Malay villagers involving at least one killing.³⁾ Today the largest number of Pathans (mainly from Hazara district in Pakistan) in the region, about forty families, are settled in the Thai-border town; their role in the business life of Pasir Mas is thus, if anything at present, mainly wholesale rather than retail. Itinerant Swat Pathan gem sellers still occasionally ply their wares in the villages of the area but most of this sort of trade is now in the hands of transient Nepali sidewalk “five foot” peddlers who operate extensively throughout Malaya and South Thailand. Finally, in addition to these various South Asian ethnic types there are a few Arabs involved in

3) A historical treatment of Pathans in Kelantan may be found in Sayed Muhamad, 1973.

shop keeping, as well as a larger number of Malays who are partly of Arab descent, a few of whom are also involved in other types of trade in one way or another.

Ethnicity and the Division of Labor

The most important points to be made about the relationship between ethnic status and the division of labor obtaining in the commercial organization of the town are shown in Tables 1 and 2 and, in greater detail, in Appendixes I, II, III and IV. To begin with, the open market as a whole is predominantly Malay and female. However, when a distinction is made between the larger sellers, whose operations require some capital, and the smaller sellers, these tendencies are more marked in the case of the latter. That the smaller sellers are entirely female and nearly all Malay indicates that this level of trade does not provide a sufficient income to make it a viable mode of work for anyone except a woman who is supplementing a husband's income or who, as a divorced or neglected second wife, has no choice but to scratch out a meager living. The larger sellers on the other hand who include a greater number of men than women, do have among them some non-Malays. These however are either South Indians or rural Chinese, rather than North Indians, or town Chinese. The extent of ethnic specialization characteristic of the larger market sellers can also be inferred from Tables 1 and 2. Non-Malays have restricted themselves to only a few lines of trade, though with the exception of locally produced cigarette tobacco and leaf wrappers none of these are the exclusive domain of one ethnic group. The exception, local cured tobacco, is explained by the fact that

Table 1 Main *Pasar* Sellers by Ethnic Type

	Malay			Village Chinese			Indian		All Groups			
	Men	Wo-men	Cou-ples	Total	Men	Wo-men	Total	Men	Wo-men	Men	Wo-men	Total
Small Sellers	0	143	0	143	0	3	3	0	0	0	146	146
Large Sellers	82	65	38	185	6	10	16	10	0	117*	94*	211
Total Market	82	208	38	328	6	13	19	10	0	117*	240*	357

* Figures each include 1/2 of number of Malay couples, or 19

Table 2 Operation of Shop Houses and Permanent Stalls by Ethnic Types

	Main Shop House Sector	Secondary Shop House Sector	Kedai Pati	Totals
Malay	41	32	25	8
Village Chinese	14	13	0	27
Urban Chinese	73	13	0	86
Arab	3	0	0	3
Bengali	7	4	3	14
Tamil	5	5	2	12
Punjabi	3	0	0	3
Totals	146	67	30	243

this is produced by the rural Chinese of the district themselves, though the leaf wrappers are imported from elsewhere.

The pattern of ethnic differentiation obtaining in the central shop house sector is very different, though it is not exactly the opposite of that characteristic of the main open market. The most notable feature of the overall ethnic composition of this arena is of course the expected one, that of urban Chinese preeminence, though this is not as complete as might be thought given common assumptions about the national Malayan ethnic division of labor: urban Chinese own about half of all the businesses in this sector, and if those operated by rural Chinese are added, the total is closer to sixty percent; while Malays operate twenty-seven percent. In terms of ethnic specialization it is also clear that while there are some tendencies for particular groups to be associated with certain lines of business, there are relatively few such lines which are completely monopolized by one or another group. In this regard the Indians are most narrowly oriented to particular businesses (though to note the full extent of this it is necessary to look also at the ethnic distribution of the secondary shop house and *kedai pati* sectors, where a number of Indian businesses are located, as well. Thus all of the North Indians, the "Bengalis", are involved in one way or another in bakeries and bread peddling—though, conversely, they do not have a monopoly on bakeries since one of the five in the town area is Chinese run—while the Malabarais are nearly all in provision shop keeping. However the Tamils, who appear to have been the least successful of the Indian groups in establishing themselves successfully in any one or another line, are involved in several. On the other hand, from the perspective of those businesses which are sufficiently numerous to be able to see clear patterns of ethnic differentiation, only a few lines are completely or nearly completely in the hands of one or another particular ethnic group. Thus while all of the goldsmiths are Chinese, as are the bicycle dealers, electrical appliance dealers, and hardware shopkeepers, the most numerous businesses—barbers, provision shops, tailors, and clothing shops are divided, if not equally, among several groups.

Turning finally to the secondary shop and "pigeon coop" stall sectors we see first that the former at least is somewhat intermediate between the open market and the central shop house sector with respect to ethnic differentiation. Malay businesses in the secondary sector are more than twice as numerous as urban Chinese ones, and still more numerous than the combined total of urban and rural Chinese shops—the two latter being equal in numbers. From the perspective of the urban Chinese, the secondary shop house sector is thus a marginal arena, though it is far from being one that is totally beneath their level of economic aspiration in the way that the *pasar* is. On the other hand, the secondary shop sector is an important one for the

rural Chinese, and contains in fact nearly all of those businesses—motor cycle, auto and bicycle repair—in which they predominate. This secondary shop sector is also equally or more important from the perspective of the Indian groups, in that it is here that most of the “Bengali” bakeries and the Malabari provision shops are located. The *kedai pati* stalls on the other hand are overwhelmingly a Malay arena, in part because these shops are mainly food stalls which tend to draw rural and town lower class Malays. The remaining businesses are all Indian, three of them also food shops.

To sum up this section of the paper, while ethnic specialization has long been a feature of the economic organization of the town, and will likely continue to be in the future as well, ethnic specialization is far from complete. All three economic sectors discussed tend to have some representation of nearly all ethnic groups, though patterns of dominance—if this is the correct word in regard to all such situations—do exist. Where such patterns of dominance are found, either in regard to general arenas or to specific lines of trade they can be explained by either negative factors—the leaving of some sectors or lines of trade to some group or groups by others not interested inclined to take them up—or by one or another positive ones—special skills, availability of capital, labor sources, etc., or by some combination of both. The negative factor applies in particular to the case of the composition of the open market. Small scale selling in the open market appeals especially to the lowest economic sector of the town—single, divorced or abandoned Malay women. Involvement in larger scale *pasar* trade in turn has a definitely wider appeal though it is still not within the range of town Chinese interests. At the other extreme the businesses of the central shop house sector are highly desired; the urban Chinese are dominant here not, at least today, because other groups prefer to leave such shops to them but because they possess more of what it takes to operate successfully at this level—capital, organizational skills, connections to suppliers, etc. Interestingly enough craft specialization along ethnic lines either does not exist—as in tailoring, watch repair work or cooking; or where it does to some extent—as in gold smithing—it does not provide much explanation of the domination of particular lines of trade by particular ethnic groups.

Rural Groups—Chinese

Although it is difficult to determine from census figures alone the exact size of rural Chinese populations or their proportion of the total population of Kelantan, they do constitute about half of the total (3,400) Chinese population of Pasir Mas district. In other districts, although their numbers may approach those of Pasir Mas,

their proportion of the total Chinese population is smaller. The rural Chinese of Pasir Mas district and most of those in adjacent districts dwell in settlements which are spread out along the Kelantan River, (though the largest single concentration of rural Chinese in the state is located inland from the river several miles); indeed on both sides of the river for at least twenty miles much of the land is occupied by rural Chinese. The Chinese say that they occupy this land because when their ancestors arrived in the state long ago it was empty. It seems highly likely as well that in earlier periods some of these Chinese were traders as well as farmers, particularly in dried cocanut and areca nut, both of which grow well along the river. While the people in both villages I studied claimed that their fathers and grandfathers had been farmers and not traders, in other cases it is known that some rural Chinese were at one time involved in riverine trade in the area. As to their claim that the riverine lands were empty—that is of Malays—when they arrived while this is likely, it raises the question of why the lands were empty and what use the Chinese could make of them that the Malay population of the Kelantan plain (which in comparison to other regions of the peninsula seems to have been fairly dense for some time) did not. The main factor seems to be that the sandy river lands are not suitable for rice cultivation, and that the Malays preferred to settle slightly back away from the river where rice cultivation could be practiced. The incoming Chinese on the other hand who were evidently adept at turning such land into productive fruit and vegetable gardens and orchards—the story of the founding of one village includes the digging of a long drainage ditch through a low area as one of the first communal acts—and were evidently welcome to it. Today these Chinese practice subsistence agriculture, supplemented in many instances with wages earned in town.

In regard to agriculture these Chinese are today dependent upon the growing of peanuts, various fruits and vegetables which do well in sandy soil, sireh leaves, and, most importantly, tobacco, which is prepared mainly for sale in local markets; rice and rubber, the mainstays of the rural Kelantan Malay economy are of much less importance. Few Chinese in either of the two villages studied owned either rice or rubber land, though a number work Malay-owned rice lands as share-croppers. Animal raising (other than fowl) is also of less importance. Since little plowing is done with the use of either water buffalo or cattle, and since pasturage is in even shorter supply along the river than it is elsewhere in the plain (where in the off-season, non-double cropped padi land is used), these large animals were not viewed as having much economic value, though cattle are kept in some cases. Sheep and goats which are raised by Malays, above all for ritual slaughter and feasting, either by themselves or for sale to others, are regarded by the Chinese as a nuisance and

are not kept since they neither eat them themselves or would have much success in selling them to Malays for ritual use. Pigs on the other hand, which are highly valued as food and which are made use of on festival occasions, are also not raised extensively. Only a few families in one village and none in the other raised them on a regular basis, though a few others would acquire a young pig or so to be raised specifically for some household or village feast. In spite of the demand for pork in both of the Chinese villages and in town pig raising is viewed as more trouble than it is worth for several reasons. For one thing pigs are not appreciated by Malay neighbors who are often located nearby and who might kill them if they wandered into their house yards, and with whom in any case the Chinese are careful to stay on good terms. But beyond this it was pointed out that pigs would root up the gardens of the Chinese themselves if permitted to run loose, and so if kept have to be raised in pens where, according to the Chinese, they do not grow well or large. Finally, since rice is not extensively raised rice bran is not available as pig food. The relative insignificance of pigs as an element of rural Chinese subsistence is one major difference between their adaptation and that of the Thai.

Thai Villagers

Kelantan presently has a Thai population numbering about 7,000, nearly all of which is rural and long settled. As in the case of the riverine rural Chinese, the origins and dates of arrival of the Thai remain obscure, though it seems highly likely that the southward movement which brought them to the Kelantan plain took place well before the turn of the present century, perhaps long before this time (Graham 1908: 20). None of the occupants of the fifty-eight households I interviewed in two adjacent villages in Pasir Mas district were able to offer any opinion on when their forebears had arrived in the state or from whence in Thailand they had come; while the inhabitants of one of these villages were able to say that it had come into being shortly after the turn of this century; it was formed by families either from the older adjacent village or from other settlements in the vicinity which had been abandoned for one reason or another (the older adjacent parent village itself dates from at least the latter part of the 19th century). The greatest portion of the Kelantan Thai dwell in large settlements located in the northeastern most corner of the state, with about three-quarters of the total found in Tumpat District alone. The total Thai population of Pasir Mas district is listed in the 1970 census as 773, most of which are settled in three village areas. One of these is comprised of the two adjacent communities located about three miles from Pasir Mas town (10 miles by road) which I surveyed; another is a neighboring village com-

munity located about a mile from this one. Both of these two village areas each have a Buddhist temple—monastery complex while the largest Thai settlements in the state each have several.

The most notable feature of the Thai settlements in Pasir Mas district are their withdrawn, conservative orientation in regard to interaction with the surrounding Malay population, and in regard to the processes of material and technological change affecting all peoples of the Kelantan plain and Malaya generally. Of all the minorities of the plain the Thai show the least (which is not of course to say that they show none) inclination to involve themselves in processes or arenas which lay beyond the local or regional Thai village world, or which would bring outsiders into their communities except for very specific and limited purposes. This is not to say that the Thai adaptation is purely a matter of negative reactions, for in fact Thai ethnicity and circumstances do provide opportunities which the Thai have been able to exploit with considerable effectiveness. This social reticence is linked in some ways at least to the general material and technological conservatism one readily notes in Thai communities—the absence of modern housing styles, or newer agricultural techniques such as sickle harvesting, which are widely characteristic of surrounding rural Malay society—though again such innovation is far from totally absent.

The Thai are also the most fully agricultural people of the Pasir Mas district, if not of the central Kelantan plain as a whole, not only in that nearly all Thai are village dwellers, but also in that whereas considerable numbers of both village dwelling Chinese and Malays earn their livelihoods at least in part in non-agricultural occupations of one sort or another few Thai do, particularly if one does not count village religious occupations. The agricultural adaptation of the Thai is basically similar to that of the surrounding rural Malays in that it centers on wet rice cultivation supplemented by rubber tapping and fruit growing. In recent years off-season tobacco cultivation on wet rice lands has been important, as it has been in suitable regions of the Kelantan plain generally. The overall economy of Thai villages differs from that of the rural Malay above all in terms of the role which pig raising plays. All of the Pasir Mas Thai families kept pigs, sometimes fenced in large yards, but more often left to run free during the daytime in houseyards and surrounding fields. Since the Thai villages are not situated close to Malay ones, and since the Thai do not engage much in vegetable gardening, pig raising does not for them entail the difficulties that it does for the rural Chinese; moreover, extensive wet rice cultivation makes rice bran readily available as a major source of pig food. In addition to pig raising, Pasir Mas Thai men regularly engage in wild pig hunting in extensive swamp and brush lands which are located a few miles from their villages

on the edge of the plain, though the economic importance of this is difficult to determine. It is however one of a number of economic activities in which the Thai are able to engage either on a non-competitive or a symbiotic basis with surrounding Malay populations, a matter on which more will be said below.

Ethnic Groups and Economic Change

In this final section of the paper I deal with economic aspects of ethnic change within the two local settings, town and rural, dealt with above. As should be apparent already the situation is different not only in the case of rural versus urban groups but also in the case of different urban and different rural groups as well. I turn first to the question of how government law and policy appear to affect the local setting of Pasir Mas town. It may be noted initially that the pace of change in the business sector of town is apt to be slower than in some settings elsewhere in the country. Although there has been some expansion of the secondary shop house sector of the town several factors appear to operate against much development. For one thing the lands surrounding the town are all subject to Malay reservation laws which makes purchase or lease by non-Malays difficult. It is also possible that the local economy as a whole would not in any case support additional business, for some of the space in the several new shop house blocks remains vacant.

Beginning with the town itself, it seems unlikely that either the nature of the open air market or the ethnic composition of its personnel will alter much—though it is possible that the number of rural Chinese operating within it might increase. The market itself will persist as it is because it reflects and meets the needs of a very large lower economic class of Malay townsmen and villagers who as buyers seek the lowest possible prices and as sellers have little capital or business knowledge on which to build larger commercial enterprises. While the government has increasingly made both available to more Malays, the size of the population and the rate of population growth is such that the sector of the Malay population which the open market serves is hardly likely to diminish. The ethnic composition of the market will probably remain more or less what it is for this same reason—because it is an expression of the ethnic and class composition of the population of the Kelantan plain, which is not likely to alter much in coming years. Even if more and more Malays move into middle and upper middle class commercial and governmental positions—some of whom will leave the region—and even if more non-Malays would move downward into positions as small or marginal business or wage laborers—some of whom will also in fact leave the area—the Malay portion of the lower economic classes of the plain will remain overwhelmingly Malay because the Malay portion of the popu-

lation is so large.

The perspective is of course very different when one looks at the shop house sectors in which Malays are a minority. Here ethnic changes that are numerically small or even hardly noticeable in relation to the total Malay population loom very large. Although it is difficult to determine whether such involvement has been at the expense of non-Malay sectors it does appear that Malay participation in shop-house business has increased over the course of this century, in relation to that of non-Malays as well as absolutely. Though east-coast Malays are not new to trade, and though Kelantan Malays from several river towns located near Kota Bharu have long had a reputation as long distance cloth traders, town informants generally claimed that in earlier periods that there was little Malay involvement in the shop house business sector of Pasir Mas, and that those Malays that were involved were of mixed Arab-Malay or mixed Malay-Indian descent. While it seems likely that there have been some Malay shops in town since the earliest decades of this century it does seem certain that shop house trade was in earlier periods very largely non-Malay. This situation has obviously already changed considerably for Malays now operate 34 percent of the combined primary and secondary shop-house businesses in town. If, as it seems likely, Malay involvement in this level of trade will continue to increase it will be for the following reasons.

First, there is a massive government effort to materially assist Malays to obtain education and training relevant to business and commerce, to obtain (among other things) capital and other assistance. While some such assistance has been going on for a long while it has been greatly intensified in the post-1969 period. Since that time also the government has created a series of national Malay corporations to promote Malay involvement in various fields of commerce and transportation and has made use of restrictive licensing provisions as a way of furthering Malay involvement in economic areas such as the wholesale rice and rubber trade, and commercial transport. The national impact of such programs and policies is a matter beyond evaluation in this paper but there is no question that they have had considerable effect in the region dealt with here.

Second, a great ideological emphasis has been placed upon Malay business involvement. While much of this also comes from the government and the Malay political parties, it is also bound up with developments in education and with contemporary Islamic religious sentiments. Malay business involvement has thus come to be viewed as a patriotic cause and, given the way that Islam is intertwined with other aspects of Malay political ideology, it has also become something of a religiously sanctioned duty as well. Before making too much of all of this as another example of a Southeast Asian Moslem protestant business ethic one should keep in

mind that the ideological push to Malay business involvement conjoins with obvious material interest and opportunity. Also, as the Chinese point out, recent Malay business ventures seem to involve little risk taking since much of it has been done with government capital and other forms of government assistance. But while it is a question as to how much it accounts for in comparison to the material inducements and opportunities the spirit is there none the less.

The question of whether either the Chinese or the Indians are likely to be displaced from the lines of trade they have long followed in the town is difficult to answer for two related reasons; first, even if the current incentives and opportunities for Malay involvement continue it is not easy to determine how much effect they would ultimately have, given the possibility, for example, that the Chinese organize more effectively and on a larger scale—for this is what they are now talking about doing—than they heretofore have. Second, the possibility that such opportunities will continue is bound up with national political and even international economic developments, the latter including in particular the value of the commodities upon which the national Malayan economy depends.

Rural Groups and Economic Change

The most significant determinants of change affecting the rural non-Malay ethnic groups of the district and of the Kelantan plain date not from the period following the post-1969 election riots, or even from post-independence period, but rather from 1930. At this time Kelantan state land enactments were passed which in effect reserved rights to land ownership in the state to Malay residents. Under these enactments non-Malays retain ownership of lands acquired before passage of the enactments and have the right to dispose of such lands to other non-Malays but not to acquire land without special permission, which in regard to the agricultural lands of the plain is evidently rarely given. What these enactments have meant is that rural non-Malay communities have been faced with a constant (if not shrinking) land base. (It should also be noted that Malay villagers themselves are also faced with land shortages due to population increase and due to evident tendencies for land ownership to pass from the hands of poorer villagers to those of wealthier villagers or townsmen, particularly to those with government salaries (Swift 1967: 241–269.) It is also the case that the situation of the two rural non-Malay groups dealt with in this paper is very different; while the Chinese villagers have an obviously severe land problem (see Table 3), the land holdings of the Pasir Mas Thai villages (Table 5) appear to be as large or larger than those of many Malay villages. Because of these differences the economic present and future of these two groups is very different

Table 3 Landholdings of Two Pasir Mas Riverine Chinese Villages

	Village #1 N=30		Village #2 N=29		Total N=59	
	Total Acres	Mean Hshld. Acres	Total Acres	Acers: Mean Hshld.	Village Total Acres	Household Mean Acres
Rice	13-1/4	.441	31.000	1.068	44.250	.750
Garden	41-2/3	1.388	27.625	.952	69.291	1.174
Rubber	12-1/2	.416	3.00	.103	15.50	.262
Total	67.41	2.247	61.625	2.125	129.041	2.187
Number of Households	N=29		N=30		N=59	
Owning Some	Village #1		Village #2		Total	
Rice Land	9		23		32	
Garden Land	29		25		54	
Rubber	3		2		5	

Table 4 Birth, Residence and Workplace of Working Village Chinese Males

	Village #1	Village #2	Total
*Born, Residing and Working in Village	29 (47%)	30 (57%)	59 (53%)
Born, Residing in Village, Working Outside	12 (20%)	6 (11%)	18 (16%)
Born in Village: Residing, Working Elsewhere in Kelantan	17 (28%)	13 (24%)	30 (26%)
Born in Village: Residing and Working Outside Kelantan	3 (5%)	4 (8%)	7 (6%)
Total	61(100%)	53(100%)	114(100%)
Born Elsewhere: Residing, Working in Village	5	5	10
Total Working in Village	34	35	69
Total Working in Village as % of Total Working Males			
Born in Village	56%	66%	60%
Born Elsewhere, Residing in Village, Working Outside	3	1	4

* Figures somewhat inflated because they include a few older males who had formerly worked elsewhere, and also some young men who will probable leave to work and/or live elsewhere.

though, as we shall see, factors other than land also play an important role in the economic adaptation of both groups as well, and there is reason to believe that they will in the future also.

In the case of the rural Chinese it seems inevitable that an increasing number will be forced to leave the village either altogether or at least for purposes of daily or periodic employment. As table 4 indicates about half of the adult males born in the two villages dealt with in this study continue to both live and work in them while the remainder either work or work and live elsewhere (though in both villages some men from elsewhere have married and reside and work there; also, some of the men who have left have taken up residence and farming in other Chinese villages). The rural Chinese who leave the village for employment work mainly as laborers, unskilled clerks, and small rural shop keepers (see Appendix V). While some of these Chinese are moving to other rural areas in the state, or beyond, some also are moving to the various towns of the Kelantan plain where they form part of a lower economic strata; it is not possible to determine exactly on the basis of present information what ethnic changes such Chinese are undergoing, but it is possible

that they will contribute substantially to the emergence of a new, non-immigrant urban Chinese lower class, one whose members possess neither the capital, the education, the business knowledge or the family system to compete with the established urban Chinese or with the government supported Malays.

The Thai

The case of the Thai is very different in several respects from that of the rural Chinese. Unlike the village Chinese who have long done so, the Thai have left the villages in search of employment or economic opportunity elsewhere in Kelantan only very occasionally. The exceptions, not counting those who have entered the monkhood, are mainly those few Thais who have become government teachers. Nor does it appear that many will take such a course in the future. The economic prospects of the Thai are thus a reflection of three sorts of factors, the first of which is local land. Since Pasir Mas Thai land holdings are still relatively large (if not very evenly distributed among households), the Thai are thus not faced with the sort of shortages the rural Chinese are in the present or in the immediate future. The second is that the Thai have long had access to lands in Thailand which the Thai government has opened for settlement and evidently wishes to see taken up by Thai people. Presumably the Thai who have taken up such lands and developed rubber estates have indicated that they wished to become citizens of Thailand, though until they do they remain citizens of Malaysia and are able to move freely back and forth across the border. This has in effect given them two options, both of which have been taken in some cases. First, some Thai have pulled up stakes entirely and settled permanently across the border in Thailand. I was told that up to a dozen families had departed from the two villages surveyed in the last ten years and that several others were going to as well. The departure of these families has no doubt contributed significantly to the favorable ratio of families to land which characterizes these settlements. Second, other families have opened up lands in Thailand but not chosen to settle permanently there, at least yet. Such families either spend part of the year there developing the lands and then return to Kelantan to cultivate rice, or they employ rubber tappers if the plantations have reached the stage of producing trees. There are however several factors which make either of these options rather problematic at the present. One of these is the instability of rubber prices over the past several years. During 1975, for example, many Kelantan villagers at least stopped tapping rubber because prices had fallen to almost half of what they had been a short while before. The other factor is banditry and extortion. South Thailand, a Malay Moslem country, has long been characterized by dissidence, political re-

Table 5 Land Holdings of Two Pasir Mas Thai Villages

	Village #1 N=37		Village #2 N=21		Total: N=58	
	Total Acres	Mean Household	Total Acres	Mean House- Hold Acres	Total	House Mean
Rice	95	2.567	39.00	1.850	134	2.310
Dusun	35	.945	29.75	1.416	64.75	1.116
Local Rubber	22	.594	15.00	.714	37.00	.637
Total Local	152	4.108	83.75	3.988	235.75	4.064
Siam Rubber	136	3.675	32.00	1.520	168.00	2.89
Total	288	7.824	115.75	5.515	403.75	6.961
Number of Households Owning Some...	Village #1 N=37		Village #2 N=21		Total: N=58	
Rice Land	31		18		49	
Dusun	28		14		42	
Local Rubber	12		8		20	
Siam Rubber	15		5		20	

bellion, and an absence of much government control beyond the major towns, and such conditions appear to have grown more pronounced in recent years. "Gangsters," (not necessarily Malay) according to the Thai villagers, were thus demanding large sums of money from owners of plantations who wished to have their rubber tapped, and would kill the tappers of anyone who did not pay.

The third factor affecting the economic status of the Thai is the demand for goods and services they provide for members of surrounding ethnic sectors, including both the rural and urban Chinese and the Malays. I have already alluded to significance of Thai pig raising. Here I wish to point to the economic significance of the tendency for the Thai to function simultaneously as a sort of polluted service "caste" in regard to surrounding Malay-Moslem society, and as a priestly one for surrounding rural and urban Chinese societies, though actually the services they provide both groups show a mixture of both elements. In regard to the Malays, another researcher who has studied Kelantan Thais and Malays elsewhere in the plain argues that the rural Thai provide a number of services for the benefit of surrounding Malays, including the removal of ritually unclean dead animals, the hunting of marauding wild pigs, (both of which are eaten), the provision in Thai villages during the fasting month of food for those Malays who wish it, and of a place to gamble and consume alcohol for those who wish these things (Golomb, 1975). Given the fact that the Pasir Mas Thai villages are situated some distance from the nearest Malay ones it does not seem that the provision of such services are of as much importance in the present instance, or therefore that they would have as much economic significance. It is the case however the Thais in the Pasir Mas district do provide other services of which Malays as well as members of other ethnic groups avail themselves, and which do have some economic significance. One of

these is sorcery and curing. Throughout Kelantan and throughout Malaya generally the Thai have a reputation in sorcery, especially in love magic. From the Malay perspective such reputed abilities have to do with the fact that the Thai are seen as people who are not restricted by prohibitions of Islam and can handle the polluting (*kotor, haram*) substances used in black magic. From my earlier work among Malays I was never sure as to the extent that Thai were not merely being used as objects of blame by Malay magical diagnosticians, though I did know Malays who had gone to Thai curers, if not sorcerers. In any case, from even the limited work I did in the Thai villages it was clear that there were Thai curers who were widely sought out and who travelled as far as Singapore. Finally, in addition to magic and curing some Thai also belong to *menora* theatrical groups which are popular among Malays as well as Thai and rural Chinese.

The priestly services which the Thai provide for rural and urban Chinese relate mainly to the Buddhist temples found in association with all Thai settlements. The rural Chinese are clearly not Buddhists in the same sense that the Thai are, for they maintain their own village religious practices and institutions which have nothing to do with Theravada Buddhism, while at the same time they participate less in such practices as entering the monkhood for some period. They do however summon monks to pray for the dead and participate to some extent in Buddhist festivals, and in the case of two Chinese communities, invited Thai monks to establish temples which now flourish. The urban Chinese, on the other hand, who make more occasional use of Buddhist monks as sources of mystical knowledge and ritual assistance, provide considerable financial support for the Thai temples. Supported by rural and urban Chinese (and to some extent even by Malays) Buddhism is an important economic asset for the Thai in that temples each provide either temporary or permanent livelihoods for ten to twenty or more Thai villagers, most of whom are from Kelantan villages.

All in all the economic base of the Pasir Mas Thai thus continues to be characterized by a rather high degree of integrity, one not found even among rural Malays, let alone the rural Chinese. The fact that the Thai appear to be the most economically successful of all the rural cultivators of Pasir Mas district probably more than anything else explains their general conservatism. For certainly the latter does not reflect backwardness or ignorance of other possibilities, but if anything, an awareness that life elsewhere (in Malaysia or Thailand) would not necessarily be better.

A Final Note

In this paper I have sought to show both how much variation there is to be

found in the present economic adaptation of different ethnic groups in one local setting, and how such variation will be manifest in likely future patterns of change. The discussion of change has presumed that except for those particular factors discussed, the general course of economic development in the Kelantan plain will not alter greatly in the future. This region has certainly already undergone considerable general economic change, deriving from the development of government irrigation projects; from the introduction of new crops and techniques of cultivation, and it will continue to do so as further lands are brought within double cropping schemes, and as the market values of different crops shift. It is not likely to become a boom area, however, in the way that the interior of the state could. On the other hand, the possible significance of other developments does need to be acknowledged. One of these is the completion and opening of the cross-peninsular highway that will link the Kelantan plain directly to the west coast rather than by the circuitous southern highway route now in use. The major effect of this alone would probably be to enhance the seasonal or irregular flow of labor out of Kelantan. The other possibility is that of industries of the sort established on the west coast becoming located in the capital of Kelantan, with the consequence of the formation of local wage earning proletariat of the sort which does not now exist.

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Appendix I Main Market: Large Sellers

Commodity or Service	Malay			Village Chinese		Indian		Total
	Men	Women	Couples	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Malay style prepared food		35						35
Thailand snacks	1	3						4
Fried bananas		3						3
Fried fish chips (snack)		3						3
Loal cured tobacco and leaf wrapper					6			6
Onions, dried chilis, sugar	10	4		3		5		22
Rice (also usually eggs)			20					20
Toys, purses, cosmetics, table ware		3	4	3	4			14
Cloth, childrens clothing	31	9						40
Woven mats	3							3
Grated coconut	3							3
Pots, pans, dishes, plastics, toys	4							4
Fresh meat (beef, water buffalo)	9							9
Coffee, tea, snacks			14			4		18
Indian bread (<i>Roti chana</i>)						1		1
Soup	3							3
Noodles	8							8
Cheap clothing	10							10
Cheap knives, gambier, lime, cooking utensil		5						5
Totals	82	65	38	6	10	10		211

Main Market: Small Sellers

Local vegetables	40							40
Small clams	7							7
Sireh leaves	6							6
Malay style snacks:								
peanuts, boiled corn, tapioca, rice	25							25
Jasmine flower strings	7							7
Dried fish, salt, shrimp paste	7							7
Chinese vegetables					3			3
Rice	15							15
Seamstress	13							13
Fermented fish sauce (<i>budu</i>)	13							13
Dried fish and fish chips	3							3
Coconuts	4							4
Coconut sugar	3							3
Totals	143				3			146

Appendix II Primary Shop Area: Ethnic Groups

	Malay	Town Chinese	Village Chinese	Arab	"Bengali"	Tamil	Punjabi
Goldsmith		5					
Dentist		2	1				
Coffee Shop	2	6					
Provision Shop	3	14	2	1	4	1	
Restaurant	2	1			1	1	
Spice Shop						1	
Book-Magazine Shop	4		2				
Rubber Dealer	2	3					
Bicycle Shop		3	1				
Rice Dealer	2						
Motorcycle Shop		1	1				
"Perm Parlor"		5	1				
Cloth Shop	2						1
Clothes Shop	3	3					2
Tailor Shop	7	12	1				
Hardware	1	4	1				
Furniture & Electrical Appliance Shop		1					
Barber	4	3					
Bakery		1			1		
Watch Shop		1			1		
Shoe Shop	1	1					
Motor Repair	1						
Poultry Store		1					
Ice and Ice Cream		1					
Clinic	2					3	
Glass & Frame Shop						2	
Toto Shop		1					
Pawn Shop		1					
Photo Shop	1	1	1				
Electrical Contractor		1					
Laundry	1						
Oil Lamp Shop		1					
Ratan Furniture Maker		1					
Wood Furniture Maker	2	1					
Bun Shop	1						
Totals	41	73	14	3	7	5	3=146

Appendix III Secondary Area Shop: Roads to Lemal, Kota Bahru, Rantau Panjang

	Malay	Town Chinese	Village Chinese	"Bengali"	Tamil	Totals
Tailor	7		3			10
Barber	4					4
Furniture Seller	1	1				2
Coffee Shop	3	2			1	6
Spice Factory					1	1
Motorcycle, Auto Repair	2		6			8
Print Shop			1			1
Laundry	1		1			2
Building Material	1					1
Bicycle Shop	1	2				3
Welder	1	1	1			3
Provision Shop	10	2			3	15
Pickles & Sweets		2				2
Bakery				4		4
Iron Forge		1				1
Wood Furniture Maker	1	2				3
Auto-Paint Shop	1					1
Record Shop			1			1
Totals	33	13	13	4	5	68

Appendix IV Kedai pati: Ethnic Groups

	Malay	Malabari Indian	Tamil	Totals
Food Stall	19	3		22
Barber	1			1
Hobby	1			1
Radio Repair	1			1
Photo Studio	1			1
Fertilizer Shop	1			1
Shoe Repair			1	1
School Supplies			1	1
Tailor	1			1
Totals	25	3	2	30

Appendix V Rural Chinese Occupations (Men Born in or Married to Women Born in Two Chinese Villages)

	Village #1	Village #2	Total
Cultivator	27	27	54
Coffin Maker	3	0	3
Carpenter	2	0	2
Auto/Bicycle Repairman	5	5	10
Laborer*	11	10	21
Trishaw Driver	0	3	3
Store Clerk	5	0	5
Office Boy	3	0	3
Shop Keeper/Trader	8	6	14
Peddler/Market Seller	3	0	3
Petrol Station Attendant	1	2	3
Truck Driver	3	1	4
House Servant	1	0	1
Boat Operator	2	0	2
Teacher's or Agricultural College Student	2	2	4
Government Officer	0	1	1
School Teacher	1	3	4
Tailor	1	0	1
Soldier	2	0	2
Totals	80	60	140

* This is principally saw mill work.