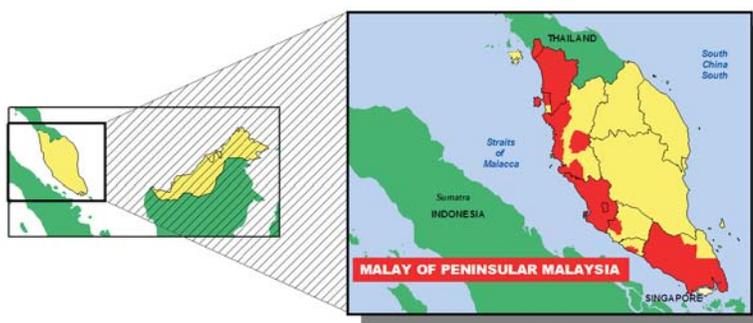


MALAY OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA



Population	Major Religion	Language
7,500,000	Islam	Bahasa Malaysia

Who are the Malay of Peninsular Malaysia?

The Malay of Peninsular Malaysia make up the majority of the Malay peoples in Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore. In Malaysia, people are classified as Malay by the federal constitution if they speak their national language, Bahasa Malaysia, practice Malay customs, and are followers of Islam.

The Malay of Peninsular Malaysia find much pride in their cultural heritage and place great emphasis on family and community dependence. Titles, such as *Pa' Long* (Eldest Uncle), are used as terms of endearment to acknowledge hierarchical position.

What are their lives like?

The Malay of Peninsular Malaysia are seen in many levels of society. There are urban Malay who are well educated and hold white collar or government positions, and there are rural Malay who may or may not pursue higher learning and typically occupy jobs such as farming, trading, and fishing. While rural Malay men often wear traditional dress such as a cloth wrap-around skirt, urban Malay men tend to blend into a western setting with their blue jeans, cell phones, and Polo shirts.

While many Malay are now building modern homes, there are still numerous traditional homes within the *kampung* or village in which Malay people reside. Traditional homes are large in order to have sufficient space for the extended family as custom allows for many generations to reside under one roof.

Although the Malay society has undergone a number of social and political changes through education and urbanization, their value orientation is still very much influenced by community. The Malay are a very social people and dependence upon community is considered normal and healthy. Often families will live within close proximity to one another so that help from relatives is easily attained. *Kenduri* (or party) is a social occasion for an entire community. The Malay women will assist to the

hosting home with the cooking and preparations.

What do they believe?

Islam was brought to Malaysia by Arabic and Indian traders many centuries ago, and the Malay people have come to embrace and ardently follow the Islamic faith. All Malay people are considered Islamic though levels of devotion to the religion are varied. Even those who half-heartedly follow Islam participate in the fasting month, and the Malay people of affluence will go on the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once if not many times during their lifetime.

The Malay have early roots in Hinduism and traces of this can still be seen in certain aspects of their culture such as weddings. For instance, the bride and groom will paint their hands with henna and will sit upon a platform for hours for the guests to admire.

Another divergence from Islam is the use of a *bomoh* (witchdoctor). Although Islam forbids the use of such a person, many Malay of Peninsular Malaysia will seek the services of a bomoh when they are experiencing a difficult situation or when they need some "magic." Also, they use bomohs for honorable or ignoble purposes. Furthermore, they consult bomohs in order to receive a blessing or a cure; or, on the other hand, in order to curse someone or get revenge.

What are their needs?

While the Malay place great emphasis on family, it is ironic that one of their greatest needs lies in the breakdown of the family unit. Divorce and youth issues are challenges facing the Malay family.

During turbulent times, pray that peace can reign among the Malay of Peninsular Malaysia and their families. Much opportunity exists for young entrepreneurial Malay students through Malaysian education, sports and business.