

Malaysia - I

Lead: Assembled from various components of the British Empire, the nation of Malaysia has made great strides since achieving independence.

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Malaysia occupies the severe southeastern point of the Eurasian continent and lies athwart some of the richest, most traveled shipping lanes in the world. The indigenous Malay population was supplemented through commercial connections with Indian and Chinese traders sometime around the first century CE. The result is that just over 20% of the population of 30,000,000 is of ethnic Chinese descent. Hinduism and Buddhism were adopted by the native population until the arrival of Islam in the 1300s and today, with Muslims constituting around 60% of the population, Islam is the official faith of Malaysia, though freedom of religion is a constitutionally protected right.

The location and rich natural resources, particularly the spices highly desired by Westerners, attracted European traders and eventually colonial control by Portugal, then Holland but eventually, by the mid 1800s, imperial Great Britain. In 1941 the Japanese war machine invaded and took over the archipelago and their rule stimulated a powerful nationalist movement which, when the British returned in 1945, signaled the beginning stages of Malaysian

independence. Originally the Brits proposed to unite Malaya into a single crown colony, but this diminished the power of local Malay authorities and gave citizenship to those of Chinese descent. This plan was shelved and was replaced by the Federation of Malaya. Next time: a united Malaysia.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

Resources

Andaya, Barbara Watson. *The History of Malaysia*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001.

Gullick, J.M. *Malaysia*. New York, NY: Preager, 1969.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>

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