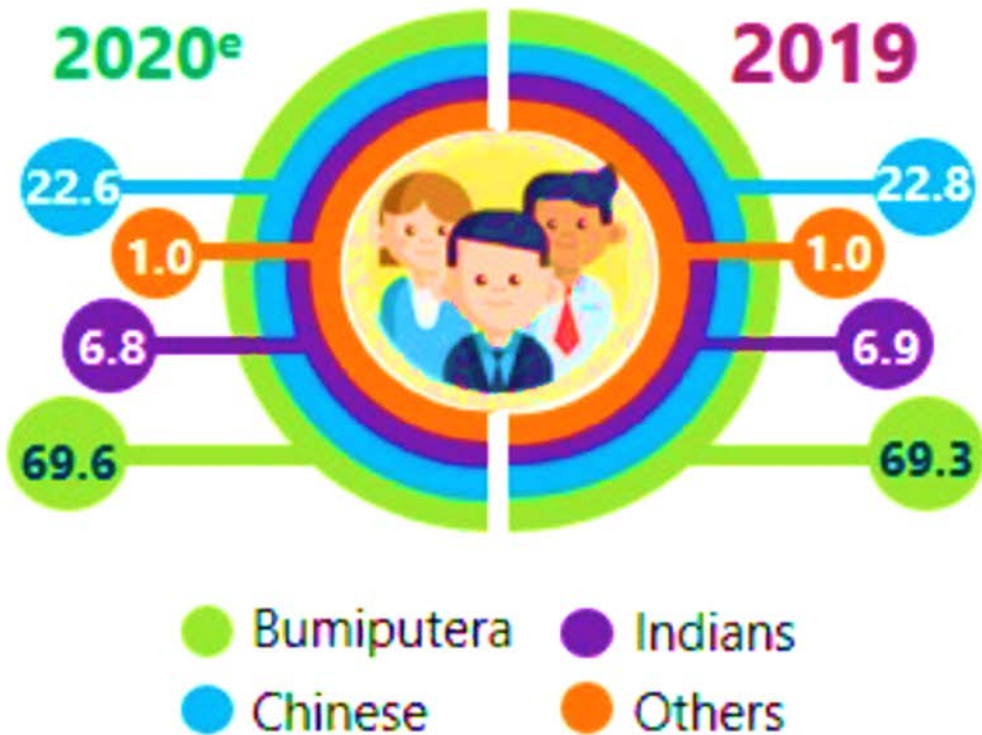


**NOT RACE BUT GRACE:
MISSION IN MALAYSIA**

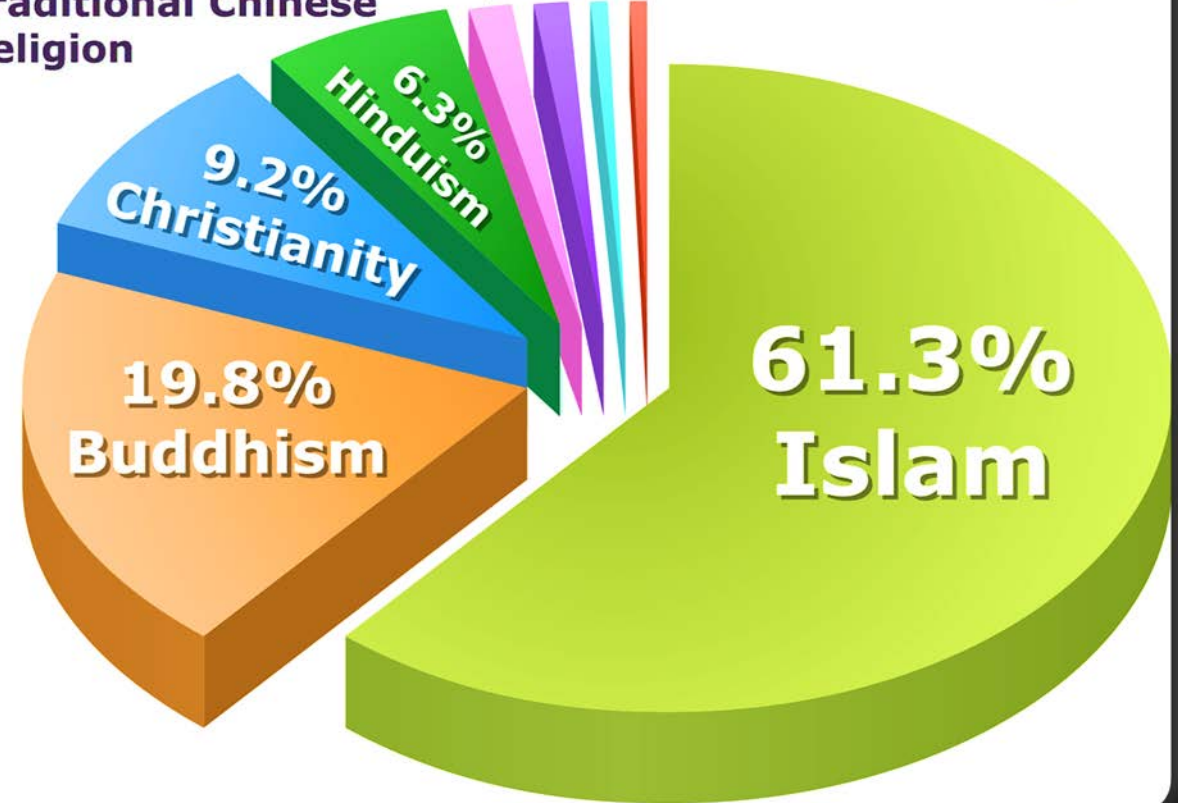
JUDY BERINAI

Malaysia's Population: 32.7 million (2020) (Department of Statistic of Malaysia)

PERCENTAGE OF CITIZENS BY ETHNIC GROUP



PERCENTAGE OF CITIZENS BY RELIGION



Chinese

Others

COLONIALIZATION & CHRISTIANITY



COLONIALIZATION & CHRISTIANITY

➤ 15th Century – decline of the Malay-Muslim Sultanate of Melaka

➤ Successive Christian colonizers:

1) Portuguese (1511-1641) - Roman Catholicism

1545 Francis Xavier (Jesuit) made Portuguese Melaka as his base for evangelism & mission.

2) Dutch (1641-1786) - Catholicism

3) British (1786-1941 & 1945-1956): Penang (1786) , Malacca (1795) & Singapore (1819), and later in the Malay states. The British facilitated Chinese and Indian migration, bringing Chinese folk religion, Hinduism and Christianity.

- 1814 William Milne (London Missionary Society) came to Malacca and he created interface between education and mission. Mission schools grew rapidly especially run by Methodist churches.
- 1911 Anglican missionaries created interface between medical care and mission.

- Both education and medical care were mission outreach to the local people during the British rule.
- 19th century, Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Brethren churches – ministry to Chinese and Indian migrants.
- Race (ethnicity) and religion has always been interrelated, Malays (Muslims), Indians (Hindus), Chinese (traditional religion, Taoism, Confucianism, ancestor worship and later Buddhism).
- Christianity was considered as a source of religious power and associated with education and westernization.
- Western missions coincided with the expansion of Western colonialism.
- The Christian colonial administration insulated the indigenous Malays from Christian missionary activities, not necessarily out of respect to their religion and culture but due to political reasons (1874 Treaty of Pangkor between British & Malay Sultans). As a result, Christianity was only for the immigrant communities (Chinese & Indians). -



MISSION TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN SABAH

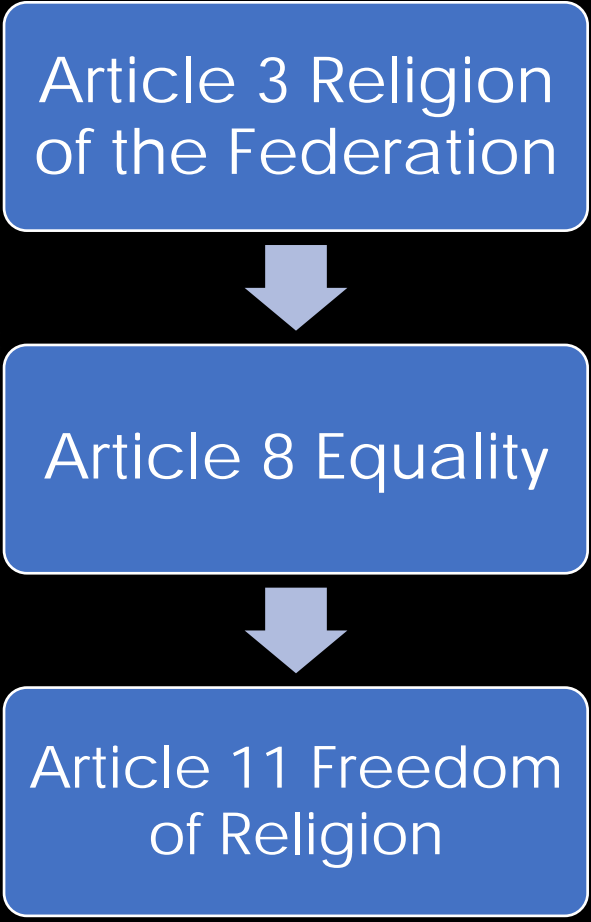
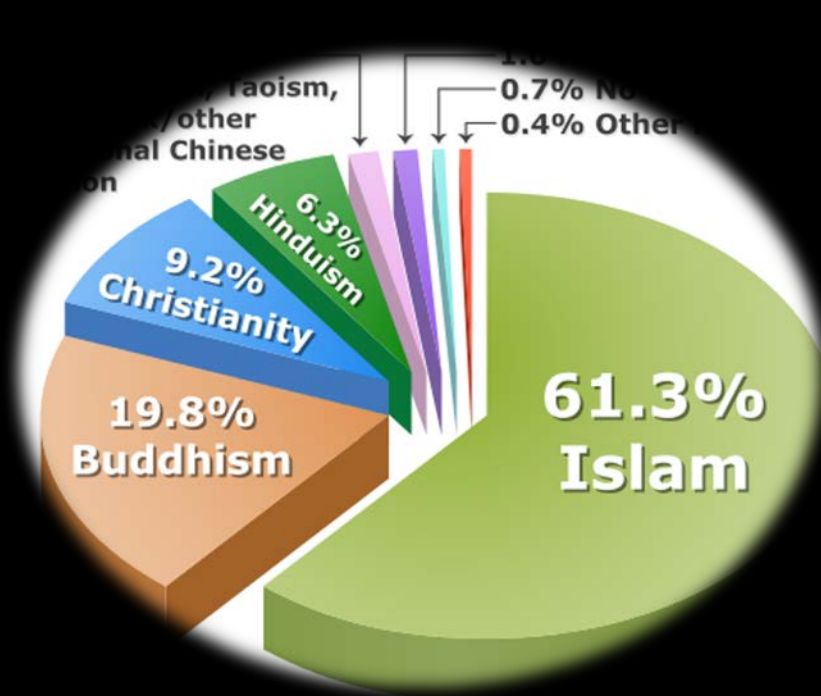
- Sabah has a heterogeneous population that is culturally diverse. There are some 50 ethnic groups. About 30 are indigenous, each with its own distinctive customs and practices.
- Based on the 2000 census, the indigenous groups make up about 60% of the estimated 2.6 million total population of Sabah. They speak more than 50 languages and 80 dialects. In July 2021 the population of Sabah is 3.83 million.
- The indigenous peoples were called *pagans* or *heathens* by the Christian missionaries and *kafir* by the Muslims. Both the Christian missionaries and Muslims ignored the traditional religion of the indigenous peoples of Sabah.
- The indigenous people of Sabah generally come from ethnic groups that had no written language. In these communities, traditions and knowledge are passed on orally through customs and practice; values are internalised through traditional socialisation.
- The British invaded North Borneo (Sabah) for commercial purposes and the early missionaries introduced Christianity and a Western worldview.

- Christianity was introduced in Sarawak and Sabah, formerly known as Borneo, in the late 19th century.
- The Basel Christian Church of Malaysia began in 1882 when a group of Hakka Chinese Christian labourers from Mainland China migrated to Kudat. It had its first centre in Kudat and its work confined to the Chinese.
- The Borneo Basel Self-Established Church (Lutheran) was originally a Swiss Christian Society. In 1952, the Basel Christian Church requested the Basel Missionary Society to establish a mission among the Rungus people.
- The Anglican Church began in Sarawak in 1856. Subsequently, it spread to Sabah in 1888. However, the Anglican mission to the indigenous peoples only began in 1956 since it was not the initial goal of the Anglican Church to evangelize the indigenous peoples. Rather, their main purpose of sending missionaries was to minister to the expatriates who were working with the colonizers and to the Chinese who were transported by the British to Sabah as their labour force in their economic enterprises.

- The Borneo Evangelical Mission, which later merged with Overseas Missionary Society began their mission in Sarawak in 1928 and extended to Sabah in 1937.
- The missionaries had the intention of transforming the lives of the indigenous peoples by imparting Christian faith for their spiritual formation and implementing Western education and worldview for their social development.

- Western missions coincided with the expansion of western colonization.
- Western missions were powerful bearers of the process of modernization; becoming a Christian was synonymous with becoming Western.
- The attitude of mission was of *tabula rasa*, and the role of missionaries was viewed as bringing Christianity and civilization to local cultures that were considered primitive or uncivilised.
- Two symbolic systems found an affinity: the preaching of the Gospel and the civilizing of the *heathen* since evangelism and civilization were inseparable.
- Historically, it is undeniable that the Christian presence in Malaysia is the consequence of missionary efforts that were made possible through the presence of the colonial powers.

CHALLENGES OF MISSIONS IN MALAYSIA TODAY



GRACE NOT RACE CHRISTIAN MISSION IN MALAYSIA TODAY



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PERSPECTIVE TO PROMOTE HOLISTIC THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION IN A COMMUNITY OF DIVERSITY.**



**Sabah
Theological
Seminary**



WAY FORWARD FOR DOING MISSION IN MALAYSIA

