Chapter 13
Negotiating Assimilation and Hybridity: The Identity of Chinese-Malays in Brunei Darussalam

Chang-Yau Hoon and Nur Shawatriqah Sahrifulhafiz

Abstract This chapter explores the ways in which Bruneians who are born into a Chinese-Malay family define their identity. It details how the state classifies them in terms of 'race', how they negotiate their bicultural practices, and the day-to-day challenges they face while growing up in what we could term a liminal space of in-betweenness. Situated against the backdrop of state-level assimilation influence, the chapter discusses the ways in which Chinese-Malays negotiate between assimilation and hybridity. By articulating the everyday experiences of between and betwixt among these biracial subjects, the chapter reveals the various forces shaping the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, belonging and non-belonging in Brunei Darussalam.

Keywords Brunei Darussalam · Chinese-Malays · Assimilation · Identity · Hybridity · Biracialism

13.1 Introduction

The population of Brunei Darussalam is estimated at 453,600 in 2020 (Department of Economic Planning and Statistics 2021). Comprising 65.8% of the population, the majority are classified as Malay, while the second largest ethnic group—the Chinese—make up 10.2% of the population. The Malays are an internally diverse group. The Brunei Constitution and the Brunei Nationality Enactment 1961 recognises seven indigenous ethnic groups (*puak jati* or *puak-puak Melayu*)—Belait, Bisaya, Brunei (Brunei Malays), Dusun, Kedayan, Murut and Tutong—as part of

This chapter is reproduced with the kind permission of Brill Academic Publishers. The original version appeared in *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 17(1): 31–57, 2021.

Chang-Yau Hoon (✉)
Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Gadong, Brunei Darussalam
e-mail: changyau.hoon@ubd.edu.bn

Nur Shawatriqah Sahrifulhafiz
Graduate School of International Studies, Sogang University, Seoul, South Korea
e-mail: shawatriqah@gmail.com

Lian Kwen Fee et al. (eds.), *(Re)presenting Brunei Darussalam*,
Asia in Transition 20, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-6059-8_13

the Malay race (*bangsa Melayu*) that comprises the dominant population of Brunei (Maxwell 2001). The incorporation of these indigenous groups into one Malay 'racial' category goes beyond the purpose of simply enumeration in a population census; it also involves the systematic assimilation of these diverse ethnicities into the dominant Malay Muslim culture. As Victor T. King (1994: 178) argues, 'This process of ethnic change usually involves two important elements: conversion to Islam and broader cultural emulation of Brunei Malays'. The assimilation or 'Malayisation' efforts are reinforced by various state-level assemblages including the national ideology of Malay Islamic monarchy (*Melayu Islam Beraja*, MIB), Islamic propagation activities (*dakwah*), Malay-language promotion, national education and institutions of customs and traditions (*adat istiadat*) (de Vienne 2015: 217–218).

Notwithstanding its ethnic and cultural diversity, Brunei does not practise a policy of multiculturalism. This is manifest in its racially and religiously exclusive national philosophy *Melayu Islam Beraja*—a mutually constitutive three-legged stool of race–religion–monarchy that was established as the bedrock of Brunei political structure since its independence in 1984. Enshrined in MIB is a unified national identity that guarantees the superior status of the Malay race, including its culture and language, and the safeguarding of the state religion of Islam by the monarch (Ho 2019). In the MIB philosophy, *Melayu* refers to the race that preserves the Malay culture that is foundational to Brunei, *Islam* as the religion espoused by the *Beraja* (monarch) that founded and rules over the Islamic sultanate (Abdul Aziz Umar 1992). Officially claimed to have been practised for more than 600 years, the ideology is deemed to be an 'authentic' definition of the Bruneian identity: being Malay, Muslim and loyal to the monarch. Some scholars argue that the ideology of MIB only privileges the Malay Muslim majority, while excluding or marginalising non-Muslim minorities (Naimah 2002; Poole 2009: 150). However, in a royal speech commemorating an Islamic ceremony, the Sultan of Brunei reassured his people that MIB is a system that 'preserves the rights of *all* residents regardless of their race or creed' (Wardi 2019, our emphasis). After decades of institutionalisation, MIB has pervaded the whole public sector and is inculcated as a compulsory subject in every educational institution in Brunei.

As the second largest 'racial' group, the Chinese play an important role in Brunei's economic development by contributing to the country's growth and prosperity (Niew 1995). Although some scholars claim that intermarriages between Chinese and Brunei Malays can be traced back to the thirteenth century (Malai Yunus 2013: 76–78), there is a dearth of historical documentation about the development of mixed marriages, and whether a distinct hybrid Peranakan community has ever emerged in Brunei. As such, this chapter focuses on the identity of Chinese-Malays in contemporary Brunei. While intermarriages have become increasingly common in the region (Nagaraj 2009), including Brunei, mixed-marriage couples still face challenges pertaining to the reconciliation of differences in culture, religion, traditions and social class. Traditionally, within the Malay community in Brunei, mixed marriages were discouraged due to the community's need to maintain a 'pure' lineage and to prevent passing on their inheritance to outsiders (Trigger and Siti Norkhalbi 2011).

However, intermarriages have become more common and increasingly accepted in contemporary Brunei provided that the non-Malay Muslim counterpart in the marriage embraces the dominant religion and assimilates into the Malay Muslim identity promulgated by MIB.[1]

It is not possible to estimate the number of Chinese-Malays in Brunei because the state uses a patrilineal system that expects children to register as their father's race. Mixed-race children are required to identify themselves with only one race when filling out official forms, thus only allowing for one racial identification. This was inherited from the colonial administrative system for racial classification when Brunei was a British protectorate from 1888 to 1984 (Maxwell 2001). A similar system is practised by the neighbouring countries of Singapore and Malaysia that share a similar colonial legacy, where 'race is understood to be patrilineal and inherent in one's biological makeup.… [and in] [p]ostcolonial governments of the two countries.… [r]ace has retained its role as the prime apparatus of administration and control' (Reddy and Gleibs 2019). This chapter uses the term 'race' instead of 'ethnicity' to reflect the term used in official policy and public discourse, as well as in our informants' articulation of their own identity. However, we acknowledge that as a label for biological categorisation, 'race' is deeply problematic and has no scientific validity (Luke and Carrington 2000). We use the term with the understanding that race is socially and politically 'constructed, situational and fluid, and not a biological fact' (Reddy and Gleibs 2019).

Considering this background, this study explores the hybrid identity of the Chinese-Malays in Brunei with the objective of answering the following questions. How do people born into a Chinese-Malay family define their identity? How does the state classify them in terms of 'race'? How do they negotiate their biracial and hybrid identity? What are the forces that influence the cultural practices of Chinese-Malays in Brunei? What kind of challenges do they face while growing up living in a liminal space? The chapter begins with a conceptual discussion on notions of identity, assimilation and hybridity in the context of Brunei. After describing the research methodology, we discuss the identity conundrum of Chinese-Malays with regard to how they respond to state classification and how they articulate their hyphenated identity. The last two sections consider the ways in which our informants negotiate their Chinese-Malay cultural practices vis-à-vis assimilation policies of the state and the challenges they face growing up in the liminal space of biracialism.

[1] 'Marriage between Muslims and [non-Muslims] is not permitted, and non-Muslims must convert to Islam if they wish to marry a Muslim' (US Department of State 2006). This is similar to the case of Malaysia where it is noted that '[i]f one of the spouses in an intercultural marriage in Malaysia is Muslim, therefore, the other non-Muslim spouse is expected to convert to Islam in order to legalize the marriage, as marriage between a Muslim and a Non-Muslim is forbidden under the Islamic Family Law Act of 1984' (Tan et al. 2008: 41). Furthermore, most interracial couples in Malaysia also adhere to the dominant Malay Muslim culture. '[C]ultural elements from [a] non-Malay spouse [can be] integrated … into their family's cultural practice, provided that the elements [do] not conflict with Islamic teachings' (Pue and Nidzam 2013: 271).

13.2 Conceptualising Identity, Assimilation and Hybridity

In the late modern world, individuals have multiple identities that they can choose to perform according to different situations. For Michel Foucault (1987), identity is a discourse, subject to power relations and unending constructs. Identity can never be fixed; it is always being negotiated and must not be essentialised as it is the subject of the unceasing 'play' of history, culture and power (Hall 1993). Referring to the context of Borneo, King (2013: 19) argues that a long history of cultural interactions and exchanges among different ethnic groups has resulted in what Chua Beng Huat (1995: 1) calls 'cultural hybridisation and syncretism'. However, in constructing national identities, politically dominant groups, powerholders or the state have invariably imposed on others 'their notions of identity and what that identity from a national perspective comprises' (King 2017: 181). This is evident in the case of the MIB ideology in Brunei, which the state uses to maintain legitimacy and to promote cultural assimilation.

Zygmunt Bauman (1997: 47, emphasis in original) describes assimilation as a process that seeks to make the different like oneself through 'annihilating the strangers by *devouring* them and then metabolically transforming them into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own'. Cultural assimilation forces the 'outsiders' (often minorities) to give up their cultural identity and be absorbed into the culture of the majority. In fact, the ideology of monocultural assimilation was the dominant discourse in the West before the policy of multiculturalism was introduced in the 1960s, which fundamentally shifted the ways that identity is constructed within Western modernity (Agger 1998).

As Brunei has never adopted a multicultural policy, the state promotes an assimilation agenda by conflating Bruneian identity with MIB. However, Hannah Ho (2019: 148) argues that the 'exclusive, fixed, and cohesive narrative of Malayness' propounded by MIB does not correspond to the social reality in Brunei where 'an inclusive, changing, and hybrid discourse of Malayness' is practised by most Malay Bruneians. Hence, it can be argued that in Brunei, assimilation does not only apply to non-Malay minorities but also to the Malays who 'endorse an inclusive idea of Malayness (where [being] Malay is divorced from being Muslim)' or who embrace 'a hybrid notion of Malayness' like some of their counterparts in Singapore, Indonesia and, to some extent, Malaysia (ibid.).

The advent of globalisation and the proliferation of intermarriage have given rise to new hyphenated, diasporic and syncretic forms of identity that can be referred to as hybridity. The concept of hybridity is inseparable from the structures and patterns of power and resistance that occurred after colonialism (Bhatia 2011). In the past, the term 'hybrid' or 'hybridity' was often associated with being 'impure', 'racially contaminated' and genetically 'deviant' in social evolution theory (Ang 2001). Hence, hybridity is an 'anti-thesis' to identity as it challenges the idea of an essentialist identity and blurs boundaries demarcated by cultural gatekeepers (Hoon 2017). For instance, Giok Hun Pue and Nidzam Sulaiman's (2013: 274) study of

interracial marriages in Malaysia shows that their children were often not accepted as members of an ethnic group by fellow members because they were perceived to be 'not "pure" enough in terms of physical appearance or cultural practices'.

While cultural purists might consider hybridity as a loss of one's identity, we argue that it can be a platform to create new opportunities and permutations for the existing identities. In some societies, hybridity has led to the emergence of new communities and even new ethnic groups. A case in point would be the Peranakan community in Southeast Asia, formed as a result of intermarriage between early Chinese migrants and the local Malay population. This community can be described as 'a "rare and beautiful blend" of two dominant cultures—Malay and Chinese—with some elements from Javanese, Batak, Siamese and European … cultures' (Lee 2008: 163). The Peranakans can be distinguished by their spoken language (Baba Malay) and unique customs, mainly derived from Chinese culture, and their fusion cuisine that features a combination of Malay and Chinese food. Using the concept of hybridity, this study endeavours to demonstrate the ways in which culture 'can take many forms and [variations], including the borrowing of words and the adoption of social practices and beliefs, and the adaptation of dress and food' (ibid.: 162).

Hybridity is sometimes seen as 'a rhetoric of emancipation, optimism, and celebration' (Bhatia 2011: 405). As globalisation indulges in the celebration of diversity, some people have mistakenly assumed that society can readily accept differences without any struggle. Jacqueline Lo (2000) refers to such uncritical celebration of diversity as 'happy hybridity'. She maintains that as a highly politicised process of negotiation, interrogation and contestation between cultures, hybridity is never happy. Cultural translation always involves conflict and tension. Therefore, hybridity is constantly in the process of negotiation and should not be uncritically assumed to be an antidote to the fragmentation of the society.

Furthermore, there may not always be equal representation of cultures in the process of hybridity. The predisposing influence of majority incumbency means that the dominant culture will always have privilege over minority cultures in a society. In the case of the present study, this is exemplified by the fact that most Chinese-Malay families privilege Malay cultural practices because of their status as the prevailing dominant culture in the country. Therefore, some elements of the Chinese culture must be altered to be compatible with Malay Muslim culture or might eventually disappear especially if they go against the religious teachings in Islam. The process of cultural negotiation is the central focus of this chapter.

13.3 Methodological Approach

This study deploys a qualitative approach of autoethnography and in-depth interviews. The data was collected by the second author who is a female Bruneian with a Malay-Chinese background. Referring to the notion of 'autobiographical ethnography', the researcher occasionally inserts her own personal and subjective interpretation based on her own identity into the research process. The aim, however, is not

to emphasise her own experience per se, but to gain a better understanding of the community through the prism of the researcher's experience (Chang 2016). Although the second author identifies herself culturally as a Malay, the state has officially classified her as a Chinese on her identification card, which reflects her father's race. Upon marrying her Malay mother, her father converted to Islam, and gradually left behind some of his Chinese cultural practices in order to embrace the Malay culture. Consequently, the second author was raised in a predominantly Malay culture. She attended an English–Malay school, speaks the Malay language with family and friends, and celebrates Malay Muslim events. Nonetheless, her father still identifies culturally as Chinese and has been preserving some Chinese practices as long as they do not contradict the Islamic faith. Even if her cultural affinity is Malay, the second author sometimes identifies herself as Chinese depending on the occasion and depending on the person she is interacting with. Her bicultural upbringing allows her to reflexively empathise with the Chinese-Malay informants and adds another layer of insights into the complex experience of hybridity among mixed-marriage informants. In order to prevent personal bias and subjectivity in affecting the validity of the data collected for the research, the researcher exercised a high level of reflexivity and distancing when collecting and analysing the data (Salzman 2002).

Apart from the autoethnographic approach, this study also involved primary data collection, which included semiformal, open-ended and face-to-face interview sessions with 15 informants between the ages of 19 and 30 years in Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital city of Brunei. The informants came from a Chinese-Malay interracial background: eight of them are classified as Chinese in their identification cards while the remaining seven informants are classified as Malay. Eleven out of 15 informants were college and university students, one was an in-service student and three were working professionals. The interview sessions were carried out in January to March 2018 using a digital voice recorder. The second author, who conducted the interviews, was flexible with the language used in the interviews, based on the preference of the informants. The interlocutors responded in Malay, English or a mixture of both languages, as well as a bit of Mandarin. Most of the informants code-switched between English and Malay while Mandarin was only used when they were asked to give examples of what Chinese words they had used in their daily conversations at home and in public. To protect the anonymity of the informants, all the names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

This research uses two different kinds of sampling methods: purposive and snowball sampling. Informants are chosen for purposive sampling due to their lived experience and bicultural knowledge (Bernard 2002; Seidler 1974). Snowball sampling, on the other hand, refers to a technique of gathering informants through personal recommendation from individual informants' social networks (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Both samplings use the following qualifications and criteria to identify key informants (Allen 1971): (1) the informants need to have a Chinese-Malay background; (2) either of the parents is a Chinese Muslim convert; (3) one of the parents is a Bruneian citizen, permanent resident or has lived in Brunei for at least 10 years; and (4) the family of the informants observes at least some Chinese and Malay cultural practices such as Chinese New Year or Hari Raya (Eid Aidilfitri).

13.4 Situating the Identity of the Chinese-Malays in Brunei

The identity conundrum of the descendants of interracial marriages is a complex issue especially when the state uses racial classification in its promulgation of 'national identity' irrespective of the individual's behavioural choice. Like Singapore and Malaysia, Brunei practises a patrilineal system in its racial policy, which means that children automatically inherit their father's race. To be specific, when a child is born from a Malay father and a Chinese mother, the child is officially classified as a Malay in the mandatory 'race' (*bangsa*) category on their official documents such as identification card, birth certificate and passport (Trigger and Siti Norkhalbi 2011). However, the social and cultural identification of these mixed-race children may or may not reflect what is recorded on their official documents. Cognisant of such limitations, the Singapore government has tried to address this issue in 2010 by allowing a 'double-barrelled' race option for mixed children so that they can register both races (such as Chinese-Malay or Indian-Eurasian) in their identity card (Kor 2010). This is possible for Singapore due to its official policy of multiracialism that aims to promote an inclusive society, which is fundamentally different from Brunei's national MIB philosophy.[2]

In this study, we found that nine out of 15 informants associated themselves with the hyphenated Chinese-Malay identity instead of identifying with or privileging one race over the other. All of these nine informants thought that the monocultural racial category imposed on them by the state was too limiting as it does not reflect their biracial parentage and does not allow the individual to decide their own racial identification. One particular informant stated during the interview:

> I tend to identify myself as a Chinese-Malay or vice versa because I believe that I should embrace both of my parents' ethnicities out of respect, not only to them but also to my ancestors. This is important for me because my identity is a reminder of where I came from, which should not be forgotten. (Haqimah, 27 years old, 26 January 2018)

Nevertheless, there were a few informants who preferred to identify themselves with one racial identity only. For example, two informants wanted to be identified only as Chinese while the other four preferred to be identified only as Malay. Ironically, two of the four informants who preferred to be identified as Malay are racially stated as Chinese in their identity card.

Welda, a 22-year-old student currently studying in Britain, was back in Brunei for a winter break in January 2018. She narrated her racial background in detail:

> My father was adopted by a Malay Muslim family since he was a baby. However, everything on his documents states his race as Chinese only. So technically, he is an ethnic Chinese with a purely Malay cultural background. My mother on the other hand is a Malay-Chinese as my maternal grandmother is a pure Chinese while her husband is a pure Malay. Therefore, that

[2] Nonetheless, mixed-raced children (or their parents) in Singapore are still required to nominate a 'dominant' race so that race-based policies can continue to be applied to this population. This shows that while the new system allows for more flexibility for mixed-race individuals to choose their cultural identification, it does very little to change the racial regime Singapore inherited from the British colonial administration.

> makes my siblings and I biologically … three-quarters Chinese and a quarter Malay. Despite the fact that our appearances look more towards … Chinese …, we do not associate ourselves as [Chinese]. In addition, due to some family complications, we have cut off the connections with our Chinese side of the family and have entirely devoted ourselves as Malay Muslims. (Welda, 22 years old, 26 January 2018)

A similar narrative was recounted by Anna:

> My father's background is quite complicated, he is racially stated as a Chinese Hokkien in his identification certificates and documents. However, at the age of 15, he was adopted by an Arabic-Malay family and therefore he grew up practising the Malay Muslim culture and I believe that he has very much forgotten about his past identity as a Chinese because he does not really tell us anything about it. (Anna, 22 years old, 2 March 2018)

The accounts above show that the racial identity stated in official documentation may not accurately reflect the cultural identity of the informants, especially in cases of adoption or for those who are fostered and brought up in a different cultural surrounding from their biological origins.

Identity can also be circumstantial depending on when and how an individual chooses to perform different facades of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender and other identities (Cohen and Kennedy 2013). Such choices are sometimes contingent on instrumental needs at a particular moment. As Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun (2001: 16) explain:

> At one moment, the person may want to temporarily submerge [their identity] in favour of a façade closer to and, therefore, more readily identifiable with his interactant. At another moment, he [*sic*] may even decide to be deliberately expressive of his ethnicity when emblematic usage of language, clothing, culture and customs of his own ethnic group is judged to favour him in the transaction.

In the same vein, our informants expressed their situational identity through language, appearance, dress code and behaviour depending on who they came into contact with, that is, either their Chinese or Malay group of family and friends as revealed in the following excerpts:

> When I was in [Catholic] secondary school at St George, the school was filled with different people who came from different racial groups: there were the Malays, Chinese, Indians as well as other different races. Most of the time, these races did not really try to mingle with each other and were very exclusive unless you were one of them. However, due to my mixed-race background I was able to interact not only with the Malay group but also the Chinese group in that school. I think that in a way I tried to adapt myself depending on the different groups I am with. For example, when I was with the Chinese group, I would usually speak in Mandarin. Most of the time my Chinese accent would just automatically change [to an English mode] when I was speaking in English. Then when I was with the Malays, I would just naturally speak and interact with them in the Malay language. (Naim, 30 years old, 10 February 2018)

> My identity can be situational especially in terms of how I dress myself. [My choice of dress] usually depends on who I am going to be with. My family in Brunei are mostly the Malay side, therefore here I would have to cover myself … with a *hijab* or at least cover my body parts appropriately. However, when I am in Indonesia with my Chinese family, I will not have to cover myself to that extent as they are very open-minded, so I am able to wear whatever dresses or skirts I want. (Azura, 22 years old, 10 March 2018)

Identities are constructed through difference—it is only through a relation to the 'Other', a relation to what is not and to what is lacking, that identity can be constructed (Hoon 2008). Some informants had expressed the dialogical aspect of their identity when they were outside of the country interacting with the Other, and when negotiating their own Otherness away from home as the following informants revealed:

> I believe that my identity is more situational when I am overseas. For instance, I used to study in Australia for my bachelor's degree and in the UK for my master's. I was able to change my identity depending on the group I was with at that time. When I was in Australia, people there were more exposed to the Malay racial groups hence I did not have to explain myself what the Malay culture is. However, when I was in the UK, the people there lacked knowledge about the Malays and most of the time they would identify me as Chinese due to my Chinese-like features. It was quite bothersome to have to explain myself to people about myself and so I would just admit to them that yes, I was in fact Chinese. (Sawfi, 28 years old, 1 February 2018)

> Despite the fact that I do not associate myself with anything that has to do with Chinese in terms of identity or culture, I do believe that my identity has become situational when I am overseas. I think that this is mainly due to my strong racial [read: Chinese] appearance. I say this because I am currently studying in Essex, United Kingdom. People often mistook me as a Chinese person and most of the time I would just say that I was Chinese. I personally chose to use my Chinese racial card for my own personal security due to the whole political issue that is going on right now with Islamophobia [in Europe]. (Welda, 22 years old, 26 January 2018)

These two excerpts demonstrate that identity can be at play not only based on the corresponding Other but also due to identity markers such as 'race', cultural behaviour and appearance. For these informants, their biracial background renders them a 'Chinese look', which they could strategically use either to prevent endless questions about their identity or to avoid being identified as a Muslim when such identification was deemed unsafe in places where Islamophobia is prevalent. Sultana Choudhry (2010) argues that multiracial individuals can choose to use their different racial identities depending on the benefits given to them according to the situation (see also Reddy 2019). The interviews show that our informants were not totally disempowered by their mixed racial background; instead, they regularly exercised agency by tactically using their multiple identities to their advantage (Rocha 2011).

13.5 Negotiating Chinese-Malay Cultural Practices

Cultural assimilation is a social reality for the Chinese-Malays in Brunei as almost all our informants practise Malay cultural customs and traditions. Unlike the Straits-born Chinese-Malays in colonial Singapore, Malaysia or Indonesia, also known as Peranakan, who had historically developed a distinct hybrid culture famously characterised by the creole Malay language, Nyonya cuisine, *kebaya* dresses, beaded footwear and exquisite ornaments (Suryadinata 2010), the Chinese-Malays in Brunei have never developed such a culture. In the absence of historical data on intermarriage

between Chinese and Malays in Brunei, we can only speculate that the population of such intermarriages might be too small for them to have developed a separate community. Apart from the palpable social, political and geographical differences between the Peranakans in the Malay Archipelago and the Chinese-Malays in Brunei, the other main distinguishing factor is religion: while most Peranakans are Christian, Chinese-Malays in Brunei have mostly converted to Islam and subsequently been absorbed into the majority Malay community.

This section discusses the nuanced incorporation and negotiation of cultural elements from both the Chinese and Malay practices by Chinese-Malays in Brunei in their everyday lives, ranging from language, cultural traditions and beliefs to their choice of cuisine. The first element under consideration is language. Six out of the 15 informants can speak both Mandarin and Malay. Another six are able to understand Mandarin but unable to speak it fluently, and the remaining three have no knowledge of Mandarin at all. Siti Hamin Stapa and Nurul Nadiah Begum Sahabudin Khan (2016) argue that the linguistic practice of code-switching in the home domain is a common phenomenon among mixed Malay-Chinese families in Malaysia. This resonates with our informants who can speak and understand Mandarin as they frequently borrow words from either Malay or Chinese to express themselves when they are unable to find the right word in one language. One informant, Dalina, mentioned that she grew up speaking three different languages at home: Hokkien, Malay and English, and was unaware of the differences among these languages:

> I am used to calling my brother using the Hokkien term '*ah hia*'. I have never called him *abang* [Malay for 'brother'] this entire time, and so I have always thought that was how you were supposed to address your brother. Even when I was a kid, every time I wanted to go to the toilet my mom would always say 'You need to go *pang sai*?' [Hokkien for 'take a dump'], and I remember getting into trouble in school for using the phrase as it is considered unrefined. I think because of the interchange among English, Malay and Chinese in my family made us believe that they are the terms we used are normal because we have integrated them into our everyday vocabulary without knowing. (Dalina, 23 years old, 5 February 2018)

As a means of communication, language is an important tool for an individual to traverse from one culture to another (Schumann 1986). Our study finds that those informants who can speak both Chinese and Malay tend to speak a certain language to fit themselves into one particular group as they perform situational identity. This is revealed by the following informant:

> I would talk in Malay when I am with my Malay friends or with my Malay family from my mother side. Usually in school I am always with my Chinese friends and therefore for us to communicate expressively, I would speak in Mandarin or Hokkien with them. (Lyle, 22 years old, 26 February 2018)

Panos Bardis (1979) argues that when a group experiences two kinds of culture, there is a tendency that the group will privilege the dominant culture in the society while the minority culture plays a lesser role. This is exemplified by our informants who have assimilated into the Brunei Malay culture as a result of their Chinese parent having to '*masuk Islam*' and '*masuk Melayu*', which means that after converting to

Islam they were expected to completely assimilate themselves into the Malay Muslim identity.[3] According to Ho, within the MIB national framework, Islamic conversion can be seen as a process of interpellation for one to enter into Malay identity. She asserts, 'In a marriage between a Muslim man and non-Muslim woman, a *shahadah* ("declaration") of intent to assume a Muslim identity involves the male granting his female bride entry into Malayness by hailing this newly converted recipient into the Malay society in the MIB nation' (Ho 2019: 150).

When non-Malays convert to Islam, they are expected to accept the social customs and dress code of the Malay Muslims. As Osman Chuah Abdullah and Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri (2008: 42) observe, 'One of the expectations of someone embracing Islam is *masuk Melayu*, i.e., becoming Malay or synonymous of being Muslim. Thus, embracing Islam would mean entering the "Malay way" … they are usually branded as entering the "Malayhood"'. Here, identity is seen as a zero-sum game: one can *either* be Chinese (or Iban, Filipino, Indian or any other ethnic identity) *or* Malay, but not both (see also Hoon 2006). This is illustrated in the case of our informant below:

> My family and I are more accustomed to our Malay culture in the way we speak, our Islamic dress code, our food and probably even how we behave. This is because my Chinese mother was brought up in a very Malay environment as she had to live with her sister and Malay brother-in-law. Thus, she has pretty much brought all of us up as Malay rather than Chinese. I also think that most of my Chinese extended families such as my grandparents and other relatives have absorbed and adapted to the Malay surroundings in Brunei because most of them have either converted to Islam for marriage or associated themselves with the Malay people. Therefore, I do think that there has been a shift in almost all my family members' identity into becoming Malay. (Hadirah, 30 years old, 28 February 2018)

Our informants who only identify as Malay did not find a need to learn the Chinese language or to preserve Chinese culture:

> I do not think it matters if you are not able to speak Chinese in Brunei because as a Malay living in Brunei, we are often told to prioritise our philosophy of speaking the Malay language [*utamakan bahasa Melayu*] and so I think the ability to speak in Chinese would be the least of my concerns. (Haalib, 23 years old, 20 January 2018)

> I came from a background where we do not practise any of the Chinese cultural values because my parents are devoted Muslims and therefore anything that has to do with the Chinese culture is not being taught and is disregarded to us since we were at a young age and therefore I know no knowledge of it. (Welda, 22 years old, 26 January 2018)

Nevertheless, the concepts of *masuk Islam* and *masuk Melayu* can be contested. For some, embracing Islam as their religion does not automatically make them Malay (Pue and Nidzam 2013: 273). Gerhard Hoffstaedter (2011) argues that Islam is a

[3] '*Masuk Islam*' refers to an individual converting from their previous religious belief to Islam when the new convert proclaims the *shahadah* which expresses the belief that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. This process may take place in a mosque, a Muslim community centre or other places deemed appropriate by the religious authorities. The converted individual is expected to establish a new relationship with the Islamic *ummah* or Muslim community, which surpasses his or her national, racial, familial, linguistic and cultural identities (Nuradli Ridzwan Shah et al. 2016).

universal religion that is not tied to any particular ethnic culture, nor is it exclusively owned by the Malays. Similarly, Hew Wai Weng (2013) challenges the idea that embracing Islam requires one to abandon their Chineseness and to become Malay, as he demonstrates that Chinese culture and Islam are compatible. In his book, *Chinese ways of being Muslim: Negotiating ethnicity and religiosity in Indonesia*, Hew (2018: 270) emphasises that 'one can be "more Islamic, but no less Chinese", as well as "more Chinese, but no less Indonesian"' to show that the marriage between Islamic identity and Chineseness is not a zero-sum game. However, the long history of fusing Malay Muslim identity and culture in Southeast Asia means that it is not always possible to separate the two. For instance, an informant revealed that her family privileges Islamic culture over Malay culture but has not been clear on the difference between the two:

> My parents see Islamic teaching and culture as a priority for our upbringing and therefore in my family we try not to go overboard or cross any boundaries when practising the Malay culture. We tend to only practise the Islamic customs such as Ramadan or Eid which are already being incorporated into the Malay culture in Brunei. (Welda, 22 years old, 26 January 2018)

There has been an Arabisation of Islam in Asia in the past few decades, including an increasing trend towards naming children with Arabised names (Ghoshal 2010). This trend is also observed in Brunei where Islamic names are increasingly preferred among Malays over traditional Malay names. Two of our informants, whose parents had not given them Islamic names, struggled to explain to others about their names:

> One very common problem that we always experience however would have something to do with my name, as you can tell, mine is more like a Chinese name rather than the common Islamic name that Malays have. These questions would usually come from the Malays though as some would ask why I have such a name and why not pick out a Malay or Islamic name. I don't exactly know how to respond to this type of questions since, yeah, my parents or perhaps my grandparents were the ones who actually gave me the name. (Maylin, 24 years old, 14 January 2018)

> I do face some problems like why my parents decided to give me a rather English name with a Chinese surname instead of having an Islamic Malay name, and people often question me about that. (Anna, 22 years old, 2 March 2018)

Intermarriage between Chinese and Malays can be challenging in terms of their (in)compatibility 'with regard to religion, ethnic identity and cultural traditions. Both ethnic groups have very strong family traditions and kinship ties', and as well as religious practices and cultural heritage to preserve (Tan et al. 2008: 40). Our study on the Chinese-Malays in Brunei shows that the negotiation between Islamic religion and Chinese cultural practices is not an easy task. The main foundation of Chinese culture is foregrounded by an amalgamation of three religions: Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism (Fan 2000: 4). The practice of some Chinese cultural elements, especially those that have originated from these religions, is deemed impermissible in Islam. Hence it is not surprising that the families of some of our informants are concerned that the practice of Chinese culture might compromise their Muslim faith or undermine the dominant Malay culture in Brunei.

However, all cultures are arguably influenced by religions and vice versa, and a clear-cut differentiation between the culture and religion is not only impossible but also unrealistic (Roy 2010). For example, while Chinese New Year is widely practised as a cultural festival, various practices in the celebration might have been adapted from elements of Chinese folk religions or superstitious beliefs and could be seen as contrary to the teachings of Islam. Hence, individual actors practise agency by going through a process of negotiation and discretion when they pick and choose whether to discard or retain certain cultural practices (see Hoon 2009; Hew 2018). In his study of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, Hew (2018) argues that contestations on what is considered halal (permissible) or haram (prohibited) according to Islamic principles can be expected in any process of religious hybridisation because textual interpretations, social conditions and everyday practices do not always meet in harmony. In the case of the Chinese-Malays in Brunei, while cultural negotiation is inevitable, practices that might constitute idol worship or what is known as *syirik* in Islam are non-negotiable and must be avoided at all costs.

It has been argued that sometimes Muslims engage in non-Islamic cultural activities with the intention of 'Islamising' the nonbelievers or to carry out *dakwah* (Islamic outreach) through a cultural approach—a familiar method in the spread of Islam in Java (Daniels 2009; Hew 2018). This was the case with some of our informants, who stated that rather than subscribing to the symbolic meanings behind Chinese cultural practices they would instead practise the culture with a different intention (*niat*):

> Yes, my cultural practice and my religion can be quite debatable. However, for me, I understand my religion more because of my Chinese culture. I do not agree with, from a practical standpoint, about the whole incense burning and such, but whenever I hear a big issue about it, I would often try to remember my own intention [*niat*] about what I am doing and who I am doing it for. The action is one thing, but the intention is what is important. Just because I burn incense, does that mean I am not a worthy Muslim? I can counter that by saying that I am doing it as a sign of respect to my grandfather and my ancestors rather than praying to Buddha or any other gods, and therefore I do not see any problem with it. (Zaim, 23 years old, 13 February 2018)

Another informant believed that Chinese cultural practices do not go against the teachings of Islam, especially those values that focus on an individual's moral behaviour and ethics or on human interactions such as building social relationships with other people:

> To be honest, I think that Chinese culture is more towards teaching about the ethics of the individual rather than on religion-based teachings as compared to the Malay culture, which has incorporated the practice of Islamic teachings in their culture. Therefore, I do not think that practising Chinese culture goes against our religion but rather it goes along with Islam instead. (Haalib, 23 years old, 20 January 2018)

Yet another informant saw the value in diversity relating to her own background in a family with members who practise different religions and celebrate different festivals:

> I believe the key to making things work is simply to keep an open mind about everything regardless of our religious and cultural differences. My family has a mix of Malay Muslims,

> Chinese Buddhists and also Dusun Christians. We often practise different cultural traditions such as Eid, Christmas and Chinese New Year. So I think that it is crucial for us to be able to respect each other's culture and tradition without having any conflict due to our differences and this enables us to be able to build our [relationships] with families and friends. (Maylin, 24 years old, 14 January 2018)

Culture consists of traditions, values and beliefs that are developed and associated with a group of people, inherited and perpetuated by subsequent generations, providing people a sense of identity and belonging (Brumann 1999). Herbert Gans (1979) argues that traditional ethnic cultures may not be relevant to the third (or more) generation who lack experiential knowledge and ties with their cultural roots. Consequently, the younger generation sometimes 'resort to the use of ethnic symbols'—cultural practices abstracted from the older ethnic culture—to try to preserve their identity and reconnect with an imagined past (ibid.: 1).

Some of our informants regarded the preservation of Chinese-Malay cultural identity as an important practice to ensure they did not forget their roots. They mentioned how their parents or grandparents would teach and remind them of their cultural values and traditions even if they were not often practised. Our interviews reveal that it was not uncommon for our informants to incorporate some Chinese cultural practices into their everyday lives. For example, some parents would celebrate our informants' birthdays with the consumption of red eggs and noodles, which symbolise prosperity and longevity in Chinese culture. Some informants still celebrate Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn and Winter Solstice. For instance, one informant noted:

> Despite the fact that some of the Chinese festivals are restricted in Brunei, we do celebrate them in private and usually at my grandmother's house. She is still a Chinese Buddhist. Therefore, most of the time we practise these traditions with her because of her strong beliefs. (Maylin, 24 years old, 14 January 2018)

As most Chinese-Malays have assimilated into the Malay cultural and religious lifestyle, some of their parents fear that their Chinese cultural heritage might fade or completely disappear, as expressed by our informant:

> I think he [father] wants to preserve the Chinese culture in our family and he probably wants us to acknowledge that we are Chinese as part of our identity, and not just Malay. The reason is probably because he doesn't want his Chinese identity to fade. Just because he is married to a Malay does not mean that he and his children or the future [generations] of his family must forget their roots. (Aida, 21 years old, 23 January 2018)

13.6 Between and Betwixt: The Challenges of Living in a Liminal Space

The concept of liminality refers to the state of 'in between-ness' (or tabula rasa) during a rite of passage where people are neither here nor there (Turner 1969). Homi K. Bhabha (1994) further develops the notion to encapsulate the late-modern condition of a cultural hybrid's uncomfortable business of inhabiting interstitial social spaces,

belonging to both and neither. The concept of hybridity challenges one's idea that identity is an essence that is fixed and unchangeable. Hybridity blurs the boundaries between people and makes space for identity to multiply, where the individuals can be in between two or more groups according to the given situation (ibid.). This case study of Chinese-Malays provides us with insights into the ways in which this community straddles and negotiates differences in their two cultural worlds.

While cultural purists might argue that hybridity inevitably compromises the integrity of an identity, it can also be argued that hybridity can '[empower] existing identities through the opening of new possibilities' (Laclau 1996: 65). However, it must be recognised that these new possibilities are not detached from the constraints of existing boundaries. When asked about the benefits of being biracial, our informants answered enthusiastically:

> Being Chinese-Malay means that we get to understand and experience not only one but two cultures together and see how the different values from both cultures can blend in our everyday lives. I get to celebrate two cultural events such as Chinese New Year and Hari Raya in a year. (Amzi, 19 years old, 5 March 2018)

> It is quite unique to be able to experience different cultures when other people are only able to experience one. I get to speak both Malay and Chinese and so I can blend in with the different racial groups. As you know the Chinese and Malay groups here in Brunei do not exactly like to mix with each other, but I get to experience the best of both worlds. (Malia, 19 years old, 9 February 2018)

> My family tends to incorporate the teachings of both Malay and Chinese together and [makes] it into something that we practise every day. (Aida, 21 years old, 23 January 2018)

However, such empowerment should not be taken for granted. There are moments when individuals with mixed heritage feel non-belonging to and non-acceptance by either culture, characterised by the liminal state of in-betweenness where they are neither here nor there. Even though these Chinese-Malays can fit into the two racial groups separately, they are constantly being reminded of their differences. These sentiments were expressed by two of our informants:

> Actually, I do not feel as if I belong to any side of my racial groups. When I am with my Malay cousins, I believe that my Chinese side becomes more prominent. I often feel as if I am very different from them not only based on my obvious appearance of having fairer skin than them or from how I tend to code-switch between English and Malay and even to how I behave, and think is very different from them. Yet, when I am with my Chinese family, it is also the same case. I do not belong just for the fact that I am unable to speak the language itself which [makes] me distant from them. (Dalina, 23 years old, 5 February 2018)

> I cannot speak or understand any Chinese or its dialects. I am always being joked around among my friends and relatives as this Chinese who cannot speak Chinese despite only being half the race. (Haqimah, 27 years old, 26 January 2018)

Hybridity can be empowering when one is able to traverse two or more cultural worlds. However, it can also be disempowering when 'authenticity' is invoked, especially when authentication is based on essentialist characteristics defined and guarded by cultural gatekeepers (Hoon 2017).

It is argued that among the biggest challenges faced by the offspring of mixed-race families are racial discrimination and stereotypes (Cheboud and Downing 2003). Interestingly, in this study, we found that most of the stereotypes of Chinese-Malays are targeted to either one of their racial groups' characteristics (that is, Chinese or Malay) rather than to Chinese-Malay as a category, perhaps because such a category does not officially exist. This is evident in the informants' responses on how they were often judged by others based on either of the races. While there were a few stereotypes made about their Malay characteristics, most of them targeted their Chinese identity. For example:

> I own an online business shop that sells *hijab*, so most of the time my friends would comment that I am a 'typical Chinese' that does business. They would always assume that just because I am half-Chinese it automatically means that I am money-minded and stingy [*karit*]. (Aida, 21 years old, 23 January 2018)

> I think one of the most typical stereotypes I [got], especially in high school, was about Chinese being smarter and more determined in their studies than other races. I grew up with straight As during high school and so people would associate my intelligence with my Chinese blood. However, I believe that it had nothing to do with my genes because it was my mother [Chinese] who would constantly push me to be good academically, she was the one who was trying to fill in the stereotypes of us having to be smart. (Dalina, 23 years old, 5 February 2018)

> When I was studying in Chung Hwa [Chinese private school], there weren't really that many Malay students enrolled in a Chinese school so Malay students would normally hang out together in a group. We would be called the '*Ma lai ren*' which translates to Malay people. Chinese people see Malays as those who are less intelligent especially when compared to them. (Lyle, 22 years old, 26 January 2018)

Geetha Reddy and Ilka Gleibs (2019) argue that colonialism is not a thing of the past; it continues to influence our contemporary ways of being in both physical heritage and in our minds and psyche. Racial stereotypes like 'greedy Chinese' and 'lazy Malays' have a long history in the Malay Archipelago since the colonial era when the population was racially segregated by a divide-and-rule policy. Such segregation had led to the formation of prejudice and stereotypes constructed based on racial characteristics which persist until the present (Hirschman 1986; Kuntjara and Hoon 2020). Sometimes such stereotypes can be internalised and reproduced by the informants themselves, functioning as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Pue and Nidzam 2013; Tan 2012). This is exemplified in Dalina's interview when she claimed, 'I do have Malay traits as well, I can be lazy when I want to be'—invoking the 'lazy Malay' stereotype in a bid to self-essentialise. Stereotypes are unavoidable as they serve as part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. They perpetuate a needed sense of difference between the Self and the Other and establish an imaginary boundary between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', and 'us' and 'them' (Hall 1997: 258). In the case of the Chinese-Malay informants, the racial stereotypes that they experienced based on one of their racial heritages highlight the endless struggles of a biracial subject in navigating the politics of belonging and exclusion, constantly trapped in the liminal space of in-betweenness and Otherness.

13.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a nuanced analysis of the cultural identity of Chinese-Malays in contemporary Brunei beyond the state-imposed racial label on their official documents. It has discussed the identity conundrum, including some of the challenges faced by our biracial informants, especially in their response to the restrictive official racial classification and contradictions in their hyphenated identity. The expressions and articulations of their identity are inevitably influenced by the state and institutional forces that define racial boundaries and bestow privilege to the dominant culture over other minorities, specifically the all-encompassing national philosophy of MIB. Amid the forces of assimilation promulgated by MIB and other state policies, we find that the notions of *masuk Islam* and *masuk Melayu* have characterised the experience of our informants whose families have opted to completely assimilate into the dominant Brunei Malay Muslim culture.

On the other hand, those who live in the liminal space of hybridity continue to negotiate the boundaries of difference between the two cultures which they inhabit. For them, their families attempt to preserve their Chineseness through the maintenance of certain ethnic symbols that do not contradict the teachings of Islam. Perhaps due to their relatively small population or due to the degree of assimilatory influence, or both, the Chinese-Malay community in Brunei has not developed a distinct hybrid identity like their Peranakan counterparts in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Nonetheless, the experience of in-betweenness is a shared feature in most biracial subjects. The interstitial cultural space that these subjects occupy can be empowering and disempowering at the same time depending on the power relations that define the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, belonging and non-belonging. It is hoped that this chapter can provide a basis for a more in-depth and nuanced study to be conducted, especially on the power dynamics that define identity politics within this understudied community.

References

Abdul Aziz Umar, Begawan Pehin Udana Hj Awang. 1992. Melayu Islam Beraja sebagai falsafah negara Brunei Darussalam [Malay Islamic monarchy reigns as the philosophy of Brunei Darussalam]. In *Sumbangsih UBD: Esei-esei mengenai negara Brunei Darussalam* [UBD contributions: Essays on Brunei Darussalam], ed. Hj Abu Bakar bin Hj Apong, 1–21. Gadong: Akademi Pengajian Brunei, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Agger, Ben. 1998. *Critical social theories: An introduction.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Allen, Harold B. 1971. Principles of informant selection. *American Speech* 46(1/2): 47–51.

Ang, Ien. 2001. *On not speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge.

Atkinson, Rowland, and John Flint. 2001. Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update* 33(1): 1–4.

Bardis, Panos D. 1979. Social interaction and social processes. *Social Science* 54(3): 147–167.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1997. The making and unmaking of strangers. In *Debating cultural hybridity: Multicultural identities and the politics of anti-racism*, ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, 46–57. London: Zed Books.

Bernard, H. Russell. 2002. *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative methods*, 3rd ed. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Bhatia, Sunil. 2011. Lost in translation: Cultural hybridity, acculturation, and human development. *Human Development* 54(6): 400–407.

Brumann, Christoph. 1999. Writing for culture: Why a successful concept should not be discarded. *Current Anthropology* 40(Supp. 1): S1–S27.

Chang, Heewon. 2016. *Autoethnography as method*. London: Routledge.

Cheboud, Elias, and Christine Downing. 2003. Issues for racially diverse families. A Research Project for the Capital Region Race Relations Association, Victoria, Canada. http://www.mixedracestudies.org/?p=11792. Accessed 18 Aug 2020.

Choudhry, Sultana. 2010. *Multifaceted identity of interethnic young people: Chameleon identities*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Chua Beng Huat. 1995. Culture, multiracialism and national identity in Singapore. National University of Singapore: Department of Sociology, Working Paper No. 125.

Chuah, Osman Abdullah, and Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri. 2008. *Muslim converts in Malaysia: The problem of cultural adjustment*. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Cohen, Robin, and Paul Kennedy. 2013. *Global sociology*, 3rd ed. New York: NYU Press.

Daniels, Timothy. 2009. *Islamic spectrum in Java*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Department of Economic Planning and Statistics, Brunei Darussalam. 2021. Population: Latest highlights. Ministry of Finance and Economy, Negara Brunei Darussalam. http://www.deps.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx. Accessed 12 Jun 2021.

Fan, Ying. 2000. A classification of Chinese culture. *Cross Cultural Management* 7(2): 3–10.

Foucault, Michel. 1987. The ethic of the care for the self as a practice of freedom: An interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984. In *The final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, 1–20. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gans, Herbert J. 1979. Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2(1): 1–20.

Ghoshal, Baladas. 2010. Arabization: The changing face of Islam in Asia. *India Quarterly* 66(1): 69–89.

Hall, Stuart. 1993. Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 392–403. London: Pearson.

———. 1997. The spectacle of the 'other'. In *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, 223–279. London: SAGE.

Hew Wai Weng. 2013. Universalising Islam in Malaysia. *Malay Mail*. 23 August.

———. 2018. *Chinese ways of being Muslim: Negotiating ethnicity and religiosity in Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Hirschman, Charles. 1986. The making of race in colonial Malaya: Political economy and racial ideology. *Sociological Forum* 1(2): 330–361.

Ho, Hannah Ming Yit. 2019. Women doing Malayness in Brunei Darussalam. *Southeast Asian Review of English* 56(2): 147–165.

Hoffstaedter, Gerhard. 2011. *Modern Muslim identities: Negotiating religion and ethnicity in Malaysia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Hoon, Chang-Yau. 2006. Assimilation, multiculturalism, hybridity: The dilemmas of Chinese Indonesians in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Asian Ethnicity* 7(2): 149–166.

———. 2008. *Chinese identity in post-Suharto Indonesia: Culture, politics and media*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

———. 2009. More than a cultural celebration: The politics of Chinese New Year in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 3: 90–105.

———. 2017. *Between hybridity and identity: Chineseness as a cultural resource in Indonesia.* Gadong: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Institute of Asian Studies, Working Paper No. 32.

King, Victor T. 1994. What is Brunei society? Reflections on a conceptual and ethnographic issue. *South East Asia Research* 2(2): 176–198.

———. 2013. *Culture and identity: Some Borneo comparisons.* Gadong: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Institute of Asian Studies, Working Paper No. 1.

———. 2017. Identities in Borneo: Constructions and transformations. In *Borneo studies in history, society and culture*, ed. Victor T. King, Zawawi Ibrahim, and Noor Hasharina Hassan, 177–207. Singapore: Springer.

Kor Kian Beng. 2010. Double-barrelled race option for children. *Straits Times.* 13 January: A1, A6.

Kuntjara, Esther, and Chang-Yau Hoon. 2020. Reassessing Chinese Indonesian stereotypes: Two decades after *Reformasi*. *South East Asia Research* 28(2): 199–216.

Laclau, Ernesto. 1996. *Emancipation(s).* New York: Verso.

Lee Su Kim. 2008. The Peranakan Baba Nyonya culture: Resurgence or disappearance? *SARI: Jurnal Alam dan Tamadun Melayu* 26: 161–170.

Lo, Jacqueline. 2000. Beyond happy hybridity: Performing Asian-Australian identities. In *Alter/Asians: Asian-Australian identities in art, media and popular culture*, ed. Ien Ang, Sharon Chalmers, Lisa Law, and Mandy Thomas, 152–168. Sydney: Pluto Press.

Luke, Carmen, and Vicki Carrington. 2000. Race matters. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 21(1): 5–24.

Malai Yunus Malai Yusof. 2013. Pengaruh sosiobudaya dalam pencapaian perniagaan: Orang Melayu dan Cina di negara Brunei Darussalam [Sociocultural influence in business achievements: Malays and Chinese in Brunei Darussalam]. PhD dissertation, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Maxwell, Allen R. 2001. Malay polysemy and political power: Census categories, ethnicity, and citizenship in Brunei Darussalam. *South East Asia Research* 9(2): 173–212.

Nagaraj, Shyamala. 2009. Intermarriage in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies* 46(1): 75–92.

Naimah S. Talib. 2002. A resilient monarchy: The sultanate of Brunei and regime legitimacy in an era of democratic nation-states. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 4(2): 134–147.

Niew Shong Tong. 1995. Chinese society in Brunei: A survey. In *Southeast Asian Chinese: The socio-cultural dimension*, ed. Leo Suryadinata, 78–94. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Nuradli Ridzwan Shah Mohd Dali, Azman Ab. Rahman, Irwan Mohd Subri, Mahazan Abdul Mutalib, Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali, Rose Irnawaty Ibrahim, and Norlina Ismail. 2016. New Muslim converts experience in embracing Islam: An analysis of the pre conversion, conversion and post conversion phases. *The Islamic Quarterly* 60(4): 443–466.

Poole, Peter A. 2009. *Politics and society in Southeast Asia.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Pue, Giok Hun, and Nidzam Sulaiman. 2013. 'Choose one!': Challenges of inter-ethnic marriages in Malaysia. *Asian Social Science* 9(17): 269–278.

Reddy, Geetha. 2019. Fluidity amidst structure: Multi-racial identity constructions across the life course of Malaysians and Singaporeans. *Social Identities* 25(3): 327–344.

———, and Ilka H. Gleibs. 2019. The endurance and contestations of colonial constructions of race among Malaysians and Singaporeans. *Frontiers in Psychology* 10: Article 792.

Rocha, Zarine L. 2011. Multiplicity within singularity: Racial categorization and recognizing 'mixed race' in Singapore. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 30(3): 95–131.

Roy, Olivier. 2010. *Holy ignorance: When religion and culture part ways*, trans. Ros Schwartz. London: Hurst.

Salzman, Philip Carl. 2002. On reflexivity. *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 805–811.

Schumann, John H. 1986. Research on the acculturation model for second language acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 7(5): 379–392.

Seidler, John. 1974. On using informants: A technique for collecting quantitative data and controlling measurement error in organization analysis. *American Sociological Review* 39(6): 816–831.

Siti Hamin Stapa, and Nurul Nadiah Begum Sahabudin Khan. 2016. Functions of code-switching: A case study of a mixed Malay-Chinese family in the home domain. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 24(Suppl.): 181–194.

Suryadinata, Leo, ed. 2010. *Peranakan Chinese in a globalizing Southeast Asia.* Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre and Baba House.

Tan Jo-Pei. 2012. Inter-ethnic and mono-ethnic families: Examining the association of parenting and child emotional and behavioural adjustment. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 20(1): 165–178.

———, Rozumah Baharuddin, Rumaya Juhari, and Steven Eric Krauss. 2008. Socio-demographic characteristics of intercultural marriage: A study of a multi-ethnic community in Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences* 5(4): 30–44.

Tong Chee Kiong, and Chan Kwok Bun. 2001. Rethinking assimilation and ethnicity: The Chinese of Thailand. In *Alternate identities: The Chinese of contemporary Thailand*, ed. Tong Chee Kiong and Chan Kwok Bun, 9–40. Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Trigger, David, and Siti Norkhalbi binti Haji Wahsalfelah. 2011. Indegeneity in society and nature: The ambiguous case of Brunei. *Janang: Jurnal Akademi Pengajian Brunei* 1(12): 74–90.

Turner, Victor. 1969. *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing.

US Department of State. 2006. International Religious Freedom Report 2006. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71334.htm. Accessed 11 June 2022.

Vienne, Marie-Sybille de. 2015. *Brunei: From the age of commerce to the 21st century*, trans. Emilia Lanier. Singapore: NUS Press.

Wardi Wasil. 2019. HM: Make prayer rooms in commercial, public spaces more readily available. *The Scoop.* 3 April. https://thescoop.co/2019/04/03/hm-make-prayer-rooms-in-commercial-public-spaces-more-readily-available/. Accessed 18 Aug 2020.

Chang-Yau Hoon is Associate Professor at the Institute of Asian Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and also Adjunct Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia. Prior to this he was Assistant Professor of Asian Studies and Sing Lun Fellow at Singapore Management University, where he was awarded the SMU Teaching Excellence Award in 2012 and SMU Research Excellence Award in 2014. He specialises in the Chinese diaspora, identity politics, multiculturalism and religious and cultural diversity in contemporary Southeast Asia. He is the author of *Chinese identity in post-Suharto Indonesia: Culture, politics and media* (Sussex Academic Press 2008), and coeditor of *Chinese Indonesians reassessed: History, religion and belonging* (Routledge 2013), *Catalyst for change: Chinese business in Asia* (World Scientific 2014), and *Contesting Chineseness: Ethnicity, identity, and nation in China and Southeast Asia* (Springer 2021).

Nur Shawatriqah Sahrifulhafiz graduated with a BA (Hons) in Sociology-Anthropology, Universiti Brunei Darussalam. She is a graduate student at the Graduate School of International Studies, Sogang University, Seoul, South Korea.