

Zawawi Ibrahim  
Gareth Richards  
Victor T. King *Editors*

# Discourses, Agency and Identity in Malaysia

Critical Perspectives

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	Victor T. King, Gareth Richards, and Zawawi Ibrahim	
<b>Part I Identities in Contestation: Borders, Complexity and Hybridities</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Culture and Identity on the Move: Malaysian Nationhood in Southeast Asia</b> .....	<b>23</b>
	Victor T. King	
<b>3</b>	<b>The Travelling Text: Manuscripts, Print Culture and Translation in the Making of the Malay World</b> .....	<b>59</b>
	Gareth Richards	
<b>4</b>	<b>In Body and Spirit: Redefining Gender Complementarity in Muslim Southeast Asia</b> .....	<b>105</b>
	Wazir Jahan B. Karim	
<b>5</b>	<b>Our People and the Life of Government: The Quest for the Good Life in the Kelabit Highlands at the Edge of Malaysia</b> .....	<b>127</b>
	Valerie Mashman	
<b>6</b>	<b>Positioning Bajau Identities as <i>Bumiputera</i>: Challenges and Potentials of Leveraging Environmental Justice and Espousal of Islam in Sabah, Malaysia</b> .....	<b>153</b>
	Fadzilah Majid Cooke and Greg Acciaioli	
<b>7</b>	<b>Sustaining Local Food Cultures and Identities in Malaysia with the Disruptive Power of Tourism and Social Media</b> .....	<b>183</b>
	Sally Everett	
<b>8</b>	<b>Negotiating Sinful Self and Desire: Agency and Identities of Non-Heteronormative Malay Muslim Men in Malaysia</b> .....	<b>207</b>
	Chua Hang-Kuen	

## **Part II Identities and Movements: Agency and Alternative Discourses**

- 9 Antiblackness in Malaysia, the Bandung Spirit and African–Asian Decolonial Critique in Richard Wright’s *The Color Curtain* ..... 231**  
Mohan Ambikaipaker
- 10 The Emergence of a New Social Movement in Malaysia: A Case Study of Malaysian Youth Activism ..... 249**  
Haris Zuan
- 11 Islam and the Environment: The Challenge of Developmental Politics in Malaysia with Special Reference to PAS’s Rule in Kelantan ..... 273**  
Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Mohamad Faizal Abd Matalib
- 12 Alternative or Mainstream? Malay Independent Book Publishing in Malaysia ..... 293**  
Muhammad Febriansyah and Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar

## **Part III Identities and Narratives: Culture and Media**

- 13 Fear and Loathing in Legal Limbo: Reimagining the Refugee in Malaysian Public Discourse and History ..... 317**  
Gerhard Hoffstaedter and Nicole Lamb
- 14 Belonging and Identity in the Narratives of Two Second-Generation Refugee Youths in Malaysia ..... 329**  
Charity Lee and Zuraidah Mohd Don
- 15 Expressing Alternative Modernities in a New Nation through Iban Popular Music, 1960s–1970s ..... 349**  
Connie Lim Keh Nie and Made Mantle Hood
- 16 Reframing the National Culture Narrative of P. Ramlee ..... 367**  
Adil Johan
- 17 Genre, Gender and Temporal Critique in *Budak Kelantan* and *Bunohan* ..... 387**  
Norman Yusoff
- 18 Left of the Dial: BFM 89.9 Independent Radio Station and Its Indie Rock-friendly Midnight Programming as a Site of Sustainability ..... 413**  
Azmyl Yusof
- 19 Postcolonial Indigenous Storytellers and the Making of a Counter-discourse to the ‘Civilising Process’ in Malaysia ..... 429**  
Zawawi Ibrahim

<b>20 Conclusion</b> .....	481
Victor T. King, Gareth Richards, and Zawawi Ibrahim	
<b>Glossary of Non-English Terms</b> .....	487
<b>Index</b> .....	495

## Chapter 15

# Expressing Alternative Modernities in a New Nation through Iban Popular Music, 1960s–1970s



Connie Lim Keh Nie and Made Mantle Hood

**Abstract** The Iban are the largest indigenous ethnic group in Sarawak, Malaysia, constituting nearly a third of the state's total population. They have experienced various forms of modernity since the Brooke Raj established the British colonial presence in 1841, through to its status as a British Crown colony, and then under the auspices of the Malaysian nation-state from 1963 onwards, all of which further incorporated indigenous peoples into national, regional and global relations. Under these different forms of governance—and the far-reaching social, economic, political and cultural transformations they unleashed—the Iban, as a self-defined ethnic group, have both adopted and adapted in recent decades to meet demanding challenges, most notably of nation-building and the idea of 'independence through Malaysia'. Drawing on a vast cultural heritage, one of the most vital means of projecting Iban responses to change has been popular music. This chapter examines a selection of Iban popular songs composed in the 1960s and 1970s which, we argue, reflected and helped shape the history of Sarawak in that era. Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by Iban-language programming on Radio Sarawak, popular music lyrics carried messages commenting on modernity: the changing relationship to ancestral lands, the impact of development, the rapid acceleration of internal migration and Sarawak's place in the broader nation-state. In doing so, popular music lyrics offered a historical narrative of Iban people in Sarawak and what an 'alternative modernity' meant in a postcolonial world.

**Keywords** Malaysia · Sarawak · Iban · Modernity · Postcolonialism · Popular music

---

C. Lim (✉)

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Malaysia  
e-mail: [lnkconnie@unimas.my](mailto:lnkconnie@unimas.my)

M. M. Hood

Research Centre for Asia-Pacific Music, Tainan National University of the Arts, Tainan City, Taiwan  
e-mail: [made.hood@gmail.com](mailto:made.hood@gmail.com)