

BEING HAKKA BRIDES: A CASE STUDY OF BIDAYUH WOMEN IN A HAKKA VILLAGE, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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Introduction

Malaysia lies within the Southeast Asia region which boasts a rich cultural diversity. There are over 40 recognized ethnic groups, with many more of lesser known which exist as offshoots in very small number in terms of population. The three main ethnic groups comprise of the indigenous community also categorized as Bumiputeras (67.4%), the Chinese (24.6%) and the Indians (7.3%). The Malays are the dominant group with the Bumiputeras, and are spread all over Malaysia. Similarly, the Chinese are also widespread. Apart from these three main groups, there are 37 other recognized ethnic groups which are categorized as 'other Bumiputera', comprising ethnic groups such as the Negrito, Senoi, Melayu Proto, Dusun, Kadazan, Rungus and so on.

In the Malaysian state of Sarawak alone there are close to 30 ethnic groups. According to latest data obtained from the population census carried out in 2010, the population in Sarawak was 2.47 million people. By breaking it down into the three main categories of ethnic groups, the Bumiputeras accounted for 1,768,991 people or 71.6% of the population, followed by the Chinese with 577,645 people or 23.4 % and Indians with 7,411 people or 0.3%. Within the native category of Bumiputera, the Iban accounted for 40.5%, followed by Malay (32.3%), Bidayuh (11.3%), Melanau (7%) and other Dayak (8.9%).

Table 1: Sarawak demography according to the 2010 population census

	Ethnic group	Total (people)	Percentage (%)
1	Iban	713,421	28.9
2	Chinese	577,646	23.4
3	Malay	568,113	22.9
4	Bidayuh	198,473	8.1
5	Melanau	123,410	4.9
6	Other Dayak [†]	156,436	6.4
7	Indian	7,411	0.3
8	Others	9,138	0.4
9	Foreigners	117,092	4.7
	Total	2,471,140	100.0

Kenyah, Kayan, Lun Bawang, Penan, Kajang, Kelabit, Punan.

^ Thai, Pilipino, Burmese, Japanese, Korean and Eurasian holding Malaysian citizenship.