



EJ095197501103

# The 1974 General Elections in West Malaysia

A Preliminary Study of Election Prospects and Voting Pattern  
of the Chinese Community \*

## 西馬來西亞一九七四年的普選

— 華人社區的投票型式及選舉景象之初步研究 —

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### 摘 要

本文之目的有二，一為試圖研究西馬來西亞國會議員及邦代表選舉中，選區的新劃分，並探討此種措施下不同選舉單位所顯示的不同比重；二為此項選舉對華人的影響。

馬來西亞的人口分佈，在基本上是華人集居於都市地區，而馬來人則聚居於鄉村，華人在西馬來西亞約占 36%，但此次當選的比重則僅為 25% 強，此皆由於馬來執政黨竄改選舉區所導致的結果。由於選舉區域的改變，固然使執政的國家陣線獲致壓倒的勝利，符合馬來政府所宣傳的多民族主義；但在霹靂、麻六甲、森美蘭及聯邦地區，由華人所結成的民主行動黨仍獲得勝利，因而在上述兩種議會中，華人仍擁有堅強的力量。

## Zusammenfassung

Diese einführende Studie auf dem Gebiet der Wahlgeographie verfolgt einen zweifachen Zweck: Sie versucht, die kürzlich erfolgte Neueinteilung der Wahlkreise und die unterschiedliche Gewichtung, die den Wahlkreisen gegeben wurde, für West-Malaysia kritisch zu analysieren. Zweitens, sie beabsichtigt, einige Hauptkonturen der Wahlaussichten sowie Wahlergebnisse aus der Sicht des chinesischen Bevölkerungsteils anzureissen.

Da in Malaysia die Chinesen vorwiegend städtische Bewohner sind, andererseits die Malaien auf dem Lande leben, resultiert das allgemein angewandte Prinzip, die ländlichen Wahlkreise stärker zu gewichten, in einer erheblichen politischen Unter-Repräsentation der Chinesen. Die Chinesen stellen einen Bevölkerungsanteil von ca. 35.4% in West-Malaysia; ihr politisches Gewicht bei den Wahlen entspricht jedoch nur dem von ca. 25%. Bei der Neueinteilung der Wahlkreisgrenzen sind zahlreiche Fälle von Wahlmanipulation, die die herrschenden Parteien begünstigen, zu berichten. Zweitens, die Wahlergebnisse gaben der Nationalen Front einen überwältigenden Sieg und bestätigten das von der Regierung propagierte Prinzip der "vielrassischen Gesellschaft" in Malaysia. Lediglich einige Hochburgen der chinesisch dominierten Opposition in Perak, Malakka, Negri Sembilan, Selangor und dem Bundesterritorium wählte nach rassischen Gesichtspunkten, welches die chauvinistische DAP zur stärksten Oppositionspartei in den gesetzgebenden Gremien macht.

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\*) Due to shortage of space this study shall be confined to West Malaysia ( Peninsular Malaysia ) only. It shall be considered a preliminary analysis since most of the data for the racial composition of the electorate within each constituency as well as the racial background of voting returns were not fully available at the time of compilation of this article. The author intends to write a more comprehensive book on the "Racial background of the 1974 General elections in Malaysia" at a later date. The writer's German-language publication entitled "Die Wahlen in Malaysia 1974", issued by the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg is mainly a pre-election analysis of election prospect and the influence of the recent boundary changes of electoral constituencies on the government's effort to eliminate the opposition.

# 1. Election Returns

The 1974 General elections in Malaysia which were held concurrently at National (Parliamentary) and State level have resulted in an overwhelming and landslide victory for the National Front Coalition Parties (Barisan Nasional) against a divided and weak opposition which was fighting more against each other than the political enemy. The National Front assured a two-thirds majority in Parliament and in all State Legislative Assemblies of West Malaysia by winning 135 out of 154 Parliamentary seats, and 313 of the 360 State seats contested (no State elections were held in Sabah). A detailed list of election returns on Parliamentary and State level is given in table 1. It was only in Sarawak which is considered a problem State within the Federation, that the opposition party SNAP gained a limited success by refusing the ruling coalition Front a two-thirds majority in the Sarawak Council Negri which would otherwise have given them power for constitutional changes and amendments.

Nevertheless, the election results had an unkind undertone. The Chinese community in West Malaysia and the Iban community in Sarawak voted along "racial lines" and the Malaysian concept of "nation building" through national unity and the integration of different racial, ethnic and social groups have encountered a minor setback, and opposition parties which are based on a multi-racial concept will have very little chances of winning opposition votes in the future.

The election returns of August 1974 cannot be compared to the previous elections of 1959, 1964 or 1969 because of two reasons: (1) The considerable extent of changes in electoral boundaries poses a real problem for comparative studies; (2) Election trends on National scale are only comparable if the major political parties remain roughly the same over a long period. Malaysian politics have experienced a multitude of short-lived parties most of them contesting only one or two elections. Party dissolutions, the creation of splinter parties by dissidents, deputies crossing the floor from one par-

Table 1 : Parliamentary and State General Elections, Malaysia 1974  
Seats won by Political Parties and Independent Candidates

State \ Party		National Front (BARNAS)	PEKEMAS	DAP	PSRM	KITA	SNAP	IPPP	BISAMAH	IND.
JOHORE	P S	16 31	— —	— 1	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
KEDAH	P S	13 24	— —	— 1	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— 1
KELANTAN	P S	12 36	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
MALACCA	P S	3 16	— —	1 4	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
NEGRI SEMBILAN	P S	5 21	— —	1 3	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
PAHANG	P S	8 32	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
PENANG	P S	9 23	— 1	— 2	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— 1
PERAK	P S	17 31	— —	4 11	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
PERLIS	P S	2 12	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
SELANGOR	P S	10 30	— —	1 1	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— 2
FEDERAL TERRITORY	P	2	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
TRENGGANU	P S	7 27	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —	— 1
SABAH	P S	16 +	— +	— +	— +	— +	— +	— +	— +	— +
SARAWAK	P S	15 30	— —	— —	— —	— —	9 18	— —	— —	— —
MALAYSIA	P S	135 313	1 1	9 23	— —	— —	9 18	— —	— —	— 5

Source : Election Commission (date: 15th September, 1974)

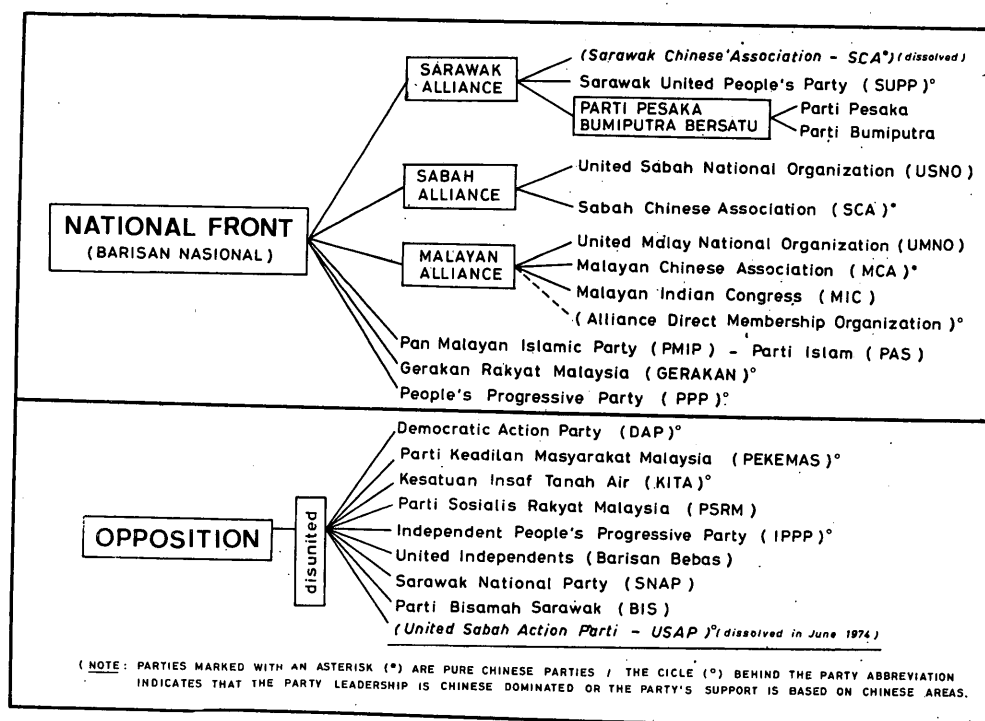
Legend : P = Parliamentary Elections (for Dewan Rakyat)

S = State Elections (for Dewan Undangan Negeri 2)

This list includes uncontested seats

+) No State elections were held in Sabah

Table 2 : Party constellation in the 1974 General Elections



ty to another, or the turn-about in political orientation of a party makes any comparative analysis difficult. A list of the present-day party constellation has been attached in table 2.

## 2. Methods and Objectives

PRESCOTT (1959, 1968, 1972) lists four major categories of topics electoral geographers have to deal with:

- To explore the geographical factors which have influenced a government to select or adopt one specific electoral system rather than another; and to bring about changes and electoral reforms.
- To study the delimitation and delineation of boundaries of political constituencies with particular reference to avoid gerrymandering<sup>1)</sup> and an

1) The term "gerrymander" stems from the action of Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts who in 1812 established an oddly shaped electoral district in order to favour his party.

uneven and unjustified weightage that may distort the will of voters.

- (c) To examine voting returns of elections and plebiscites from a spatial or regional viewpoint.
- (d) To investigate into votes cast by members of Parliament or other political or legislative bodies, and in how far they can influence regional policies.

This shall be called a preliminary study in applied political geography, but the methods that have been used were taken from social geography. Malaysia which follows the British majority system of elections with slight modifications, is one of the few developing countries with a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society where the different community groups are living closely together and are not regionally separated as it is the case in India or many African countries. Malaysia, therefore, provides an excellent example for studies in social geography and this shall be done with particular reference to the Chinese community in West Malaysia. The Chinese masses never took very active part in political life and the overall majority was usually satisfied when their traditional spheres of activity in business and commerce were not touched or restricted. It was only recently that their political and racial consciousness was awakened which may be coinciding with the increasing Malayisation of public life and the growing feeling of many non-Bumiputras<sup>1)</sup> that they are only "second-class citizens".

It shall be the objective of this study to:

- (1) examine the influence of the recent delimitation of constituencies which took place in July 1974 after a period of 16 years, on the election prospects of opposition parties which are mainly based on the support of Chinese voters in urban areas ;
- (2) study the election returns of some Chinese dominated areas along the West coast of Malaya and to study the performance of the principal Chinese opposition party DAP under regional aspects.

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1) BUMIPUTRA = son of the soil or indigenous population of Malaysia ; in West Malaysia it is used for the Malay population .

### 3. Delimitation of Constituencies

In accordance with the Federal constitution of Malaysia: <sup>1)</sup> Parliamentary and State constituencies must be reviewed every 10 years and the boundaries of electoral districts must be adapted to the population growth and inter-regional population movements. The recent delimitation also became necessary when Parliament approved a bill to increase the number of MPs from 144 to 154 and of State assemblymen from 362 to 408 (see also table 3).

It was for the first time in 1954 that Malaya was subdivided into electoral districts for the elections to the Malayan Legislative Council, a rudimentary form of the present-day Parliament (Dewan Rakyat) <sup>2)</sup>. A subsequent new delineation of constituencies took place in 1958/59 <sup>3)</sup> which formed the basis for the 1959, 1964, and 1969 General elections. In 1963, a review of constituencies was envisaged but was later put off because of the impending entrance of the Borneo territories of Sabah and Sarawak into the Federation. In East Malaysia and Singapore no direct elections for the Dewan Rakyat took place in 1964,

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- 1) Malaysian Federal Constitution: "The Election Commission shall, at intervals of not more than ten nor, subject to clause (3), less than eight years, review the division of the Federation and the States into constituencies and recommend such changes therein, as they may think necessary in order to comply with the provisions contained in the 13th schedule; and the review of constituencies for the purpose of elections to the Legislative assemblies shall be undertaken at the same time, as the review of constituencies for the purpose of elections to the House of Representatives".
  - 2) ELECTION COMMISSION (1954): Report of the Constituency Delimitation Commission, 1954; (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer)
  - 3) ELECTION COMMISSION (1958): Report of the Election Commission on the delimitation of constituencies for the first election to the House of Representatives and the State Legislative Assemblies, 1958

but Sabahan, Sarawakian and Singaporean deputies were nominated by their respective Legislative bodies. After the separation of Singapore in 1965 and the formation of an independent Republic, a review of the existing 51 constituencies was carried out in 1967<sup>1)</sup> and a similiar adjustment made four years later when the original 58 constituencies were increased to 65<sup>2)</sup>.

Table 3 : Distribution of Parliamentary and State seats within  
the different member States of Malaysia

States	Number of seats in Parliament		Number of seats in State Assembly		Multiplier between number of Parliament. and State seats		Quotient registered number of voters per Parl. seat <sup>+</sup>
	before	after	before	after	before	after	
Perlis	2	2	12	12	x6	x6	28 942
Kedah	12	13	24	26	x2	x2	30 763
Kelantan	10	12	30	36	x3	x3	28 070
Trengganu	6	7	24	28	x4	x4	26 246
Pulau Pinang	8	9	24	27	x3	x3	32 644
Perak	20	21	40	42	x2	x2	30 425
Pahang	6	8	24	32	x4	x4	25 974
Selangor	14	11	28	33	x2	x3	31 023
Fed. Territory	—	5	—	—	—	—	42 167
Negeri Sembilan	6	6	24	24	x4	x4	30 168
Malacca	4	4	20	20	x5	x5	38 250
Johore	16	16	32	32	x2	x2	29 704
West Malaysia	104	114	282	312	—	—	30 400
Sabah	16	16	32	48	x2	x3	14 128
Sarawak	24	24	48	48	x2	x2	14 280 <sup>+</sup>
Malaysia	144	154	362	408	—	—	26 150

<sup>+</sup>) Registered number of voters in Februar 1974 ( in Sarawak: registered number of voters in 1969 )

- 1) REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE (1967) : White paper on the report of the Electoral Boundaries Delineation Committee on the review of the boundaries of present fifty-one Parliament electoral divisions.
- 2) REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE (1971) : White paper ..... on the review of boundaries of the present fifty-eight Parliament electoral divisions.



In West Malaysia, the latest review of constituencies dates back to only July 1974 which resulted in a fundamental reorganization of electoral units and subsequently was used for the recent General elections in August 1974<sup>1)</sup>

The methods and principles that have been used for the recent Malaysian delimitation of constituencies deserve some consideration because they provide the key for the ultimate distribution of seats in Parliament and State legislative bodies. An ideal delineation of electoral units should be done in such a way that the percentage of votes received by the parties contesting the elections should not show too great a disparity to the actual distribution of seats in the legislature. Under the majority system which can be also described as "regional representation" it is quite possible that a party or a political group which may receive a minority of votes can ultimately obtain a majority of seats in Parliament<sup>2)</sup>.

To avoid such discrepancies and gerrymandering, obligatory principles for the delimitation of constituencies have to be laid down in the election laws. Nevertheless, under the majority system it is perfectly possible that an apparent gerrymander will occur even with the application of the soundest principles.

In Malaysia, the Federal Constitution sets out a schedule of rules that have to be taken in consideration when delimiting constituencies:

"The following principles shall as possible be taken into account in di-

- 1) ELECTION COMMISSION (1974) : Laporan Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia atas Persempadanan Bahagian-Bahagian-Pilihanraya Persekutuan dan Negri bagi Negri-Negri Tanah Melayu (Semenanjung Malaysia), tahun 1974.
- 2) Such a case occurred in the British General elections of February 1974 when the Labour Party received only 37.2 percent of the votes cast, but finally won 47.5 percent of the seats in Parliament; against the Conservative Party which gained 38.2 percent according to the proportional representation system, but was able to nominate only 46.8 percent of the MPs.

viding any unit of review into constituencies pursuant to the provisions Articles 116 and 117 :

- a) While having regard to the desirability of giving all electors reasonably convenient opportunities of going to the polls, constituencies ought to be delimited so that they do not cross State boundaries and regard ought to be had to the inconveniences of State constituencies crossing the boundaries of federal constituencies ;
- b) regard ought to be had to the administrative facilities available within the constituencies for the establishment of the necessary registration and polling machines ;
- c) the number of electors within each constituency ought to be approximately equal throughout the unit of review except that, having regard to the greater difficulty of reaching electors in the country districts and the other disadvantages facing rural constituencies, a measure of weightage for area ought to be given to such constituencies, to the extent that in some cases a rural constituency may contain as little as one half of the electors of any urban constituency ;
- d) regard ought to be had to the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies, and to the maintenance of local ties " .

These principles were slightly modified in the recent delimitation report of 1974 which reads as follows (translation from Bahasa Malaysia) :

- 1st principle : Constituencies should under no circumstances cut State boundaries, and as far as possible, State constituencies cutting across Federal constituencies should be avoided.
- 2nd principle : That attention is given to administrative facilities available in constituencies to provide the necessary machinery for registration and voting. Polling stations as the smallest electoral unit should be left intact as far as possible (and only in Kelantan and Selangor several polling districts were broken up because of the inaccessibility in some areas and the creation of the Federal Territory) .
- 3rd principle : That the number of voters in each constituency in a State

is more or less the same.

- 4th principle : That the size of the constituency should be given due consideration.
- 5th principle : That proper attention is given to problems arising from changes in the constituencies.
- 6th principle : That due attention is given to ensure that kampongs (Malay rural settlements) and "new villages" (Chinese strategic hamlets) in an area are not separated into different constituencies.
- 7th principle : When renaming constituencies due consideration should be given to the actual usage of the locality, and constituencies that smack of colonialism (like Port Dickson) should be given local names.

Let us now examine the extent of boundary changes and in how far they are affecting the election prospects of the (Chinese-based) opposition parties. The author does not impute that the Election Commission deliberately changed certain electoral boundaries in order to eliminate the opposition or minimize its electoral chances, but the fact remains that there is a multiple number of cases where recent boundary changes are in favour of the government. The Election Commission is an autonomous institution outside the executive government machinery established under the Election Commission Ordinance of 1957 and consists of three to four full members usually drawn from all three racial groups. But, as the appointment is made by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King) at the suggestion of the Prime Minister, and most of the members are distinguished personalities in public life, who have, to some extent, close connection with the government, gerrymandering practices cannot be completely ruled out. Therefore, boundary changes must be critically examined that they do not invalidate the interpretation based on the election statistics (PRECOTT, 1959).

Due to paginal limitation only two examples shall be mentioned in form of case studies from Perak and the Kuala Lumpur conurbation: both of which are areas with a near-fifty percent proportion of Chinese population.

A more detailed discussion of gerrymandering practices of the recent delimitation of constituencies can be found in the author's German language publication on "Die Wahlen in Malaysia 1974", published by the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg.

The most common gerrymander is drawing electoral boundaries so that one party wastes very few votes while other parties waste large number of votes. The ideal operation of this system would leave the opposition with an extremely small number of seats where they polled a near-hundred percent of the votes, while the ruling party won all the rest with a slight majority of 51 percent or so. A close analysis of the delimitation techniques used for the recent 1974 review of constituencies reveals that such a gerrymander can not be ruled out even if the original intention for such a delineation of boundaries was based on two different ideas in accordance with those principles set out in the Malaysian constitution:

- (1) The attached maps (No. 1-4) showing the situation of Perak and Selangor constituencies in 1958 and 1974 indicate that the first and foremost aim of the recent review of boundaries was to bring electoral constituencies in line with administrative divisions (Daerah or Mukim) to facilitate electoral administration. In the process of delimitation, many State constituency boundaries became Federal ones and vice versa.
- (2) One of the most fundamental delimitation principle says, that racial, ethnic, religious, cultural or other socio-demographic similarities and connections should not be arbitrarily disrupted. Adhering to this principle of grouping together similar social entities, the "quasi-gerrymander" in the area of Kuala Lumpur and other areas of the West coast must be seen (see figures 1 and 2) ; Before the creation of the Federal

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1) The geographical, administrative and political implications of the creation of a special territory under the administration of the Federal government and outside the State of Selangor have been discussed in the author's paper on "Kuala Lumpur wird Bundesterritorium", published in the German-language magazine "Zeitschrift fuer Wirtschaftsgeographie" (Hagen), and shall not be repeated in this connection.

## REVIEW OF ELECTORAL DIVISIONS 1974

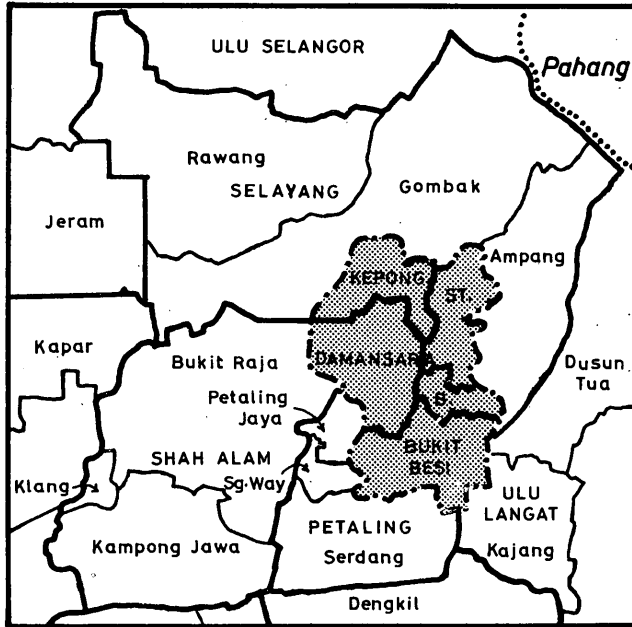


FIG. 1 POSITION OF PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE CON-  
STITUENCIES IN SELANGOR AND THE FEDERAL  
TERRITORY, 1974

- Federal Constituency
- State Constituency
- ..... State Boundary
- Federal Territory

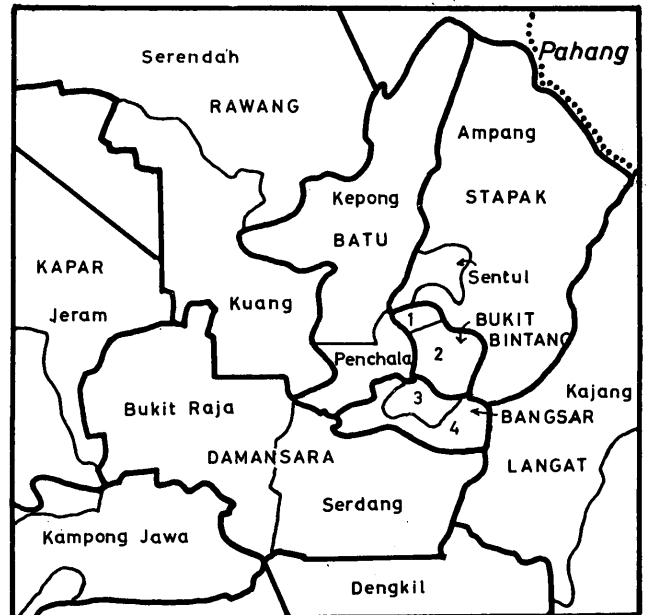


FIG. 2 POSITION OF PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE CON-  
STITUENCIES IN SELANGOR, 1959

- Federal Constituency
- State Constituency
- ..... State Boundary

# PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE CONSTITUENCIES

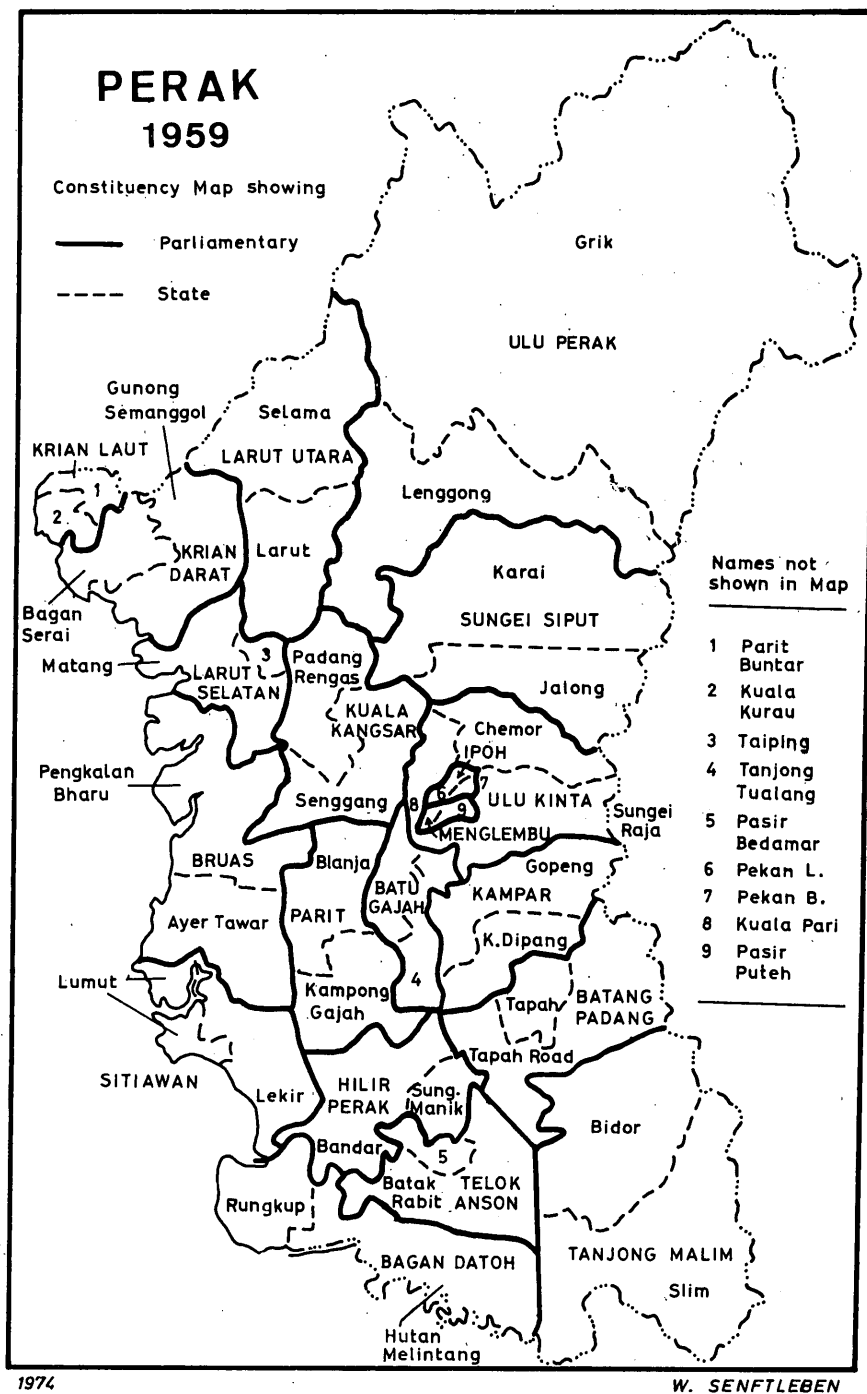


Figure 3

# PARLIAMENTARY AND STATE CONSTITUENCIES

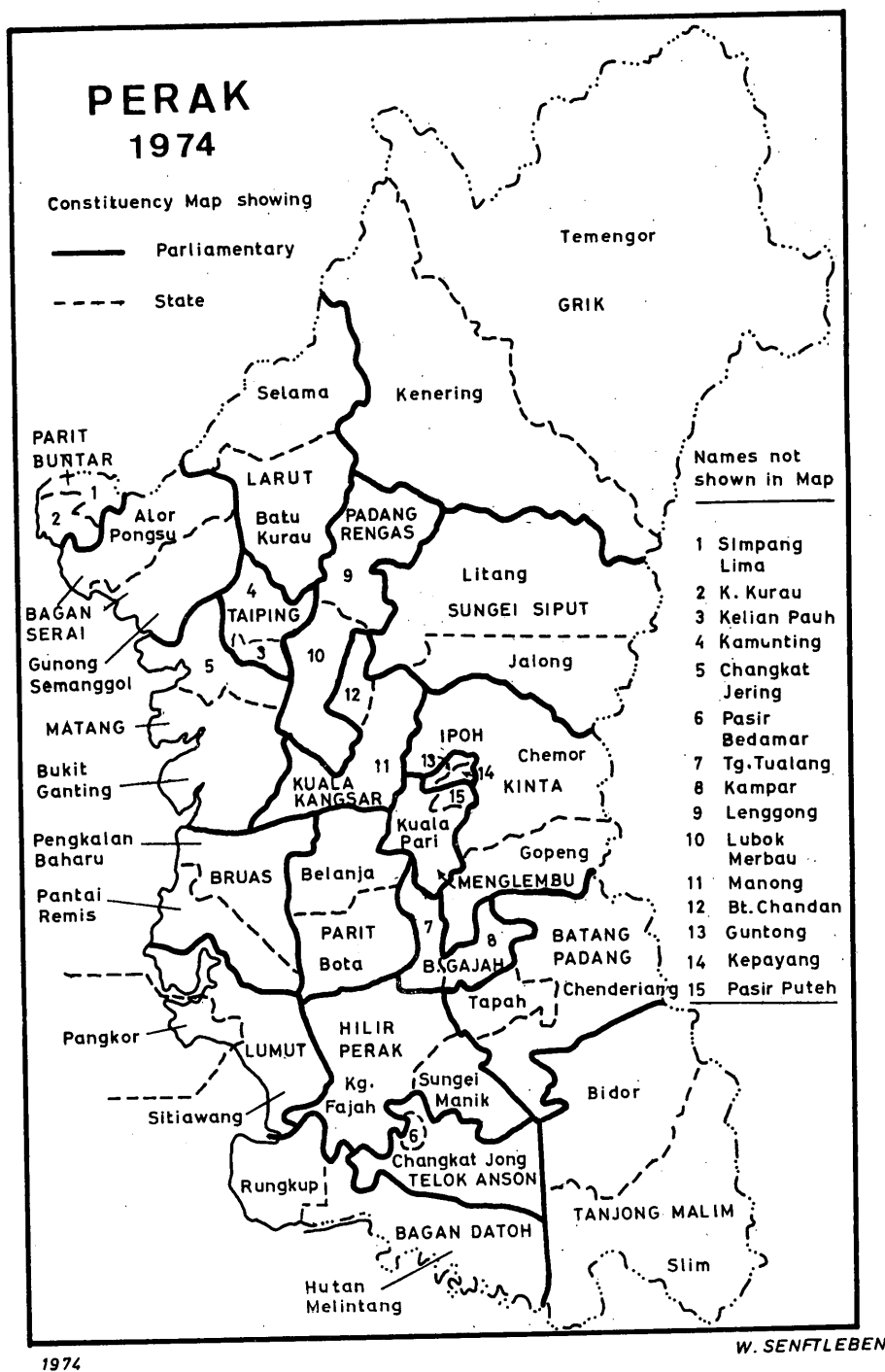


Figure 4

Territory of Kuala Lumpur in February 1974<sup>1)</sup> most of the constituencies around Kuala Lumpur (except Bukit Bintang) comprised a Chinese-dominated urban core-centre and a sub-urban umland with a mixed population (example: Kepong Federal constituency). In the past, most of these urban constituencies were won by the opposition, and a large number of Malay votes from the adjacent umland were lost. The recent delimitation isolates the Chinese city-core from the semi-urban hinterland (example: Selayang Federal constituency) and gives them a separate electoral entity.

A similar delimitation technique can be noticed in other Chinese stronghold areas, like Taiping in Perak. Taiping, the former capital of Perak in pre-war times and one of the earliest areas in Malaysia of tin mining and Chinese immigration in the 19th century, was originally included in the vast constituency of Larut Selatan, but was later re-drawn and concentrated to the Chinese heartland of Taiping City proper and the near Larut Valley.

The preceding discussion stressed that the process of delimitation of electoral units is in the true sense an area of "applied geography" and should not be left to administrators and politicians alone. Therefore, the membership of the Electoral Commission should include at least one technical expert familiar with scientific delimitation techniques to ensure that boundaries have not been drawn to produce a particular election result. In fact, the geographer as an impartial and unbiased expert, not pre-occupied by political thinking, would be predestined for doing such a job.

#### 4. The System of Weightage

It is a commonly acknowledged principle practised in almost all countries of the world with a democratic parliamentary election system, to give the rural areas a stronger political weightage in the sense that the potential electorate of rural constituency is smaller in population than an equivalent urban one<sup>1)</sup>. When delimiting electoral constituencies, not only population strength but also "area" in terms of square dimension should find adequate consideration. This is because a candidate or representative in a



rural constituency has to spend more time and effort for campaigning and representing the people than a deputy in an urban area.

But it is an unique situation in Malaysia that the Chinese ethnic group is almost congruent with the urban population whereas the Malay counterpart (53.2% of West Malaysia's population) is preponderately living in rural agricultural areas. No other multi-racial country in the world with a free election system presents a similiar suitable object of investigation in socio-electoral gegraphy, with a minor exception of the Negro population in the USA or the Turkish minority in Cyprus. Fiji which has a similiar demographic structure as Malaysia, with 45 percent Melanesians living in the countryside (agricultural land is reserved for them) and the 54-percent majority of Indians mainly living in towns, is voting according to separate ballots for the two racial groups. Other multi-racial countries, like the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia or Angola follow a policy of racial discrimination or segregation; or many other developing countries with a plural society have either a one-party-system or are based under military rule.

The political situation in Malaysia is very obvious. The Chinese, although amounting to 35.4 percent of the total West Malaysian population are fa-

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- 1) This was particularly true in former times when conservative governments tried to preserve their power by clinging to rural areas as their main reservoir of voters. The Gaullist regime in France, for instance, has always favoured the rural areas by giving them a stronger weightage in order to weaken the cities influenced by socialist ideas. The British colonial government in Malaya, when delimiting constituencies for the first time in 1954, gave a strong preponderance to the Malay rural areas because the Malays used to be absolutely loyal to the colonial government, whereas a large number of Chinese in Malaya were influenced by Communist ideas and it was the Chinese element that started the Malayan post-war insurgency and the official emergency from 1948-1960. Thus, it has been always the intention of the British to keep the Chinese influence in politics down and to give the Malays a privileged position in administration and active political life. Similiar attitudes of the British colonial policy of "impera et divide" can be found in many former British developing countries; vide: SMITH, T.E. (1960): Elections in Developing Countries: a case study of electoral procedures used in tropical Africa, Southeast Asia and the British Caribbean; (London: Macmillan).

ced with a serious political under-representation, and their electoral weight is slightly above 25 percent. The reason behind this is not political discrimination of an ethnic group, but it must be seen in the light of weighting rural areas more heavily. It shall be the objective of this chapter to analyse in how far the recent delimitation of constituencies has corrected or worsened the imbalance and disparity in political representation between rural and urban areas.

Although the Malaysian Constitution expressively stipulates that, for applying a measure of weightage between rural and urban areas, this should be "to the extent that in some cases a rural constituency may contain as little as one half of the electorate of any urban constituency".<sup>1)</sup> A careful analysis of the figures given in the recent Electoral Delineation Report reveals that the above mentioned principle has been grossly neglected by the Election Commission when reviewing electoral boundaries. Table 4 gives a clear indication that some of the Federal constituencies have a ratio that is above the permitted 1:2 proportion. The most obvious extremes occur in the State of Perak where West Malaysia's smallest constituency is Grik with an electorate of 16 407 only, against Ipoh constituency which lists 51 570 registered voters. Ipoh and the adjacent Menglembu constituency are areas with the highest concentration of Chinese population in Malaysia. To create such large disparities, the Election Commission might have taken into account large-scale population resettlement in connection with new land colonization in future time. For instance, in the Grik area a large number of future

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1) Post-scriptum: A recent amendment to the Federal Constitution (Constitution Amendment No.2 Act A 206) has redrafted and amended certain sections of Article 113, 116 and the 13th Schedule to the Constitution. With regard to Paragraph (c) of section 2 of the Thirteenth Schedule, the following changes have been brought about:

The passage "the number of electors within each constituency ought to be approximately equal throughout the unit of review" should be substituted for "the number of electors within each constituency in a State ought to be approximately equal"; and

The passage "... to the extent that in some cases a rural constituency may contain as little as one half of the electors of any urban constituency" has been deleted from the Constitution.

population increase in this constituency may result from the East-West Highway project now under construction between Penang and Kelantan.

Table 4 : Selected rural and urban Federal constituencies in relation to the number of registered voters for West Malaysia (as at February 1974)

State	rural constituencies		urban constituencies		ratio
	name of constituency	registered voters	name of constituency	registered voters	
Perak	Grik Larut	16 407	Ipoh	51 569	3.1
		20 424	Menglembu	51 316	2.5
Penang	Permatang Pauh	21 942	Tanjong	46 719	2.1
Selangor	Sepang	22 025	Petaling	44 100	2.0
Johore	Tenggarah	17 274	Johore Bahru	43 752	2.5
Kelantan	Ulu Kelantan	16 765	Kota Bharu	38 958	2.4

But the Commission's opinion that this is a short-term preponderance valid only for the 1974-election and that these disparities will be gradually equalized through new land settlement and large-scale population movements until the next election in a five years' time, might be based on wrong assumptions, since it is not the urban Chinese population to become scheme participants in pioneer land settlement areas, but Malays from over-populated rural areas along the West coast will move there. The over-emphasized weightage in favour of the Malay rural areas contravenes to some extent the principle of "one man one vote". A comparison between extreme cases within State constituencies of the same State show a similar disparity with some cases even above the 4:1 ratio. The smallest State constituency in West Malaysia is Bukit Iban in Southeast Pahang with a total

electorate of 3 367, in contrast to Bandar constituency with 13 907 registered voters (see table 5).

Table 5 : Selected rural and urban State constituencies in relation to the number of registered voters for West Malaysia (as at February 1974)

State	rural constituencies		urban constituencies		ratio
	name of constituency	registered voters	name of constituency	registered voters	
Kelantan	Manak Urai	4 981	Sg. Keladi	15 444	3.1
	Jeli	5 495	Wakaf Baru	12 314	2.3
Trengganu	Kuala Berang	4 659	Bandar Trengganu	10 534	2.3
Perak	Temengor	6 913	Kepayang	26 525	3.8
Pahang	Bukit Iban	3 367	Kuantan	13 903	4.1
Selangor	Morib	6 752	Petaling Jaya	26 863	4.0
Negri Sembilan	Rantau	4 681	Rahang	13 478	2.9
Penang	Sungei Dua	6 748	Pengk. Kota	16 077	2.4
	Bukit Tambun	7 006	Padang Kota	15 086	2.2
Johore	Endau	8 107	Tanjong Petri	28 556	3.5

## 5. Index of Representativeness

Statistical measurements to determine the bias caused by having wide variations in the enrolment of different electorates and a disparity between urban and rural areas, have been developed by electoral geographers and political scientists. Among the various methods used for determining a fair and equal political representation, the DAUER-KELSAY "Index of Repre-

sentativeness" <sup>1)</sup> is the most appropriate one and very easy to determine . It is defined as :

"The smallest percentage of a state's registered number of voters which could theoretically elect a majority to Parliament or other legislative bodies ".

Unfortunately, the index can be used only to compare distributions for legislatures with equal number of seats, but it can be applied equally for the Malaysian Federal and State elections. It is therefore not significant to compare various indices for West Malaysian State legislative assemblies since they vary considerably in size (Perak : 42 seats ; Perlis 12) ; but the index can indicate whether the recent review of electoral boundaries has adjusted or aggravated the existing disparities between Chinese urban and Malay rural constituencies (see table 6) .

A comparison of indices for State legislatures shows that most of the values have deteriorated after the recent review of constituencies, and only Negri Sembilan and Selangor are indicating slight improvements. The Perlis State Legislative Assembly with 12 seats is too small to give a representative figure. In Kedan, Kelantan, Pahang , Penang , Perak , Selangor and Trengganu, the number of assemblymen in the local legislature has been increased which aggravates a mutual comparison. Nevertheless, the unmistakable trend in direction of increasing disparities is too evident. The only genuine improvement in the DAUER - KELSAY index can be reported from Negri

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1) DAUER, M. J. & KELSAY, R.G. (1955) : Unrepresentative states ; in: National Municipal Review, vol. 44, pp. 571-575 ; 587

The index is calculated in the following way. In the case of Perak, for instance, the registered number of voters is 630 873 and the Dewan Undangan Negri Perak has a total of 42 State assemblymen. All constituencies are listed in ascending order of their electoral strength and the 22 electorates with the smallest number of voters are accumulated. The sum of a 22-seat majority of the smallest electorates is divided by the total number of registered voters.

Table 6 : The Dauer-Kelsay Index in comparison to Population,  
West Malaysia

State	Percent of total populat- ion, (1970)	Percent of Chi- nese populat. (1970)	Percent of urban populat- ion <sup>1</sup> (1970)	Percent of seats in Parli- ament (1974)	Dauer-Kelsay Index <sup>3)</sup>	
					previous delimitation <sup>1)</sup>	present delimitation <sup>2)</sup>
Johore	14.4	39.4	26.1	10.4	46.4	42.9
Kedah	10.8	19.3	12.5	8.4	47.5	41.8
Kelantan	7.8	5.3	15.1	7.8	46.3	43.0
Malacca	4.6	39.6	24.8	2.6	49.5	48.5
Negri Sembilan	5.5	38.1	21.1	3.9	41.3	43.1
Pahang	5.7	31.2	19.1	5.2	45.7	38.6
Penang	8.8	56.1	50.7	5.8	44.2	39.1
Perak	17.9	42.5	27.6	13.8	41.8	40.5
Perlis	1.4	16.2	—	1.3	(53.1)	(52.9)
Selangor	18.5	46.3	45.5	7.1	34.2	38.6
Fed. Territory <sup>5)</sup>	—	—	—	3.2	—	—
Trengganu	4.6	5.4	26.6	4.5	46.9	46.5
West Malaysia	100	35.4	28.7	74.1 <sup>4)</sup>	41.9	41.4

Explanation: 1) previous electoral delimitation dated 1958; number of registered voters as at February 1972/3

2) present delimitation dated 1974; number of registered voters as at February 1974

3) Dauer-Kelsay Index relates to State legislative Assemblies; fictitious value for the 114 (104) West Malaysian representatives in Federal Parliament

4) The remaining 15.9 percent goes to the East Malaysian States of Sabah and Sarawak

5) The Federal Territory was established in February 1974; prior to that no Statistical data available for this area; the Federal Territory is under the administration of the Federal government and has therefore no State legislative assembly.

Sembilan where many urban constituencies had four to five times as many voters as the Malay rural ones during the 1969 election (Lukut: 3 556 ; Sungei Ujong: 15 934). The increase of the index for Selangor is misleading since the old index of 1969 includes the large conurbation of Kuala Lumpur whereas the new index of 1974 does not consider the area of the Federal Territory. In fact, the inhabitants of Kuala Lumpur - 55 percent of them are Chinese - have been deprived of their representation in the Selangor State Assembly, due to the transformation of power to Federal administration.

To restrict the influence of the Chinese in local politics all Local government elections for municipal, town and district councils have been suspended since almost a decade and the recently enacted "Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act, No. 124 of 1973" has completely abolished local authorities as an autonomous level within the three-tier system of administration for the next decades to come. This was because the Malay-dominated Federal and State governments were afraid that the majority of local government bodies might fall into the hands of the Chinese-based opposition. But to be fair, local government in Malaysia has always been the weakest link in public administration and was characterized by inefficiency, malpractices, corruption, mismanagement, neglectfulness and financial misappropriation.

On Federal level, a fictitious value of the DAUER - KELSAY index for the West Malaysian MPs shows a slight deterioration from 41.9 to 41.1. If the East Malaysian MPs would have been included the index sank far below 40. Under the Malaysia Agreement of 1963, an extraordinary strong weightage has been given to the Sabahan and Sarawakian Federal constituencies to ensure a proper representation in Parliament of these under-populated states. Most of the Sabahan constituencies have an electorate below 10 000 whereas the West Malaysian average is above 25 000.

In brief: The 1974 revision of Federal and State constituencies and their boundaries, after a period of 16 years, was aiming to give due consideration to demographic changes and large-scale population movements on

the basis of the 1970 census of population and housing. But a careful analysis of the delineation process reveals that the Election Commission actually has increased the rural-urban disparity. The voters in urban areas had been short-changed and the preconditions for representation of the Chinese community have been theoretically further diminished. According to the 1970 census of population, more than 70 percent of all West Malaysians are living in rural areas. Apart from racial considerations, Malaysian elections will be always decided in the padi fields, rubber smallholding or oil-palm estates, and no party in Malaysia ever could be successful to book substantial gains unless it has support from rural areas.

## 6. Qualifications for Voting

Citizenship or nationality of a country is one of the most fundamental requirements for being entitled to vote. In West Malaysia, all the 4.7 million Malays (other than Indonesians) are automatically and per definitionem citizens of the Federation; but it is estimated that among the 4 million Chinese and Indians of West Malaysia there are more than 250 000 permanent residents who are non-citizens or stateless persons and therefore not eligible for voting. The laws and regulations governing the acquisition of the Malaysian citizenship belong to one of the five "sensitive issues" whose public discussion or calling in question is prohibited by the recently enacted amendment to the Sedition Act.

Secondly, according to the British-based election system, the voluntary registration of voters is one of the basic prerequisites for the eligibility to exercise the right to vote on election day. The system of registration as well as the subsequent preparation of electoral rolls is one of the weakest and most inadequate areas of the Malaysian electoral system; but this is outside of the scope of this paper and more an administrative and political problem than a geographical one. But one fact remains that during the process of the 1974 revision of electoral rolls, a number of 300 000 eligible voters out of a total voting force of approximately 3.2 million in West



Malaysia has been struck off the rolls under the pretext to avoid double-registration in two constituencies simultaneously, but the high number of disqualifications is actually due to the application of false administrative techniques, and the majority of these disqualifications occurred in Chinese-dominated urban areas. For example, in the Kuala Lumpur Bandar constituency a number of 14 000 are missing from the electoral registers. The Chinese areas are the most affected by these irregularities, but it is certain that these omissions have not been done purposely to reduce the potential electorate of the Chinese population or to reduce the chances of opposition parties, since also a number of high-ranking officials from the Malay community and the government are among the victims.

Already PRESCOTT (1959) has pointed out that in any multi-racial or multi-ethnic states (like Malaysia, the Union of South Africa, or Rhodesia) particular attention of the politicians responsible must be attributed to prevent that the electoral qualifications do not restrict the voting power of one or more of the racial groups.

## 7. Election Situation

The actual election contest in West Malaysia was fought in the Chinese and Indian dominated areas whereas the majority of Malay candidates in predominantly rural areas were not challenged by opposition candidates.

On nomination-day, the ruling National Front coalition has won 47 Parliamentary and 43 State seats uncontested in areas its opponents dared not contest. Of the 47 Parliamentary seats only two were taken uncontested by Chinese candidates (Padang Serai and Ayer Hitam); and on State level only 6 out of 43 seats went to Chinese candidates unopposed (Kulim, Lunas, Tanah Rata, Bekok, Sri Lalang and Layang-Layang). All the Malay ministers and high party officials had an easy walkover whereas Chinese officials were engaged either in a straight or in a more-cornered fight.

The situation of the candidates' line-up for Parliamentary constituencies on nomination-day is given in figure 6. But for two exceptions, Malay

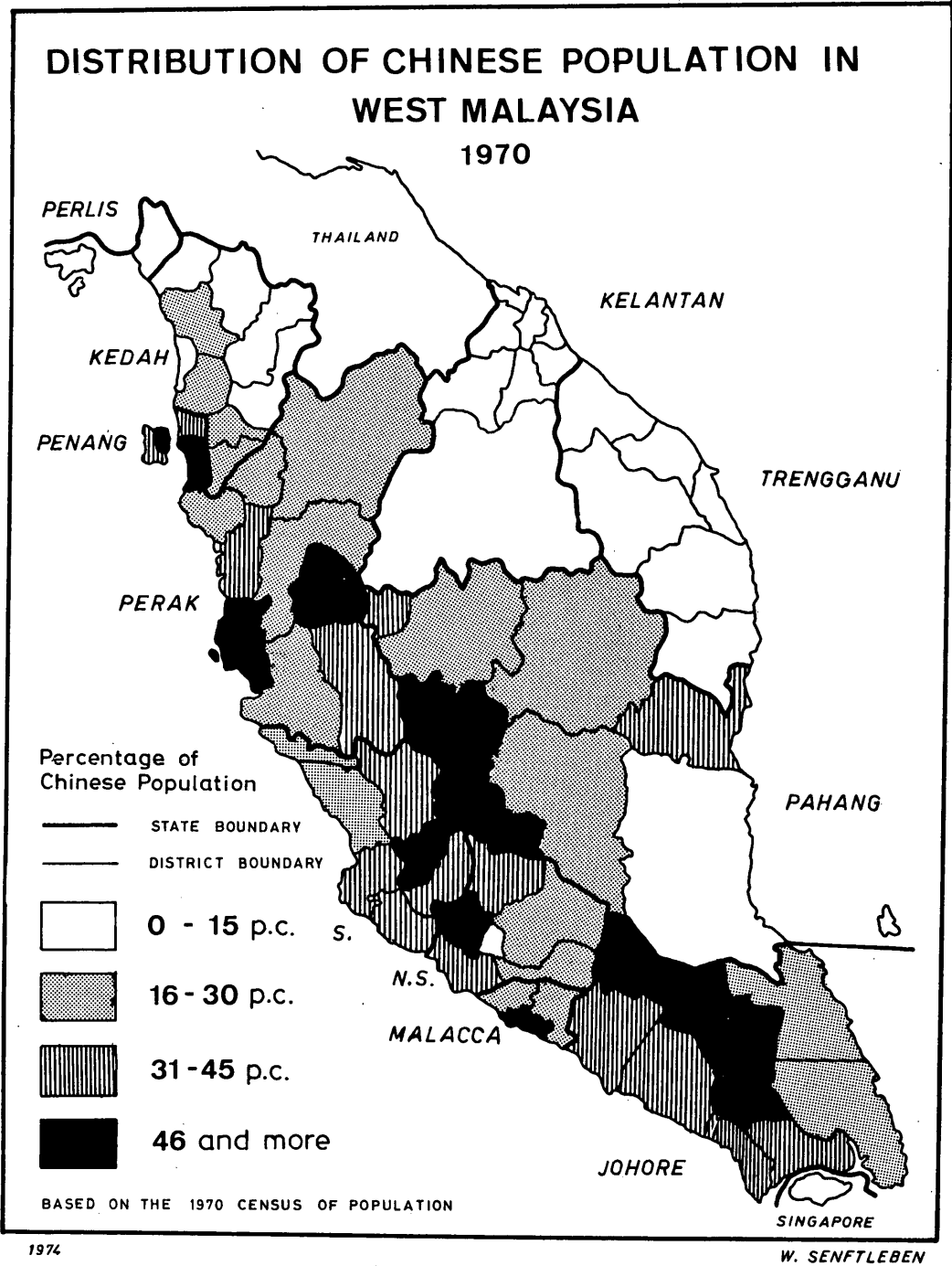


Figure 5

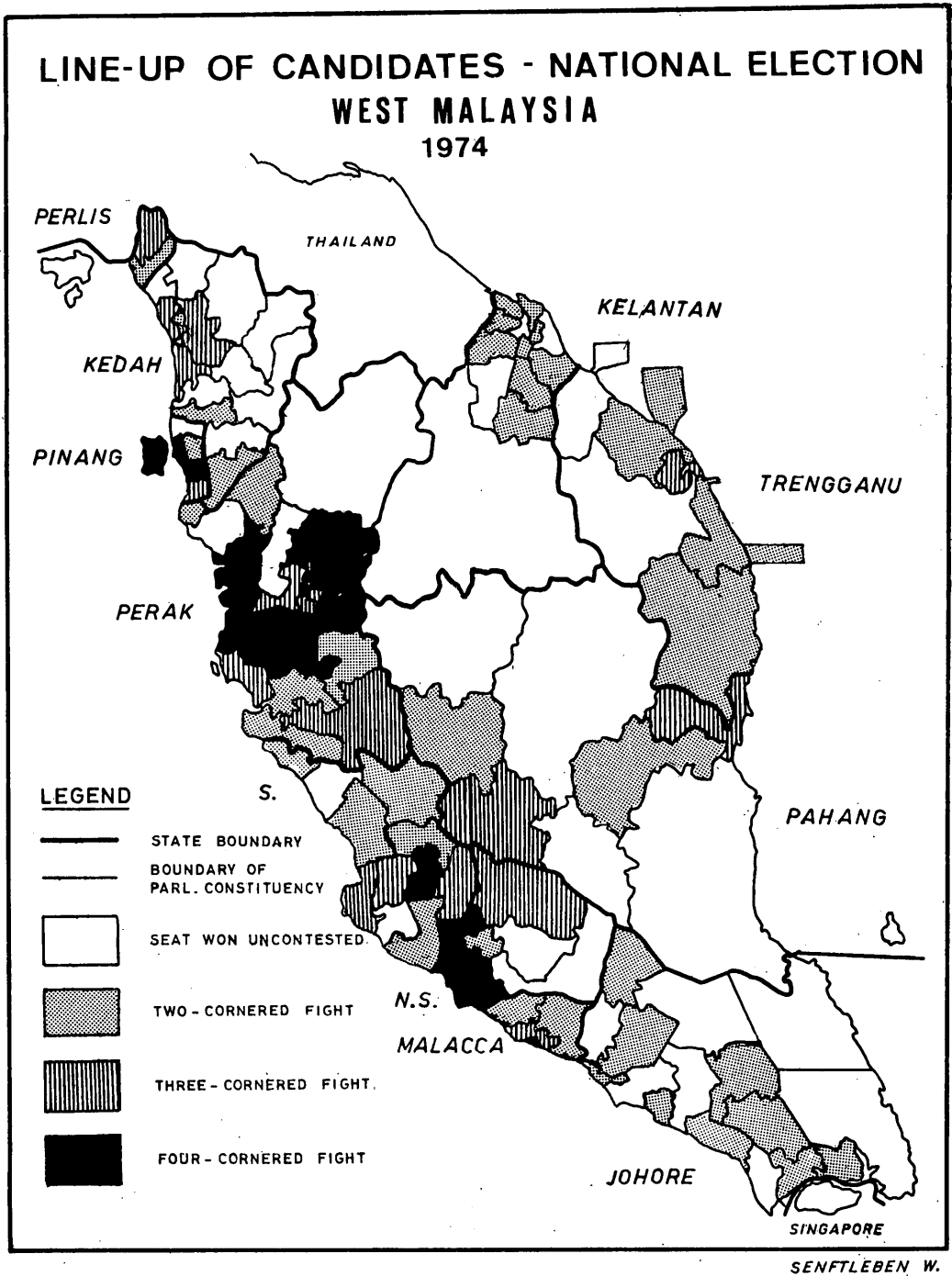


Figure 6

rural areas in Johore, Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan and Kedah were taken by the Barisan Nasional uncontested. Due to the coalition agreement between the National Front parties to nominate only one candidate in each constituency, this election resulted in an unusual high number of candidates standing as Independents, despite the fact that the government increased the election deposit three-fold. In the last twenty years none of the Independents ever had won any Parliamentary seat and most of the straight fights between the Front and Independents were located in the Malay areas of the East coast where Independents never had a show of winning. This is especially true in Kelantan where the "United Independents" (former PMIP dissidents) fought for the preservice of their orthodox Islamic principles. The other example is Trengganu where Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia tried unsuccessfully to gain sympathy among the rural Malay proletariat. Apart from this, the main election happenings took place in the Chinese areas of the densely populated West coast. Most of the constituencies with Chinese population were engaged in a three or four-cornered fight resulting in heavy vote-splitting among opposition parties which can be considered the main reason for the extremely poor performance of the Chinese and Indian-based opposition parties, like DAP, KITA and PEKEMAS which have their voters' reservoir exclusively in urban areas.

Chinese politics in Malaysia has been characterized by diversity and disunity since the early days of the first emergency (1948-60) which resulted in a multitude of different Chinese-based opposition parties many of which never left the stage of infancy.

The assumption that the majority of areas dominated by Chinese population would rather favour the opposition than their own Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) which had the negative reputation of being a party for rich towkeys rather than a spokesman of the Chinese community until recently, has no common justification. For instance, the State of Johore which has a forty-percent proportion of Chinese population, has always been loyal to the ruling Alliance which was able to capture all 16 Parliamentary and almost all State seats during the previous four General elections from 1959 till

1974. A similar situation is given in Pahang where the Chinese community always has supported the ruling establishment and in many cases even Malay candidates. To study the reasons behind the different regional disparities of Chinese voters favouring one side or the other, is rather a discipline of political psychology than human geography and is outside the scope of this paper.

A regional breakdown of the election trends in Chinese stronghold areas can be only summarized since shall be the topic for another research paper: In Penang, five of the nine Parliamentary constituencies were engaged in a four-cornered fight thus enabling the GERAKAN-dominated National Front coalition to win all Federal seats in the State. Besides Sarawak, the State of Perak presents the most interesting area for a spatial analysis of electoral trends and it was here where the main opposition party DAP made most of its gains at the expenses of the moribund People's Progressive Party (PPP) now with the National Front. The PPP, a regional party confined to the Kinta tin mining areas and dominated by the Seenivasagam brothers, rode in on Chinese chauvinism in the 1969 elections and has been now unseated by the same Chinese chauvinism. The DAP (formerly a branch of Singapore's PAP) was mainly fighting on "racial issues" (see plate 1) under the slogan of a "Malaysian Malaysia". In the Federal Territory which locates the second largest concentration of Chinese population in Malaysia, most of them more westernized and educated than in other parts of Malaya, the racial issue was kept in the background and it was more a personality battle.

The writer's statement that the Chinese community in West Malaysia is politically under-represented is exclusively in reference to the preconditions and qualifications for voting as mentioned before: The strong preponderance of Malay rural areas and the heavy weightage of the former over the Chinese urban areas is theoretically the reason behind this. On the other hand, the actual representation of the Chinese community in the legislative bodies is determined rather by party bosses of the Alliance (in consultation with the coalition partners) than by the electors. The present Malaysian

Table 7: The actual representation of the Chinese in Federal and State legislatures according to the 1974 election returns for West Malaysia

State	Percent. of Chinese populat. (1970)	Federal Parliament				State Assemblies			
		total number of seats	seats won by Chinese candidates			total number of seats	seats won by Chinese candidates		
			N. F.	Opp.	total		N. F.	Opp.	total
Perlis	16.2 %	2	—	—	—	12	2	—	2
Kedah	19.3 %	13	2	—	2	26	3	—	3
Kelantan	5.3 %	12	—	—	—	36	1	—	1
Trengganu	5.4 %	7	—	—	—	28	1	—	1
Pulau Pinang	56.1 %	9	5	—	5	27	10	4	14
Perak	42.5 %	21	5	4	9	42	6	8	14
Pahang	31.2 %	8	1	—	1	32	8	—	8
Selangor	46.3 %	11	4	1	8	33	7	2	9
Federal Terr.*		5	—	3		—	—	—	—
Negri Sembilan	38.1 %	6	1	1	2	24	5	2	7
Malacca	39.6 %	4	1	1	2	20	3	4	7
Johore	39.4 %	16	5	—	5	32	11	—	11
West Malaysia	35.4 %	114	24	10	34	312	57	20	77

Note : N. F. = National Front (Barisan Nasional)

\*) No State representation in the  
Federal Territory

Opp. = Opposition

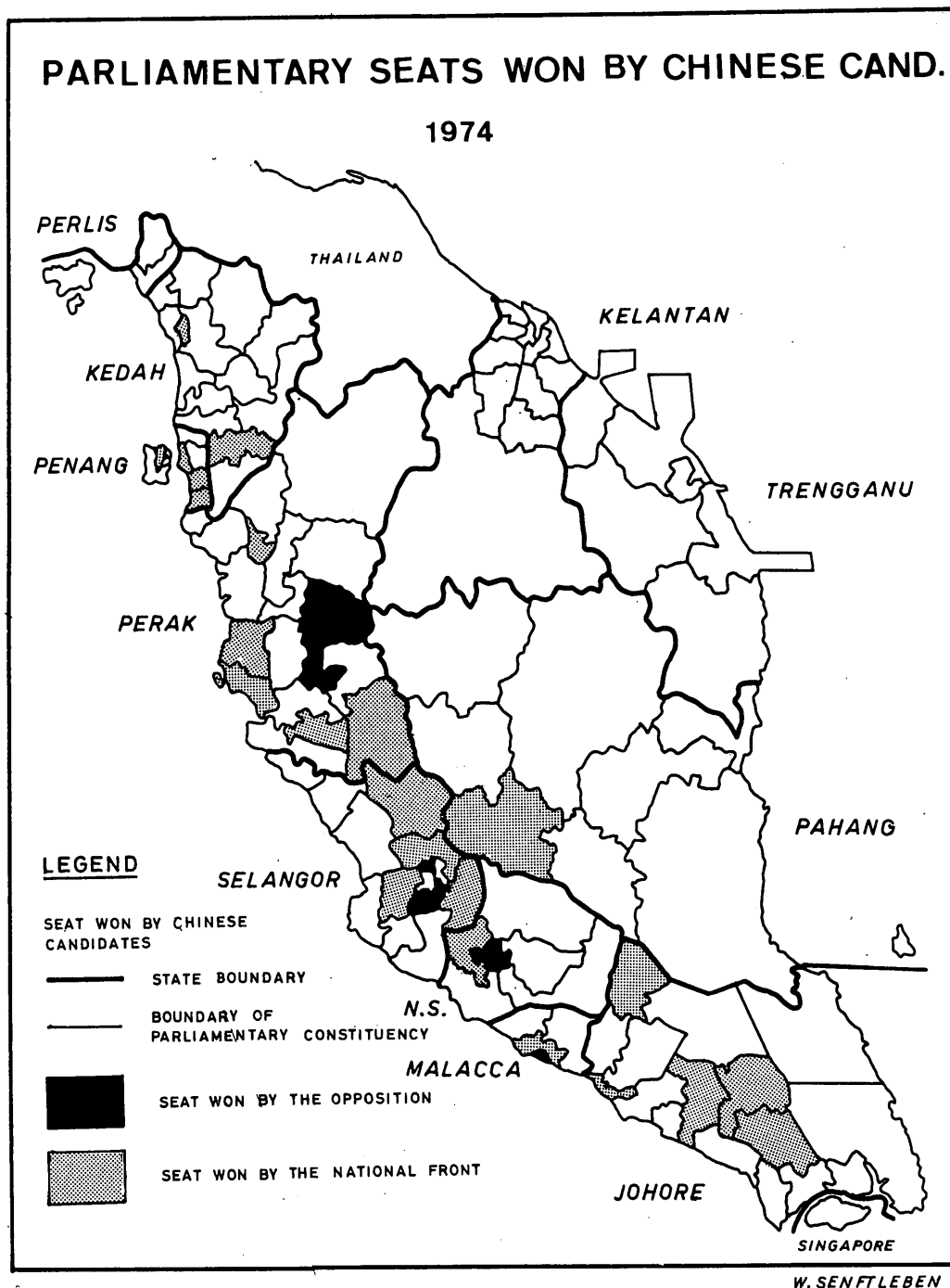


Figure 7

government follows a policy of adequate all-racial representation which becomes evident when looking at figure 7.

Thus, we have to distinguish clearly between the potential representativeness and the actual representation. Table 7 demonstrates that the present composition of Federal and State legislatures have a fairly good representation of Chinese deputies - a percentage which is slightly below the actual population ratio.

## 8. The Multi-racial Concept

One of the results of the 1974 General elections is the massive backing of the multi-racial concept propagated by the government which resulted in a landslide victory for the National Front. On the other side, opposition parties which based their policy and election strategy on similar multi-racial concepts badly failed to gain recognition. It certainly will take generations for the concept of multi-racialism which is the cornerstone for the "nation building" process to be fully understood by every Malaysian citizen and particularly by the Chinese. PEKEMAS and Parti Sosialis Rakyat, the only two opposition parties which tried to practise multi-racialism lost badly, and only the DAP which fought on communal issues could gain a limited acknowledgement among the Chinese voters in certain areas. But to characterize the DAP purely as a chauvinistic Chinese-based party (as it has been done by circles close to the government) might not do full justice to this party. For instance, it is interesting to note that in two constituencies of Perak, a Malay DAP-candidate was able to win the confidence of the predominantly Chinese electorate and defeat the Chinese opponent from the National Front (Guntong and Pasir Puteh State constituencies in Perak). PEKEMAS's experiment in Selangor in fielding a Malay candidate in the preponderantly Chinese area of Ampang and for PEKEMAS-president Dr. TAN CHEE-KHOON to stand in the Malay area of Gombak did not turn out a success.



The election menace by prominent members of the government towards the Chinese electorate was evident: The Malay component in future Parliament (UMNO and PAS) was almost sure to secure a viable majority to form a new government. Thus, every seat won by the opposition parties from the Front's non-Malay candidates would be one seat less for the Chinese in the government to be formed after the elections.

Another threat must be also taken seriously and is not in accordance with good democratic practice, namely that those constituencies and areas voting for opposition candidates will be left behind in the pace of development and will remain in economic standstill.

Despite all criticism it must be stressed that Malaysia is, besides India, one of the few developing countries where Westminster Parliamentary and Western democracy still is practised in the purest form. This study may stimulate to undertake more research in electoral geography with particular reference to multi-racialism, and Fiji, Guiana, Mauritius or Sri Lanka (Ceylon) besides Malaysia may provide excellent material for such research, apart from several African countries where plural societies are characterized by tribalism rather than racialism.



Plate 1 : Election poster of the opposition party DAP - The slogans translated mean: "The dacing destroys Chinese education; the rocket protects Chinese culture-determine to oppose the dacing".

(Note: "dacing" (Malay) means pair of scales and is the election symbol of the National Front parties; the rocket is the symbol of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) . The DAP was subsequently accused of Racialism and the election poster was ordered to be removed through police action under the pretext that it contravenes the Sedition Act) .

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