

LIVING ON THE PERIPHERY

Development and Islamization
among the Orang Asli in Malaysia



Nobuta Toshihiro

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Abbreviations

The names of the governmental and other bodies are fully spelled out when first mentioned and thereafter referred to by their abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used:

CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development
JHEOA	Department of Orang Asli Affairs
JKKK	Village Development and Security Committee
PERKIM	Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia
POASM	Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association
PPRT	Program for the Development of the Hardcore Poor
RISDA	Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority
UMNO	United Malays National Organization

Malaysian Currency

The Ringgit is the currency of Malaysia. One ringgit is divided into 100 sen. At the time of the research, a ringgit was worth about 50 Japanese yen: one U.S. dollar was worth about 2.7 ringgit. The abbreviation RM (Ringgit Malaysia) is used in the charts.

Preface

This book grew out of the doctoral dissertation I submitted to the Graduate School of Social Science, Tokyo Metropolitan University, in 2002. It has been revised and edited extensively for publication. The preliminary research for the study was carried out over two months from December 1995 to February 1996, and was funded by the Shibusawa Fund for Ethnological Studies. The main fieldwork was conducted over twenty-seven months from May 1996 to September 1998, and was funded by the Fuji Xerox Setsutaro Kobayashi Memorial Fund and the Asian Scholarship Program of the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture of Japan. The supplementary research was carried out over two weeks in March 2001, and was funded by Tokyo Metropolitan University.

The aim of this book is to elucidate the processes of development and Islamization among the Orang Asli from a social anthropological point of view. The Orang Asli are the indigenous minority in the Malay Peninsula, and have been marginalized in Malaysian history and society. In this book I try, as much as possible, to understand and consider the life of the Orang Asli and the world from their point of view.

In the early part of my fieldwork I was adopted as a member of an Orang Asli family and became deeply involved in their everyday lives and their religious problems. I gradually felt sympathy for those who were attempting to resist the state-led Islamization policy. As an ethnographer, as well as “a member” of their community, I felt the necessity of recording their everyday practices and writing down their behaviors and emotional responses to the Islamization processes.

I cannot mention all the people for whose help and encouragement I owe many thanks. First, however, I would like to thank the Orang Asli people, especially the villagers in Kampung Durian Tawar (which is a pseudonym) for their warm hospitality and support. Without their help, I could not have completed my fieldwork. In particular, I would like to thank Asat, who is my research assistant and my “brother”. And my special thanks go to Tok Batin, my “uncle”.



Plates 1 & 2: The adoption ceremony. I was adopted (*kedim*) as a “younger brother” (*adik angkat*, adopted younder sibling) of the daughter of a deceased sister of Batin Janggut (in striped shirt). Members of Batin Janggut’s matrilineal descent group participated in the *kedim* ceremony. I became a member of this group and was given the title of Panglima (warrior) and the village name of Rantau by Batin Janggut. In the village, I was addressed as (Panglima Rantau. [NT-1997]

For my research in Japan during my graduate school studies I would like to thank Professor Makoto Itoh (my supervisor), Professor Makio Matsuzono, Professor Yoshio Watanabe, Professor Kazuo Ohtsuka and Professor Satoshi Tanahashi at the Department of Social Anthropology, Tokyo Metropolitan University. Under their guidance, I learned how to think as a social anthropologist. For the periods during and after my fieldwork, I owe many thanks for the help and encouragement of the

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In relation to my stay as a student in Malaysia, I would like to thank Professor Hood Salleh, Professor Hasan Mat Nor and Professor Shamsul Amri Baharuddin at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Without their help and support I could not have continued my study and conducted my field research among the Orang Asli. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Mohamed Yusoff Ismail and his family for their warm hospitality and support. I also would like to thank Dr. Colin Nicholas for his appropriate advice as to the current political and economic situation of the Orang Asli. I thank Dr. Kazufumi Nagatsu and Dr. Naoki Soda for their useful contributions to our discussions about Malaysian society and politics.

It took quite a while before I was able to publish my book. In May 2002, on Professor Narifumi Tachimoto's suggestion, I submitted my original manuscript, written in Japanese, to the editorial committee of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. The book was published in Japanese by Kyoto University Press in December 2004 after about two years of extensive revisions based on the editorial committee's suggestions. I would like to thank Dr. Noboru Ishikawa and the anonymous referees.

After the publication of my book, I attempted many times to translate the book into English. However, because of my poor ability in English, the work did not progress well. In November 2005 I decided to apply to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to have my book published in English. My application was accepted in April 2006. I am deeply grateful to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for the "Grant-in-Aid for Publication of Scientific Research Results", which made this publication possible. In the process of translation, which took two years, the editors and translators at Kyoto University Press and Trans Pacific Press were always helpful to me.

I submitted the English manuscript to the editorial committee of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University in February 2007. I would like to thank Professor Yoko Hayami and the anonymous referees of the manuscript, who read it with great care and gave me thought-provoking comments and suggestions. Dr. Colin Nicholas, one of the referees, recommended that the editorial committee publish my

book in Malaysia. I am especially grateful to Dr. Nicholas for his kind consideration.

This edition of the book is published by COAC (Center for Orang Asli Concerns). I am very thankful to Dr. Colin Nicholas, Ms. Pua Sze Ning, and Ms. Jenita Engi for their good services in the process of preparing this book for publication. This edition has a new fine layout and many more photos.

The publication of this book in Malaysia was funded by the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. I wish to express my gratitude to the members of editorial committee of the National Museum of Ethnology for their kind considerations.

The comments and suggestions I received from Professor Tsuyoshi Kato, one of recommended referees of the editorial committee of the National Museum of Ethnology, were invaluable in rewriting the manuscript at the final stage of editing. Thanks to his comments and suggestions, this book is better than the one in Japanese.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, my parents-in-law and my sister's family for their support and encouragement. And my special thanks go to my wife, Tomomi, and my dear daughter, Shizuka. In particular, I would like to thank Shizuka for giving me a new opportunity to think about people living on the periphery.

March 2009
Kyoto

Prologue

Evolution of the Research Topic

This ethnographic study examines the impact of state-led development projects and Islamization on Orang Asli society, and the Orang Asli's reactions to these forces.

The Orang Asli are believed to be descendants of the first settlers on the Malay Peninsula. They are believed to have settled there earlier than the Malays, who are the core of the Bumiputra (meaning original settlers, literally “sons of the earth”).¹ The Malays claim political supremacy over the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia because of their earlier arrival in the country. Yet such claims conflict with the position they have taken with regard to the earlier settlers, the Orang Asli.² The question of where to position the Orang Asli in respect to national unity is of prime importance for the Malaysian government's Orang Asli policy. The government considers the most appropriate path to take is to classify them as Bumiputra in preparation for their eventual assimilation with the Malays.

The Orang Asli are marginal dwellers when seen from the central position of the nation-state. On the periphery, they have formed their own world and have existed relatively independently of the nation-state. The government in the center has been deploying various measures to integrate those people living on its margins. In this context, the development projects and the Islamization policy intended for the Orang Asli have become firmly entrenched as the mechanism for their integration into the nation-state.

This book discusses the development projects and the Islamization policy directed towards the Orang Asli. The issue of Islamization runs through the entire volume, along with issues arising from development projects. This book does not deal directly with the development projects aimed at the Orang Asli, but in discussing the socioeconomic state of a village we need to consider the aspect of development.

Kampung Durian Tawar (pseudonym), the village where I carried out my research, has become stratified along socioeconomic lines as a result of the development projects. I stress this because, in Kampung Durian Tawar, the social order established in response to the introduction of the state-led development projects in the 1970s has in turn been reorganized due to the impact of Islamization since the late 1990s. The lower economic segment of the village population has been targeted for Islamic conversion. The upper economic segment of the population has opposed Islamization in order to protect the social order established as a result of the development projects. It is important to note that both the development projects and Islamization, though implemented in different decades, have been imposed by a nation-state keen to see the Orang Asli integrated.

There is no shortage of problems arising from development projects and Islamization in the history of Kampung Durian Tawar. In short, anyone doing fieldwork in this tiny village in Malaysia at the end of the twentieth century would have been confronted by the problems caused by development projects and Islamization. I want to stress here that I had done no research into these problems before, but, by being there, I inevitably stumbled onto the topic of “development and Islamization among the Orang Asli”.

My initial study topic had been to examine the socioeconomic situation of a village and to learn about its relationship with the state-led development projects. My application to the Malaysian government for a permit to carry out research did focus on that aim, although I also wanted to investigate the survival strategies of the Orang Asli in multi-ethnic Malaysia. However, the state-led Islamization policy and the Orang Asli’s response were not included in my initial research objectives.

My experiences in the field engaged my research interest in Islamization, as well as in the development projects. In June 1996 I began my field research while living in an Orang Asli village, or, to be more precise, a village of the Temuan people, in the state of Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia. In the village in which I first lived, Kampung Baning (pseudonym), I began to acquire the unique language of the Orang Asli, which might be considered a Malay dialect, through attending the village primary school and playing with the children who lived in the dormitory adjacent to the school. I also attempted to mingle with the village community by frequenting the village shop and having rudimentary conversations with the villagers over a cup of tea. I gradually increased my local knowledge, in bits and pieces. When I thought the villagers were used to my presence, I began an interview survey of households.

I became accustomed to life there and began to understand the social structure of the village. However, due to various unforeseen circumstances, I had to change field locations. One such circumstance was that I became ill with urethral calculus, to the point of being hospitalized. After I was discharged from the hospital, I could not continue my research in Kampung Baning due to the fatigue from the operation and the fever.

Worse, while I was recuperating, a youth from next door, who was a troublemaker in the village, started to take out his frustrations by harassing me. He was frustrated because the village had ostracized him and his family because they had converted to Islam (his father was Orang Asli-Chinese and his mother was Malay). He vented his unhappiness by consuming alcohol and illicit drugs, by gambling, fighting and stealing, and by harassing me, the outsider. Being in the same age group (I was twenty-seven and he was in his early twenties), I tried hard to understand him in the very early stages of my research, but in the end it did not work out.³ It became too difficult to remain in Kampung Baning. This had a great impact on my subsequent research. In December 1996 I moved to Kampung Durian Tawar, the setting for this book.

When I made up my mind to change field locations, I wanted to leave Kampung Baning as quickly as possible. In a way, I felt depressed by a sense of failure. I was also becoming aware of the position of Islamic converts in Orang Asli society. In Kampung Durian Tawar I was adopted by a family so that I could be protected from any trouble I might encounter.⁴ The relatives were obliged to look after me as an adopted family member. I acquired an uncle, aunt, brothers, cousins, nephews and nieces. In Kampung Baning I had been just a researcher, an outsider to the villagers. They had no obligation to help me, even when I was in trouble.

I welcomed being adopted as a member of the village of Kampung Durian Tawar, but it restricted my movements as a researcher. I was adopted by a family who had not converted to Islam, so I was not welcomed by some converted families. The problems associated with Islamization were even more serious at this village, which had a population of about 400; converted Muslims made up some thirty members of them. This number includes those who converted during my stay. As from March 1997, tensions surrounding the Islamic converts began surfacing in the village.

Before beginning my research I did not really understand the seriousness of the problems the Orang Asli were having with Islamization, and had virtually no information on the subject. I gained knowledge as I carried out my research. Every time I heard about an incident involving

Islamic conversion, I found myself thinking about what Islam meant to the Orang Asli. I initially looked for written material on the subject, but finding any was quite difficult, due to the sensitivity of the issue. The Malaysian government does not welcome discussion on the Islamization of the Orang Asli.

I became interested in the attitudes of the Orang Asli who continued to resist Islamic conversion, particularly in today's Malaysia where Islam is overwhelmingly dominant. Refusing to be converted was not necessarily a wise socioeconomic strategy. Being converted and being able to enjoy equal rights with the Malays would seem to be a wiser, more rational strategy.

Yet they continued to resist conversion. Why, I wondered, when the benefits of becoming Muslim were right in front of their eyes, did they so stubbornly resist conversion to Islam? This was the question I found myself asking as a result of my fieldwork experiences. In this book I develop this question further and examine it through data gathered in the field, as well as through some written documents. The starting point for my book was, thus, not among written texts, but in the field.

Development and Islamization

In the insular Southeast Asian countries, development policies targeting the marginal areas have been extensive. The objective has been to integrate the marginal regions into the respective nation-states. The policies have brought about drastic social changes to marginal areas, increasingly integrating them socioeconomically and politically into the system of the nation-state.

In this book I describe various incidents that have taken place in response to the development projects in Malaysian villages, noting, in particular, that these alter not only economic conditions but also people's consciousness and even identity. As Adachi (1993) notes, people do not become aware of their "underdeveloped-ness" just because this best describes their condition, but because this is what they are told by others. It is also possible that some people, who initially accepted the argument for development, may have changed their minds after living through the projects.

In Kampung Durian Tawar those who have accepted the development projects criticize those who attain value from their traditional livelihoods (i.e. hunting and gathering, and day laboring). Conversely, those who have not accepted the development projects envy the economic affluence enjoyed by those who have accepted them. There are cases of anti-development

people who have converted to Islam (even though this is linked to the development), and pro-development people who have refused conversion (a situation not anticipated by the government).⁵

The cause of these phenomena lies in the fact that in Malaysia, where the state religion is Islam, the state-led development projects implicitly and explicitly carry religious connotations. Under the New Economic Policy, which has been followed since the 1970s and favors the Malays among the Bumiputra, being a Muslim is an unstated prerequisite for receiving economic benefits. As Chapter 2 shows, the government's Orang Asli policy since the 1980s has included in its economic development projects the clear aim of promoting conversion to Islam.

Although they have maintained their own unique society on the peripheral area of the larger society, Orang Asli autonomy has been undermined by state-led development projects and Islamization. This has created a situation that can be described as "internal colonialism" (Nicholas 2000: 233).

The response of the Orang Asli to Islamization under these circumstances is either to accept conversion to a world religion, or to refuse it. Of course, there are a myriad of options between these two. First, the Orang Asli may convert to Islam. While some genuinely convert, others do so only nominally. Second, going against the tide of Islamization, conversion to Christianity or another world religion is possible, and they do not need to convert to Islam. Here, too, the conversion can be genuine or just for the sake of convenience. Third, some convert to Islam for personal reasons, such as marrying a Muslim ("Marrying a Muslim but remaining non-Muslim" is not an option according to the national law of Malaysia, nor to Islamic law).

Refusing Islamic conversion, and therefore resisting Islamization, may seem difficult to understand for the proponents of Islamization. To resist Islam, the state religion, is seen as an act of defiance against the nation-state, and is politically very dangerous. The alternative – converting to Islam – opens the door to receiving government assistance and becoming part of the dominant ethnic group of the Malays. In these circumstances, it appears unwise not to convert to Islam and unreasonable to resist Islamization.

To be perfectly clear, the meaning I want to convey by the phrase "resisting Islamization" is evident in the following story that I heard. A man was being forced by the relatives of his wife (who had converted to Islam) to sign and to put his fingerprint on the paper to accept conversion. The converted people grabbed the man by the right arm, in order to

force him to sign and stamp his finger on the paper. The man desperately resisted. This man's determination is my starting point.⁶

The decision to convert or to resist conversion has brought about a division in the Orang Asli community. The ethnic classification of Orang Asli, used merely to describe a concept in opposition to the Muslim Malay population, includes a range of diverse people – from Muslim people very much like the Malays to non-Muslims who differ markedly from the Malays, and converts to non-Islamic religions. In some villages one group of people lives separately from the others as a result of conflict between them over religious matters. There are some instances where such divisions cross village borders. There are also splits between family members and relatives, which clearly show the seriousness of the problems caused by Islamization.⁷

A History of Orang Asli Studies

Early studies of the Orang Asli focused on aspects of their livelihood such as hunting and gathering, and swidden cultivation; their traditional belief system, including animism; their kinship organization and their social order; their mode of living as forest people; and so on. These studies treated the subject as a static entity, and have been criticized. More recently, studies focusing on the dynamic relationship of the Orang Asli with the nation-state are gaining in popularity. The research focus has shifted from the "traditional" mode of living to the contemporary way of life of the Orang Asli. Orang Asli scholars, for example, are becoming more interested in problems arising from inadequate land ownership, poverty and other social problems caused by the development projects and social changes.

Scholars are also more interested in the ethnic identity of the Orang Asli, and in other contemporary issues including their political rights. My period of field study coincided with the time when these discussions about the contemporary Orang Asli situation were taking place. In the following paragraphs I reflect on the history of studies of the Orang Asli.⁸

Writings about the Orang Asli date back to the early British colonial period (e.g. Anderson 1824, 1850; Newbold [1839] 1971; Logan 1847; Farve 1848; Mikluho-Maclay 1878; Maxwell 1880; Swettenham 1880, 1887; Borie 1887). These writings tended to be collections of fragmented descriptions based on each writer's experiences. Later, an increasing number of more detailed ethnographical reports appeared (e.g. Anandale and Robinson 1903; Skeat and Blagden 1906; Cerruti 1904, 1908; Evans 1923; Schebesta [1928] 1973; Noone 1936). However, apart from the works

of Evans and Noone, most were in essence reports of the writer's field trip experiences. As directors of the Perak Museum, Evans and Noone carried out research on a number of visits to different Orang Asli communities on the Malay Peninsula. Evans visited Negeri Sembilan (Evans 1915), the same setting for this book. Noone lived for a long period with the Orang Asli, and married an Orang Asli woman.

British colonial rule ended with the Japanese military invasion, and the surrender of the Japanese was followed by the Emergency period (1948-60). During this time of turbulence, virtually no research was conducted on the Orang Asli. Politically, however, this time of upheaval was most significant for the Orang Asli. It was during this time that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established. The first two directors of the department each conducted research on the Orang Asli (Williams-Hunt 1952; Noone, R.O.D. 1954). Williams-Hunt's *An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines* (1952) was written primarily as a guidebook on the Orang Asli for British Commonwealth soldiers.

Scholarly fieldwork studies increased in number after the independence of Malaysia, and were mostly carried out by social and cultural anthropologists. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, European and American, as well as Japanese, anthropologists conducted fieldwork studies (e.g. Needham 1964a; Dentan 1965, 1968; Benjamin 1967; Endicott 1974, 1979; Dunn 1975; Robarchek 1977; Laird 1978; Couillard 1980; Rambo 1982, 1988; Howell 1984; Gianni 1990; Roseman 1991; Jenning 1995; Nagata 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Kuchikura 1996; Maeda (Tachimoto) 2000). At the same time, Malaysian scholars were also carrying out fieldwork research (Carey 1976a; Baharon 1973; Hood 1974, 1978; Wazir 1981; Mohd. Tap 1977, 1990; Gomes 1982, 1986; Nicholas 1985; Hasan 1992; Ramle Abdullah 1993; Razha Rashid 1996; Williams-Hunt 1996; Zawawi 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Lye 1997, 2000, 2004).⁹

The Orang Asli have also become an ideal subject of study for anthropological fieldwork for universities in Malaysia. From the undergraduate level to the postgraduate level, the Orang Asli have been studied in different disciplines¹⁰ – proof that the Orang Asli are the nearest “other” in Malaysia to non-Orang Asli Malaysians, at least in the Malay Peninsula.

The objective of Orang Asli studies in post-independence Malaysia has been to compile ethnographic details of their society. Orang Asli society has often been mentioned as an ideal means of exploring the foundation of the Malay world. For example, Tachimoto conducted a field study into the Orang Hulu of the Melayu Asli group. While admitting

the limitations of his work as a “still picture”, he nonetheless presents the “family circle” – an important theoretical concept for Southeast Asia studies – by demonstrating that the Orang Asli society is a prototype of the Malay world (Tachimoto 2000: 7).

This book focuses on Orang Asli responses to the government’s national policies, and provides ethnographically detailed information about the inside workings of Orang Asli society. The focus here is on contemporary issues. This is because of the current predicament of the Orang Asli. It has become increasingly difficult to find in Orang Asli society the sort of cultural phenomena described in previous ethnographic studies. What we can more clearly see is the transformed society itself. Colin Nicholas, the coordinator of the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, which was established in 1989, describes the loss of traditional culture as “de-culturalization” (Nicholas 2000: 111). Partly because of this, a more contemporary focus on the relationship of the Orang Asli with the nation-state, rather than a detailed ethnographic focus, has become more common in Orang Asli studies since the 1990s (e.g. Zawawi 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Razha Rashid 1996; Nicholas 1994, 2000).

Nicholas (2000) points out that the study of the Orang Asli has shifted from a “traditional” ethnographical one to a discussion of issues that were once considered to be too sensitive and were thus avoided, such as the impact of development projects and policies, and political representation and indigenous rights, especially land rights. In these studies, the Orang Asli are not “other beings” to be objectified; their words are listened to and taken seriously. The focus of study has adjusted to what the Orang Asli themselves see and respond to in relation to government policies and the outside world.¹¹

Among the many contemporary issues concerning the Orang Asli, this book deals with Islamization and its links to state-led development projects. This is mostly because the location of my study happened to be in one of the areas experiencing these problems, but also because I came to realize that these problems vividly illustrate today’s Orang Asli society. All the problems and issues – such as social conflict and the collapse of social order in the villages due to division over Islamic conversion, the distortion brought about by Islamization coupled with the development projects, and the issue over the legal status of the non-Muslim indigenous people in the Islamic state of Malaysia – relate to “development and Islamization”.

The main subject of this book has been discussed widely from various perspectives and positions. Endicott (1979: 199-202) argued that most of

the forest resources the Orang Asli used, and the land they had owned, had been taken away from them as a result of forced exposure to the cash economy through forest development projects. Hood and Hassan (1982) claimed that the Orang Asli had been transformed into settled farmers because of the cash economy and a shortage of land. In contrast to these arguments, Baharon, the former director of the Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs), insisted that it would be possible for them, like farmers around them, to be integrated into the national economy (he based this on his research experience in Kampung Durian Tawar).¹² In Kampung Durian Tawar, he reasoned, the village economy had already come to rely on the market economy, and it had adapted well.

Jimin (1992), the successor to Baharon in the position of JHEOA director, also cited Kampung Durian Tawar as a successful example. Of course, their opinions heavily reflected their political stance as directors of the JHEOA. It is remarkable that two JHEOA directors mentioned Kampung Durian Tawar village as a successful example. This book re-examines the JHEOA's claim, using concrete, empirical data. This will no doubt cause some unease in discussions among government officials about development projects and the Orang Asli.

The Islamization of the Orang Asli and its associated problems have not been discussed in any real depth in Orang Asli studies. Descriptions of the reality of Islamization emerged only in the late 1990s, when discussion of its impact took place in a more critical light (Dentan et al. 1997: 142-50; Nobuta 1999a; Nicholas 2000: 98-102).

One can think of many reasons for the paucity of analytical studies carried out on the Islamization of the Orang Asli. These include timing, politics, lack of interest on the part of academics and "silence" on the part of the Orang Asli. By timing, I mean that the villagers were not being subjected to intense Islamization in the period when the studies were carried out. Politically, the subject is too sensitive to be discussed openly in Malaysia. Scholars may not have been very interested in Islamization from the start, or, at best, may have been reluctant to address the issue. The problems may not have been apparent because the Orang Asli themselves kept quiet and refrained from action, due to the political nature of Islamization.

It is very difficult to identify the reality of Islamization among the Orang Asli. Islamic studies students at universities in Malaysia have discussed Islamic missionary activities and Islamic conversion (for example, in undergraduate academic papers).¹³ However, the subject is always seen

from the missionaries' viewpoint – their interest in the Orang Asli is only as successful examples of Islamization and only Muslim Orang Asli are examined. These studies do not consider the viewpoint of the Orang Asli and their reactions to Islamization.

In this book, Islamization in progress among the Orang Asli is understood to be a process of integration of the marginal periphery into the nation-state. The number of Islamic converts among the Orang Asli is on the increase; if this trend continues, eventually most of them will become Muslims. The Orang Asli as an ethnic group might disappear and become Malay. Should this day arrive, this book may be considered to be a primary research-based historical record of the Islamization of the Orang Asli.

A Brief Summary

This book is an ethnographic record of a community whose population, tightly knit through kinship, has been torn apart by pressures from the outside world, resulting in strife, conflict, breakdown and reconciliation. External pressure is not limited only to the present day. It has affected the community one way or another since at least the period of British colonialism. From the Orang Asli community's point of view, the development projects and Islamization, as apparatuses for national integration, are part of an historically continuous pressure exercised by the outside world.

I managed to get first-hand experience of the community response to Islamization. My experience could be incidental, but when one considers the nature of Islamization as the apparatus for national unity, it could be a logical necessity. From a broader perspective, what happens in an Orang Asli village in Malaysia at the end of the twentieth century should be examined with regard to the Orang Asli's historical and stratified relationships with the outer world.

The people living in the community are, in a sense, the people who just happened to be classified as "Orang Asli" as a matter of historical coincidence. In order to grasp what is happening to them, we need to understand the special circumstances and situations associated with the Orang Asli.

In Part I of this book I discuss the Orang Asli in the macro system, focusing on their history and the government's policies towards them. The Malaysian government has carried out its development projects and Islamization in the name of national unity, and has targeted these at the Orang Asli. Islamization, intended by the government to function as the

apparatus of integration and assimilation of these marginal people into the nation, has not functioned as anticipated.

In Parts II and III, I develop a micro-level discussion set in the village. We see what the villagers on the ground do, without losing focus on the position of the Orang Asli in the macro structure. In Part II we see the impact of external pressure on the community, in the name of the development projects. Part III looks at the effect of Islamization and how the community has responded. What I stress in the second part is that Kampung Durian Tawar has become stratified since the development projects were initiated. That is to say, there has been an economic divide between those who accepted the projects and those who either did not accept them or were excluded from them.

The socioeconomic changes brought about as a result of the projects have created splits and disharmonies in the tiny community of Kampung Durian Tawar. As I explain in Chapter 7, what I noticed was the way those who have accepted the logic of development use the forest resources. Even though they have been overwhelmed by the logic of development, they subjectively apply it to their environment. That attitude reminds me of the way they employ their customs (*adat*) in their lives.

Part III focuses on how the people respond to Islamization. Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 reveal – mainly through the villagers' thoughts on *adat* – that Kampung Durian Tawar is not a monolithic entity. The pressure of Islamization on the Orang Asli is overpowering, but even under these circumstances there are people who fight desperately to maintain their own identity. Their response may seem trivial and minor, but it should not be overlooked. Chapters 10 and 11 show the responses to Islamization.

Chapter 12, the concluding chapter, is based on my experience of revisiting Kampung Durian Tawar and examines the people's responses to Islamization. This chapter addresses the fundamental reasons for their protest against the state-led Islamization. The relationship between the stratified order created as a result of the development projects and Islamization is also considered.

Notes

1. The category of Bumiputra includes the Malays, Orang Asli (including non-Muslims), indigenous people (including non-Muslims) in Sabah/Sarawak and so on. This category excludes the Chinese and Indian Muslims (Horii 1989: iv). For a comprehensive discussion on the political and identity issues of the Bumiputra and non-Bumiputra, see Shamsul (1996a; 1996c).
2. Malay politicians consider the existence of the indigenous Orang Asli as a nuisance. Their existence means that the Malays are “migrants and latecomers” (Mohd. Tap 1990: 13). This is not openly discussed for fear of undermining the Malay’s privileges.
3. When I revisited Kampung Durian Tawar in March 2001, I was told this youth had died in a motorcycle accident. Some said he was drunk and ran off the road, while others said he was beaten to death in a fight with some Indians. Whatever the actual cause, I was told that he was found dead one morning on the roadside with his face covered in blood.
4. Baharon, who did his research in the early 1970s, also went through family adoption (*kedim*) and became a “little brother” (*adik angkat*) of Batin Janggut (pseudonym), and was given the title (*gelaran*) of Panglima Tunggal (Baharon 1973: 31–34). *Kedim* is also practised among the Malays (cf. Swift 1965: 21, 137, 175). Incidentally, Baharon is a Malay originating from the state of Kelantan. I was adopted as a “little brother” of the daughter of a deceased sister of Batin Janggut and given the title of Panglima (warrior) Rantau. In the village I was addressed as Rantau.
5. A number of scholars have pointed out that some Orang Asli refuse to be converted to the Islamic faith even though, through the development projects, they have become settled farmers, just like the Malays, and have adopted the Malay culture (Carey 1976: 201; Dentan 1968: 103; Hood 1974: 175).
6. I need to point out here that the Orang Asli in Kampung Durian Tawar were the marginalized and the oppressed. In the village non-Muslims were marginalized and oppressed by people from the outside world (mostly Malays) and were socially discriminated against. In Malaysia having no religion is a good enough reason for discrimination. When

- thinking about these situations, it may be true that they resisted the oppressors because they were the oppressed. Moreover, their resistance is actually aimed at the nation-state that represents the oppressors.
7. In this book, because I am dealing with Islamization, some may argue that I needed to examine Islamic studies carried out in Southeast Asia. However, I felt this was of secondary importance. It is understood that there has been a rise in interest in Islam in Southeast Asia in recent times. The social, political and economic aspects of Muslims in Southeast Asia have been studied by anthropologists and others (e.g. Bowen 1993; Hefner and Horvatic 1997; Hefner 2000; Pelez 2004). Some of the discussions have included the issue of Islamic practices and the opinions of “ordinary Muslims”, and the “Islam versus tradition” issue arising from Islamization at the village level (Pelez 1997; Rossler 1997). This book departs from the typical studies of Muslims. Unlike studies on Muslims that focus on “Muslim society” (for example, the Malay community), this book is, like Hefner’s work on the “Hinduists” in Java (Hefner 1985), about a “non-Muslim society”. This book is distinctive in that it deals with the Islamization of a “non-Muslim society”.
 8. Concerning the history of Orang Asli studies, Lye Tuck-Po compiled a comprehensive and annotated bibliography (Lye 2001).
 9. Orang Asli studies based in Malaysia were initially carried out mostly by Malay scholars, but more recently some studies have been conducted by the Orang Asli themselves (e.g. Juli Edo 1990). As it has become more difficult to obtain a study permit, Orang Asli studies based in Malaysia are increasing in number.
 10. There are many dissertations based on fieldwork done by students at Malaysian universities such as Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and supervised by professors specialized in Orang Asli studies (such as Gomes, Nagata, Hood, Hasan). (For example, Abdul Malik 1977; Abd. Razak 1986; Bustami 1980; Chan 1995; Ho 1994; Jaharah 1974; Juli Edo 1990; Khadizan and Abdul Razak 1974; Khoo 1991; Koh 1978; Lee 1976; Norsiah 1984; Omar 1978; Osman 1994; Rajmah 1971; San 1994; Shamsul et al. 1972; Siti Nazly 1993; Soh 1980; Tek 1994; Uma 1995; Zainab et al. 1972; Zainudin 1977).

11. This is not only occurring on an academic level but also in society, with the voices of Orang Asli people increasingly being heard and their social movements becoming more visible.
12. Baharon joined JHEOA in 1963 and was appointed its director in 1969 (Baharon 1973: 2).
13. Examples can be found in, for instance, bachelor theses at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. As examples, see Abdullah Muhammad (2000); Ahmad (1984); Burhanuddin (1987); Faridah (1987); Hussein (1986); Karusin (1984); Mahi Din (1983); Nafisiah (1985); Nor Fariza (1994); Fasnida (1991); Rosnida (1991); Rohima (1988); Ruslan (1991); Siti Rohana (1984); Zainuddin (1995).

PART 1



An Outline of the Orang Asli

PART 1

An Outline of the Orang Asli

Part I discusses the characteristics of the Orang Asli and the Orang Asli policy. The Orang Asli comprise approximately 100,000 people – less than 1% of the population of Malaysia, which totaled approximately 24,000,000 during my fieldwork period (1996-98). The Orang Asli form a minority that is situated at the periphery of the three mainstream ethnic groups in Malaysia: the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. Although the Orang Asli tend to be forgotten in this ethnic context, the Orang Asli form the focus of political and economic interests, as well as academic interest, because of their unique existence. Specifically, during the Emergency period (1948-60), the British Commonwealth forces showed a great interest in the Orang Asli because of military and strategic considerations and provided legal provisions for them. The Malaysian government initially



Plate 3: Youths watching television. They are watching the promotional videos (VCDs) of Orang Asli bands. Prior to this, they watched the English Premier League. [NT-2007]

retained the paternalistic policies of the British colonial government, but has gradually changed their significance and substance as a result of its increasing Islamization.

The government's Orang Asli policies have been put into practice independently of the expectations of the Orang Asli themselves. On the surface, the Orang Asli appear to be tossed about by the almost capricious policies. They also look as though they have lived without having anything to do with the policies. However, it is necessary to have a full understanding of the history of the Orang Asli and the policies towards them in order to comprehend the current situation; the Orang Asli are now in a position in which they cannot ignore these policies. They have no choice but to face the unilateral policies.

Chapter 1

Forest, Development and Islamization

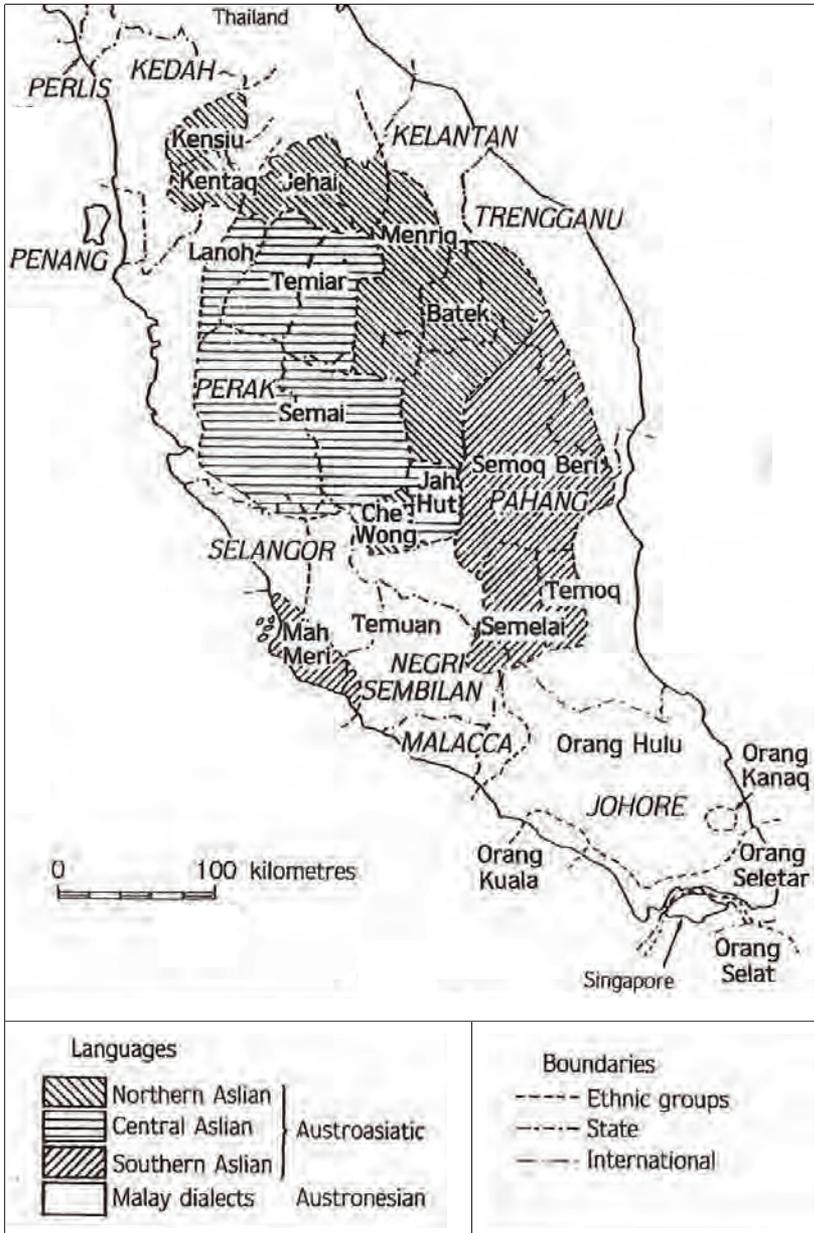
Who are the Orang Asli?

Orang Asli is a generic name given to the indigenous people living on the Malay Peninsula. Eighteen ethnic subgroups fall into this category, which can be classified into three groups – the Negrito,¹ the Senoi² and the Melayu Asli³ – according to their language, livelihood and administrative purposes. The term Orang Asli is a Malay translation of the English word “aborigine”, with *orang* meaning “human” and *asli* meaning “original” or “traditional”. According to the JHEOA, there were 92,529 Orang Asli as of 1996. They are a minority because they make up just 0.5% of the national population. The distribution of the Orang Asli and subgroups is presented in Figures 1 and 2; Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the demographic compositions during the British colonial period and following the independence of Malaysia.

As Nicholas (2000: 6) has pointed out, the Orang Asli did not exist as an ethnic entity before 1960 (i.e. before Malaysian independence) or, to be more precise, the various indigenous peoples of the Malay Peninsula did not see themselves as a homogeneous group.⁴ The Malaysian government began officially using the term Orang Asli in 1966 (Mohd. Tap 1990: 31; Dentan et al. 1997: 66-67). Before then, the Orang Asli were variously described as the Biduanda, Jakun, Sakai, aborigines and by other terms. These terms used during British rule are now considered derogatory.⁵ In this book, for the purpose of convenience, the term Orang Asli is used even when discussing these people prior to 1966.

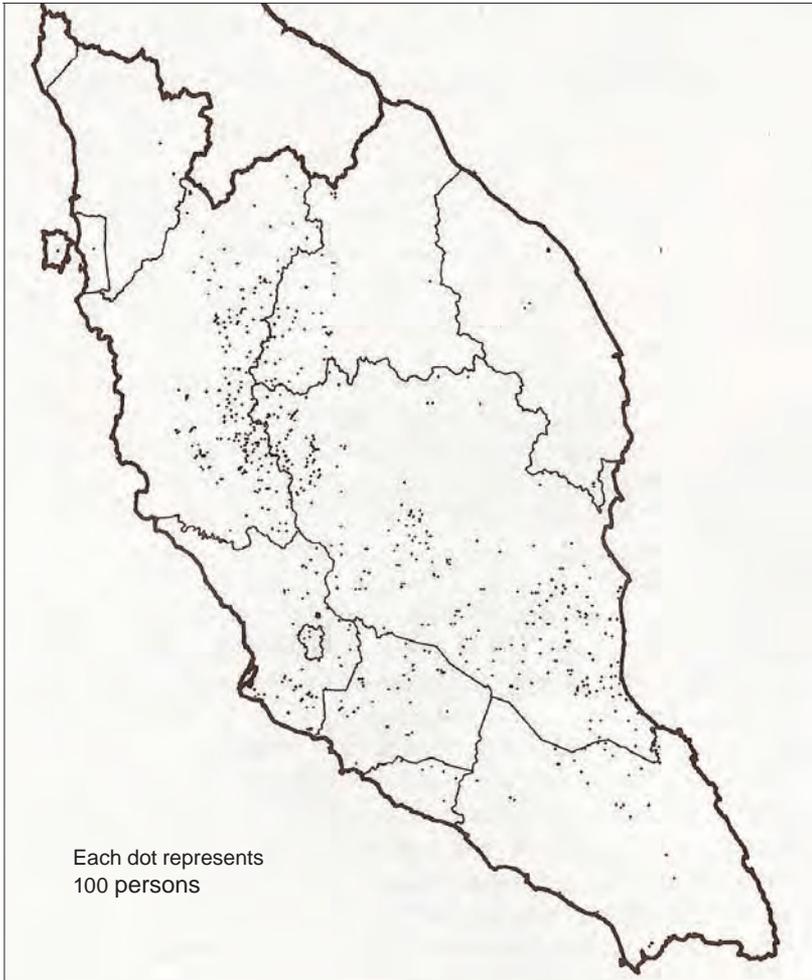
The Orang Asli do not identify themselves according to their individual subgroups, such as the Semai, Temiar or Temuan, but as Orang Asli (although this was originally not a self-designated term). For this reason, also, I use the Orang Asli term in this book.

Figure 1
Subgroups of the Orang Asli



Source: Nicholas 2000: xxv (based on Benjamin 1985)

Figure 2
Distribution of Orang Asli villages



Source: Nicholas 2000: 50

The Orang Asli were traditionally engaged in hunting and gathering and swidden cultivation, but their way of life has changed drastically. This is due to changes in the forest environment caused by development, and because of the government's policies encouraging settled farming and relocation, and related changes in the local economy. Despite the widely held perception of the Orang Asli as hunter-gatherers and swidden cultivators, the Malaysian government does not sufficiently recognize their

Table 1
The population change of the Orang Asli during the British colonial period

State	Male					Female					Total								
	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1947	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1947	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1947	
Pinang	12	....	....	....	....	29	22	....	....	....	....	39	34	....	....	....	....	....	68
Malaka	59	43	48	18	40	121	49	39	39	21	50	120	108	82	87	39	90	241	241
Perak	3,127	4,338	6,767	6,339	4,901	5,377	2,652	3,644	5,966	5,465	4,461	4,831	5,779	7,982	12,733	11,804	9,362	10,208	10,208
Selangor	682	959	1,245	1,265	1,285	1,559	542	916	1,112	1,101	1,108	1,348	1,224	1,875	2,357	2,366	2,393	2,907	2,907
Negeri Sembilan	216	742	925	686	784	964	231	635	839	643	663	862	447	1,377	1,764	1,329	1,447	1,826	1,826
Pahang	....	3,079	5,458	6,323	7,649	6,852	....	2,864	4,906	5,675	6,955	6,321	2,032	5,943	10,364	11,998	14,604	13,173	13,173
Johor	....	....	534	531	353	727	....	....	438	475	302	662	....	....	972	1,006	655	1,389	1,389
Kedah	....	....	58	42	124	100	....	....	47	37	85	82	....	....	105	79	209	182	182
Kelantan	....	....	851	2,233	1,606	2,426	....	....	832	1,521	1,413	2,143	....	....	1,683	3,754	3,019	4,569	4,569
Terengganu	....	....	....	33	30	88	....	....	....	40	43	86	....	....	....	73	73	174	174
Total	4,096	9,161	15,886	17,470	16,772	18,243	3,496	8,098	14,179	14,978	15,080	16,494	9,624	17,259	30,065	32,448	31,852	34,737	34,737

Compiled from Nobuta 1999b:189

Table 2
The population change of the Orang Asli after the independence of Malaysia

Subgroups	1960	1965	1969	1974	1980
Negrito					
Kintak	256	76	122	103	103
Kensiu	126	76	98	101	130
Jahai	621	546	702	769	740
Mendriq	106	94	118	121	144
Batek	530	339	501	585	720
Lanoh	142	142	264	302	224
Subtotal	1,781	1,273	1,805	1,981	2,061
Senoi					
Temiar	8,945	9,325	9,929	10,586	12,365
Semai	11,609	12,748	15,506	16,497	17,789
Che Wong	182	268	272	215	203
Jah Hut	1,703	1,893	2,103	2,280	2,442
Semaq Beri	1,230	1,418	1,406	1,699	1,746
Mah Meri	1,898	1,212	1,198	1,356	1,389
Subtotal	25,567	26,864	30,414	32,633	35,934
Melayu Asli					
Temuan	5,241	7,221	8,631	8,698	9,449
Semelai	3,238	1,391	2,391	2,874	3,096
Temoq	51	52	100	...*1	...*1
Orang Hulu	6,786	7,331	8,995	8,719	9,605
Orang Kanak	38	40	40	36	37
Orang Seleter	252	290	277	374	497
Orang Kuala	936	1,259	1,480	1,612	1,625
Subtotal	16,542	17,584	21,914	22,313	24,309
Total	43,890	45,721	54,133	56,927	62,304

Compiled from Nobuta 1996b:189

* 1 The listed numbers for the Temoq are given where available, as they were counted as Jakun (then known as Orang Hulu), along with Orang Hulu. As a result, there may be a discrepancy in the total.

land rights.⁶As a result, when the government launches large development projects (such as dams, airports, universities, golf courses, highways, recreation parks and resorts, oil palm plantations, housing and commercial townships, logging concessions, national parks and conservation areas, industrial centers, and pulp and paper mills), the Orang Asli have almost always been forced to relocate, receiving only a pittance as compensation. It is absolutely certain that such development projects do not support the socioeconomic development of the Orang Asli (Nicholas 2000: 42).

The Orang Asli face numerous problems, such as economic hardship as a result of difficulties in adapting to the changes in their environment and livelihood, discrimination from the Malays and others in the wider population, and limited legal and political rights symbolized by their lack of land rights.⁷

The Malaysian government's integration policy for the Orang Asli departed from the British colonial model of protection and separation. Once the Islamic resurgence movement was in full swing, the assimilation of the Orang Asli into Malay society and conversion to the Islamic faith became official policy. The Orang Asli, seen as animistic and without religion, were once targeted for conversion to Christianity by European and American missionaries,⁸ but are now expected to convert to Islam. The Muslim population among the Orang Asli has been on the increase, especially since the 1980s, due to the government's Islamization policy. But the traditional discriminatory view of the Orang Asli as pagans is deep-seated among some of the Muslim Malay majority. Meanwhile, there is also a widespread distrust among the Orang Asli of the Malay population. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that the assimilation policy (or the integration of the Orang Asli into Malaysian society, including their conversion to Islam) has been successful.

Temuan: A Group under Study

The primary focus in this book is the Temuan, a Melayu Asli subgroup.⁹ Development of Temuan land began early in the twentieth century. In particular, the rubber boom accelerated the rate of forest clearances. The Temuan dwelling in the lowland areas were forced to move to the hillsides, the forest edges and the coastal regions (Dunn 1977: 86).¹⁰ Today, most Temuan communities live on the fringes of the forests: they are not deep forest dwellers. A typical Temuan community can be found on the edge of the forest reservations, surrounded by rubber and oil palm plantations, Malay villages, abandoned tin mine sites, sites set aside for development projects and so on. Once their main source of livelihood came from swidden cultivation of rice (grown in a dry field), corn and

Table 3
The population of the Orang Asli (in 1996)

State	Negrito			Senoi			Melayu Asli					Total							
	Kensiu	Kintak	Lanoh	Jahai	Mendriq	Batek	Terniar	Semai	Semaq Beri	Che Wong	Jah Hut		Mah Meri	Temuan	Semelai	Jakun	Orang Kanak	Orang Kuala	Orang Seletar
Kedah	180																		180
Perak	30	227	359	740			8,779	16,299		4									26,438
Kelantan	14	8	309	131	247		5,994	91											6,794
Terengganu					55				451										506
Pahang				14	658		116	9,040	2,037	381	3,150		2,741	2,491	13,113				33,741
Selangor							227	619		12	38	2,162	7,107	135	157		10	5	10,472
Negeri Sembilan							6				5	12	4,691	1,460	14				6,188
Malaka												7	818	6					831
Johor										6		4	663	11	3,353	64	2,482	796	7,379
Total	224	235	359	1,049	145	960	15,122	26,049	2,488	403	3,193	2,185	16,020	4,103	16,637	64	2,492	801	92,529

Source: The 1996 population census, JHEOA

cassava (*Manihot dulcis*), but since the mid-1960s their livelihood has been provided by rubber tapping.

A Temuan village was once described as an “island” in an “ocean of development” (Dunn 1977: 83-84). Going from one “island” to another “island”, the Temuan visited their relatives on foot, on bikes and buses, and now do so on motorcycles and in cars. For them, everything along the way – the sites for development projects, the cities and towns, and the Malay settlements – are an “ocean of development”. Left untouched by the wave of development, the Temuan villages are “islands” scattered in this “ocean of development”. Malay communities, as well as Chinese and Indian communities, surround the Temuan communities. In this respect, the Temuan communities differ from Orang Asli communities set deep in the forest. Their contact with the outside world is a daily routine. Once the Temuan become dispersed throughout the surrounding society, their identity may be weakened.

The Temuan are encroached upon by different societies, which has instigated moves to strengthen their identity. The sense of crisis drives them to consciously hold on to their identity, otherwise they would be swamped by the wider world. The identity they seek is not Temuan but Orang Asli identity. The more threatening the identity crisis becomes due to Islamization and other encroachments, the stronger the Orang Asli consciousness will become.

Orang Asli Identity as Forest People

The Orang Asli have collected forest products since as early as the fifth century, and have played a significant role in trade networks on the Malay Peninsula (Dunn 1975: 108-09). They were forest settlers with skills and experience in forest dwelling. The trade network in which the Orang Asli took part as forest resource collectors is believed to have operated continuously between the establishment of the Melaka Sultanate in the fifteenth century, or even earlier, and the beginning of the British colonial rule in the mid-nineteenth century (Gomes 1986: 5). Forest resources collected by the Orang Asli were exported overseas through the patron-client relationship they had with the Malays. Traditionally, the forest was the primary living zone of the Orang Asli; it was an indispensable forest resource in their economic life. The forest provided them with many and varied products, as well as the land needed for their swidden cultivation. But the forest development and the forest clearances under the National Forestry Act and other official development policies have severely restricted the Orang Asli's access to the forest.¹¹ The Orang Asli have lost their “forest rights” (Mohd. Tap 1990: 45).

Different Worlds

When I started my fieldwork in Kampung Durian Tawar, I felt that I was out of place because the world the villagers lived in and experienced resembled mine but was not the same. We were sharing the same space and time in the village, but I could not help but sense a gap. After having spent some time living and conversing with them, I began wondering if their viewpoint may be fundamentally different from mine. The main characteristic of their worldview is that they continue to see the world, villages, towns, cities and the state from the point of view of the forest.

I felt this gap between us more clearly when some villagers and I went together to Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. Looking at the roads and buildings, I was conversing with them while thinking, “This is such and such building; that road leads to such and such”. Meanwhile, they talked about the plants and trees growing wild in high mounds in the city. They were saying, for instance, “Oh, look, there is a *petai*, that is a *petai* tree”, and “It is amazing to see one of those [trees] here”. We were looking out at the same view but they were seeing something completely different from what I was seeing. While I was differentiating one building from another, one road from another, they were looking at the forest and distinguishing one tree from another. To me, the forest is nothing but a single green-colored world. In contrast, to them the urban concrete landscape of roads and buildings is one undistinguishable world of gray.

Here is another example. I often had the opportunity to talk with the villagers in a forest hut (*pondok*). I also talked with them in a farm shed, situated away from the village. In these settings, they never failed to criticize the Malays for their racist behavior. For example, they criticize the Malays who sold the Orang Asli to the Japanese military during the occupation, and the Malays who took them as slaves and committed rape and pillage against them. They also criticized Islamization, and complained about the politicians and the government promoting the development and destruction of the forests. Surprisingly, I found them to be more opinionated when they were in the forest. I hardly ever heard them talk in this way while in the village. In the village, they would respond if I asked for an opinion, but in the forest they talked far more spontaneously and openly.

I concluded that the gap between us seemed to stem from our different perceptions of the world. For them, the forest is the center of their world. Sometimes the village may be included in this, but the city is outside it. Meanwhile, for me, the urban environment with its city systems and the nation-state constitute my world. The forest sits outside my world.¹² Those from opposite spectrums meet in the village, positioned midway between the different worlds.



Plate 4: Astro (satellite television). This family put up a satellite antenna early in the 2000s in their 1970s, government-built house. They must pay about 50 ringgit per month in order to access the basic programs which Astro provides. The Astro's picture quality is very superior compared to the often very weak signals from the free-to-air TV channels. [NT-2007]

The gap between our worldviews is only to be expected because we live in different worlds. For urban dwellers, the outer periphery of their world is the village (stretching beyond that point is the forest, the ocean and other parts of the natural world), and the forest belongs to the frontier. In the context of development, the forest presents nothing more than a frontier for the government and industry.¹³ For the Orang Asli, however, the forest is their life source, not a development frontier. The invasion by development projects of their living space, the forest, has altered Orang Asli society, and has sometimes led to the destruction of their culture.

Image

If we were to ask the ordinary Malaysian people (that is, the Malay, Indian, Chinese and other Malaysians) what they think of the Orang Asli, the most likely response would be that they are “forest people”. The general perception of the Orang Asli is one of primitive peoples dwelling in the forest. This point of view is widespread.¹⁴ It is found on television, in newspapers and other media, and in school education. Whether accurate or not, this perception, which stresses the connection between the Orang Asli and the forest, is being perpetuated. In reality, however, if we look at how they subsist, the Negrito groups in the north of the Malay Peninsula live by hunting and gathering, while the people in the central region, the Senoi groups, are swidden cultivators. The Melayu Asli in the south are

settlers and live by farming, like the Malays, although they also hunt and gather. To all of them, the forest occupies an indispensable and important position in their lives.

For the Malays, who are not forest dwellers, forests are an object of awe. This feeling affects their opinion of the forest people. The Orang Asli are known for their magical powers. The Orang Asli, as collectors and manufacturers of magic medicines and herbs often made from forest products, conjure up a formidable image, especially for the Malays (Jones 1968: 8). Malays and Indians flock to see Orang Asli witch doctors, believing they can cure what is deemed to be incurable by their own doctors.

While the magical powers of the forest people occasion a sense of awe, on the social level they are a deterrent from mixing with the Orang Asli. Malays stay away from the Orang Asli in case the latter deploy their magic powers if the relationship sours. When I told the Malays that I lived in an Orang Asli village, their usual response was, “How could you? Their magical powers are dangerous (*bahaya*). I am afraid (*takut*) for you.” From the time I began living in the Orang Asli village, the Malay people repeatedly warned me to watch out for their magic.

Here is an example. The leader in the village of study, Kampung Durian Tawar, is Batin Janggut. He had a Chinese father and an Orang Asli mother. However, his mother’s maternal grandfather was a Malay, and her father also had some Malay ancestry. Batin Janggut used to reside near a Malay village, as did his father, but was forced to evacuate when the Japanese military occupied the Malay Peninsula. Batin Janggut fled into the forest with his mother’s relatives, the Orang Asli. He had a Chinese name at the time. Having lost his father, who was captured and killed by the Japanese, he has lived in Orang Asli society ever since. He has mastered the skills and knowledge of the forest, as well as the magical power.

When Malaysia attained independence, deciding on his identity became a necessity. Batin Janggut decided to register under an Orang Asli name, feeling a Chinese name would instantly deem him a Communist suspect, as was often the case. He has since become leader of the Orang Asli community and has been given the title of Batin. He is now renowned as a folk medicine man, visited even by Malay patients because of his magical healing power. The ethnic identity of the Orang Asli is always associated with the forest. A revealing aspect of Batin Janggut’s life story is that his life experience in the forest has an extremely important correlation with his Orang Asli identity (especially his magical power).



Plate 5: Making traditional medicine. Batin Janggut is making a traditional medicine with his 6th wife and the son of his 5th wife. Not only the Orang Asli but also the Malays, the Chinese, the Indians believe that Batin Janggut's medicine has an effect on various mental and physical diseases. He uses this medicine for his magical treatment. [NT-1997]

A “not Muslim” Identity

If what defines one's ethnic identity is not just “who one is” but also “who one is not”, a significant characteristic of today's Orang Asli is the fact that they are not Muslims, unlike the Muslim Malays. Non-Muslims are, one way or another, worse off in Malaysia, where Islam is a state religion. Moreover, most of them are not even Buddhist, Hindu or Christian, but are, in the eyes of Islam, “infidels or non-believers”.¹⁵ Put simply, living in the forest often contravenes Islamic law. Despite being important sources of protein, many animals that can be caught in the forest (such as wild pigs, or *babi hutan*) are prohibited as food sources according to Islamic precepts. Becoming Muslim means that life based in and on the forest must be discarded.

Most of the people we now call the Malays are believed to be descendants of a people with ties to the forest as strong as those of the Orang Asli. I discuss this at a later stage, but the fact that Batin Siuntung, an ancestor of Batin Janggut, was a Malay shows how blurred the distinction once was between the Malays and the Orang Asli. The ethnic distinctions on the Malay Peninsula developed from a prototype created during the Melaka Sultanate, which was strengthened during the British colonial period and institutionalized after the independence of Malaysia. Here we can see a

pattern emerging whereby the Malays lost their contact with the forest because of their Muslim faith, while the Orang Asli have maintained it because they are not Muslim.

In addition to the conversions to Islam, the economy helps to explain why the forest people have been giving up their life based in the forest. Various forest developments on the Malay Peninsula have depleted the forest resources and polluted the forest environment. Most of the forest, once Orang Asli territory, has been declared during the government's "colonization of the forest" (cf. Sato 1998: 198) as land for "forest reserves". The government has driven the Orang Asli away from the forest and has subjected them to various restrictions on hunting and other forest resource-extraction activities. The Orang Asli have been demanding the restoration of their land rights, most of which have been neglected or shelved, but only a tiny proportion of land has been returned to them as "Orang Asli reservations".

With limited access to forest resources, the Orang Asli can no longer lead a traditional forest life. As a result, many have become impoverished. Ironically, the nation, which in the first place drove them into poverty, now has to initiate development programs to assist them. Most programs involve conversion to the Islamic faith. In the context of development, being a forest person and being Muslim are increasingly mutually exclusive. Though still often referred to as "forest people", the Orang Asli these days also are seen as an "impoverished people". The government believes that impoverished people need financial assistance (that is, development) and a spiritual backbone (that is, the Islamic faith).

Islamization, interwoven with development, is forcing the Orang Asli to change their ethnicity to Malay. In short, this process can be summarized as follows. The Orang Asli are being driven to abandon their life in the forest due to depletion of resources, environmental degradation and restriction of their access to resources – the forests are being liberalized and colonized by market forces. Uprooted from their source of livelihood, the Orang Asli will become further impoverished and will be forced to accept a life under the development scheme and outside the forest. As settled farmers, they could lead a life that would not violate Islamic law, and they could convert to the Islamic faith and become Malay. Some Orang Asli have already converted or are going through the process, and their offspring may become wholly Malay, not "Muslim Orang Asli". However, others have refused to convert to Islam – this now makes the Orang Asli the Orang Asli.

Notes

1. The Negrito is an ethnic subgroup of the Orang Asli. The official title in Malaysia is Negrito, but Negrito living on the other side of the border with Thailand are called either Ngok or Ngok Pa. According to documents from the British colonial period, the western Negrito were described as Semang, while those in the east were described as Pangan. Both these names were derived from Malay terms that were strongly derogatory, and, because of this, are rarely used today. According to 1996 statistics from JHEOA, the total population of the Negrito, which is made up of smaller subgroups including the Kensiu, Kintak, Lanoh, Jahai, Mendriq and Batek, was 2,972. However, these subgroups do not share the same sense of ethnic identity as the Negrito. Their languages belong to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic language family. In a recent classification, their languages, along with the Senoi ones, are included in the Asli branch (strictly speaking, the North Asli sub-branch of the Asli branch) (Benjamin 1996). Most Negrito live in the forest areas of the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. They were known as hunter-gatherers but because of the depletion of forest resources as a result of development, and due to the resettlement policy and regroupment scheme, some of them now live by farming. However, even among these settlers, some periodically venture into the forest to hunt and gather. Others continue to pursue their traditional nomadic life of hunting and gathering, refusing to settle in government resettlement areas, in protest against government policies seeking to convert them to Islam and farming. It has been suggested that this nomadic aspect of the Negrito way of life contributes to the perception that they are the lowest among the three Orang Asli subgroups (Nicholas 2000: 3).
2. Senoi, meaning “people” in the local language of the Semai, includes the Semai, Temiar, Che Wong, Jah Hut, Semaq Beri and Mah Meri. However, Senoi is only an administrative ethnic grouping, as these people do not share a sense of belonging to one ethnic group. The Senoi population, as recorded in 1996, was 49,440. Their language, unlike Malay, which belongs to the Austronesian family, belongs to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic family. In a recent classification, it belongs to the Asli language branch. Most of them live in the Main Range (in other words, the forests) of the central part of the Malay Peninsula, but the Mah Meri live on the coast along the Strait of Malacca. Their livelihood has changed drastically. While

traditionally they engaged in hunting and gathering, and in swidden cultivation, more recently they have been engaging in paid labor on rubber, tea and oil palm plantations, or in factories.

3. Melayu Asli, meaning proto-Malay in the Malay language, is the classification given to the Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Orang Kanak, Orang Kuala and Orang Seletar. In colonial days the term Jakun was used instead of Melayu Asli. Today Jakun is an ethnic subgroup within the Melayu Asli. The Melayu Asli population, as recorded in 1996, was 40,117. The Melayu Asli people exhibit cultural connections with the Malays. Linguistically, too, their languages belong to the broader Malay branch, except for the Semelai language, which belongs to the Asli branch. The easiest way to distinguish the Melayu Asli from the Malays is to note that they are not Muslims. However, the Orang Kuala who live by fishing on the coast were apparently Muslim before the independence of Malaysia. They are classified as Orang Asli and not as Malay due to their high poverty levels. Most Melayu Asli are forest people, living on the fringe of the forest in the southern forest area of the Malay Peninsula, but the Orang Kuala and the Orang Seletar are marine people. Therefore, it can be said that there is not much commonality among the Melayu Asli, certainly not in the sense of ethnic identity. Traditionally there was negligible difference between the living standards of the Melayu Asli and the Malays in the farming villages. Now the Malays, having benefited from the Bumiputra policy, are far better off. If we combine the Muslim/non-Muslim label with the rich/poor standard, the Melayu Asli can be classified as the “non-Muslim poor”. For the Orang Asli, hunting and gathering now carry less significance in economic terms than as an act of identity. While Negrito and Senoi societies are more egalitarian, Hood (1989) has pointed out that the Temuan, Jakun and Semelai are hierarchical ones based on an honor system, and with a *Batin* at the top. The title *Batin* is found widely among the Melayu Asli, but JHEOA also employs the term when it appoints community leaders to the Negrito and the Senoi communities.
4. Other peoples in the Malay Peninsula identified them in association with their particular local geographical features, such as “people in the upstream area” (Orang Hulu), “people in the remote area” (Orang Darat) and “people on the coast” (Orang Laut). There were also some disparaging identifications, such as “wild people” (Orang Liar), “fresh tree eaters” (Pangan), “apelike people” (Orang Mawas) and

- “domesticated or enslaved people” (Orang Jinak) (Maxwell 1880: 47; Skeat and Blagden 1906: 19-24; Wilkinson 1971: 15-20).
5. The word “aborigines”, like “abo” and “abos”, had derogatory connotations (Jimin 1983: 3).
 6. It is believed that some 60-70% of the Orang Asli area is not legally recognized (Mohd. Tap 1990: 71). Private ownership is not recognized because not recognizing ownership is conceived to be better for them. According to this understanding, the Orang Asli are so poor that they would not be able to pay the land tax, and they would be forced to sell their land to the Chinese and others (Nicholas 2000: 119). Recently the government seems to have become more willing to recognize the private ownership of the land by the Orang Asli people, but its approach is replete with problems. For example, it does not respect the traditional custom of “communal ownership” of land (Nicholas 2000: 121-22). Some scholars argue against the government approach, claiming that it is possible to give the Orang Asli land rights by providing them with decent protection measures as applied to the Malay reserves where private ownership of the land is granted (e.g. Hooker 1976, 1996; Liow 1980; Rachagan 1990).
 7. In response, they have set up a non-government organization of their own to promote self-help activities and political lobbying. This is the Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM, Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association). POASM was set up in 1976 by Orang Asli staff of JHEOA (Jimin 1983: 145-46). It now has a wide membership among the Orang Asli. Apart from POASM, the activities of the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, established in 1989, should be noted. For POASM and the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, see Dentan et al. (1997: 153-55). Though unsuccessful, POASM and the Center for Orang Asli Concerns played a central role in campaigning in 1999 for the first Orang Asli candidate in a general election (Nicholas 2000: 162-70).
 8. The Portuguese began Christian missionary activities in Melaka following colonization in 1511. Their activities, however, were limited to the Portuguese residential area and the area around Melaka (Hassan 1994: 147). Full-scale Christian missionary activities aimed at the residents of the Malay Peninsula, especially the non-Muslim Orang Asli, began only in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the British colonial era. Father Borie conducted the first missionary

activities among the Orang Mantra (today's Temuan people) in 1847. Borie reported on Orang Mantra customs for events such as childbirth, marriage and divorce, and argued that the customs could be reconciled with the Catholic dogma (Borie 1887). He also reported that some Orang Mantra had fled to their relatives in remote settlements in protest against Christian missionary activities. Due to the missionary activities during British colonial times, there are many Christians in today's Temuan villages. In Kampung Tekir, a Temuan village, stands a small church built in 1953. Some 300 Christian (Catholic) converts lived in Kampung Tekir (Baharon [1976] 1986: 62). Protestant missionary activities apparently started in earnest only after 1930. Hasan (1994), who studied Christian missionary activities among the Semai people, noted that the Protestants (Methodists) conducted their missionary activities through Batak missionaries from Sumatra, in and around today's Perak where the Semai lived. The high proportion of Christians among the Semai is the result of these missionary activities. For more details on the Christian missionary activities among the Semai, Hermen's (1989) work is also useful.

9. Apart from Baharon's work (1973), ethnographic reports on the Temuan people include those of Dunn (1975, 1977), Gomes (1982) and Ali (1980). There are also occasional monographs dealing with the traditional religions, such as that by Azizah Kassim (1979).
10. This was the original place of the current Temuan residential communities. An increase in demand for forest products has also brought about changes. In Selangor forest products had already become cash commodities, no longer simply items for bartering, even before the Japanese military invasion. The rubber tapping business began in the 1930s (Dunn 1977: 86).
11. It is obvious that the forest no longer exists in isolation, in terms of its development and protection. It is said that the so-called environmental issue has become more obvious in two respects, notably resource depletion and environmental pollution (Ichikawa 1997: 135).
12. The Orang Asli point of view is that the Malays belong to the village, the Chinese to the town and "we" to the jungle (Carey 1976: 37; Roseman 1984: 2). The awe those settled villagers (especially the Malays) feel towards the forest derives from the fact that the forest is outside their territory.

13. The forest on the outer periphery as the frontier has gone through various changes in the context of economic development in Southeast Asia (Otome 1995: 82).
14. Many scholars discuss the image of the Orang Asli as forest people in articles and books (e.g. Hood 1993; Roseman 1998; Winzeler (ed.) 1997; Benjamin and Chou (eds.) 2002; Lye 2004).
15. Fukushima (1991: 97) states that in Indonesia, “those people without religious faith” are put under the same pressure as those who are labeled as the remaining members of the Indonesian Communist Party. The situation is very similar in Malaysia, where “non-believers” are also subjected to discrimination and persecution.

Chapter 2

Orang Asli History and Policy

In the Malay Peninsula there are three main ethnic groups: the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. When analyzing the Orang Asli ethnic identity, their ethnic relationship with the Malays is very important.¹ The central focus of this book is the people known as the Temuan, who live in Negeri Sembilan. The Temuan are regarded as having socioeconomic relations with the Malays. Baharon, who studied the Orang Asli village of Kampung Durian Tawar, pointed out that the village culture had many Malay elements, such as its customs (*adat*) (Baharon 1973).

Invention of Orang Asli and Malay

Since the rise of the Melaka Sultanate in the fifteenth century, inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula have gradually converted to Islam. Within the process of Islamization, most inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula have become the Malays.²

The Biduanda people are a case in point. The Melaka Sultanate categorized aborigines living in the hinterland (Melaka and Negeri Sembilan) as “Biduanda”, which means “followers of Raja (king)” (Wilkinson 1971 (1911): 283-87; Winstedt 1934: 43).³ Within the process of Islamization, most Biduanda people have been converted to Islam. They became the Malays in the British colonial period.⁴ However, some Biduanda people did not convert to Islam and remained non-Muslim. They became the Orang Asli (Sakai, Jakun and Aborigine) living in the states of Melaka and Negeri Sembilan in the British colonial period.⁵

After colonizing some states of the Malay Peninsula, the British colonial government introduced the indirect rule that reinforced the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims (Couillard 1984: 101). Based on a religious criterion, the indigenous Muslims were classified as

the Malays, while the indigenous non-Muslims were classified as Sakai,⁶ Jakun and Aborigine. The British colonial government categorized the Malays as “natives” and the Orang Asli as “Aborigines” (Mohd. Tap 1990: 30). Thus, the prototype of the Malays and the Orang Asli was invented in the British colonial period.⁷

Land Rights

Under British colonial rule, Malay reservations were given to the Malays, while the Orang Asli were confined to Sakai reservations.⁸ By 1913 Malays were given the right to own and lease property within their reservations, but the Orang Asli were not granted the same privilege. In the latter days of the colonial era, Noone argued for the necessity of Sakai reservations (Noone 1936: 59).⁹ Throughout the colonial era, an enormous amount of Orang Asli land was taken by the government and by the Malays for Malay reservations and forest reserves (Nicholas 2000: 85).

Official documents of the British colonial government concerning the Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan reveal some interesting examples. An insight into the life of the Orang Asli in those days is shown in the following documents:

1. a request from the Orang Asli for the registration of a property for durian cultivation (Negeri Sembilan Secretariat N. S. 3988/03 (1903)).
2. a discussion on taxing the Orang Asli for their harvest of the forest products (Negeri Sembilan Secretariat N. S. 5699/04 (1904)).¹⁰
3. a report insisting on taxing the Chinese, as evidence suggested that the Orang Asli were selling the forest products to them (Negeri Sembilan Secretariat N.S. 5371/04 (1904)).
4. the Orang Asli, who had been illegally occupying a forest reserve, were given a Temporary Occupation License to enable them to cultivate food plants (British Resident’s Office, Negeri Sembilan Tamp. (Tampin) 2789/20 (1920)).
5. permission was granted to the Orang Asli for a rubber smallholding (Jabatan Hutan Negeri Sembilan 262/28 (1928)).
6. the Orang Asli registered a property for a durian orchard (Jabatan Hutan Negeri Sembilan 535/31 (1931)) (the orchard continued production until 1940).

7. the Batin, an ancestor of Kampung Baning, applied for a Temporary Occupation License for a rubber smallholding (British Resident's Office, Negeri Sembilan 526/35 (1935)).
8. a report was produced that recommended the introduction of land ownership for the Orang Asli, similar to that which applied to the Malay reservations, as their land was occupied by the Chinese and others (State Forest Office Negeri Sembilan 137/39 (1939)).
9. a boundary dispute erupted with the Malays (both sides lodged a complaint to the government claiming that the other was occupying land across the boundary) (British Resident's Office, Negeri Sembilan 498/41 (1941)).

Various assumptions can be made from reading these intriguing documents. They show that the British colonial rulers were considering giving land title to the Orang Asli who had settled and who were cultivating durians and rubber. In contrast, the documents show that the government was not inclined to give land to the Orang Asli who were "on the move". Jones (1968: 293) suggests that the British colonial government had little administrative interest in forest products that did not contravene its Forestry Enactment. In the latter part of the British colonial era, the documents show there was a land dispute between the Orang Asli and the Malays, but this kind of dispute was curtailed by the Japanese military invasion. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar claim the Malay people took the land away from the Orang Asli in the wake of the Japanese invasion, but there is no documented evidence to support this.

Japanese Military Occupation and the Emergency

The Japanese forces' invasion of the Malay Peninsula in December 1941 was significant for the Orang Asli in negative ways.¹¹ During the military occupation, some Orang Asli collaborated with the Japanese (Holman 1958: 127; Noone 1972: 131), while others assisted the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (Leary 1989: 3; Chapman [1949] 1997). However, like the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, most of them fled to the forest. Fearing detection and attack by the Japanese forces, the Orang Asli could no longer carry out swidden cultivation on a large scale (Dunn 1977: 86). In any case, the Japanese military occupation had suddenly changed their relationship with the outside world, which was being established gradually throughout the British colonial era.

The British returned to the Malay Peninsula following Japan's surrender, and in 1948 the formation of the Federation of Malaya was

discussed. In opposition to this, in June 1948 the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) launched an armed uprising. A state of emergency was declared for the whole of the Malay Peninsula, thus marking the beginning of what is called the Emergency period (1948-60). Very few documents exist on the life of the Orang Asli during the Emergency.¹² Initially, the Orang Asli were allied with the Communist guerrillas,¹³ but the CPM guerrillas valued the Orang Asli only as food providers and as guides.¹⁴ Strategically, the Orang Asli switched sides to the Federation forces.

The Federation army tried several measures - many of which are the precursors to today's Orang Asli policies - to win over the Orang Asli. The purpose of the Resettlement Scheme (implemented initially by the Federation forces) was to cut off from the Communist guerrillas the Orang Asli people, as well as the Chinese and others likely to collaborate with the Communists, by removing them forcibly to new settlements.¹⁵ Over the course of the Emergency period, 7,000 to 8,000 Orang Asli lives were lost (Williams-Hunt 1952: 32).¹⁶

Realizing the failure of the Resettlement Scheme, the Federation army decided to build forts within the Orang Asli reservations and station their soldiers there (Jones 1968: 298). In Negeri Sembilan a fort was constructed in Kampung Dalam (pseudonym). The fort was equipped with a medical clinic and a shop, from where the Federation army offered medical services. Under this scheme, the JHEOA (then known as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs) assigned field assistants, including some Orang Asli, to help the Federation forces (Dentan et al. 1997: 64). As I discuss later, Batin Janggut was one of these field assistants.

While carrying out research in Kampung Baning in Negeri Sembilan, I frequently heard the phrase *Senoi Pra'aq* (in the Semai language, *senoi* means the "people" and *pra'aq* means "fighting").¹⁷ The Senoi Pra'aq are the paramilitary special forces of the Orang Asli people and were organized by British Commonwealth forces to counter the Communist guerrillas. Men from Kampung Baning took part in combat as members of the Senoi Pra'aq, and were initially recruited by the Federation forces - but then, through the network of relatives (it is said), men from Kampung Baning volunteered to join up with the Senoi Pra'aq. It was very useful for the Federation forces to be able to mobilize the Orang Asli, given that they knew the forest so well. The Senoi Pra'aq were officially established as part of the Malaysian armed forces in 1958, but unofficially they existed well before this.

In 1950 Williams-Hunt was appointed advisor on the Orang Asli to the Federation government. Following his death in 1953, the JHEOA

was expanded¹⁸ and R. O. D. Noone (the brother of H. D. Noone, the Perak Museum director who died during the Japanese occupation) was appointed to head the organization. In the following year, the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance was enacted (Jones 1968: 296; Carey 1976: 293; Mohd. Tap 1990: 213). The implementation of the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance was intended to steer the Orang Asli away from the Communist guerrilla influence, as evidenced by the Ordinance's ban on non-Orang Asli entering Orang Asli territory and distributing printed materials in such territory (Nicholas 2000: 82-83). The origin of today's Orang Asli policies can be seen in such military strategy during the Emergency period.¹⁹

Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance

In the Constitution of Malaysia there is no congruence of “Malay” and “Orang Asli” (Hooker 1991: 72). In the Constitution, the term “Malay” refers to a person who practices Islam and Malay custom (*adat*) and speaks the Malay language. The original Constitution made no reference to the Orang Asli.²⁰

A definition of the Orang Asli was given in the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance enacted in 1954 before independence (and revised in 1974 as the Aboriginal Peoples Act). Section 3 of the Ordinance is as follows:

Section 3

1. In this Ordinance an aborigine is defined as;

- (a) any person whose male parent is or was, a member of an aboriginal ethnic group, who speaks an aboriginal language and habitually follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and beliefs, and includes a descendant through male or such persons;
- (b) any person of any race adopted when an infant by aborigines who has been brought up as an aborigine, habitually speaks an aboriginal language, habitually follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and beliefs and is a member of an aboriginal community; or
- (c) the child of any union between an aboriginal female and a male of another race, provided that the child habitually speaks an aboriginal language, habitually follows an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs and beliefs and remains a member of an aboriginal community.

2. Any aborigine who by reason of conversion to any religion or for any other reason ceases to adhere to aboriginal beliefs but who continues to follow an aboriginal way of life and aboriginal customs or speaks an aboriginal language shall not be deemed to have ceased to be an aborigine by reason of only practicing that religion.
3. Any question whether any person is or is not an aborigine shall be decided by the Minister.

In this Ordinance, the government makes the final decision on who is an Orang Asli person, regardless of parentage or what his or her religious beliefs may be. In particular, section 3(2) of this Ordinance preserves the status of the Orang Asli despite conversion to any religion (such as Islam), provided an aboriginal way of life is maintained (Hooker 1991: 70).

The rule in section 3(2) clearly contradicts state law on Islam (Hooker 1991: 61). From 1952 onwards, each state of the Federation of Malaya (Malaysia) enacted its own legislation providing for the administration of Islamic law. The Syariah (Sharia) Courts of each state have exclusive jurisdiction over Muslim residents in the state in all matters of personal status and inheritance. Therefore, the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance (revised as the Aboriginal Peoples Act) is in direct conflict with the state's Islamic law enactments (Hooker 1991: 70).

The Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance has a legal problem regarding Islamic converts of the Orang Asli. In the Ordinance, even if they are Muslims, they are the Orang Asli: in the Constitution or state Islamic law enactments, if they are Muslims, they might become Malay.

Who are the Orang Asli? What is the relationship between the Orang Asli and the Malays? Are the Orang Asli placed under the Malays or not? The Malaysian government has tried to resolve these problems since independence, but they have not been resolved yet. In the 1970s the Malaysian government introduced a new category - the Bumiputra - to resolve these problems. The Orang Asli and the Malays were placed under the category of Bumiputra but their relationship remained obscure. (Incidentally, there is no constitutional definition of "Bumiputra" (Hooker 1991: 72).)

Orang Asli Policy

The JHEOA has played a pivotal role in Orang Asli policy-making since independence.²¹ Today's policy is based on a government statement released in 1961 (Government of Malaysia 1961). The government objective

for economic development for the Orang Asli under the New Economic Policy - the so-called Bumiputra Policy - was to raise the economic standard of Orang Asli society in order for them to finally integrate into the wider Malay society (Carey 1968; Mohd. Ruslan 1974). In particular, the government gave top priority to the “development” of the Orang Asli. Initially the objective was to improve the economic and social status of the Orang Asli, but gradually their assimilation into Malay society has become an end in itself. In other words, Islamization has begun.

In 1961 the independent Malaysian government released the “Statement of Policy Regarding the Administration of the Aborigine Peoples of the Federation of Malaya” (Government of Malaysia 1961). This statement included two different aims for the integration of the Orang Asli: (1) the integration of the aboriginal peoples (the Orang Asli) within the rest of the national community and (2) the integration of the aboriginal peoples (the Orang Asli) within the Malay section of the community.

This policy statement was important in that it set out how the new nation of Malaysia could position the Orang Asli people, who did not fit in with the Malays at the time of independence. When discussing their assimilation into the wider national community, the Orang Asli were treated as an ethnic group equal to the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. But when talking about their assimilation into the Malay section of the community, the Orang Asli were placed underneath the Malays, as a sub-ethnic group. In other words, the first objective of the policy was a legacy of the British colonial era, to divide and rule, indicating the disconnection between the Orang Asli and the Malays. In the second objective, the connection with the Malay people was acknowledged, albeit with the Orang Asli being a lower ethnic category than the dominant Malays, and being contingent on accepting the process of “Malayization”. The second objective provided the basis for the Islamization of the Orang Asli.

After a race riot between the Malays and the Chinese in 1969, the New Economic Policy was introduced in the early 1970s. The policy offers preferential socioeconomic treatment to the Bumiputra, which includes the Malays, the indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak, and the Orang Asli. However, initially there was argument about whether or not the Orang Asli were included in the category of Bumiputra. With the introduction of the new category of Bumiputra, the JHEOA had to examine the abovementioned integration of the two objectives of the 1961 statement.

In the official report of the JHEOA in 1974, the position of the Orang Asli under the New Economic Policy was discussed. In this report, the author (Mohd. Ruslan) analyzed three levels of integration or assimilation:

(i) the level of the national community, (ii) the level of the Bumiputra community and (iii) the level of the Malay element of the Bumiputra community (Mohd. Ruslan 1974: 21).

The first level - the level of the national community - means that the Orang Asli community is positioned on the same level as the Chinese and Indian communities. According to the author, whether or not the Orang Asli are categorized as Bumiputra in this level is unclear.

The third level - the level of the Malay element of the Bumiputra community - is almost the same as the abovementioned second objective of the 1961 statement to integrate the Orang Asli within the Malay section of the community. The author rejects the third level because it is not integration but assimilation.

The author concludes that the Orang Asli fully and properly fit into the second level of the Bumiputra community, for which no religious qualifications are necessary. It is true that the vast majority of the Bumiputra are Muslims, but others are animists and Christians (Mohd. Ruslan 1974: 21-23).

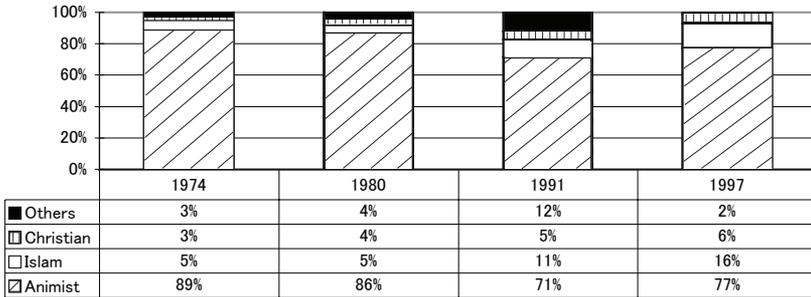
Ultimately, in this report, the Orang Asli community is positioned on the same level as the Malay community under the Bumiputra community. Judging from discussions about this report, some JHEOA members obviously resisted the assimilation of the Orang Asli with the Malays. Here, "assimilation" means the Orang Asli converting to Islam, thereby becoming Muslims and completing the "Malayization" process.²² While there was opposition to this "assimilation" within the government, the national census figures taken since the 1970s have gradually placed the Orang Asli as a lower category of the Malays (Means 1985-86: 638; Hooker 1991: 72).²³

However, since the 1980s the situation has changed drastically. In the early 1980s Islamic resurgence movements in Malaysia became active and had a considerable influence on government religious policies. As a result, various government agencies were requested to promote the Islamization policy. In 1983 the JHEOA officially announced its Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli. This official announcement shows that the second objective of the abovementioned 1961 statement and the third level in the 1974 official report of JHEOA were gradually empowered within the process of Islamization in Malaysia.²⁴

Islamization Policy

Since the 1980s the policy of Islamization in relation to the Orang Asli has intensified. The Muslim proportion of the overall population has been on the increase since the 1980s, as shown in Table 4. For the current

Table 4
Changes in the religious distribution among the Orang Asli population



Sources: The 1974 and 1997 data are drawn from JHEOA statistics. The 1980 and 1991 are my calculations, based on statistics from the Malaysian Government's Department of Statistics.

distribution, as of 1997, see Table 5, and for the Muslim population numbers among the Orang Asli, see Tables 6 and 7.

Two Director-Generals of the JHEOA between the late 1960s and early 1970s discussed the issue of Islamization among the Orang Asli (Baharon 1968; Carey 1970). They remarked on the small number of Muslims among the Orang Asli and discussed the practical problems of the Islamic missionary activities, but they refrained from talking about the so-called aggressive Islamization.²⁵ In reality, Nicholas argues (2000: 103), the government exerted strong pressure on both Carey and his successor, Baharon, to carry out Islamic missionary activities among the Orang Asli.

On the one hand, Carey agreed that in principle the integration of the Orang Asli into the wider Malay society had connotations of institutionalized Islamic missionary activity (Carey 1970: 157); on the other hand, he listed reasons for failed Islamic missionary activities. One reason involved administrative structural problems arising from the fact that such activities had been carried out separately by individual states through their Religious Affairs Departments. He also cited lack of funds and the fact that Orang Asli customs were so different from the Islamic customs of circumcision, taboos on food, prayers, fasting and so on (Carey 1970: 156-57).²⁶ Baharon attributed the failure of the Islamic missionaries to the same reasons (Baharon 1972: 6). He pointed out that for the Malays, the "integration" of the Orang Asli meant they would "become Malays" (and Muslims),²⁷ but for the Orang Asli, "integration" was understood to

mean only that they would become “like Malays” - that is, the process would not necessarily require them to convert to Islam (Baharon 1972: 3).

The abovementioned 1974 official report of JHEOA contains a reference to the state-led institutionalized Islamic missionary activities. The Malaysian government at that time requested that the JHEOA promote the Islamic missionary activities towards the Orang Asli.²⁸ However, the JHEOA did not approve this request because it was afraid of losing the trust of the Orang Asli due to such activities (Mohd. Ruslan 1974: 94-95). The JHEOA was opposed to the Islamic missionary activities, which the Religious Affairs Departments and other semi-government Islamic missionaries promoted.

In Table 8, which I compiled from the 1980 report, it is clear that the missionary activities of the Religious Affairs Departments (in reality, the Departments of Islamic Affairs) were not very vigorous in the 1970s.²⁹ Exceptions to this were the generally highly Islamic Orang Kuala of the Melayu Asli group in Johor,³⁰ some of the Semai and Temiar in Perak, and in Terengganu, where the Islamization policy had been in operation since the 1970s.³¹ No Islamic missionary activities were conducted in Selangor until 1977, and in Negeri Sembilan there were no Islamic missionary activities towards the Orang Asli. However, the situation changed when Islamic resurgence movements considerably influenced government religious policy in the 1980s.

In 1980 a seminar entitled “Resolusi: Seminar Dakwah Islamiah di Kalangan Orang Asli Malaysia (The Islamic Mission to the Orang Asli Society)” was held at Universiti Malaya in Kuala Lumpur under the sponsorship of Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (PERKIM, Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia), a semi-governmental Islamic mission. This seminar brought about a profound effect on the Islamization policy of the JHEOA. In fact, the JHEOA submitted an official strategic report about the Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli in 1983 (JHEOA 1983). This official report reflected a shift in the goal of the JHEOA from integration to assimilation, which resulted in the Orang Asli being absorbed into the Malay community (Dentan et al. 1997: 80).

The fundamental principle of the Islamization policy of the JHEOA was shown in “Strategi Perkembangan Ugama Islam di Kalangan Masyarakat Orang Asli (A Strategy for the Islamization of the Orang Asli)” (JHEOA 1983). This report had two main objectives: (1) the Islamization of the whole Orang Asli community and (2) the integration/assimilation of the Orang Asli within the Malay community (JHEOA 1983: 2).³² “Islamization”, in this report, meant not only conversion to Islam but also re-Islamization,

Table 5
Current religious distribution among the Orang Asli population

State	District	Village	Muslim	Christian	Bahai	animist	Buddhist	other	Total
Johor	8	62	3,904	92	0	4,433	1	0	8,430
Kedah	1	1	108	0	0	100	0	0	208
Kelantan	3	140	1,146	0	0	5,650	0	0	6,796
Melaka	2	13	118	33	0	689	0	0	840
Negeri Sembilan	7	77	592	366	0	5,444	32	8	6,442
Pahang	11	249	3,428	930	290	35,812	0	1	40,461
Perak	4	196	5,349	4,213	1,229	18,601	0	0	29,392
Selangor/Federal territories	6	74	1,206	330	0	9,328	0	0	10,864
Terengganu	3	3	549	0	0	0	0	0	549
Total	45	815	16,400	5,964	1,519	80,057	33	9	103,982
%			15.77%	5.74%	1.46%	76.99%	0.03%	0.01%	100%

Source: Figures are taken from the 1997 JHEOA statistics.
NB: Most of the 'others' are Hindu.

Table 6
Muslim population among the Orang Asli

State	Negrito					Senoi					Melayu Asli					Total			
	Kensiu	Kintak	Lanoh	Jahai	Mendriq	Batek	Temiar	Semai	Semaq Beri	Che Wong	Jah Hut	Mah Meri	Temuan	Semelai	Jakun		Orang Kanak	Orang Kuala	Orang Selalor
Kedah	108																		108
Perak		67	94	127			4,492	569											5,349
Kelantan				165	61	147	773												1,146
Terengganu								549											549
Pahang						563	1	941	407	231	180		241	220	644				3,428
Selangor								65				165	976						1,206
Negeri Sembilan													592						592
Melaka													118						118
Johor													1		680	65	2,918	240	3,904
Total	108	67	94	292	61	710	5,266	1,575	956	231	180	165	1,928	220	1,324	65	2,918	240	16,400

Source: Figures are taken from the 1997 JHEOA statistics.

Table 7
State by state, the numbers of Muslim Orang Asli

State	Orang Asli population	Muslim Orang Asli population	Percentage of Muslims
Kedah	208	108	51.9%
Perak	29,392	5,349	18.2%
Kelantan	6,796	1,146	16.9%
Terengganu	549	549	100.0%
Pahang	40,461	3,428	8.5%
Selangor/Federal territories	10,864	1,206	11.1%
Negeri Sembilan	6,442	592	9.2%
Melaka	840	118	14.0%
Johor	8,430	3,904	46.3%
Total	103,982	16,400	15.8%

Source: Figures are taken from the 1997 JHEOA statistics.

which means becoming “more Islamic” (Tawada 1997). Targets of the Islamization policy were (i) Islamic converts of the Orang Asli, (ii) the Orang Asli communities adjacent to the Malay communities, (iii) the Orang Asli who are government employees and (iv) the Orang Asli living in the interior (JHEOA 1983: 2-3). However, the first three groups were the actual targets; the fourth group - the Orang Asli living in the interior - was not so important at that time.

The “positive discrimination” policy, a kind of affirmative action for the Islamic converts among the Orang Asli, caused a negative effect on the Orang Asli community. The JHEOA tried to provide Islamic converts with housing (including water and electricity supplies), income-earning opportunities, education, and health and transportation facilities that were better than those supplied to non-Muslims (Dentan et al. 1997: 144). In addition, the JHEOA gave preference to Muslim Orang Asli employees in promotion decisions; it was generally understood that a non-Muslim could not rise to the upper ranks in the JHEOA (Dentan et al. 1997: 144-45).

The aim of this policy was to promote Orang Asli conversion to Islam. In fact, the abovementioned second objective - the integration/assimilation

Table 8
Islamic missionary activities among the Orang Asli, carried out by the state Religious Affairs Department (up to 1980)

States	Missionary activities	Problems
Johor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Missionary activities in Daerah Batu Pahat, Pontian and elsewhere ▪ Religious teachers (Orang Asli) appointed at Kg. Senggarang and Kg. Rengit ▪ Religious teachers appointed at Orang Asli boarding schools at Bentut Pontian and Keluang ▪ Departmental staff were dispatched every month to individual districts for missionary activities (i.e. giving away food and snacks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only five officials for missionary activities ▪ Insufficient budget ▪ Little cooperation from the Malays
Perak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Missionary activities in the villages deep in the forest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shortage of missionaries, there being only 12 missionaries and 14 assistants ▪ The staff's monthly wage was RM80 (very small) ▪ Villages are very distant (lack of means of transport) ▪ The Christian mission is interfering with the Islamic conversion ▪ Missionaries cannot understand the Orang Asli languages ▪ Not a large enough budget to be able to give away food and snacks
Selangor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active since 1977, especially in Kg. Kuala Pangsun, Kg. Tun Razak, Kg. Bukit Lanjan, Kg. Bukit Bangkok ▪ Using films made by the Religious Affairs Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficult to convert the people from ancestor worship to the Islamic faith ▪ Only one religious staff member (1977 - 80) ▪ No language problem (as they understand Bahasa Melayu) ▪ Surrounding Malays are not good role models ▪ Small budget ▪ Little cooperation from the Malays

Melaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A missionary campaign was launched in 1977 but it was unsuccessful ▪ Activities are carried out within the framework of the Saudara Baru (Chinese, Indian and other Islamic converts) (1980) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No specific budget for missionary activities for the Orang Asli ▪ Difficulty with the languages ▪ The villagers were assisted by the frequently visiting Christian missionaries ▪ Limited budget compared to the budget the Christians have for their missionary activities (RM 80,000)
Terengganu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities in all districts where the Orang Asli reside ▪ Dispatch of two religious staff to Sungai Pergam Jabor Kemaman, Kuala Sayap Besut, and Sungai Prui Ulu Terengganu; One of them to teach children at school, the other to teach adults ▪ Their wages are paid by the state's Religious Affairs Department ▪ No sign of Christian missionary activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Due to the shortage of staff, missionary activities in other areas are not possible
Negeri Sembilan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virtually no missionary activities ▪ Two staff, but neither are singularly dedicated to the Orang Asli 	
Kelantan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No missionary activities directed towards the Orang Asli ▪ Only accepts those who have been converted 	
Federal territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No dedicated staff for the conversion of the Orang Asli ▪ Only provides welfare activities for the Saudara Baru (Chinese, Indian and other Islamic converts) (1980) 	

Source: Bahagian Ugama, Jabatan Perdana Menteri 1980 'Ke Arah Pengislaman Orang Asli di Malaysia dan Masalah-Masalah Yang Dihadapi' (PERKIM 1980: 56-60)

of the Orang Asli within the Malay community - meant that the Orang Asli would be gradually assimilated into the Malay community within the process of Islamization. The policy-makers might have thought that the Orang Asli would choose to be converted to Islam in order to get various kinds of governmental assistance. But the positive discrimination policy also meant that non-Muslim Orang Asli could not get as much assistance as Muslim Orang Asli, or, even if they could get assistance, their priorities were lower than the Muslim Orang Asli. In other words, this policy showed that the Orang Asli could not get equal benefits with the Muslim Orang Asli as long as they were non-Muslim.

Assimilation with the Malay communities is synonymous with conversion to Islam. Under the Bumiputra policy, the Orang Asli are considered to be part of the Bumiputra communities, but the truth is that they do not enjoy the same benefits and entitlements as the Malays, because they are non-Muslims.

The Islamization policy was carefully kept secret by the JHEOA in the 1980s because it was afraid of criticism. In the 1990s, however, government agencies, including the JHEOA, began to publicly announce the Islamization policy. The program to Islamize Orang Asli was no longer secret. For example, former JHEOA Director-General Jimin bin Idris stated in 1990 that he hoped the Orang Asli would become fully integrated into Malaysian society, preferably as an Islamized subgroup of the Malays (Dentan et al. 1997: 80). The JHEOA no longer had a problem with the government's Islamization policy. Within the JHEOA, it is argued, the research and planning division is directly responsible for the propagation of Islam, along with public security works and providing assistance to academics (Jimin 1983: 90-91; Hooker 1991: 55-56).

In 1991 the Religious Affairs Department and the JHEOA appointed and trained 250 Muslim missionaries (*Penggerak Masyarakat*). It was also announced that community halls (*balai raya*) would be built in Orang Asli villages. The *balai raya* would include an Islamic prayer hall (*surau*). A special unit, Cawangan Dakwah Orang Asli, was established in the Islam Center (Pusat Islam) of the Prime Minister's Department (Nicholas 2000: 98-99). The Pusat Islam sponsored the Muslim Orang Asli to undertake pilgrimages to Mecca (Dentan et al. 1997: 145).

The Johor Islamic Religious Department announced that it was to accelerate Islamic missionary activity among the Orang Asli via a multi-agency approach. The program, Socializing the Orang Asli, was launched in April 1998 and was coordinated by the Johor JHEOA (Nicholas 2000: 99). In 1999 the Islamic Religious Council of Negeri Sembilan set aside a

fund for Orang Asli students in the state. Monetary assistance was to be given only to those Orang Asli students who had recently been converted to Islam (Nicholas 2000: 100). These political and religious situations showed that the Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli was closely connected with development and material benefits.³³

Discussion

Islamization is forcing the Orang Asli to change their ethnicity. Some Orang Asli have already converted and their offspring may become the Malays. However, others have refused to convert to Islam, despite the benefits offered.

In this chapter, I described the historical process of Islamization among the Orang Asli. The ethnic distinctions on the Malay Peninsula developed from a prototype created during the Melaka Sultanate, which was strengthened during the British colonial period and institutionalized after the independence of Malaysia.

Domestication

Kato (1993) referred to the “domestication of ethnicity by state power” - the process by which an ethnic group becomes domesticated by policies and various other means. From the rulers’ point of view, the domestication of an ethnic group is a much surer means of control than resorting to the use of military force to suppress uprisings.

Prior to the British colonial period, the Orang Asli who were taken into slavery were referred to by the adjective “domesticated” (*jinak*), while “wild” (*liar*) was used to describe those people who remained free and roamed the forest (e.g. Skeat and Blagden 1906: 19-24; Wilkinson 1971: 15-20).³⁴ During the British colonial period, the colonial government gave land (in the form of the Sakai reservations) to “domesticated” Orang Asli who settled and lived on the land. The “wild” Orang Asli, who still lived by swidden cultivation and hunting and gathering, were considered unpredictable and dangerous. During the Emergency period, moving the “wild” Orang Asli to the resettlement areas and keeping them under surveillance became the most important military strategy.

As part of the Orang Asli policy, the newly independent Malaysian government placed stress on the development of the “domesticated” and settled Orang Asli. The “undomesticated” Orang Asli implied a negative image. The government never acknowledged the Orang Asli as owners of vast landholdings. Instead, it implemented resettlement programs,

including the Regroupment Scheme, in which the Orang Asli were forced to relocate from their country to far distant settlements.

Whether a group is considered “domesticated” or “wild” is, however, a product of the domesticator’s perspective. This polarity is often associated with the groups’ levels of settlement, where the settled people are tagged with the “domesticated” label and the unsettled people are labeled as “wild”. From the Orang Asli point of view, mobility has become a strategic tool to avoid being controlled by the outside world (Mohd. Tap 1990: 208; Nobuta 1996b). In this context, the policy of Islamization can be understood as a policy of imposing more control over the Orang Asli who have already settled and been “domesticated”. The best way to further “domesticate” the Orang Asli who have already resettled and show no sign of pursuing their former nomadic life is to convert them to Islam and to make them the Malays (i.e. Malayization).

*Integration and Assimilation*³⁵

The Orang Asli policy is now in transition from the integration stage to the assimilation stage; from gentle Malayization, where Islamization was only hinted at, to radical Malayization where Islamization is a compulsory part of the process (e.g. Hooker 1991). There is also an optimistic view of this process. When the assimilation process reaches completion and there is no longer an “Orang Asli” people, the former “Orang Asli” will become “Malays” and thus will be able to enjoy the same benefits as the “Malays” (Rachagan 1990: 110).

However, the actual situation has become more complicated. In reality, the policy transition from integration to assimilation has caused an identity crisis among the Orang Asli - the assimilation policy promotes the abandonment of the Orang Asli’s historically constituted “Orang Asli-ness” (e.g. the identity of the non-Muslim forest people), rather than retaining what makes them who they are. It has been pointed out that the assimilation policy, being in essence the Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli, promotes the loss of their culture, or their “de-culturalization” (Nicholas 2000: 111).

Table 9 shows the history of Islamization and the changes in ethnic identity among the Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan. The Melaka Sultanate categorized the Orang Asli as Biduanda. Within the process of Islamization, most of the Biduanda people converted to Islam and became Malay in the British colonial period. But some Biduanda people did not convert to Islam and remained non-Muslim - and became the Orang Asli (Sakai, Jakun and Aborigine) in the British colonial period.

Table 9
**Islamization and the change in ethnic identity among
 the Orang Asli (in Negeri Sembilan)**

	Pre-colonial period	British colonial period	After Independence
Non-Muslim	Biduanda	Sakai/Jakun/Aborigines	Orang Asli
Islamic Convert	↓	↓	↓
	Biduanda	Sakai/Jakun/Aborigines	Muslim Orang Asli
	→	→	
Muslim	Malay (Melayu)	Malay (Melayu)	Malay (Melayu)

Note: The vertical arrow indicates conversion to Islam, while the horizontal arrow indicates the change in ethnic identity.

Under the British colonial administration's indirect rule, non-Muslim Orang Asli (Sakai, Jakun and Aborigine) were distinguished from the Muslim Malays. Some administrators and anthropologists tried to urge the protection of the Orang Asli, fearing their conversion to Islam or Christianity might lead to the loss of their culture (cf. Noone 1936).³⁶ The Orang Asli were the subject of "protection" by the British colonial government (Dodge 1981). However, within the process of Islamization, some of the Orang Asli were converted to Islam. They became the Malays after independence.

The Orang Asli were marked for integration into the new nation with the coming of Malaysia's independence. The logic of integration has changed to that of assimilation in the context of the increasing influence of the Islamic resurgence movement on government Islamic policy-making since the 1980s.

On a cultural level, the Malaysian government policy after independence was to push for assimilation. Because of the Orang Asli policy since the 1980s, the differences between the Malays and the Orang Asli have been disappearing. The national language, Bahasa Melayu, has been replacing their languages, and Malayization has been continuing in other realms of cultural life. The social reality is that the Islamic converts of the Orang Asli are considered to be Malays (*Orang Melayu*, or *jobo*, a derogatory term (meaning Malays) used by the Orang Asli in my research site).

However, from a legal point of view, the problem of converting the Orang Asli to Islam was the main obstacle to assimilation. The legal aspects of the Orang Asli policy do not necessarily accord with the assimilation-oriented cultural aspect of the policy. In the legal system,

the Orang Asli have been differentiated from the Malays since the British colonial period. As section 3(2) of the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance (revised as the Aboriginal Peoples Act) states, an Orang Asli can remain Orang Asli even after converting to Islam. Conversely, the Act, which was based on the principle of integration inherited from the British colonial government, is perpetuating discrimination against the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli have never enjoyed the same legal rights as the Malays. Accordingly, in a strict sense, the Orang Asli policy, even today, is not legally directed towards assimilation.

Those Orang Asli who have converted to Islam are perceived to be Malay, but in a legal sense they remain Orang Asli, not Malay. This issue surrounding Islamic converts of the Orang Asli remains unresolved. The contradiction between the cultural and legal aspects of the Orang Asli policy had a subtle influence on the Islamization policy. As a result, a new classification, Muslim Orang Asli (*Orang Asli yang sudah beragama Islam*), was created.

Notes

1. The Orang Asli often tend to compare themselves to their Malay counterparts (Dentan 1976). The Orang Asli have been subjugated and their relationship with the Malays is not friendly, but rather antagonistic (Dentan et al. 1997: 15-16).
2. The process of Islamization sometimes involved the colonization of the inland regions, looting and slavery. This calls for a re-evaluation of the relationship between the (mostly non-Muslim) indigenous people and the migrants. Slavery in the Malay Peninsula was forced on the non-Muslims because Islamic law prohibits Muslims from keeping other Muslims as slaves (Dentan et al. 1997: 55; Roseman 1984: 9). Because of this, the Orang Asli, as infidels or non-believers (*kafir*), were targeted for slavery and exploitation. Various reports show that the Orang Asli were treated as if they were wild animals, and were subjected to pillage and slavery (Logan 1847: 328-29; Mikluho-Maclay 1878; Swettenham 1880; Maxwell 1880; Letessier 1892; Clifford 1897; Wray 1903). Men were killed, while women and children were taken as slaves, and some women were reportedly raped (Dentan et al. 1997: 57). Enslaved Orang Asli became Malays after they were liberated from slavery. Some believe that the peninsula was inhabited only by

the Orang Asli and that Malays invaded the original inhabitants and then drove them into the hills (Roseman 1984: 2). Malay colonization is believed by some to have caused many non-Muslim Orang Asli to become Muslim Malays (Endicott 1983). The British colonial administration officially banned all forms of slavery (including debt slavery) in the Malay Peninsula in 1884 (Skeat and Blagden [1906] 1966; Carey 1976: 52-53; Nicholas 1985: 4-5). But in practice, it is understood that it continued to exist all over the Malay Peninsula well into the 1930s (Endicott 1983: 236).

3. See Newbold ([1839] 1971: 117-26) in relation to the Melaka Sultanate granting titles to the leaders of Biduanda. Newbold, however, described the “Orang Benua” ([1839] 1971: 370). He also wrote about the Jakun people converting to Islam or marrying Malays (Newbold [1839] 1971: 396-97).
4. Lewis (1960: 69) argues that the Suku Biduanda Waris clan, one of the twelve clans (*suku*) in Negeri Sembilan, was formed as a result of the union of the indigenous Biduanda and the migrating Minangkabau. Whatever the truth of the matter, in theory some of the Suku Biduanda Waris are descended both from the Minangkabau and the Biduanda, yet they are classified as Malays. Lewis (1960) estimates that Islamization for the Biduanda may have occurred as follows. It is believed that some Biduanda converted to Islam and moved out from the forest and along the river. Those who had not converted continued living in the forest under the leader, the Batin. Because the Batin held all the land rights, those who had converted sought the Batin’s permission to leave the forest before their departure. It had become impossible for the converted Muslims to remain in the forest and to live on the animals that they customarily hunted, due to Islamic law. The Batin, it is said, ordered them to leave the forest, and gave one of them the title of Penghulu. The Penghulu became the guardian of those who left the forest, while the Batin remained the ruler of the population in the forest. Those who left the forest and lived under the Penghulu were also called Biduanda Waris (Hooker 1972: 179). Hooker (1972: 142) noted that the Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan today, once they have been converted, become clan members by being “adopted” by the local Biduanda Waris. He pointed out that once converted to Islam and after becoming Malay, all Orang Asli would belong to the Biduanda Waris clan (Hooker 1972: 165).

5. “Biduanda” referred to both those who had converted to Islam and to the non-converted. Therefore, in theory, it is considered that the non-converted are the ancestors of the Orang Asli. In fact, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar claim that the Orang Asli in the state of Negeri Sembilan, the Temuan, are members of the Biduanda Waris clan (Baharon 1972: 2).
6. Sakai used to refer to the subjugated non-Muslim indigenous population of the Malay Peninsula. But Couillard (1984: 84-85) claims that the definition of Sakai had been altered over the years and did not originally mean slaves. According to her, the word *sakai* derived from a Sanskrit word *sakhi* (meaning friends), and it was used by the Hindu traders around the seventh century when addressing their trading partners.
7. Even in the British colonial period, Islamization, along with assimilation into the Malays, was accelerated. Just before the independence of Malaya in 1957, there were many Muslim Orang Asli (Baharon 1968) – approximately 20,000 in number (JHEOA 1972). Most were categorized as Malays after independence.
8. Under the Malay Reservation Act of 1913, Malay reservations were given to the Malays (Mizushima 1994: 34). It was argued that the Orang Asli should be given Sakai reservations (Noone 1936: 59). The Sakai reservations were renamed the Orang Asli reservations following the passage of the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance in 1954.
9. As has been pointed out, the protective measures taken by Noone were continued by the newly formed JHEOA after Malaysia’s independence (McLellan 1985: 91). For example, in 1935 a license from the Forestry Department was newly required for the collection of forest resources within the forest reservations, which had been created under the Forestry Enactment. Noone campaigned for the colonial authority to recognize the Sakai reservations, and to give free access to the resources within those boundary (Noone 1936: 59). He was the driving force in drafting the Aboriginal Tribes Enactment in 1939, which was published in the gazette of the Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) (Rachagan 1990: 105). Noone’s protection policy was an indication of the character of the British colonial authority as the “protector” of the Orang Asli (Dodge 1981: 8-9).

10. The 1935 Forestry Enactment made all trade in forestry products taxable, but in most cases the department had not been able to enforce this. The illegal trade is reported to have been active even fairly recently (Gomes 1990: 32).
11. The Japanese invasion left a vivid impression on the Orang Hulu who lived along the Endau River in Johor (Maeda 1969b: 354). Likewise, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar remember it vividly. They still talk about the Japanese ghosts (*hantu*), an impression created out of the soldiers marching in the dead of night. Soon after I moved into the village, some of the old women fled from their houses on seeing me. It is said that a Japanese soldier shot the wife of Jenang Misai in the leg, and that the Japanese killed the father (of Chinese descent) of Batin Janggut.
12. The best-known document about the life of the Orang Asli during the Emergency period is the work by Leary (1989, 1995), who compiled newspaper reports, official documents and interviews and detailed the state of the Orang Asli (Semai and Temiar) in Perak. However, when it comes to the Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan, very little documentation exists apart from one official document that details the life of the Orang Asli in the Peradong Resettlement in Jelebu district (Jabatan Hutan Negeri Sembilan 24/54 (1954)). However, a large number of documents concerning the fort in Kampung Dalam do exist, but are classified “confidential” and cannot be viewed. Other than these, there is a compilation of newspaper reports from the period (Nicholas et al. 1989).
13. By 1953 approximately 30,000 Orang Asli people were under the influence of the Communists (Carey 1976: 305; Jones 1968: 297). According to oral accounts from the research site (in the state of Negeri Sembilan), there were many Orang Asli of mixed blood born as a result of inter-marriages with the Chinese (mostly between Chinese men and Orang Asli women), many of whom had fought with the Chinese in the war (it is believed they were Chinese, because they had Chinese names).
14. In the northern regions of the Malay Peninsula where the Temiar and Semai live, the CPM set up an organization called the Asal Group (Leary 1989: 11). The party referred to the Orang Asli as the Asal Peoples. This is said to be the origin of the word “Asli” (Carey 1976:

- 47). The Asal Group aided the CPM right to the end, and many Orang Asli were killed in the bombing and fighting (Leary 1989: 8).
15. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar were forced to relocate, in accordance with this program, to a resettlement area at Peradong in Jelebu district (*daerah*) in Negeri Sembilan.
 16. Considering that the total of the relocated Orang Asli population was in the order of 25,000 people (Nicholas 1985: 110), this was an incredibly high death rate. Many deaths were reportedly due to poor hygiene and psychological stress associated with life in the extremely hot conditions of the new settlements (Carey 1976: 307).
 17. The Senoi Pra'aq comprised members from various sub-ethnic groups of the Orang Asli. It has been pointed out that their sense of being a group identified as Orang Asli had its origin in the Senoi Pra'aq (Mohd. Tap 1990: 217). For the organizational structure and actual activities of the Senoi Pra'aq, see the more detailed work by Jumper (2001).
 18. JHEOA, it must be noted, was established as a military countermeasure to the CPM guerrillas (Mohd. Tap 1990: 9).
 19. The threat of Communism had an immense impact on the formulation of Orang Asli policy in post-independence Malaysia. In the early 1970s, there was a resurgence of the Malayan Communist Party. To counter this, the government cited a national security concern and in 1977 introduced a new development project, the Regroupment Scheme, which was identical to the Resettlement Scheme of the Emergency period (Jimin 1983: 48-53). The Regroupment Scheme aimed to relocate the Orang Asli from their "traditional" area (which was also the area feared to be the location for the Communist resurgence) to areas earmarked for new economic development. This shows that the Orang Asli policy was closely linked to the fear of Communism (Nicholas 1990: 70, 2000: 95-96; Mohd. Tap 1990: 112; Zahid 1990: 94; Benjamin 1993: 110). In 1989 the Malayan Communist Party officially reconciled with the Malaysian government (Mohd. Tap 1990: 514).
 20. The Orang Asli are mentioned twice in the amended Constitution of Malaysia, which incorporates July 1985 amendments (Hooker 1991: 71).
 21. JHEOA has been relocated among various ministries as follows:

Ministry of Home Affairs (1955-56), Ministry of Education (1956-59), Ministry of Home Affairs (1959-64), Ministry of National and Rural Development (1971-74), Ministry of Home Affairs (1974-90), Ministry of Rural Development (1990-94) and Ministry of National Unity and Social Development (1994-2000) (Nicholas 2000: 139). The department is commonly known as JOA (Jabatan Orang Asli), which the Orang Asli people often sarcastically call *Jual Orang Asli* (meaning “to sell off Orang Asli”) (Nicholas 2000: 171). Such is the depth of distrust of the department among the Orang Asli. One villager told me that JHEOA does not stand for “Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli”, but “Jabatan Haiwan Orang Asli” (*haiwan* means animals). He implied that the department only knows the number of inhabitants, as if they were wild animals, and has no interest in them beyond that.

22. Baharon argued for Malayization based on his studies. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar spoke the same language, Malay, and lived on rice paddy cultivations, just like the Malays around them. Baharon stressed the “Malayness” of the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, and concluded that for the sake of convenience they could be called “marginal Malays” (Baharon [1976] 1986: 55). But, he added, the villagers were not completely assimilated into Malay society, as they had not converted to the Islamic faith (Baharon [1976] 1986: 56).
23. There is a view that placing the Orang Asli as a subcategory of the Malays, which does not affect the ethnic population balance very much, is politically motivated (Hirschman 1987: 563). The censuses from 1881 to 1911 (Straits Settlements) called them Aborigines; censuses between 1911 and 1931 (the Federated Malay States) called them Sakai. The censuses in 1947 and 1957 reverted to Aborigines, while the 1970 and 1980 censuses called them Orang Asli. The censuses taken since 1970 placed them as a subcategory of the Malays (Hirschman 1987: 563). Because of the placement of the Orang Asli (as well as the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak regions) as a subcategory of the Malays, it has been pointed out that the “Melayu” accounted for 53.2% of the population in the 1970 census (McLellan 1985: 3). In the 1991 census, where the Bumiputra was divided into Malays and “others”, the Orang Asli were classified as one of the “others” of the Bumiputra (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia 1991: 670).
24. When we look at the Orang Asli policy today, the influence of JHEOA is generally decreasing. This in itself suggests that the assimilation

of the Orang Asli is nearly complete. The role of overseeing their education has been transferred from JHEOA to the Department of Education, while the role played by JHEOA in Orang Asli development is diminishing and is increasingly being taken up by other departments. In other words, the policy of treating the Orang Asli as special (the origin of which can be traced back to the British colonial government's protection policy) is coming to an end and being replaced by a policy of treating them the same as the Malays. However, the Orang Asli do not become "true" Malaysian nationals without first going through the Malayization process. In a sense, this could be seen overall as "integration", with the Orang Asli becoming members of the nation-state, but it is in reality simply an "assimilation" process, by which they have to become the Malays.

25. Carey pointed out that 60% of the Orang Asli resided "deep in the jungle", while the remaining 40% resided in the accessible agrarian villages, where the missionary activities of Christians and others were concentrated (Carey 1970: 155).
26. He also pointed out the danger of conversion to Islam, citing examples such as a conflict over conversion to Christianity in a Temuan village in Negeri Sembilan (Carey 1970: 158).
27. Amran (1991) explains the logical justification for the "integration" of the Orang Asli from the Malay point of view as follows:
 - (1) The Malays are the dominant majority of the Malay Peninsula and all of them are Muslims.
 - (2) The Orang Asli are "ethnically" close to the Malays.
 - (3) The Orang Asli speak the Malaysian language (Bahasa Melayu).
 - (4) The Orang Asli follow the Malay customs and rituals.
 - (5) The Orang Asli experience the external world through the Malay culture.
 - (6) The Orang Asli look similar to the Malays.
 - (7) The Orang Asli and the Malays share the same ancestors [so the myth says].

He points out that these form the basis for pushing for "integration", including Islamic conversion (Amran 1991: 104-06).

28. Islamic missionary activities intensified among the indigenous people in Sabah in the 1970s. Baharon ([1976] 1986: 62) estimated that 75,000 (or 10%) of the population in Sabah were converted to Islam in the course of three years. This figure may not necessarily be correct: in Sabah the influx of Muslim migrants from the Philippines and Indonesia should be considered.
29. Until the mid-1970s JHEOA concentrated on the economic development of the Orang Asli. The department had allowed Islamic organizations and individuals (such as department staff and teachers) to carry out missionary activities among the Orang Asli without any official sanction. In the late 1970s, however, the government itself exerted pressure on JHEOA for the Islamization of the Orang Asli, and JHEOA set up a missionary bureau staffed with Muslim Orang Asli (Mohd. Tap 1990: 228-29). In 1981 the government banned missionary activities conducted by the Christian Semai people (Mohd. Tap 1990: 146).
30. The Orang Kuala, the “people of the river mouth”, had converted to Islam before Malaysian independence. They were said to have been classified as Orang Asli because of their poor economic condition (Baharon 1972: 6). Although officially categorized as Orang Asli, many regarded themselves as Malays.
31. In 1976 JHEOA had already submitted a proposal for Islamic missionary activities in the states of Pahang and Terengganu (JHEOA 1976).
32. In JHEOA there is no difference between integration and assimilation.
33. Nicholas points out that the close connection between development (material aid and financial assistance) and conversion to Islam is no longer a secret, and is frequently discussed in the media (Nicholas 2000: 100).
34. The use of adjectives usually reserved for animals to refer to the Orang Asli was a reflection of how they were seen as beings midway between animals and humans (Dodge 1891: 3). Needham also reported that the Malays regarded the Orang Asli as if they were animals, not necessarily in a negative way, but in a positive way, as in “determined braveness” (*berani*) (Needham 1976: 189).

35. Referring to the argument on “integration” put forward by Komagome (1996), who has studied cultural integration in the colonies of Imperial Japan, the concept of “integration” needs to be understood on two levels – the cultural and the legal. This distinction is also useful when understanding the Orang Asli policy. Accordingly, I employ Komagome’s methodology here.
36. H. D. Noone was a British anthropologist who was director of the Perak Museum during the British colonial period, and met an untimely death during the Japanese occupation. Holman (1958) and R.O.D. Noone (H.D. Noone’s brother) have written a biography of H.D. Noone in which they told of his relationship with the Temiar and his marriage to a Temiar woman. H. D. Noone argued more or less for acceptance of the policy that without Malayization (Islamization), the Temiar would not survive (Noone 1936: 57). At the same time, Noone also criticized Christian missionary activities aimed at the Orang Asli because they would destroy the Orang Asli culture (Noone 1936: 58; Hasan 1994: 149). Behind Noone’s opinion was the fact that some Temiar people who had fled the forest and lived in the Malay villages downstream, and who had converted to Islam and become Malays, still could not adapt to life with the surrounding Malay communities, and ended up returning to the forest where their relatives lived. Noone was concerned about those Temiar people, and came to the abovementioned conclusion. He insisted that the survival of the Orang Asli hinged on working towards integration with the surrounding Malays by becoming Muslims, rather than causing conflict and friction by becoming Christians. Noone’s argument for Malayization (and Islamization) was, if only partially, reflected in independent Malaysia’s so-called Orang Asli policy. This policy can be seen as a re-interpretation of Noone’s protective policy to fit in with the aims of the Malaysian nation-state (Dodge 1981: 8-9). Either way, Noone’s argument provided the starting point for subsequent Orang Asli policies towards integration and assimilation into Malay society.

PART 2



Life-World of Kampung Durian Tawar

PART 2

Life-World of Kampung Durian Tawar

Kampung Durian Tawar is different from traditional Orang Asli villages, where life is centered in the forest.¹ The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar moved repeatedly, as did most Orang Asli in other areas, to take refuge during the invasion of the Malay Peninsula by Japanese forces and during the Emergency. In the mid-1960s Kampung Durian Tawar settled in its current position adjacent to a Malay village, about four kilometers from the nearby town of Pertang.²

Baharon, a Malay, undertook fieldwork study in Kampung Durian Tawar from June 1971 to September 1972, when a housing construction project was being carried out.³ As Director-General of the JHEOA, his connection with Kampung Durian Tawar influenced development projects subsequently undertaken there. From the 1970s and into the 1980s, rubber, fish farming, bananas, goats and various other cash-crop cultivation development projects were carried out intensively in Kampung Durian Tawar,⁴ which has been regarded by the JHEOA as a success case among Orang Asli villages. The JHEOA actively refers to Kampung Durian Tawar for promotional activities and material.⁵

Of significance to development projects in Kampung Durian Tawar is the fact that the village leader, Batin Janggut, was a field officer of the JHEOA and performed the role of mediator between the village and the government. From the JHEOA's perspective, the success of the projects is a reflection on the success of the JHEOA itself. Yet even though the development projects may have been planned to suit the JHEOA, Kampung Durian Tawar itself must surely also have welcomed the implementation of the projects.

Along with the close relationship between village leaders and the government, another factor in the economic "success" of Kampung Durian



Plate 6: Men of village. They made a gate in front of the rubber trader's shop to prevent cattle of the neighbouring Malays from encroaching into the village. In the end, however, the gate did not serve its purpose as it collapsed. [NT-1998]

Tawar is that, under the leadership of Batin Janggut and his older brother Jenang Misai, the villagers studied and put into practice the methods of farming and farm management of the local Chinese. Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai have a close relationship with the local Chinese. Both are able to speak Chinese (*bahasa Cina*) because their father, who was killed by the Japanese forces, was Chinese (*orang Cina*).⁶

The government has presented the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar with an Orang Asli reservation of approximately 800 acres. Since receiving the land, however, they have illegally expanded their area of cultivation, to date opening up land within the surrounding forest reservation at least three times.⁷ During these acts of expansion, Batin Janggut has been arrested for illegal tree felling. In addition, the government forcibly removed rubber tree seedlings the villagers had purchased and planted.⁸ Even so, the villagers continue to open up new areas of cultivation today.

In addition, during the 1980s rattan (*rotan*) and aromatic wood (*gaharu*) were increasingly sold as commodities, and there was a boom in the harvesting of forest products. Some villagers gained sufficient wealth to be able to build new homes with their own money. The durian is an important source of income for the villagers, and durian orchards (*dusun durian*) provide the villagers with harvests not only in the Orang Asli reservation but also deep within the forest where their ancestors (*moyang*) lived.

In this way, Kampung Durian Tawar has been successful through agricultural practice. This success has not been seen elsewhere in

Orang Asli society. At the same time, however, political and economic inequalities have emerged in the village between a group led by Batin Janggut and another opposed to his agricultural practices. In contrast to the Orang Asli groups described as egalitarian, Temuan society is known for its status-differentiating system of titles (see Table 10) for community leaders (Hood 1989). For this reason, in Kampung Durian Tawar, which is representative of Temuan society, the implementation of development projects arguably served to strengthen the pre-existing status structure.

The core villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, with Batin Janggut at the center, live on the top of the hill in the village, having built their houses there under the abovementioned housing construction project undertaken at the beginning of the 1970s. They have come to be called the upper people (*orang atas*). In contrast, those who opposed Batin Janggut and who did not participate in the development projects live at the bottom of the hill. They have come to be called the lower people (*orang bawah*). In addition, in Batin Janggut's categorizations, the majority of the upper people follow the customs (*adat*) in Kampung Durian Tawar and are therefore also called the *adat* group (*puak adat*). By contrast, because some of the lower people have converted to Islam and some have succumbed to alcohol addiction (the majority of them men), some in this

Table 10
The village title system

Title	Primary role	Notes
Batin	The village leader	Endorsement and salary provided by the JHEOA. The village head.
Mangku	Represents the Batin when he is not in the village.	When the Batin is in the village, no role at all.
Menteri	The Batin's deputy	-
Jenang	Executor and protector of the <i>adat</i>	-
Jekerah	Protector of the villagers as a whole	-
Panglima	Protector of family and relatives	Often bestowed on people from other villagers who have married villagers

group are also known as the religion group (*puak agama*) and the drunk group (*puak mabuk*).

The upper people comprise those who, under the leadership of Batin Janggut, actively participated in the development projects promoted by the government through departments and agencies such as the JHEOA. They have made a shift in livelihood from a lifestyle centered on the forest involving hunting and gathering to a village-centered lifestyle involving rubber tapping. They have adopted the matrilineal *adat* of the Malays of Negeri Sembilan as the guiding basis for their lives and have applied them in the new environment of village life. Every one of them, however, has resisted Islamization. That is to say, they have taken the position of rejecting conversion to Islam.

In contrast to the upper people, who have made rubber tapping their chief means of livelihood, many of the lower people continue to engage in the collection of forest products or are employed by the Chinese as day laborers. In a sense, they have been the “forest people”, those who place importance on living in the forest. Because of a reduction in forest products due to development and deforestation, and changes in the forest environment in general, it is no longer possible for these people to survive solely through living in the forest. In addition, there has been a strong tendency in the past, under the policy of positive discrimination (a policy of positive discrimination towards Islamic converts), for there to be effectively no development or assistance available for them because they are non-Muslim. Since the 1990s, however, a number of the lower people have converted to Islam and, through this, have become recipients of development projects and aid.

Government officials (including those from the JHEOA) want to see role models created in the process of the “Islamization of the Orang Asli”, which is personified by materially wealthier villagers whose improvement in circumstances is a result of the state-led economic development projects and conversion to the Islamic faith. In Kampung Durian Tawar it is among the economically poor (the lower people), who initially refused the development projects and later were excluded from them, that we see an increasing number “nominally” converting to Islam. Meanwhile, among the original targets of the Islamic conversion (the upper people), opposition to Islamization is emerging as a reaction to the nominal converts.

In Kampung Durian Tawar the emerging reality is in direct opposition to what the government was hoping to gain from the economic development projects and subsequent conversion to Islam, or from integration and assimilation into Malay society. Thus, Kampung Durian Tawar is

ambiguous; it is a model village for the official development projects and yet is a village with unexpected outcomes.

Notes

1. JHEOA estimates the Orang Asli living in the forest comprise 40% of the total Orang Asli population. Data from the 1990 census show that Orang Asli living in rural areas comprised 88.9% of the total Orang Asli population, with the rest living in cities and towns (Nicholas 2000: 17). It seems that JHEOA has not been counting the number of Orang Asli living in cities (Nicholas 2000: 19) and that it continues to seek to associate the Orang Asli with forest dwellers. Lim's analysis of unpublished JHEOA data includes the following calculations: in 1990, of the 774 existing Orang Asli villages, 120 (16%) were located within easy access of towns (Kampung Durian Tawar fits into this category); 379 (49%) were located on the fringes of the forest; and 275 (35%) were located in isolated areas deep within the forest (Lim 1997: 42).
2. Kampung Durian Tawar is located two-and-a-half miles (approximately four kilometers) from Pertang and fifteen miles (approximately twenty-four kilometers) from Kuala Kelawang (Baharon 1973:51). Its population in 1972 was 165 (thirty-three households) (Baharon 1973: 55–56).
3. Among the aims of Baharon's study were investigations of the villagers' responses to the development projects and social change (Baharon 1973: 30). His study was conducted with the full support and assistance of JHEOA. For example, the Department paid his fieldwork assistant (Baharon 1973: 45).
4. When implementing economic development projects, JHEOA divided the Orang Asli into three geographically defined groups: (1) deep jungle groups, (2) fringe groups and (3) settled groups. The deep jungle groups were literally those who resided deep in the jungle, while the fringe groups resided on the edges of the jungle (either inside or outside). The settled groups were those people who lived in the farming villages, especially the "islands in the sea of development" of Malay society. In the development projects, the fringe and settled groups were preferred to those of the deep jungle (Mohd. Ruslan 1974: 6–11). Kampung Durian Tawar falls into the settled category. In Kampung Durian Tawar, development projects have been carried out in situ, instead of implementing the Regroupment Scheme, which requires migration to new large-scale development settlements (Mohd. Tap 1990: 129).
5. The February 1985 edition of *Dewan Masyarakat* (one of Malaysia's major

magazines), for example, carried a special feature report on Kampung Durian Tawar. The economic success of Kampung Durian Tawar was also discussed in an article in the *New Straits Times* (July 13, 1987).

6. The fact that they are Orang Asli and not Chinese, despite their father being Chinese, requires some explanation. With the invasion of the Japanese forces, their family, which had been living in a Malay rural village (their father was a carpenter), fled and went to live with their mother's relatives (their mother was Orang Asli). At the time, the children had Chinese names and, up until just prior to the Japanese invasion, Jenang Misai attended a Chinese school. When their father went missing (he is said to have been killed by Japanese forces) after going into town (he was an opium addict) following the Japanese occupation of the Malay Peninsula, the mother and children took refuge in the forest, moving from place to place under the guidance of the Orang Asli. They changed their names during the time of the Emergency: the Malay Penghulu (a local administrator at the time), fearing that their Chinese names would cause them to be suspected of being Communist insurgents (who were primarily Chinese), advised them to enter "Orang Asli names" (i.e. using the Malay, that is to say the Islamic, method of bin/binti) on their identity documents. With this situation in mind, Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance at the time recognized children who lived in Orang Asli society as Orang Asli. Even if they were actually adopted, as long as they were living in Orang Asli society, they were regarded as Orang Asli. After the Emergency period, their father's relatives came to see them and encouraged them to come and live in Chinese society. However, they already had Orang Asli wives, and were living as Orang Asli, and so did not take up the invitation. Their father's relatives are regarded as a prominent family, amongst them (in 1997) Deputy Minister of Finance in the federal government (Wong See Wah). Local Chinese regard Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai as Chinese, though to the Chinese who live as Orang Asli, and to Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai themselves, they are regarded as "having Chinese blood". In Orang Asli society in the south of the Malay Peninsula, there are members of the Orang Asli who are, in this way, of mixed Chinese blood, and they often hold leading positions within village society.
7. The first time this is said to have happened was at the time of Hari Raya Puasa in 1984. The villagers, counting on the fact that the forestry officials were on holiday because of the festival, felled trees and cleared an area in the forest reservation. They view this illegal act with confidence. Amongst the villagers it is an open secret, but very few outsiders are aware of it.
8. Similar instances of forest reservation development have been reported in Semai (Gomes 1990: 30).

Chapter 3

Landscape

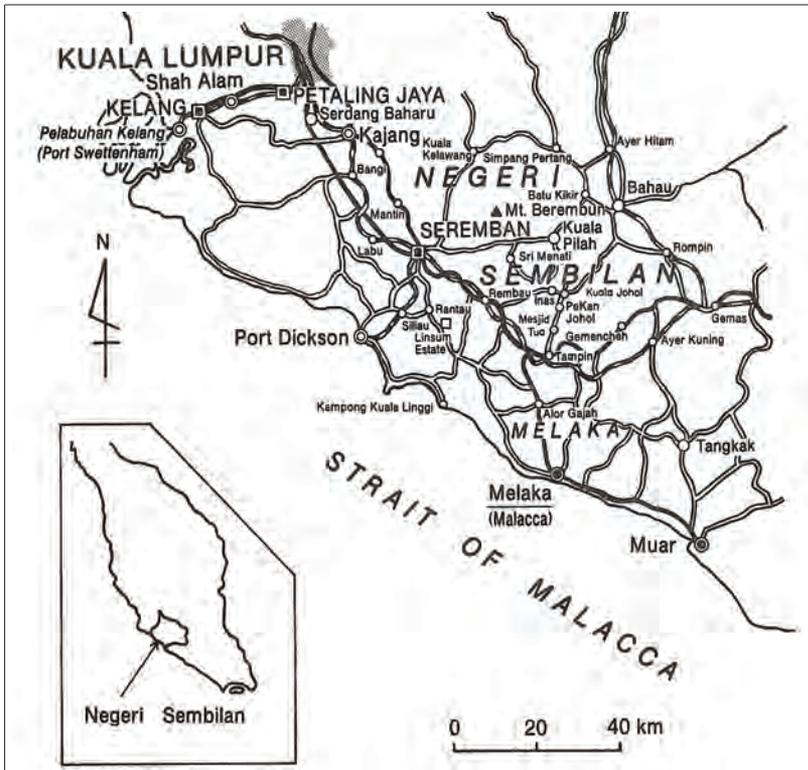
Surrounding Region

The Jelevu district, in which Kampung Durian Tawar is located, is in the middle of a mountainous part of the state of Negeri Sembilan. To reach the Jelevu district from the state capital, Seremban, one must take a road via either Kuala Kelawang or Kuala Pilah, and in either case must cross over mountain passes. As a result, Jelevu district appears somewhat isolated (for a map of the location, see Figure 3). The area has a low population but the proportion of Orang Asli in the ethnic composition of the area as a whole is relatively high (see Table 11; the Orang Asli are included in this table under “Other Bumiputra”). In this area, the Orang Asli cannot be regarded as scarce and, in certain parts, their numbers are in fact sufficiently high for them to be particularly visible as an ethnic group. In the towns (*pekan*) one often comes across Orang Asli people.

Most of the Temuan in Negeri Sembilan live along the eastern and western flanks of the central mountain range that traverses the state. Leaving behind the Malay villages situated along the roads, and going deep into the forest that runs along the mountains, one arrives at the Temuan villages. Not all the Orang Asli who live in Negeri Sembilan, however, are Temuan. There are also Semelai, who are chiefly concentrated around Lake Bera (Tasik Bera) in the neighboring state of Pahang. The areas they inhabit, however, extend beyond the state border to the edges of the mountain range traversing the eastern part of the district of Jempol in Negeri Sembilan.

In the past most Temuan villages were located adjacent to Malay ones. However, development projects aimed at establishing large-scale plantations obliterated the forest, the life source for the Temuan. Because of this, they moved even deeper into the forest reservations.

Figure 3
Negeri Sembilan and surrounding area



Source: Kato (1991:110)

The distribution of Temuan villages has therefore changed into what can be described as small islands in a vast sea of plantations and forest reservations.¹ Kampung Durian Tawar retains comparatively more traces of the past than most Temuan villages. One reason for this is that large-scale development projects have not yet been undertaken in the area surrounding it. This is not the case with neighboring villages.²

Jelebu and Pertang

The Jelebu district is located in the northern part of the state of Negeri Sembilan (for a map of the area surrounding Kampung Durian Tawar, see Figure 4). The rivers running through the Jelebu district flow through the neighboring state of Pahang and down to the eastern coast of the Malay

Table 11
Population by ethnic group (Pertang, Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan)

	Malay	Other Bumiputera	Chinese	Indian	Other	Total
Pertang	7,371	807	2,716	1,205	168	12,267
	60.1%	6.6%	22.1%	9.8%	1.4%	100.0%
Jelebu	22,641	1,486	12,863	2,170	299	39,459
	57.4%	3.8%	32.6%	5.5%	0.8%	100.0%
Negeri Sembilan	366,700	7,360	211,071	116,480	10,134	711,745
	51.5%	1.0%	29.7%	16.4%	1.4%	100.0%

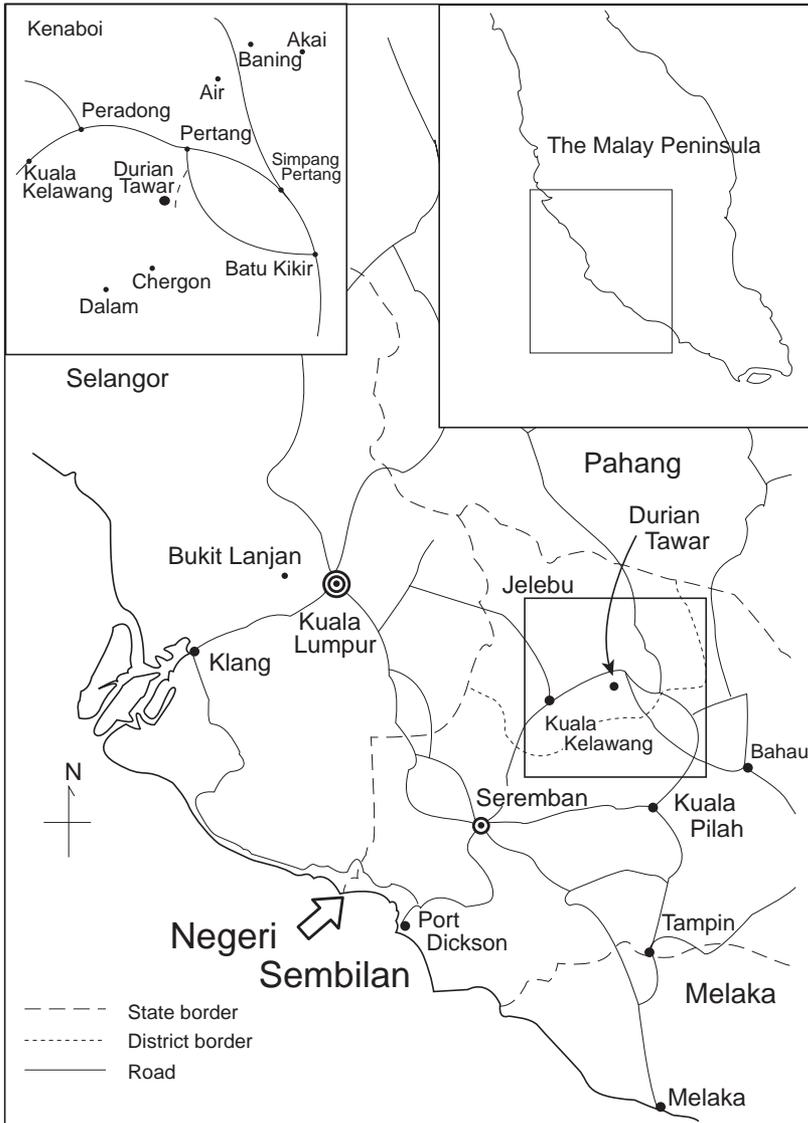
Source: Date compiled from Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (1995a; 1995b)

Peninsula. We can imagine how strong the relationship between the Jelebu district and Pahang was back in the era when river transportation was the primary mode of transportation.³

The Jelebu district is traversed in the north and west by the central mountain range running through Negeri Sembilan. Its primary trunk road routes are the national highway running through to the state capital Seremban, the state highway running through to Selangor, and the national highway traversing Negeri Sembilan from Melaka to Pahang. These are the only roads linking the district with other areas. The national highway to Seremban and the state highway to Selangor both cross the mountains at the district border. To avoid these mountainous routes, the central artery for the road transport of goods is the national highway, which runs along the plain to Melaka and passes through Kuala Pilah and Tampin. Cash crops such as rubber, palm oil and sugarcane are transported south along this highway to Melaka and Singapore. In other words, the economy of this area relies not on the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, but on Melaka and Singapore as principal markets. The Chinese control the local economy, and at present the traders and businesses they deal with are located in Johor and Singapore. Among the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers employed by the Chinese, there are some who have worked on construction sites in Singapore.

The district capital, Kuala Kelawang, is the largest town in the Jelebu district. Some of the largest towns in the wider eastern part of Negeri Sembilan are Kuala Pilah and Bahau, both located in neighboring districts. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar know Kuala Kelawang well because it has a JHEOA branch. They also often go to Bahau, known

Figure 4
The Fieldwork Area



for its nightlife, by car or motorbike, and to Kuala Pilah, which has a bus running directly to it from Kampung Durian Tawar.

To the east of the Pertang area (Mukim Pertang) is FELDA-developed land that stretches across from the northern part of Jempol. This was previously forest reservation land and a favored hunting and gathering site for the Orang Asli. Now, however, it has been developed and is dominated by palm oil plantations. On the Jempol part of this land there is a large forest reserve for the Pasoh, a large-scale research project on forest environment in which Japanese researchers are participating.⁴

The large stands of rubber trees surrounding Pertang are the remains of rubber plantations established during the British colonial period. These days rubber extraction is carried out on small farms operated by individual Chinese farmers and by the Indian plantation workers. Almost all the Indians in Pertang are connected to the plantations. They do not live in the town of Pertang, however, but in the plantation areas surrounding Pertang. Their houses are provided by the plantations and are all virtually identical.

The Pertang area has the towns of Pertang and Simpang Pertang, which most villagers visit on a daily basis. Simpang Pertang, located about five kilometers from Pertang, is the economic center of the area, partly because it is a transportation center where national highways intersect. It has a police station, post office, bank, branch office of the Department of Forestry and a public market. An industrial area containing factories and manufacturing businesses is also currently being constructed here, as part of the plans to develop Simpang Pertang into the area's industrial center.

Pertang is the closest town to the village, being about four kilometers away.⁵ It has a number of educational institutions such as a junior high school, a senior high school and a primary school for Chinese children. It also has a number of administrative offices, such as a police station, a post office, a health center (Pusat Kesihatan) and a Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA) office. Although the town itself is smaller than Simpang Pertang, Pertang is regarded as the administrative center of the Pertang area.

To buy everyday items and food, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar usually go to Pertang. However, the Pertang post office does not have a computer for automated payments of water and electricity bills; as such, they must make a monthly trip to the Simpang Pertang post office. Many villagers also go to the market (*pasar*) held each Thursday afternoon in Simpang Pertang. There is also a market held on Thursday evenings in Pertang, but it is smaller.

In many cases, items that are not available in the Chinese shops in Pertang can be found in those in Simpang Pertang. Knowing this from experience, some villagers do not bother to go to the shops in Pertang but go straight to Simpang Pertang. Given the cost of the petrol for the return trip to Simpang Pertang by motorbike or car, however, most villagers, despite being aware that they are unlikely to find what they are looking for, first check the shops in Pertang just in case.

From Pertang to Kampung Durian Tawar

Traveling south along the state highway, which intersects with the national highway in Pertang, takes you in the direction of Kampung Durian Tawar. Most of the people residing in Pertang are Chinese, although housing for Malay public servants who work in government institutions and centers (such as the police station, the health center and the schools) is located in one corner of the town. The Chinese regularly gather in the town's restaurants and cafes.

There are two major roads in Pertang, which run parallel to each other. The eastern road is the town's main road, which also leads to Kampung Durian Tawar. Chinese-owned shops and businesses operate along both sides of this road. A kindergarten and primary school for Chinese children are located on the western road, and the Thursday evening market is held along this road and is filled with stalls. An Indian stall is located in a corner of the square in front of the kindergarten. The restaurants and cafes operated by the Chinese are located inside, while shops operated by Malays or Indians are usually open-air stalls. Most of the businesses operated by the Chinese are located along the first floor of the long terrace-like buildings found in towns all over Malaysia. Malay-run restaurants and cafes operate in a section of buildings owned by the local government (for example, in the public sanitation office or the local office for a road construction project).

Three Chinese-operated businesses in Pertang sell foodstuffs. A Chinese man's wife and his concubine originally operated two of these, and now they are operated by their sons. I was a frequent customer of one of these shops located on the national highway. Orang Asli and the Indians (and sometimes even Malays) often drink Chinese liquor and beer behind the shop throughout the day. Purchasing goods in the shop, I would meet Orang Asli men from the local villages who smelled of alcohol. If I came across men who knew me, they would often come up and talk to me. Given that there is no particular reason for the Chinese and the Indians to do their drinking out of sight, those drinking behind the shop were

usually Orang Asli and Malays. The Malays drink out of sight because, as Muslims, they are prohibited from drinking alcohol; the Orang Asli do so because they are often mistaken for Malays.

The third Chinese-run business selling foodstuffs in Pertang is located on the state highway, the road that continues on to Kampung Durian Tawar. The drunk group from Kampung Durian Tawar drink here. Orang Asli from villages close to Simpang Pertang also drink here, as do Malays. I would often see Orang Asli men, drunk and red in the face, either having finished their drinking or waiting for a drinking companion. I did not shop here because I tried to avoid trouble with drunks.

As you travel south along the state highway from Pertang, you see the houses of the Chinese tightly packed along the hills to the right. Many Chinese inhabitants of Pertang were killed by the Japanese forces during the Second World War. A memorial stone is located in a corner of the local Chinese cemetery.⁶ I often heard stories from the town's Chinese about their relatives who had been killed by the Japanese. Meeting me awakened memories of their dead relatives and, even before I could turn the conversation in that direction, they would begin, of their own volition, to speak of the slaughter of their relatives.

At the beginning of the 1990s increasing numbers of local Chinese laborers were going to Japan in search of work, but at the time of my fieldwork (1997) this trend had subsided. When I ate in the Chinese restaurants or cafes, people would often try to start up a conversation with me in broken Japanese. The conversations were never straightforward, though, as it seemed they could not understand why a Japanese person was living in an Orang Asli village. For my part, I had a sense of what their lives in Japan must have been like when they had gone there to work. When I asked them about their time in Japan, I discovered that they had worked washing dishes or as kitchen hands in restaurants or cafes, or on construction sites or in factories, just as I had suspected.

Having passed the Chinese residential area, a Malay-style residential area appears on the right. These are not, in fact, the houses of Malays but those of the Muslim Batak, that is to say, the Mandailing, who emigrated from the island of Sumatra in Indonesia in the nineteenth century.⁷ The Mandailing took refuge here during the Emergency period. Some of these people returned to their home villages in the area surrounding Pertang after the Emergency period; others, however, remained in Pertang. One of these Mandailing leases a rubber smallholding in Kampung Durian Tawar, and he sometimes said, "We are different from the Malays".



Plates 7 & 8: Pertang town. The Chinese form the majority of the population in Pertang and they also operate most of the shops. Malay government officers, Malay villagers, Indian workers in the European's rubber plantation, and Mandailing people also live in Pertang. The villagers of Durian Tawar often have a meal and drink in the Chinese restaurant and café. Behind the Chinese shop, the Orang Asli men and sometimes the Malay men, drink Chinese liquor and beer. Malays are forbidden to drink alcohol while the Orang Asli are afraid to be mistaken for Malays. [NT-2003]

Past the Mandailing residential area, and again on the right, stand the large buildings of the public junior high and senior high schools. Students from Kampung Durian Tawar attend these schools. In the early afternoon the road is filled with students on their way home from school. The students from Kampung Durian Tawar wait just outside the school gates for the minibus that comes to collect them. Unlike the Malay girls, the Orang Asli

girls do not wear a veil (*tudung*), one of the most recognizable symbols of Islam. Otherwise similar in appearance to the Malays, the fact that they do not wear a veil serves to mark their difference from the Malays.

Further down the road, beyond the schools a rubber plantation opens out, once more on the right. Crossing over a hill, you come to the housing provided for the Indians who work in the plantations in the area. The housing is adjacent to the national highway that passes through Pertang. On the left lie Malay-owned fishponds. The Chinese do the actual fish farming.

Traveling further south, the state highway splits into two, with one road going to Kampung Durian Tawar and the other to the Malay village of Kampung Gelang. The road to Gelang is the primary road and is fully paved. It crosses the mountains and eventually arrives in Batu Kikir. Some of the villagers from Kampung Durian Tawar use the road through Gelang when going into the forest. They leave their motorbikes or cars by the side of the mountain road and go into the forest to hunt and gather.

The road that forks off to Kampung Durian Tawar from the state highway is not paved. The remains of the mine next to Kampung Durian Tawar are now partially used for fish farming (operated by the Chinese). Part of the mine is owned by a Chinese businessman who operates a soil and gravel business there. Most of the soil and gravel is transported in trucks that travel along the road from Kampung Durian Tawar to the state highway and on to construction sites in Bahau. Because of these trucks, the road is always dusty. The state government responsible for roads tells the people of the village that the constant use of the road by the trucks means that paving the surface is futile, as the trucks would soon damage it.⁸

Along the right-hand side of the road stretch neatly planted rows of rubber trees, belonging to the rubber plantation mentioned earlier. Along the left-hand side stretch the durian orchards and sugarcane fields of Gelang. The Chinese farmers operate the sugarcane farms, having leased the land from Malay owners. On occasion, I saw men from Kampung Durian Tawar, employed by the Chinese, harvesting the sugarcane.

Traveling south down this narrow road, a line of mountains rises up before you. There are no towns and no Malay villages ahead. If you did not know that there was an Orang Asli village ahead, the road would probably make you think of turning back. At night it is even more lonely, shrouded in a darkness broken only by the occasional lights of a motorbike or car. Just as one is thinking of turning back, suddenly the orderly rows of trees of the rubber plantation end and a banana field comes into view on the right. This marks the entrance to Kampung Durian Tawar.

Village Landscape

Malay Village and Orang Asli Village

Almost all Malay villages face onto the plains, with the line of mountains behind them. Kampung Gelang, a neighboring village to Kampung Durian Tawar, is a case in point. Nowadays most Malay houses have paved roads in front of them and each house has a relatively spacious garden around it. This is the typical layout of a Malay village. It suits the Malay lifestyle of settled habitation, with the pursuit of agriculture as the chief means of livelihood.

Previously, the Orang Asli's means of livelihood were hunting and gathering, and swidden cultivation. They moved from place to place within their defined territory in the forest. It is difficult now, however, to find such nomadic Orang Asli.⁹ For the Orang Asli of this earlier nomadic period, a "house" was simply a temporary hut to shelter from the rain; they rarely settled in a house. As has been pointed out, the Malay way of life is epitomized by the concept of the village (*kampung*), a place where life is centered on wet rice farming and fruit tree cultivation. In contrast, the Orang Asli way of life is epitomized by the concepts of the forest (*hutan*), the hills (*bukit*) and the interior (*darat*).

For the Malays, the village and the house are the base for a permanent, settled existence, and Malays focus particular attention on decorating the house and on furniture. The village itself is formed around the mosque. The landscape of the village and the decoration of the houses can be said to be elaborate. In the Orang Asli case, in contrast, the village and the house, being conceived as a temporary place of habitation, are extremely simple. If they felt a particular need to move to another place, they would do so. Given this, the village and the houses were places that could readily be abandoned at a moment's notice.

Reflecting on their previous nomadic lives, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar gave me accounts as follows. "If someone who had been living with us died, we would immediately abandon the village and move to another place, fearing the spirit of the dead person". "In extreme cases we would leave the dead person in a hut and flee to another place without even burying him or her".¹⁰ "It was not just the spirits of the dead we feared. If a storm occurred we would abandon the village believing it to be the work of the forest spirit (*hantu hutan*)". "We would also flee and abandon the village if a fierce animal appeared, such as a Malayan tiger".

There is no doubt that in the past Orang Asli people would have considered the adornment or the special design of houses, or of the village

as a whole, to be a waste of time. In addition to their regular moving, their fear of the dead and of the forest spirit meant that houses and villages had to be able to be readily abandoned at any time.

The landscape of present-day Orang Asli villages is not as fixed as is the case with Malay villages, but several patterns are nonetheless apparent. The first of these involves villages of a relatively small size located within the forest reservations. These villages have an open area in the middle, with the surrounding houses arranged tightly around it and with relatively little space between each house. This is very similar to the arrangement of huts used when the Orang Asli set up camp in the forest while gathering forest products. The second pattern involves relatively large villages established within Orang Asli reservations located within the larger forest reservations. In these cases, the distance between houses is considerable, with houses scattered among the trees and weeds.

In Orang Asli villages located within the forest (i.e. in villages of both the above patterns), the houses are built on the slopes of hills. The Malays, prior to building their houses along the roads, built them along the rivers. In contrast to this, although the Orang Asli build their huts close to a stream, in most cases they build them on higher ground, especially when constructing them in the forest. They have done this for reasons of hygiene, and also to avoid flooding due to rising levels of the rivers and streams. In this sense, Orang Asli villages in the forest, in contrast to those on the plains, can be said to retain aspects of the earlier nomadic period. The villagers explain that they do not want to live downstream on rivers in the way that the Malays do, because this would mean drinking the drainage of those higher up the river. The reason for not moving down to the plains, in other words, is based on their own conceptions of hygiene.

Villages in which the JHEOA has implemented housing construction projects, such as Kampung Durian Tawar, are of a completely different type to those located within the forest where housing is “Orang Asli style”. The government-provided houses are lined up within the village along the roads. Compared to Malay villages, which have been formed over a longer period, these Orang Asli villages appear to be relatively denuded (in contrast to the earlier villages of the nomadic Orang Asli). Houses are arranged with relatively little space between them, as this is deemed economically efficient in terms of allowing for easier future provision of electricity and water (to save money for the government on water pipes and electrical wires). This sort of bureaucratic arrangement of dwellings is similar to that of the dwellings of the Indian laborers working on rubber plantations.

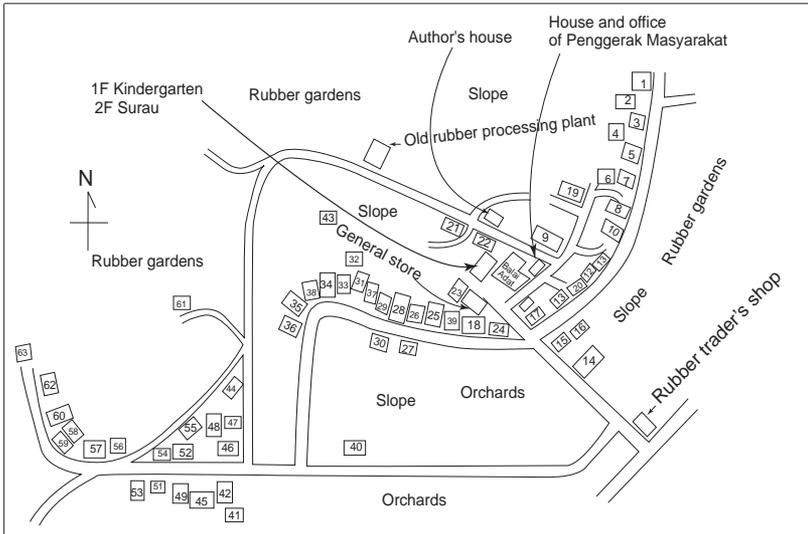
While Kampung Durian Tawar appears denuded in comparison to the surrounding Malay villages, it appears less denuded than other Orang Asli villages where housing construction projects have been undertaken more recently. In part this is because the housing construction project in Kampung Durian Tawar was undertaken almost thirty years ago. In Malaysia you can often estimate the age of a village by the height of its coconut trees. The coconut trees in Kampung Durian Tawar stand very tall, which shows that it has been there some time and has been settled gradually. In Kampung Durian Tawar, people did not immediately move into the new houses after the housing construction project was complete. The villagers say that they first planted coconut and fruit tree seedlings and then waited for them to grow. The aim of this was to provide shade for the houses, thereby making them more comfortable to live in. As a result, although the construction project began in the early 1970s, it was not until the mid-1970s that the actual moving of people into the new houses was complete.

Inside the Village

Figure 5 shows the layout of Kampung Durian Tawar. At the entrance to Kampung Durian Tawar there is a gate to stop the intrusion into the village of cattle from the neighboring Malay village. Despite the gate, the cattle often enter Kampung Durian Tawar and trample the crops. Next to the gate there is a rubber trader's shop (*kedai getah*).¹¹ This was my "research base". While I worked as a monitor of the quantity of rubber sold, I also gathered all sorts of information by talking with the villagers who came to sell it.

The road splits into two as soon as you enter the village. One road climbs the hill directly in front of you, while the other curves off to the left. Taking the road to the left, you see durian, rambutan and other fruit tree orchards on both sides of the road, and eventually you arrive at Jelawai, the area where the lower people live. The road sloping up the hill directly in front of the village entrance climbs straight up the hill, requiring you to put your car or motorbike into low gear. Visitors to the village take this road, arriving in the main residential area where the upper people live. Part way up this road, on the right, stands the impressive concrete house of Batin Janggut (No. 14) (the numbers here refer to the house numbers). Above this is the house (No. 15) of his third wife, from whom he is now divorced. This house stands as if directly looking down onto Batin Janggut. The land running down to the bottom of the hill on both sides of the road here belongs to Batin Janggut. It is a large area, with fishponds, banana fields, and durian and rambutan orchards.

Figure 5
The residential area of Kampung Durian Tawar



On the left of the road durian and rambutan trees grow on orchard land. The rambutan were planted partly through the orchard owners' initiative and expense, and partly through the assistance of the JHEOA. The slopes of the hill here are said to be where the villagers' ancestors once lived, led there by Batin Siuntung. This means that they lived there until just before the Japanese invasion. The orchard area is the site of the remains of the houses of people of the former Menteri Lewat group (which will be discussed later). In the future the children of the various families who own different parts of this orchard will set up their own independent households there. There are already some houses there. Lunas has built a house (No. 40) on part of an orchard owned by her younger sister, Bangli. Pong, who is one of the lower people, and her adopted son-in-law Arif, have also built their houses (No. 41 and No. 42 respectively) on part of the orchard area owned by Bangli and Lunas. The sisters are Pong's cousins.

To the right of the road, beyond Batin Janggut's house, a rubber garden covers the land along the slopes of the hill. The garden was established through a rubber development project undertaken with the aid of the JHEOA.

At the end of the road going up the hill is the village square. Along its sides stand the *adat* hall (*balai adat*), a general store and a kindergarten (on



Plates 9 & 10: Village life. Taking care of children involves kinsfolk. When their parents are at work, their daughters and mothers usually take care of their little children. So far there has been no need to set up a nursery in the village. [NT-2003]

the second floor of which there is a *surau*, an Islamic prayer house). In part of the village square there is a *sepak takraw* court.¹² Various ceremonies and events take place in the square, with the *adat* hall being the main site of activity. Weddings and funerals take place here, as do meetings and discussions with government officials. The square is what we might call the village center of Kampung Durian Tawar, and offers a good view out to the surrounding mountains. This close-up view of the surrounding mountains is one of the reasons that the villagers of Kampung Baniang,

located on the lower reaches of the Pertang River down on the plain, refer to the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar as the hill people (*orang bukit*).

Before it reaches the top of the hill, the road running up the hill from the village entrance branches into two roads running to the left and right. The wooden houses built during the housing construction project line these roads. The road to the right goes as far as Ota's house (No. 1), and then continues on to a rubber garden. Ota's family is plagued by the smell from the rubber garden and by the swarms of mosquitoes that come from there. In the other direction, the road to the left traverses the hill slope as far as Jekerah Asang's house (No. 36) and then descends to the bottom of the hill, where it meets up with the road running from the village entrance to the Jelawai area.

At the very top of the hill, you come to the village square I have just described. Just before it, however, there is yet another road running off to the right. Along this road (and next to the *adat* hall) is the house of the Muslim missionary (*Penggerak Masyarakat*). This means that both the *surau* and the home of this Muslim missionary are located right in the center of the village. This road runs parallel to the road running to Ota's house. On the left side of the road, as you descend from the village center, are the houses of Mangku Hasim (No. 9) and Ukal (No. 19). These houses were built by the owners themselves. Made of concrete, they are both large and impressive and have colorful flower gardens around them. This is what might be called the "high-class" part of the village.

A road runs downhill, between Mangku Hasim's house and the house of the Muslim missionary, to a rubber garden on the slopes below. The wooden house in which I lived is located along this road, standing behind Mangku Hasim's house. My house was originally built by the government for use by the kindergarten teacher. The current teacher, however, is a woman from the village (who lives in the house at No. 17)¹³ and the house was therefore empty. Above my house on the left stand the houses of Konchon (No. 21) and Aru (No. 22). They built these new houses when they left their parents' homes to set up their own families.

The land on the slope behind my house was cleared of trees and weeds when it was planned that I would live there. The work was carried out through community cooperation (*gotong royong*). It has since been set aside for the future houses of Batin Janggut's sisters' sons (*enekbuah*): Milong (who lives at No. 13), Asat (who lives at No. 19) and Genreh (who lives at No. 20), and for the married children of Mangku Hasim, the children of Jenang Misai (who lives at No. 24), and the children of Menteri



Plate 11: The house and office of Penggerak Masyarakat. When the state-led Islamic mission or *dakwah* was very active in Kampung Durian Tawar in 1998, a male Muslim missionary officer resided in this house. However, in 2007, the house was vacant. [NT-2007]

Gemuk (who lives at No. 35) and Jekerah Asang. It is, in other words, land set aside for the use of the children or sisters' children of the people who are the holders of titles within the village.

Traveling down the hill along the road on which my house was located, you come to a rubber-processing plant on the right. It is not currently in use. Above it on the left is the house (No. 43, more so a hut) of Ajam. The other villagers regard him as a madman (*orang gila*). The land the house stands on belongs to Ajam's older brother Kedai (who lives at No. 45). Kedai's daughter and her husband live in a newly built house next to Ajam's house.

Arriving at the bottom of the hill, the road divides into three. Two of these roads run through rubber gardens. The third, running off to the left, passes through a rubber garden and leads towards the Jelawai area. The Jelawai area takes its name from the large *jelawai* tree. To get to the Jelawai area from the village entrance you take the road that branches off to the left just inside the entrance. You pass by Lunas's house, which, as mentioned, is located within an orchard. The road then intersects with the road running down the hill from Jekerah Asang's house and, crossing a small stream, enters the Jelawai area. At the entrance to this area, you see the houses of Pong, Arif and Kedai on the left, and on the right the house of the Islamic convert Adunan (No. 46). The road divides here, with one road continuing in the same direction and another branching



Plates 12 & 13: The author's house. The house was originally one meant for a kindergarten teacher in the village. As the teacher, the Batin's daughter, had her own house in the village, this house was left vacant. The house has one bed room, one living room, and a kitchen. The toilet and bathroom are outside the house. My car, a small Perodua Kancil, can be seen in the second picture. [NT-1997]

off to the right. The road to the right, as mentioned above, passes through the rubber garden. Awas's house (No. 61) stands inside the rubber garden. Along this road to the right stand the houses of Katup (No. 44), Bujang (No. 47) and Doyes (No. 48). Durian orchards surround the three houses. The road branches off to the left just past Katup's house. This road meets up at its end with the original road running to the Jelawai area from the village entrance. It is used as a shortcut by the upper people when

heading to the land they work for cultivation. Gobek's house (No. 55), newly built, is located on this road. Using this road, the upper people get to see on an almost daily basis the dilapidated, barrack-like houses and the impoverished circumstances of the lower people who live here.

Along the road running from the village entrance into the Jelawai area there are, in addition to those already mentioned, the houses of Gat (No. 49), the Islamic convert Jahara (No. 51) and Entak (No. 53) on the left, and the houses of the Islamic convert Haji Konin (No. 52) and Inan (No. 54) on the right. All these houses are simple concrete structures provided for the use of the "poor"; they are provided by the government under its Program Pembangunan Rakyat Termiskin (PPRT, Program for the Development of the Poor) project. This is the poorest area in Kampung Durian Tawar.

The house of the Islamic convert Kepah (No. 56) is located where the road from the village entrance intersects with the above-mentioned "shortcut" road. There is also another road here that branches off to the left. This road goes to the fields the villagers have under cultivation. Back on the road running from the village entrance into the Jelawai area, there are a number of other houses on the right, including that of Aki Main (No. 57). At the house of Sudin (No. 63), Aki Main's son, the road ends. A number of relatives of the people of the Aki Main group (which is discussed later) live in this part of the village. They originally come from Kampung Bukit Lanjan (on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur), and many men among them began the practice of drinking throughout the day. This part of the village has many "drunks" living in it.

Cultivated Area and Forest

Crossing a stream as you take the road leading to the land the villagers have under cultivation, and heading out of the village, you come to a rubber garden, which tends to be dark even during the day. A little further along, at an eight-acre rubber smallholding owned by Batin Janggut, the road divides into two. The road branching off to the right goes to the Sialang area. The Sialang area takes its name from the large *sialang* tree. In the Sialang area almost all the land under cultivation consists of orchards of durian and other fruit. The Islamic convert Tekok's house (a simple hut, No. 50) is located in a corner of a durian orchard there. She does not wish to associate in any way with the villagers and lives alone with her daughter. There is also a durian orchard owned by Batin Janggut in the Sialang area. This is part of an orchard "purchased" by Batin Janggut from Jekerah Ali. Part of this orchard has been given to Batin Janggut's younger sister, Manyo. The rest of the orchards in this area are durian orchards belonging to the descendants of Jekerah Ali, who used to live there.



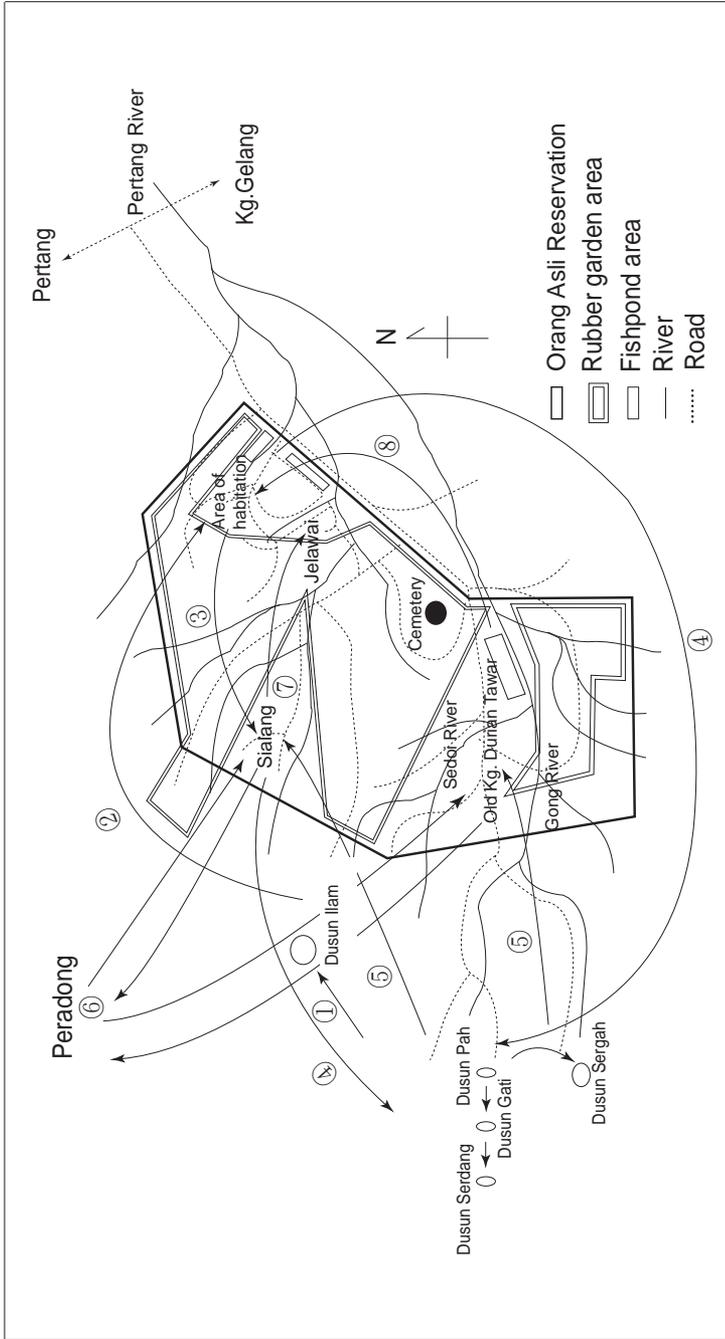
Plate 14: The Sialang area. In the past, the lower people lived in the Sialang area and planted durian trees. Later, however, Batin Janggut purchased some durian orchards from the lower people so the Sialang area now has some durian orchards belonging to Batin Janggut and his relatives. [NT-2004]

The scenery in the rubber gardens does not change very much throughout the year, but in the durian orchards it does. During the harvest season, for example, the weeds in the orchard are removed for the harvest and the orchard land is tidied up generally. The durian orchards have a very open and tidy look about them during the harvest season. For the rest of the year, however, they are hardly touched and grass and weeds grow abundantly throughout them. As a result, they look just like an area of wild growth. To those unaware that a durian orchard is there, this could only appear to be uncultivated land.

Before reaching the Sialang area, the road hits a T-junction. The road to the left proceeds through rubber gardens and eventually becomes a forest road (*jalan hutan*) leading to Dusun Ilam. The road to the right passes through rubber gardens. These rubber gardens continue outside the boundary of the Orang Asli reservation and into the forest reservation, finally finishing at a rubber smallholding owned by Ukal on the slope of a mountain. That is as far as you can proceed by motorbike. A dark forest road continues from there.

Proceeding along this forest road, you immediately feel the coolness of the air. The darkness of the thickly growing trees blocks the rays of the sun. The rubber gardens are cool, too, but because of the swarms of mosquitoes, they cannot be described as pleasant. A villager said to me:

Figure 6
Kampung Durian Tawar



The forest used to have many large trees and this prevented the growth of smaller trees and weeds. As a result, the forest was cool. You could easily see some distance ahead, and it was easy to walk through. Now that most of the large trees have gone, taken away through logging, the forest is covered with smaller trees and weeds. As such, it is difficult to see ahead and difficult to walk through it.

Turning left at the eight-acre rubber smallholding owned by Batin Janggut, there is an area of low-lying hills on the right. Rubber smallholdings planted under a RISDA development project cover this area. The rubber trees here have not yet grown sufficiently for rubber to be extracted from them. With the trees not yet fully grown, the area is open to the sky and the rays of the sun are strong. A road branching off to the right takes you to a cemetery (*kubur*) at the foot of the hill area. The cemetery is eerie, with overgrown trees and grass growing thickly and with rubber gardens surrounding it on all sides. People do not go near it except during burials, believing that ghosts (*hantu*) appear there. The villagers believe that if the spirit of a dead person attaches itself to you, you will become ill. For them the cemetery is a dangerous (*bahaya*) place. Within the rubber gardens and the durian orchards, many trees and bamboo groves have not been felled and cleared. The villagers told me that these places also had some kind of connection with “spirits”, and warned me not to go near them.

The road that runs past the cemetery and up through the rubber gardens growing on the side of the hill curves to the left and eventually meets up with another road. If you go straight ahead, instead of turning off to the right at Batin Janggut’s rubber gardens (which leads you to the road going to the cemetery), you pass through more rubber gardens and soon come to a gate set up to prevent the intrusion of cattle. There is a small shrine located here, set down by the local Chinese. There is a story that a man from the village, passing by this small shrine in the middle of the night, encountered a ghost. Some of the local Chinese men go hunting as a hobby in the forest, with rifles and hunting dogs. The villagers said to me that when venturing into the forest, the Chinese men pray at the shrine for their safe return.

The road then meets up with another running from the entrance to Kampung Durian Tawar. This road, running along the outside of the boundary of the Orang Asli reservation, links Pertang and Titi. The old village of Kampung Durian Tawar, established after the defeat of the Japanese forces, was located on this road. As you travel along this road, more rubber gardens are visible on the right. You eventually come to another gate set up to prevent the intrusion of cattle, and soon after the

road divides into two. The road to the left eventually meets up again with the road branching off to the right. The land between these two roads contains a number of fishponds set up under a development project. In contrast to the fishponds owned by Batin Janggut, which are located near the entrance of Kampung Durian Tawar, these fishponds are rarely used. The supply of water to them no longer works efficiently and, as a result, they have been largely abandoned.

To the left (south) of the fishponds lie rubber gardens and durian orchards. The durian orchards, dotted here and there, surround the rubber gardens. The rubber smallholdings here have been established under development projects undertaken by the JHEOA and RISDA. This area contained houses during the days of the old village of Kampung Durian Tawar. In the old village the people did not live close together in a concentrated area but, rather, were relatively scattered. Durian orchards now stand where the houses once stood.

Traveling further along the road linking Pertang and Titi, there are durian orchards to the left and right of the road. They contain within them orchards of rambutan and other fruit trees. These orchards run along the sides of the fishponds to the left, and along the slopes of the hills to the right. The orchards here, too, are located where houses of the old village of Kampung Durian Tawar used to be. This is where Baharon lived when he undertook his study. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar still remember the location of his house.

When the fishponds end, you encounter wetlands stretching out in front of you. From here there is a good view out across the forest-covered mountains. The Sedoi River (Sungai Sedoi) runs through the wetlands, where wet rice cultivation was previously carried out. The development project fishponds mentioned above are also located along a river, the Gong (which the Sedoi flows into); wet rice cultivation was also carried out in this area. When wet rice cultivation was abandoned, part of the area of cultivation was reused for fishponds. The owners of the fishponds are the descendants of the owners of the earlier rice fields.

Crossing the Sedoi River, you enter the hills. The durian orchards located in this area are cool and shady. Durian Tawar means “tasteless durian” and, according to the villagers, the name of the village originates from the durians grown in this hill area. Taking the road that forks off from here through the durian orchards to the right, you come to a very large orchard growing durian and other fruit. Mangku Hasim owns this. It stretches into forest reservation land, and continues right up to the foot of Dusun Ilam.



Plates 15 & 16: Gotong royong work along the Sedoi River . When the Sedoi River became clogged, the villagers came together to carry out drainage and irrigation work. They wore long-sleeved shirts with hats to protect them from the strong direct sunlight. [NT-1998]

Straight ahead along the road that crosses the Sedoi River, you continue to pass through durian orchards. Going up and over a small hill, you come to the boundary of the Orang Asli reservation. Ahead lies an open basin area completely surrounded by mountains. Some rubber gardens are dotted here and there in this area, but durian, rambutan and other fruit orchards cover most of the land. The road from here on is even narrower, becoming little more than an animal track. It forks into two again, with the left fork bringing you to Dusun Sergah. There are orchards in the Dusun Sergah



Plate 17: Catching fish in the Sedoi River in 2007. This area was once a paddy field. After wet-rice cultivation was discontinued, flood prevention work in the Sedoi river was carried out regularly. During these times, fish, eels, and mud snails were easy to catch. This young couple is trying to catch them. [NT-2007]

area owned by the families and relatives of Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai. An orchard owned by Tikak, one of Batin Janggut's sons, is located in the middle of the basin area. The basin area is referred to as stolen cultivated land (*cerobo*) and it is, indeed, land cultivated in secret from the outside.

The road forking off to the right at the beginning of the basin area is the old road to Titi. This road traverses the mountains and, for a mountain road, its gradient is relatively gentle. There is, however, an old logging road that forks off to the left, which climbs straight up the steep sides of the mountains. Deep in the forest, it meets up again with the old road to Titi.

The road to Titi follows the Pah River downstream. Following the old logging road across several mountains takes you through the area of the "durian orchards in the forest" (*dusun durian dalam hutan*). Passing by several of these durian orchards in the forest, and going even deeper into the forest, you finally come, at the end of the road, to Dusun Serdang (owned by Mangku Hasim).

At a steep slope just before Dusun Serdang, the road becomes impassable by motorbike. Along the road here you see old-growth forest, just as you do, for example, in the area along the Pah River. There are areas here that give a clear idea of how the forest environment used to be. In many places, however, the large trees have been felled through logging.

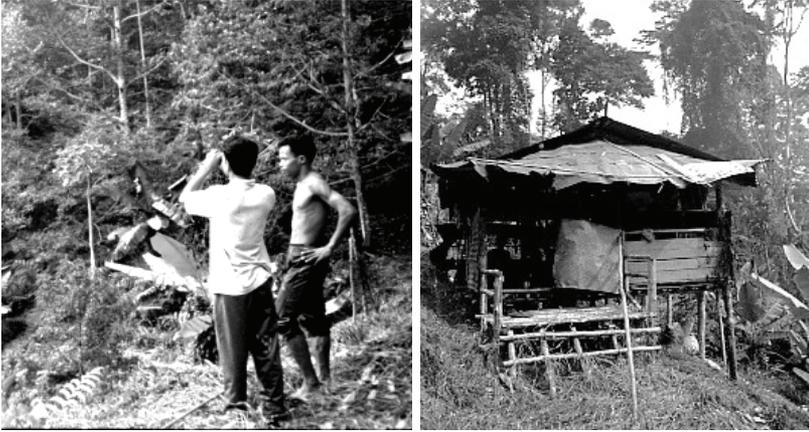


Plate 18: Dusun Serdang (left) and Plate 19: Mangku Hasim's hut (right). During the durian harvesting season, Mangku Hasim and his family lived in this hut. However as the price of durian fell, they spent less time there. [NT-1997]

This allows the rays of the sun to penetrate directly to the forest floor, making the forest unbearably hot.

The durian orchards in this area are ancestral property (*pusaka*). They are all located on the steep slopes of the mountains. As access by motorbike is impossible, the durians have to be transported by foot down to the bottom of the mountain (where the motorbikes are left). The location of Dusun Serdang is not so very far from Kampung Dalam. On the other side of the mountain, in fact, there are durian orchards belonging to Kampung Dalam villagers.

It is roughly a one-hour trip by motorbike from Kampung Durian Tawar to Dusun Serdang. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar often use the road to Dusun Serdang to go hunting and gathering, so this conveys a sense of the size of the forest area they regard as their territory. Dusun Serdang marks the end of that territory.

Notes

1. Many of the Temuan villages in the state of Selangor have been left starkly isolated after the forest, which previously surrounded them, was destroyed through large-scale development projects (the construction of freeways or new cities). Such villages have a great sense of dilapidation and ruin about them, some looking quite literally as though they have been placed on the barracks of the construction areas. Such Temuan villages stand in stark contrast to the Malay ones with their clean and sanitary appearance, verdant covering of palm trees, fine houses and fully provided amenities.
2. Kampung Banning, for example, is surrounded by a large-scale plantation established by the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), and part of Kampung Air is enclosed by a Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA) palm oil plantation.
3. The villagers of Kampung Banning say that their ancestors lived in a location closer to Pahang than that in which the villagers currently reside.
4. Apparently, Orang Asli people, unaware that the land was a forest reserve, have hunted and caught wild animals there, incurring the anger of the Japanese researchers. The area of the forest reserve is known in Kampung Durian Tawar as “David’s place” (*tempat David*). The villagers explained to me that this name probably arose when Orang Asli people asked about the name of the place, to which a researcher responded with his own name.
5. Pertang is where, in the past, Chinese carrying tin from the tin mine would rest and stay overnight. The name for Pertang was given to it, people say, because if you left Titi in the morning you would arrive in the area of Pertang in the evening (*petang* means evening). Located north of Kuala Kelawang, Titi is known for the tin mine that was located there. The old road from Titi to Pertang, which the Chinese used for transporting tin, has hardly been in use since the construction of the national highway. It is on this old road that Kampung Durian Tawar is located. The road runs through the forest. The hills along it are known as “the hills of Chinese tears” (*bukit Cina menangis*), apparently because the Chinese would weep with pain as they carried the heavy tin across the hills. After resting overnight in Pertang, they would carry their loads on to Batu Kikir in Jempol and from there on to Melaka and Singapore. Pertang was also a tin mining town, though operated on a smaller scale than Titi, and the remains of the mine are located to the south-east of Kampung Durian

Tawar. The abandoned mining pits have been filled with water and are now used as fishponds and are operated by the Chinese.

6. *The Japanese Army in Malaya: The Chinese Massacre in Negeri Sembilan* (Takashima and Hayashi (ed.) 1989), based on interviews, provides a thorough coverage of the massacre of the Chinese in Negeri Sembilan.
7. Tugby provides a detailed discussion of the migration of the Mandailing into Negeri Sembilan and Malaysia in general (Tugby 1977).
8. When I revisited Kampung Durian Tawar in March 2001 the road had been paved as a result of a promise made by a United Malays National Organization (UMNO) parliamentarian during the 1999 election.
9. Concerning this topic, see also Lye's discussion (Lye 2004).
10. Concerning the movement of the Sakai, Strong pointed out that taboos surrounding death were one of the motivations for the peoples' movement (Strong 1932: 244). Baharon (1973: 22) also pointed out that one of the reasons for the movement of the people is a fear of defilement when a death occurs, particularly the death of the village leader; the Batin. The people believe that a death brings diseases (elephantiasis (*jemoi*), dropsy (*busong*)) that are transmitted from the dead body.
11. This land near the village entrance is TOL (Temporary Occupation License) land and, strictly speaking, is not part of the Orang Asli reservation. It was temporarily given to the villagers by the government at the time of the Emergency. The initial thirty-year period for which the land was granted has expired but there has been no change in the title of the land.
12. *Sepak takraw* is a sport played according to rules similar to volleyball and involves passing a ball made of rattan using any part of the body except the hands.
13. This is the daughter of Batin Janggut's third wife, with whom he is in conflict.

Chapter 4

Village History

Movement before Independence

In the 1870s Batin Baning, the founder of Kampung Durian Tawar, moved with his relatives from the Tampin area in Negeri Sembilan to an area west of present-day Kampung Durian Tawar (Movement 1) (on the villagers' movement referred to in the following discussion, refer to Table 12). This was more than a century before Baharon undertook his study (for the location of *dusuns* and places of habitation, refer to Figure 6).¹ At the first place in which they settled, Dusun Ilam, they carried out swidden cultivation of dry rice, cassava and corn. They also planted durian tree seedlings (although there is a story that they first settled in an area where durian trees were already growing).

Batin Baning and his wife were attacked and killed by a Malayan tiger while on a trip to Ulu Beranang to gather durians (Ulu Beranang is an Orang Asli village located near the border between present-day Negeri Sembilan and Selangor). After the disappearance of the Batin, Batin Siuntung, the Malay husband of Pindah, one of Batin Baning's matrilineal cousins (i.e. a relative belonging to the same matrilineal group) succeeded to his title (Siuntung himself was not a member of this matrilineal group). Batin Siuntung was a Malay warrior of high rank. He had fled to the Kampung Durian Tawar area from Pahang and had relatives living in the Malay villages in the area. In addition to being Malay, he was a pious Muslim who apparently never missed his daily prayers.

In the 1880s a group of people under the leadership of Batin Siuntung moved from Dusun Ilam to present-day Kampung Durian Tawar (Movement 2). One of the reasons given for this move is that Batin Siuntung wished to be closer to his relatives in the surrounding Malay villages. In this new location the group under his leadership began wet

rice cultivation. During the durian harvest season he invited his Malay relatives to the new village to eat durian and other fruit with him and his people. The custom of inviting Malays to the village during durian harvests continued until the Orang Asli took refuge in the forest during the Japanese invasion.

Around 1920 Bongsu, the husband of Batin Siuntung's daughter, succeeded to the title of Batin, and Batin Siuntung's son, Ali, took the title of Jekerah. The Malay rulers (the Undang) of Jelebu in this period, Dato' Syed Ali (18??-1905) and Dato' Abdullah (1905-45), referred to Batin Bongsu and Jekerah Ali as "relatives from the interior" (*waris didalam*), and are said to have built close relationships with them.² Dato' Abdullah was from Pahang and was, in fact, related to Batin Siuntung. The villagers say that he enjoyed participating in gathering resin (*damar*) with the Orang Asli. As mentioned, Ali's father, Batin Siuntung, was Malay. The villagers say that Batin Bongsu had Malay blood. Both Jekerah Ali and Batin Bongsu were, therefore, in one way or another, related to Malays.

During the period of Batin Bongsu's leadership (1920-40), leaders from surrounding villages were invited to Kampung Durian Tawar during the durian harvest season; for example, Batin Dulang came from nearby Kampung Akai and Batin Keset (Batin Bongsu's older brother) came from Chergon (which was located near present-day Kampung Dalam, but no longer exists). As a result, the people of Kampung Durian Tawar intermarried with the people of Kampung Akai and Chergon.³

A group led by Jekerah Ali left Batin Bongsu's group and moved to an area near present-day Sialang (Movement 3). Jekerah Ali's son, Deraman, succeeded to the title of the next Batin and remained in Sialang. Jekerah Ali continued to hold influence during the period of the leadership of Batin Deraman. Batin Bongsu's son, Lewat, succeeded to the title of Menteri and became the leader of Bongsu's group. This is how the Jekerah Ali group and the Menteri Lewat group were formed. They are referred to from here on as the Ali group and the Lewat group.

During the Japanese occupation, Panglima Seng, the Chinese husband of Batin Bongsu's daughter, was captured and killed by Japanese forces. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar (i.e. the Ali group and the Lewat group), thinking they had angered the Japanese forces by harboring Panglima Seng, fled deep into the forest (Movement 4). At the sites of present-day Dusun Pah and Dusun Gati, they met up with people from Kampung Dalam and Chergon who had also fled to the forest after harboring Chinese and fearing attack. When the turbulent, early stages of the Japanese occupation subsided, these Orang Asli moved from deep

within the forest to the slightly less isolated area of Dusun Sergah. This period of refuge in the forest has been described as a “period of desperate, of extreme harshness and hardship” (*da’ asat*) for the villagers (Baharon 1973: 61).

When British Commonwealth soldiers told the villagers of the surrender of the Japanese, they emerged from the forest. The Ali group returned to Sialang and the Lewat group settled in the area of Old Kampung Durian Tawar (i.e. in an area different from that in which they had lived prior to the Japanese occupation) (Movement 5).

During the Emergency period the villagers lived under British Commonwealth military policy as refugees in a resettlement area near Peradong (Movement 6). There is a record of a Jelebu District Officer application to the State Department of Forestry at the time, requesting land to enable the Orang Asli to undertake wet rice cultivation and to grow cassava and bananas in Peradong (Jabatan Hutan Negri Sembilan 24/54 1954). As well as villagers from Kampung Durian Tawar and Kampung Akai, Orang Asli were taken by the British to Peradong from areas around Kenaboi and Kuala Kelawang. The total number at Peradong was about 400.

Of particular note regarding this period, Peradong was the first place in which the Temuan economy was introduced to the practice of working for a cash income (through rubber tapping). In addition to work within the subsistence economy, which had existed previously, people began to undertake wage labor by planting rubber trees and tapping rubber in Malay-owned rubber plantations.⁴ By 1956 most of the Orang Asli villagers at Peradong were allowed to return to their respective home villages. The Ali group returned to Sialang and the Lewat group to the area of Old Kampung Durian Tawar. Soon after this, the Ali group split into two, with part of the group moving to the area of present-day Jelawai (Movement 7).

In 1966 Batin Deraman died, and in the following year Batin Janggut succeeded to the title of Batin.⁵ Prior to this, Batin Janggut was an employee of the JHEOA in Kampung Baning and was based in Kampung Dalam (his first wife died and his second and third wives lived in Kampung Dalam). After succeeding to the title of Batin, he switched his base to Kampung Durian Tawar, and moved one of his wives (his third wife) and her children there. When he was working as a JHEOA official he stayed in the Pertang area branch office of the JHEOA in Kampung Baning; when undertaking duties as Batin, he would visit Kampung Durian Tawar.

Under a housing construction project in 1970, the people from the Lewat group who had been living in Old Kampung Durian Tawar moved to their present location (Movement 8). The Ali group, which had been living in Sialang, then moved (somewhat later) to Jelawai, though some remained where they were.

Looking back over the early movements of the people of Kampung Durian Tawar, an immediate question arises. The history of the village, seen in this way, begins with Batin Baning and his people when they moved from the Tampin area to Dusun Ilam, but there is no mention of where Batin Baning and his people came from, nor any mention about their roots. It is possible that they were “Malay”. At a later period, the people of the village began to have contact with the Malays under the leadership of Siuntung (he was Malay, as will be recalled, but his Malay name is unknown), who had come to the village after fleeing a war in Pahang. Under Siuntung’s leadership, the village came under the tutelage of the Malay ruler. Towards the end of the British colonial period, we also begin to see the existence of Chinese in the village. Inter-ethnic connections are, then, a feature of the early history of Kampung Durian Tawar.

According to the records, in 1915 the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar were regarded as different from the Malays. This is evident in Evans’s fieldwork report as director of the Perak Museum, in which he visited this area in 1914 (Evans 1915). Based on information gained from “Jakun” living in the area, Evans presents the following findings in his report: (1) durian were already being cultivated at that time, as were cassava, and rattan and other forest products were being sold by local Chinese in Pertang; (2) people from the village were purchasing rice with money obtained from selling wild animals caught through hunting; (3) various titles of leadership existed among them; and (4) intermarriage occurred between the people of the village and the villagers from Kampung Simpang Pertang, Kampung Akai and Kampung Air (Evans 1915: 101-04). For a number of reasons, however, Evans did not visit Kampung Durian Tawar.⁶

From Evans’s report, it seems clear that the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar were regarded as being different from the Muslim Malays and were referred to as “Sakai” or “Jakun”. But from the oral histories passed down by the people of the village, there is also evidence of widespread intermarriage with Malays and the Chinese, and of a close relationship between the village and the Malay political structures of the time.⁷ Yet, despite the actual connections between the villagers of

Kampung Durian Tawar and the Malays and local Chinese, the view of them as “Sakai” or “Jakun” was to be decisive in their future fate.

The Japanese invasion of the Malay Peninsula came as a shock to the villagers, and was to have a significant effect on their society. Taking refuge deep within the forest, their ties with Malay society were completely severed. Pre-Japanese occupation relations between villagers and Malays, such as visits of Malays to the village during durian harvests, were not resumed after the occupation.

During the Emergency period, the forest changed from a place of domicile to a battle zone between Chinese-led Communist insurgents and British Commonwealth forces. This also had a decisive effect on the future of Orang Asli society. In contrast to the situation during the Japanese occupation, in this later conflict they were suspected of assisting the insurgents and were taken by the government from the forest and relocated to resettlement areas (such as Peradong). The government at the time felt it necessary, for both military and administrative reasons, to somehow deal with the Orang Asli.

The foundations for the administration of the Orang Asli were put in place during this period. The JHEOA (at the time known as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs) was established in 1950, was enlarged in 1954 and, in the same year, the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance (later the Aboriginal Peoples Act) was enacted. In the midst of these developments, the image of the Orang Asli that has since held sway can be said to have emerged.

When the villagers returned to Kampung Durian Tawar at the end of the Emergency period, they were no longer the “forest people”. Their lives as refugees had changed their basic means of livelihood. In addition, most of the rites and magic they had once practised had gradually disappeared, and most of the knowledge regarding these had been lost. Being banned from living in the forest, most of the knowledge and skills they had developed in this earlier life were also lost.

After Independence

With Malaysian independence the Malays took political control and the relationship between the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar and Malays changed yet again. Categorized as Orang Asli, the villagers were now identified as constituents within the nation-state and were identified as being in need of economic development and as a people who should in the future be assimilated with the Malays. In the 1960s, when Batin Janggut succeeded to the title of Batin, a new relationship between the Orang Asli and the Malaysian state was being established.

Batin Janggut

Batin Janggut and his older brother Jenang Misai led the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar from the late 1960s onwards. As mentioned above, their father was Chinese. They were, in other words, of mixed blood, born of a Chinese father and an Orang Asli mother. During the Japanese occupation they took refuge in the forest, living under the guidance of their mother's people. Before that, they had lived with their father, a carpenter, in a Malay village. Their father's brothers also married Orang Asli women and their "cousins" joined the Communist insurgents during the Emergency period and died fighting the British Commonwealth forces.

Batin Janggut's life has followed an unusual path. Suspected of assisting the Communist insurgents, he was arrested by the British forces during the Emergency period and spent about three months in jail. After being released, he became a guide and porter for the British forces, guiding them through the forest. Later he was employed by the newly formed JHEOA. He worked for the JHEOA as a field assistant, taking on the job of encouraging development in the Orang Asli villages of Negeri Sembilan. Through Batin Janggut's information, the JHEOA gained knowledge of Orang Asli society, and Batin Janggut in turn was given on-site command of specific development projects. In all projects undertaken, from school, housing and hall construction to the opening up of land for cultivation (such as for rubber smallholdings), Batin Janggut acted as chief mediator.

Although he was a JHEOA official, the villagers also recognized Batin Janggut as having leadership qualities. His succession to the title of Batin in 1967 signified his ability to act as a true mediator between the government (the JHEOA) and the Orang Asli community. Previous Batins had also acted as intermediaries with the outside world (the traditional Malay polity or the British colonial government) in addition to holding traditional authority. Their role, however, was always symbolic and the extent of their authority limited. Prior to Batin Janggut's time, the "modern" authority that comes with working for a government department did not exist.

By the time Batin Janggut took on the title of Batin, the situation had changed. Now the title of Batin was recognized not by the Undang (the traditional Malay ruler) or the British colonial government but by the JHEOA within the Malaysian government. Indeed, the influence of the JHEOA can be seen in Batin Janggut's very inheritance of the Batin title. The history of development in Kampung Durian Tawar from the 1970s onwards cannot be discussed without consideration of the relationship

between the Director-General of the JHEOA, Baharon, and Batin Janggut. Moreover, Baharon's study of the village was made possible by the assistance of Batin Janggut. The fact that Kampung Durian Tawar became a model of village development is also connected to Batin Janggut's mediator role.

History of Development

The primary incentives for the development of infrastructure in Malaysian villages are the national elections held every few years. The situation in Kampung Durian Tawar, where political connections influence the provision of infrastructure and the undertaking of development projects, has been no exception. An example of this is the provision of water supply to houses, which occurred due to the involvement of a Chinese federal parliamentarian (that is to say, a parliamentarian with kinship ties to Batin Janggut's father). It is sufficient for our purposes to note that these political connections and involvements are influential in Kampung Durian Tawar, and further detail is not given here.

In 1970 the JHEOA undertook a project to build twenty-five houses in Kampung Durian Tawar (on specific development projects referred to in the following discussion, refer to Table 12). Given that this project occurred in the middle of Baharon's study of Kampung Durian Tawar, it is appropriate to see it as a "repayment" for Batin Janggut's granting of permission to Baharon to undertake the study.⁸

The important thing to note about this housing construction project, however, is that the houses were allocated to the people of the Lewat group. As mentioned earlier, the people of the Lewat group, who had been living in Old Kampung Durian Tawar, first moved to their current area of residence in the mid-1970s. They delayed their movement into the new houses because the area of residence had no vegetation and the lack of shade made the houses hot and uninhabitable. They planted fruit trees (some of which came from the JHEOA in the form of aid) and, after testing the new houses, eventually all completed the move.⁹

Water was supplied to houses in Kampung Durian Tawar in 1979. Before that, people in the new residential area (Kampung Durian Tawar) used water from a well. Given that the older residential area (Old Kampung Durian Tawar) has a stream running through it, there is no doubt that it would have been easier to live there because of the convenience of living near a stream. Since its installation, the water supply has frequently broken down, in which case people living in the new residential area go to the stream in the older area to collect water and to wash.

Table 12
Significant village events and Malaysian history

Year	Malaysian history	Significant Orang Asli related events	Significant village events
1870s			Arrival of the original ancestors of the villagers under the leadership of Batin Baining
1880s			Movement of the villagers under the leadership of Bating Siuntung
1914		Evans visits the Perang area	Batin Bongsu succeeds to the title of Batin
1920		Noone "Report on the Settlements and Welfare of the Ple-Temiar of the Perak Kelanian Watershed"	
1936		Aboriginal Tribes Enactment, Perak	Batin Bongsu dies
1939			The villagers take refuge in the forest
1941	Invasion of the Malay Peninsula by Japanese forces		
1945	End of the Second World War (end of the period of Japanese occupation)		
1948	Establishment of the Federation of Malaya, declaration of "Emergency"		
1950		Major Peter D.R. Williams-Hunt appointed as the first Federal Advisor on Aborigines	
1954		Department of Aboriginal Affairs expanded. The Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance promulgated.	The villagers move to Peradong
1956			Return of the villagers to the village
1957	Independence of the Federation of Malaya from Britain		
1960	Rescinding of the declaration of "Emergency"		
1961		The separation of Senoi Praaq from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Statement of Policy Regarding the Administration of the Aborigine Peoples of the Federation of Malaya	

1963	Establishment of the Federation of Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak join the Federation)		
1965	Secession of Singapore		
1966		Orang Asli is used as an official name by the government	Batin Deraman dies
1967		Amendment to the Aboriginal Peoples Act: no change from the previous Ordinance in terms of content	Batin Janggut appointed as Batin
1969	Outbreak of race riots between the Malays and the Chinese		
1970			JHEOA housing construction project (25 houses constructed)
1974		Review and Notes on Policy and Development (Confidential). Amendment to the Aboriginal Peoples Act: no change from the previous Ordinance in terms of content	Water supply connected
1979			
1980		Seminar Dakwah Islamiah Di Kalangan Orang Asli Malaysia (Held by PERKIM)	Construction of a rubber-processing plant (by RISDA)
1981			Rubber project: 50 acres (JHEOA)
1982			Electricity connected
1983		Strategi Perkembangan Ugama Islam Di Kalangan Masyarakat Orang Asli	General Store, goat (kambing) project
1984			Roads in the village are paved. <i>Sepak Takraw</i> court built.
1986		Speech by Prime Minister Mahatir at the Orang Asli Museum	Fishpond project (53 lots constructed). construction of a new <i>balai adat</i> , joining of UMNO
1987			
1988		The JHEOA transferred from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of Rural Development	Construction of a new <i>surau</i> and a residence for the <i>Periggerak Masyarakat</i> by JPM (Jabatan Perdana Menteri)
1989	Peace agreement between the Communist Party of Malaya and the government		PPRT housing projects
1991			
1992			PPRT housing projects
1993	International year of indigenous peoples	The JHEOA relocated to the the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. <i>Surau</i> established in Orang Asli villages (265 in total)	
1996		Pelan Strategi Pembangunan Orang Asli 1997-2005	
1997			Chicken coop project, fishpond project
1998			

In 1984 electricity arrived at the village, and houses were connected to the electrical supply. For safety reasons, however, connection was not permitted to self-built huts made from materials such as palm leaves, bamboo or rattan.

With the provision of the infrastructure of water and electricity came the problem of paying for the use of these resources and services. Provision of infrastructure is fruitless if the users of the utilities do not have the economic means to pay for their ongoing use. In Orang Asli villages electricity and water are frequently cut off due to overdue or unpaid electricity and water bills.

In 1986 the general store (operated by Jenang Misai) was opened through government assistance. In 1987 roads in the area of the first housing construction project were paved. Also in 1987, the earlier mentioned *sepak takraw* court was constructed through a donation made by a federal parliamentarian.

In 1988 the wooden *adat* hall (*balai adat*) was demolished and on the same site a new hall of reinforced concrete was built. The money for the construction of the new *adat* hall came primarily from the sale of timber obtained by the clearing of forest land for a new rubber tree planting project and the felling of existing rubber trees. The Batin held the rights concerning land in the village and it was he, therefore, who acted as the representative of the village in the sale of the timber. Most of the money obtained went towards the construction costs of the new hall, but some was divided between the *adat* leaders and their relatives. At the time, a split occurred in the relationship between the Batin and his son Tikak over the method of distribution of the money and over bribes paid to officials for the logging permission.

Rubber development projects were undertaken in the 1980s. In 1981 RISDA built a rubber-processing plant. Prior to that, rubber tapping was carried out under the leadership of Menteri Lewat and Batin Janggut, but then government aid began to be directed towards individually operated rubber-tapping activity. In 1982 the JHEOA undertook a rubber development project, with rubber tree seedlings being planted on approximately fifty acres of land. Money for fertilizer, replacement crops and the like was allocated to the recipients of the project. Following this, and up until 1992, RISDA undertook a number of rubber development projects, which involved land being opened up for plantations and the planting of rubber trees.

In addition, aid for goat farming was provided and a development project to establish fish breeding was carried out. According to official records,



Plates 20 & 21: Fishponds of Ukal and Manyo. Ukal and Manyo owned these fishponds. They used nets to catch the fish which was then sold to the Chinese middleman. In 1998, a joint project between some businessmen and the JHEOA focused on rehabilitating the abandoned fishponds, including that of Ukal and Manyo. The villagers essentially rented out their fishponds for an annual rent of RM300. [NT-1997]

an aid project for the development of goat farming was implemented in 1986. However, this seems to have ended in failure.¹⁰

In 1988 a development project to establish fifty-three lots of fishponds was undertaken. The ponds were built on land previously used for wet rice cultivation (wet rice cultivation was abandoned in the 1970s). However, as with the goats, this farming has been all but abandoned (the villagers give

reasons such as “the water supply to the ponds is bad”, “there is no money to purchase food for the fish” and “no money is to be made out of this”).¹¹

Most of the development projects mentioned thus far were carried out with Batin Janggut and the upper people as the primary recipients. Although the government intended the development projects in Kampung Durian Tawar to be carried out “fairly”, at the village level Batin Janggut and the *adat* leaders held de facto authority over who would be the beneficiaries of particular development projects. As a result, there was a strong tendency for projects to be directed towards relatives of the *adat* leaders.

In 1988 most of the people in the village joined Malaysia’s ruling party, United Malays National Organization (UMNO), and one of the Batin’s son, Tikak, became the Kampung Durian Tawar Branch President (*Ketua Cawangan*).¹² When this happened, the previous tendency for development projects to go to the upper people shifted, if subtly. The emergence of Tikak as the local UMNO Branch President saw the creation of a distribution route for development aid other than that which went through Batin Janggut.

Along with other factors in their father–son relationship, Batin Janggut and Tikak came into conflict over the issue of leadership in development matters within the village. This manifestation of the discord between father and son caused subtle cracks to appear in the interpersonal relationships of the upper people. Exacerbating things even further, Tikak, having taken on the position of representing RISDA within the village, expanded the recipients of rubber development projects to include some of his friends among the lower people.

In the 1990s there was a dramatic decrease in the development projects undertaken by the JHEOA (in other words, through the Batin). This signified Batin Janggut’s reduced leadership role in development matters. In contrast to his traditional leadership within the village, a new form of leadership, which was symbolized by the linking up of UMNO and Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK, Village Development and Security Committee), was becoming influential, and development aid through this route increased. This type of change is frequently pointed out as having occurred in Malay society rather than in Orang Asli society (e.g. Shamsul 1986).

The JKKK system has been in operation since 1972 (Mohd. Tap 1990: 58), and it now supervises major projects. Projects in Orang Asli villages are most often undertaken as part of projects being carried out in neighboring Malay villages. The majority of JKKK committee members

Table 13
Spiritual (*kerohanian*) program

	Project	Recipients	Period	Responsible officer
1	Follow-up projects for villagers who have converted to Islam	20 villages	1997	Research and Public Relations Office Director/Branch Head
2	"Good Family Relations Day"	6 occasions	1997	Branch Head
3	"Experience Ramadam" event	30 villages	Ramadam	Research and Public Relations Office Director/Branch Head
4	Hari Raya religious ceremony	Each area	10th month of the Islamic calender (Syawal)	Branch Head
5	Religious ceremonies on Islamic festival days	10 occasions	According to the Islamic calender (Hijrah)	Branch Head
6	Muslim Orang Asli "student" at the Centre for Islamic Missionary Studies run by the PERKIM	30 people	1997	Research and Public Relations Office Director
7	Sending of Muslim Orang Asli on pilgrimage (Umrah)	12 people	1997	Research and Public Relations Office Director

Source: JHEOA 1997 *Pelan Strategi Pembangunan Orang Asli 1997-2005*

are Malay, with only one Orang Asli member having been appointed to the committee. As a result, Malays have effective control over who receives development projects, and the Orang Asli tend only to get part of the leftovers. Being a committee member means that one has great influence within one's Orang Asli village. Tikak was appointed a member of JKKK. UMNO and JKKK are closely linked as a conduit for development not only in the case of the Malays, but also for the Orang Asli.¹³

In 1992 and 1996, when national elections were looming, a PPRT project to provide housing aid for the poor was undertaken as part of UMNO's election campaign in the village. Most of the recipients of the project were from the lower people. In the 1990s, meanwhile, some of the lower people converted to Islam, and development assistance through Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM, Department of Islamic Development) and the joint semi-governmental organization PERKIM was provided. In 1991 the Prime Minister's Office supervised the construction of a second-story Islamic prayer house (*surau*) in the village, in conjunction with the construction of a kindergarten on the first floor. An office and dwelling

for the Muslim missionary (*Penggerak Masyarakat*) posted to the village by the Islamic Centre (*Pusat Islam*) was also constructed in the village. It was through the posting of the Muslim missionary that Islamic converts began to appear in the village.

Specific development projects in the village undertaken through Islamic bodies have so far only amounted to the provision of financial aid to the Muslim poor and a project undertaken by PERKIM to construct chicken coops (eating chickens is not against Islamic precepts). As a result, by 1998 development from this type of source had not had much effect on economic relations within the village. Development projects likely to be undertaken through Islamic bodies in the future, however, will no doubt have a significant effect on the political economy of the village (see Table 13).

Kampung Durian Tawar in the News Press

As we have seen, since the early 1970s the government has undertaken a variety of development projects in Kampung Durian Tawar. However, substantial development in Kampung Durian Tawar really began in the 1980s. Newspaper and magazine articles from this period describe the situation in the village at the time and show that the JHEOA promoted activities to publicize the “successes” of the development of Kampung Durian Tawar.

I present here segments of a newspaper article from the *New Straits Times*, July 13, 1987. It presents Kampung Durian Tawar as a model of village development, one that represents Orang Asli society as a whole. As such, we also see the position it occupies within the broader Orang Asli society.

Orang Asli of a different class (by Rosli Zakaria and Shukor Rahman, *New Straits Times*, July 13, 1987)

Orang Asli conjures an image of jungle dwellers, shifting cultivators and people who know very little about the value of products they gather from the jungle.

Twenty years ago this might have been true. The Orang Asli of today are of a different class altogether. They not only know how to value things but have developed quite a sophisticated economic lifestyle.

Take the case of a settlement in Kampung Durian Tawar in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan, which Haji Amirruddin bin Jaafar,

director of the Department of Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan, describes as the most advanced in terms of economic growth and social development.

Kampung Durian Tawar has a population of 320. There are 64 families, most of them inter-related by marriage.

"This group of Orang Asli is very hardworking and disciplined. They are receptive to new ideas introduced by the JHEOA, the district office and agencies such as RISDA," he said in an interview.

The Orang Asli of the Temuan tribe has moved away from their traditional economic activities such as gathering rattan and other forest products, to cultivation of rubber trees, cash crops and fruit on a large scale.

"Economically, this tribe is probably the richest among the Orang Asli in settlements in the country. Some are earning about \$1,000 a month from tapping rubber trees and selling their cash crops such as bananas and pineapple direct to wholesalers."

The Orang Asli have no problem selling their cash crops outside the settlement. Wholesalers visit them during harvesting periods, usually once a week, to buy the bananas and pineapple.

They grow *pisang emas*, *pisang rastali* and *pisang tanduk* while the pineapples are of the Sarawak variety. They also plant garlic, chilli, and tapioca.

During the fruit season, the villagers sell durians and rambutans by the truckload to wholesalers.

"These Orang Asli are quite calculative when it comes to marketing their products. They will not sell them to middlemen, but to wholesalers who normally give them better prices."

The community also has 20 fish ponds about 0.2 hectares [half an acre] each, which they dug themselves last year. Another 20 ponds will be dug soon. The drains to supply water to the ponds have already been dug by the Temuan.

"Their efforts in fish rearing will be rewarded in one or two months time," he added.

They get their supply of *jelawat*, *ketutu* and red *tilapia* fish fry from the Fisheries Department.

In addition to fish rearing, the Orang Asli were also given 124 sheep by the Veterinary Department. The sheep graze in the rubber plantations.

Encik Amiruddin added that the Orang Asli have a 120-hectare [almost 300 acre] "traditional" rubber plantation. Another 70 hectares [173 acres] were planted with rubber with the help of RISDA and 20 hectares [fifty acres] with the JHEOA's assistance.

The JHEOA has donated three motorized rollers for making rubber sheets to help the Orang Asli cope with the increasing latex production.

“Some of the Temuan can produce 60 sheets of rubber per day. They work from 2 am until noon daily and tend to their cash crops after that. Idling is not their way of life,” said Encik Amiruddin.

The Temuan also plant cocoa trees in between the rubber trees. There is also an 80-hectare [200 acre] fruit orchard planted with durians, rambutans and cash crops.

Kampung Durian Tawar village chieftain Batin Janggut said his villagers have nothing against development as long as their customs and traditions are not affected.

“I want to see my followers taste the fruits of their labor and live like any other race in the country but I will not tolerate influences which could affect the dignity of my men,” he said.

He is strongly against alcoholism and gambling in the village. He has warned the villagers on numerous occasions that he would not hesitate to evict them if they committed the “crime”.

Batin Janggut organizes a meeting each week to find out the latest development in the village and the daily problems faced by the villagers.

“I work like the rest of the villagers. In fact, I had to work more because I have set an example to the villagers and make sure that all the projects introduced by the authorities are fruitful.”

For example, the villagers were not very keen to tap rubber trees until he proved to them that it is a profitable venture. The same goes for the planting of bananas, pineapple and other cash crops.

He is very appreciative of the authorities who “opened the eyes” of his villagers – that there was more to improving their economic condition than gathering just rattan and bamboo.

“Give me any idea that will benefit my people and train me. I will go back to my people and prove it to them that it can work to their benefit.”



Plate 22: Children are resting in the shade under trees. Trees in the village sometimes provide resting places for villagers in the afternoon when it can get too hot in the house for comfort. In the afternoon, children spend their time resting, playing in the field, or going to the village shop to buy sweets and biscuits. [NT-2007]

Present¹⁴

Everyday Life

Dawn comes late in Malaysia; daybreak is not until approximately 7 am. The villagers' day, however, has already begun. At first light, when the crowing of roosters sounds across the village, you can hear the quiet sounds of people washing. After 7 am, when the sun has risen, the village soundscape is filled with motorbikes and the voices of children who have finished washing and preparing themselves and are now in their school uniforms and on their way to school. Riding in a minibus owned by Jenang Misai and purchased to take the village children to school (obtained through aid received from the JHEOA), the children go off to school in the neighboring town. For breakfast the children usually eat cookies or bread and drink tea or coffee.

Not accustomed to getting up before dawn, I get up around the time that the children are heading off for school. While I wash and prepare myself for the day, villagers are heading off for the rubber gardens. Rubber tapping is more effective in the cool of the morning, so having sent their children off to school a little after 7 am, husbands and wives set off together, by motorbike or on foot, for the rubber gardens. In cases

where the children are still very young and dependant, however, only the husbands go to work. Unmarried men and women do rubber-tapping work in the rubber smallholdings owned by their families.

In cases where households own several separate rubber smallholdings, they visit each rubber garden in turn. The tapping work usually is complete by 9 or 10 am and the villagers return home. The men then set off on their motorbikes for the town of Pertang, where they drink tea (*minum teh/godeh*) in the cafes. Most of the men set off for Pertang on the days (Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday) when you can purchase a ticket in the four-numbered lottery called “number” (*nombor*), which the villagers think of as gambling (*main judi*). In fact, no lottery shop (*kedai nombor*) exists in Pertang. There are, however, “black marketeers”, and a well-established system exists whereby each marketeer approaches the same particular villagers having tea in the cafes, and sells them *nombor* tickets. This practice means that the villagers do not have to travel to the lottery shop in Simpang Pertang. There are four digits in this lottery system – the same number of digits as on car and motorbike number plates (it seems that the lottery system uses four numbers for this very reason) – and many people purchase a ticket using the numbers of their own cars or motorbikes.

While the men are in Pertang having tea and buying lottery tickets, the women are at home washing, cleaning and having tea. It is also the case that some of the villagers do not return home from the rubber gardens but continue tapping work, having rested for a while.

Having finished my morning field notes, I head off after 9 am to the rubber trader’s shop located in the village. This is one of the main places that most villagers visit at some point each day. I chat with them as I take down data regarding the amount of money received from the sale of the rubber to the trader. This is my main daily activity.

Among the men in Pertang who have either completed their morning work or who are about to go off into the forest to hunt and gather, some start drinking Chinese liquor or beer at the back of the Chinese-operated shops. Returning to the village after shopping at lunchtime, on more than one occasion I have come across men from the village lying drunk on the road. Drunk men often barge into the rubber trader’s shop located at the village entrance and involve themselves in conversation with other villagers or myself.

As noon approaches, the number of people coming to the rubber trader’s shop to sell rubber drops off. There are, however, people who began their tapping work about 9 or 10 am. Men who have had no luck



Plates 23 - 25: Selling bananas. Before the rubber or durian trees matured, the villagers often intercropped them with bananas or sugarcane. These were then sold to the Chinese wholesalers. The unit price was RM1 per kilogram for grade A and 40 sen per kilogram for grade B. [NT-2007]

hunting and gathering during the night or early morning, and have therefore been unable to obtain cash, then turn to rubber-tapping work. When this happens, their rubber-selling activities are sometimes delayed and the rubber trader's shop remains open until 1 pm, when the last of the rubber-selling activities occur.

Lunch at the Chinese restaurants is served from about 11.30 am, perhaps to fit in with the routines of the Chinese, who also begin their



Plates 26-28: Teaching at the village night school. Genreh and the Batin's daughters are primary school teachers. In March 1998, they voluntarily started the village classes both for children and adults who could not read and write in the Malay language. Later, Genreh started special classes for Orang Asli pupils who could not keep up with their school work at the primary school in Kampung Baniang. [NT-1998]

working day early in the morning. Before 1 pm all the packed lunches (*nasi bungkus*) have been sold and the restaurants have finished business. I eat lunch almost exclusively at these Chinese restaurants, but when they are closed at 1 pm I often go to an Indian stall in the area or to Chinese restaurants in Simpang Pertang to have lunch. In contrast to the demand for Malay restaurants in the cities, rural areas have very little demand for them. In Pertang there is a Malay cafe (*kedai minuman*) but no Malay



Plate 29: Gathering honey. Gathering honey is very dangerous work because a skilled gatherer has to climb tall trees and drive out a swarm of bees with smoke to get at a honey comb. Most of the honey is sold to the Chinese middleman; the rest is consumed at home. [NT-1998]

restaurants. This is probably because Malays generally eat at home and, as such, it is economically difficult to run a Malay restaurant.

The villagers have tea in the morning after finishing the rubber-tapping work, and so they often have lunch slightly later, at some time after 1 pm. The children return home from school after 12 pm, having eaten the lunch provided at school. For them a meal is “eating rice” (*makan nasi*). If they do eat other items, such as bread or noodles, it is not regarded as a meal but as “having tea” (*minum teh*).

By the approach of noon, it is already hot enough to make one’s awareness of being in the tropics unavoidable. By this time, agricultural work is difficult, and the unbearable heat continues through the afternoon. Taking a nap after lunch or resting in the shade under trees is a way of trying to endure the heat. The children, however, run around the village playing, in spite of the glaring tropical sun. The village is otherwise surprisingly quiet, wrapped in a midday stillness.

Men “going into the forest” (*masuk hutan*) to hunt and gather set out quite early, as soon as they have finished their rubber-tapping work (there are, of course, those who do no rubber tapping prior to going into the forest). Rubber tapping in the morning and then hunting and gathering in the afternoon is considered an ideal way of making a living. Those who achieve this ideal balance, however, are rare; on days when hunting and

gathering occur, many of the participants abandon their rubber-tapping work.

There are hunting and gathering seasons, particular times when people devote themselves to these activities.¹⁵ For example, the durian season is the fruit season, when the men of the village are kept busy protecting the durians from the monkeys and squirrels that come to eat them. Another example of this type of focused activity relates to the *petai*, a plant of the bean family. As the *petai* is in season every three to four months, at these times the men devote themselves to gathering it.

Additionally, when the success stories of others circulate (“so and so gathered some aromatic wood and made quite a bit of money”; “you can catch snakes there”; “someone caught a lot of fish”), everyone is busy with the same sort of hunting or gathering activity (everyone apparently thinking, “if he can get some, I can get some too”). Traders also turn up at certain times and encourage the men to gather certain forest products, such as rattan, aromatic wood and honey, which they claim will fetch a good price at the time.

The villagers do not only hunt and gather in the forest close to the village; they also travel as far as the forest reservation in the Titi area. When this involves staying overnight and setting up camp, they usually go in male and female (husband and wife) pairs. The women take care of the meals and the washing, and the men hunt prey. However, the gathering work is done together. When collecting rattan or aromatic wood, the income gained from these goes to each individual depending on the amount he or she has collected.

In the late afternoon, from 4 to 5 pm, work in the fields takes place. Some villagers do rubber-tapping work at this time, but most work in banana fields or vegetable fields. Most husbands head off for this work with their wives seated on the back of their motorbikes. Kampung Durian Tawar follows matrilineal *adat* and in most cases the women own the fields. Given this, the men truly are “chauffeurs”.

Both husband and wife do the actual work in the fields, but the wife decides whether or not they will work. If a woman says, “I want to do some work in the fields”, her husband takes her there to do the work.

The afternoon work in the fields generally finishes as daylight fades, at which time each couple returns to the village. Some of the men, having taken their wives home, then go into the town, either to have tea or to drink liquor or beer. In most cases, going to town in the evening means drinking liquor or beer.

The cooler hours before the evening meal are a time for socializing.



Plates 30-33: Gathering petai. Gathering petai is dangerous and difficult work even for a skillful gatherer. It is also very hard work to carry bunches of petai (no less than 60 kilogram) on one's shoulder. In this case, 700 pods of petais were sold at RM17 per 100 pods. The income was distributed among gatherers and carriers, including me (plate 33) who was merely the camera man on this outing. [NT-1997]



Plate 34: Village general store. In 1998, there was only one general store in Kampung Durian Tawar. Later, one more store opened in the residence area of the lower people. In the evenings, which are pleasantly cool, the village women and children come to the store to buy snacks, biscuits and foodstuffs. The men, however, who have motorbikes and cars, prefer to go to the nearest town (Pertang) for their purchases. [NT-2007]

People stroll about the village and visit each other. This is the time of “emerging” (*nimbul*; in Malay, *timbul*). It is not, of course, a fixed activity that occurs every day; people visit others if they feel inclined to do so. The evening meal usually occurs after 8 pm; as such, *nimbul* lasts until that time.

The evening meal is taken late because there is a habit of “having tea” in the evening. There is also a narrative, however, that people eat so late because they do not want to feel hungry while trying to sleep during the night. Another narrative is that this practice is modeled on the eating habits of the Malays; that it is modeled, in other words, on the practice of Muslim Malays, who eat their evening meal after finishing their evening prayers.

After the evening meal, people tidy up and wash the dishes, bathe, watch television and chat. Most go to bed about 10 pm. I visit houses to conduct interviews either during *nimbul* or after the evening meal. When I interview Batin Janggut I usually visit his house before the evening meal and, accompanied by my field assistant, Asat, am treated to dinner before the interview is conducted. Batin Janggut talks at great length, sometimes until 1 or 2 am, at which time the roosters have begun crowing. Even on these occasions, however, Batin Janggut is up early the next morning and working in the fields. Asat and I, however, sleep in.

Some of the men in the village hunt during the night. This is particularly the case if they are going to collect frogs (which they catch using electric torches). Having hunted for frogs during the night, they sell them the following morning to Chinese traders. They then drink liquor or beer at the Chinese shops in the town and return home to the village drunk. This is usually what has happened when one sees Orang Asli men drunk; they have gone hunting during the night, sold the prey to Chinese businesses in the town, and then used the money to buy liquor and beer.

Yearly Cycle

Wet rice cultivation was abandoned in Kampung Durian Tawar in the mid-1970s due to a reduction in water retention in the forest and also to the switch to rubber tapping as the primary agricultural practice. As a result, it is difficult to discern natural, annual cycles in the work undertaken. Apart from Chinese New Year (the old lunar New Year) in February, when the rubber trader's shop is closed for business, rubber tapping can, in principle, be undertaken throughout the year. If rubber tapping stops, it is due to falling rubber prices (around August) or because it is the durian season (in 1997 this was in October and November) or the wet season (rainfall is highest in December). On mornings of continuous rain it is not possible for the villagers to undertake rubber tapping that day. However, this does not mean that one can relax and enjoy the day. The income gained from rubber is directly connected to the villagers' daily budgets. Unless a person has a supplementary source of income, a day off from rubber tapping has a direct impact on the money available for daily living.

Therefore, although it may seem that life in Kampung Durian Tawar follows a monotonous pattern throughout the year, the yearly cycle is, in fact, divided into various events and seasons. There are events such as a festival (held on October 1) modeled on the major Malay festival held at the end of Ramadan (Hari Raya Puasa), weddings held during school holidays, and the Chinese New Year in February. In terms of seasons, August is devoted to gathering forest products such as *petai* and rambutan. At this time, supplementing the household income through gathering activities becomes necessary due to falls in the price of rubber. There is also the durian season, which now comes irregularly, and the wet season in December. These seasons add a subtle coloring to daily life in Kampung Durian Tawar, which otherwise does not experience major climatic change across each year.

Given that the major means of livelihood in Kampung Durian Tawar is rubber tapping, Chinese New Year in February has a direct effect. The



Plate 35: Hari Raya. Hari Kesedaran (or Hari Raya) is a special holiday for villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar. The youths who are working outside return to the village to celebrate Hari Raya with their families. Children dress up and visit their relative's houses. They eat *lemang* (glutinous rice steamed in bamboo) and special biscuits. At night, 'disco' dancing is held in the open. The villagers usually look forward to Hari Raya with pleasure. [NT-2003]

rubber trader's shop closes for business, so it is not possible to sell rubber. On top of that, all Chinese-operated businesses in the town close, making it difficult to sell things obtained from the forest. Due to the strong reliance of many Orang Asli villagers on Chinese businesses, many hold Hari Raya in February to fit in with Chinese New Year. During Hari Raya relatives come to visit (as is the case with the Malay Hari Raya Puasa), banquets are given and discos (*joget*, meaning "dance") with live music are held at night (for religious reasons, discos are no longer held in Malay villages). As local Chinese also come to visit, many other villages provide beer for these events.

In the case of Orang Asli villages, Hari Raya is not only held during the Chinese New Year. I am aware that Muslim Orang Asli in some villages also hold Hari Raya at the same time as the Hari Raya Puasa of the Malays after Ramadan. In many villages where there are numerous Christians, Hari Raya is also held on Christmas Day, and there are also villages where Hari Raya is held on the calendar New Year (January 1). As such, from the end of the year 1997 through to Chinese New Year in February 1998, Hari Raya was held on most weekends somewhere in Orang Asli villages.

A disco is held on nights when there has been a ceremony, especially after a wedding or during Hari Raya.¹⁶ At the discos, young people and



Plate 36: Wedding of Batin Janggut's daughter at Balai Adat. This was a Malay-style wedding with wedding costumes rented from a Malay wedding agency. The bride, Batin Janggut's daughter, is a primary school teacher and the groom, who comes from an Orang Asli village in Kuala Langat, Selangor, is a truck driver. After marriage, they lived together in the Batin's house (i.e. the bride's house), in keeping with the adat of Kampung Durian Tawar. [NT-1998]

children dance to the singing and the music. Sometimes you also see drunken older men dancing. The discos continue through the night, and are places for young men and women to meet.

In most cases, young men will go to discos in their own village, but will also travel to other village discos. The young women, however, only attend discos held in their own village. Attraction between a young man and young woman who have met at a disco will sometimes lead to sexual intercourse on the same night. Alcohol-related fights, often over women, usually occur. In order to keep things in the village "safe and peaceful", the older men holding the discos must supervise the proceedings very carefully. If trouble does occur, they have to calm down the parties involved, or order them to leave. If a fight begins to get out of hand, the police are sometimes called in.

Recently, alcohol-consumption and fighting at discos in Kampung Durian Tawar have become such a problem that they are no longer held. Young Malay men and others, despite having no affiliation with the wedding or Hari Raya held during the day, come to the village to attend the disco for a fun night out. In fights involving such third parties, the village *adat* leaders do not have the authority to control the situation. The supervisors of the village have to scramble to call in the police. Discos are

the major source of this kind of problem, and as such have been cancelled. The police have also given notice that discos should not be held after midnight.

Weddings are usually held when the children of the village are on school holidays. According to my notes, May, August, October and December (in 1997) are the most frequent times of year for weddings to be held in one village or another. On weekends during these months, young men of the village head out on motorbikes or in cars for discos being held in Orang Asli villages as far afield as Pahang and Selangor states. The areas to which the young men travel match almost exactly those with which Kampung Durian Tawar has a history of intermarriage. In other words, they travel to villages with which they have kinship networks; most often, to where a married brother, sister or other relative lives.¹⁷

In Kampung Durian Tawar the durian season is very important for the villagers' socioeconomic, cultural and religious lives. In the past a ceremony was held at the end of the durian season. This was known as the "durian harvest ceremony". In Kampung Durian Tawar the durian harvest ceremony occurred irregularly and has since ceased altogether. In its place, a "relatives visiting ceremony" (*Hari Kesedaran*) takes place each year on October 1.¹⁸

When I was living in Kampung Durian Tawar, the durian season ran from July to September in 1996, October to December 1997, and from July to September 1998. Other fruits also grow during the durian season, such as rambutan. Combined with income from rubber, gains from selling such fruit make this a relatively financially blessed time of year.

The fruit season is also a hunting season because monkeys and squirrels that come to eat the fruit can be caught using blowpipes. Although hunting animals such as deer is prohibited, these animals can be shot and caught in the name of chasing them away from the fruit. Hunting is usually restricted to the forest, but at this time of year the prey come out to the fields. In addition to eating the fruit itself, the villagers can also eat the meat of such prey, and the prey can be sold to the Chinese businesses in town.

Harvesting the durians consists simply of collecting the durians that have fallen from the trees, transporting them, and then selling them to the wholesalers. Although it is very difficult to transport durians from the orchards on the hill slopes to where the wholesalers are able to collect them, this work is easier than rubber tapping. In terms of income, the same can be made in one day of durian harvesting as would take three days of rubber tapping. This income is additional to that from the sale

of other fruit and from hunted prey, so the durian season is one of great bounty for the people of Kampung Durian Tawar.

Notes

1. Concerning the early history of Kampung Durian Tawar, I refer in particular to Baharon's written historical account (1973: 56-64).
2. In *adat* this is expressed by the following sayings: "*Berjinjang di hutan, bertali ke luar*" ("To dwell in the jungle, to be related to those outside"); "*Berjinjang di luar, bertali ke hutan*" ("To dwell outside, to be related to those in the jungle"); and "*Ta' mantara' mata' putih dengan mata' hitam*" ("There can be no separation between the white and the black of the eye"). These sayings express the fact that the relationship between Orang Asli and Malays is close and is characterized by mutual respect (Baharon 1973: 58-59).
3. The villagers of Kampung Baning lived in Sungai Inn near Pahang and so do not share close (kinship) relations with the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar. The villagers of Kampung Akai were scattered amongst the present-day villages of Kampung Air, Kampung Akai and Kampung Simpang Pertang (Batu 12). There was a village of Batu 47 (village name) but the village was destroyed as part of a FELDA development project and the villagers were scattered amongst Kampung Air, Kampung Akai and Kampung Simpang Pertang.
4. In Peradong they could not plant durian trees because of insufficient cultivated land.
5. In March 1997 I attended a ceremony held in Kampung Durian Tawar marking the thirtieth anniversary of Batin Janggut's role as Batin. This enabled me to establish that he formally took over the position on 27 March 1967.
6. The "Jakun" of Kampung Durian Tawar was considered extremely cautious; they preferred living in the forest and they did not understand Malay very well; further, the Batin of the village (Siuntung?) had the ability to place powerful curses on people and was not trusted.
7. There are other examples of this connection with Malays and the local Chinese. Baharon's assistant during his study, for example, was a Malay. Though the assistant's father was a Malay, his mother was Orang Asli.

- Furthermore, his mother's father (i.e. his grandfather) was Chinese, and his mother's mother (his grandmother) was Orang Asli (Baharon 1973: 28).
8. Housing construction projects are often undertaken in Orang Asli villages. This is aimed at promoting settled habitation. However, it has also been pointed out that this construction occurs because it provides the most visible form of the results of development (Mohd. Tap 1990: 89-90).
 9. It has been pointed out that when new houses are provided for the Orang Asli, they do not remain living in them but instead return to the forest (Kuchikura 1996: 10). It is surely not only the Orang Asli, however, who would not want to live in hot and unshaded houses (made of wood with tin roofs) located on low-lying ground. It is not surprising that it is sometimes more comfortable and convenient to live in the area in which they had previously done so, in huts built close to a stream so that water for washing, for the toilet, clothes-washing, cooking and so on is readily accessible. When a water supply and other infrastructure have not been provided in new areas of residence built under housing construction projects, it is hardly surprising that people prefer their old area of residence.
 10. Nowadays there is not a single goat to be seen in the village. When I was living in the village, an aid project for the development of chicken farming was carried out. The recipients of the project, however, ended up selling the chickens they had received to Chinese farmers. In the case of the goats, it is possible that either the villagers were unable to farm them successfully or, as was the case with the chickens, they ended up selling them.
 11. In 1998 a joint development project between private businesses and JHEOA focused on these abandoned fishponds. JHEOA acted as mediator in the leasing of the fishponds to private businesses. The villagers who owned the fishponds signed an agreement to receive 300 ringgit per fishpond annually as rent from the private businesses. The rights for farming and selling the fish, however, passed to the private businesses. This development project had only just begun when I revisited the village in March 2001, the delay having been partly caused by the economic crisis (1997) that had set in since I was last there.
 12. Nicholas (1990) has reported that when Prime Minister Mahathir formed the New UMNO and launched an election campaign, Orang Asli were mobilized as part of this campaign. Batin Janggut has also participated, as an "Orang Asli leader", in election campaign activities in Pahang. Regarding Orang Asli joining UMNO, see Dentan et al. (1997: 142).

Regarding the development towards the joining of UMNO by non-Muslim aboriginal peoples, such as the Orang Asli and the indigenous people of Sabah/Sarawak, see Shamsul (1996c: 30). In 1987, the year before the formation of the New UMNO, Prime Minister Mahathir gave a speech at the Orang Asli Museum (located in Gombak (in Selangor state), an outlying suburb of Kuala Lumpur).

13. When I made investigations on my revisit to the village in March 2001, Tikak was no longer in the position of Branch President of UMNO. JKKK had also ceased its union with the Malays, so Tikak no longer had any authority as a committee member. There is currently an application pending for Kampung Durian Tawar to form its own JKKK, centered on the younger generation.
14. I present here a field note-based sketch of Kampung Durian Tawar during the period of my fieldwork (1996-98).
15. After his study of the livelihood of the Negrito hunters and gatherers, Benjamin has termed the hunting and gathering activities of the Orang Asli as “opportunistic foraging” (Benjamin 1973). This term indicates a livelihood that, viewed from the outside, is irregular and unpredictable but that actually changes in regard to the particular circumstances and timing to increase profits (Kuchikura 1996: 76).
16. Gambling based on card games also occurs (Mohd. Tap 1990: 492-94). This is regarded as a problem because the men drink liquor and beer and get into physical fights. Discos held on the night after a funeral are often said to get out of hand.
17. At the beginning of my stay, not being very aware of this situation, I wondered how the young people of the village were able to find life partners, especially given that life in the village offered far fewer opportunities than life in the cities. Once I thought about the above situation, however, and understood that the young villagers actively pursue a variety of pastimes in their daily lives and that such opportunities for meeting members of the opposite sex often lead to marriage, I realized that my concern was groundless. Yet there are young men and women who are not good at mixing at discos and some of them remain unmarried, even in older years. This sort of problem is connected to the fact that the previous “marriage system”, whereby marriage partners were brought together by a young person’s parents or by the *adat* leaders, has nowadays been replaced by young people freely choosing their partners.
18. In several Temuan villages in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, Ancestor Day (*Hari Moyang*) used to be held in conjunction with Chinese New

Year (the lunar New Year). It has been pointed out that JHEOA, disliking “Chinese-ization”, has instructed these villages to hold Ancestor Day in conjunction with the calendar New Year (i.e. the New Year according to the solar calendar) (Nicholas 2000: 131).

Chapter 5

Social Relationship

Kampung Durian Tawar is a village of people who, within the overarching ethnic category of Orang Asli, fall under the sub-category of Temuan. Although Orang Asli society is regarded as egalitarian relative to Malay society, Temuan society is nonetheless hierarchical and, as such, has received much attention given this difference to wider Orang Asli society (Hood 1989). Despite this, in discussions on social organization among the Orang Asli, Kampung Durian Tawar has often been considered as representative of Temuan society.

In present-day Kampung Durian Tawar the villagers divide themselves into a number of stratifying categories. The villagers talk about themselves on the basis of these categories. The major categories are (1) the upper people (*orang atas*) and the lower people (*orang bawah*), (2) the *adat* group (*puak adat*), the religion group (*puak agama*) and the drunk group (*puak mabuk*), and (3) the *enekbuah pusaka*, the *enekbuah bakar* and the *enekbuah mendatang* (explained below).

The first category arose as a result of the housing construction project undertaken in the village in the 1970s, and refers to those who came to live on the hill in the village (the upper people) and those who came to live at the bottom of the hill (the lower people). As this chapter shows, this categorization reflects both geographical and social differences. In other words, “upper” and “lower”, as used by the villagers, also reflect a class consciousness in the village: an upper class and a lower class.

The second category arose with the increase of Islamic converts in the village, and represents a split between the villagers who follow *adat* (the *adat* group), those who follow a particular religion such as Islam or Christianity (the religion group), and those having no beliefs (the drunk group).

The third category arose from matrilineal kinship principles, and refers to the legitimate inheritors (including women) of ancestral property (*enekbuah pusaka*; *pusaka* refers to titles or land such as durian orchards); the children of titleholders who have remained in Kampung Durian Tawar (holders of titles do not necessarily follow the practice of uxorilocal residence) (*enekbuah bakar*); and the husbands living in the village due to the practice of uxorilocal residence or who are newly arrived in the village (*enekbuah mendatang*).

As we shall see in this chapter, while the categories of upper and lower people are clearly defined and well established among the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, the other categories were introduced by Batin Janggut. Additionally, while it is true that many villagers have adopted the categories, not all villagers accept or apply them. Villagers belonging to the lower people category understand themselves as belonging to the lower people, for example, but people categorized as belonging to the drunk group do not see themselves as members of the drunk group. I use the categories here because I believe that one can thereby show how Kampung Durian Tawar is not a single, unified community. The fact is that factional oppositions are evident among the villagers and are influential in village politics. Rather than draw on my own terms, I use these categories of factions or groupings because these are the ones accepted and used by many of the villagers themselves.

Family and Kinship

The basic unit of life in the village is the nuclear family (*kelamin*), consisting of a husband (*laki*), a wife (*bini*) and unmarried children (*enek*). In most cases nuclear families occupy a single house (*rumah*).¹ When children marry, they usually build a new house and live independently of their parents. The married couple is the basic economic unit of production and consumption (Baharon 1973: 65).

People in the village have a clear understanding of the specific kinship relations they have with relatives living in the village. For relatives living outside the village, however, they are only aware that some kind of blood connection exists and tend to forget the specifics of the kin relationship. Although it is difficult to generalize, the villagers seem to see those relations within a range extending to third cousins (*tiga pupuk*) as relatives (*saudara*),² whereas they talk of “having ties” (*tali*) with relations who fall outside this range. It is at the *tali* level of awareness that we hear comments such as, “I have forgotten exactly what relation he/she is, but there is some sort of blood relation”.

Baharon (1973: 373) suggests that kin terms used by the Temuan in general are essentially bilateral and classificatory. At times the range of kinship relations stretches quite far. The limits of the range of kinship relations, however, are not fixed. Seen in terms of the network of relatives, the villagers' kinship relations can be classified, at the level of everyday life, as bilateral. In this sense, the great majority of kinship terms and relations in Kampung Durian Tawar share the same characteristics as the bilateral society that Tachimoto (2000) has described among the Orang Hulu.

However, the concept of womb or belly (*perut*, here referring to a matrilineal descent group) operates in the village, and there is debate over whether or not this is due to the influence of the surrounding Malays' matrilineal *adat*. In addition, the kinship terms of mother's brother (*ibubapa*) and sister's son/daughter (*enekbuah*) indicate the operation of matrilineal principles (see Table 14 for a comprehensive list of kinship terms). *Ibubapa* and *enekbuah* are also used to refer, respectively, to the "head of a matrilineal descent group" and a "member of a matrilineal descent group". *Enekbuah* is also used simply to refer to "people (villagers) who follow the Batin".

Waris refers to those members (inheritors) of a matrilineal descent group who have the right of inheritance or succession to ancestral property (*pusaka*). In Kampung Durian Tawar *waris* and *perut* are often used interchangeably, and *waris* is often used in the place of *perut* when referring to a matrilineal descent group. The matrilineal descent group is also the unit of exogamy. There is a particularly strong prohibition against marriage between members of the same matrilineal descent group (Baharon 1973: 69-70). In other words, marriage rules operating in the village adhere closely to matrilineal principles. Further, uxori-local residence is regarded as the ideal. Husbands, referred to as *orang semenda*, are the ones who enter a new household after marriage, and they are prohibited from involvement in matters regarding the wife's matrilineal descent group (*tempat semenda*).

According to the earliest records of the village, inheritance of the titles of leaders and of land (such as rice fields) began under matrilineal principles. As such, it is feasible that the villagers' kinship relations are matrilineal as well as bilateral. Baharon (1973) commented that the village is a bilateral society at the practical level, while at the ideal level it is matrilineal. In Kampung Durian Tawar the practice of these once-ideal matrilineal principles has recently gained strength.

Table 14
Kinship terms in **Kampung Durian Tawar**

Number	Kinship term	Kinship relation	English translation	Notes
1	<i>enek</i>	S, D	Son, daughter	No particular gender differentiation. When differentiating <i>enek jantan</i> is used for son and <i>enek betina</i> for daughter.
2	<i>enekbuah</i>	ZS, ZD	Sister's son, sister's daughter	Also refers to a member of a matrilineal descent group (<i>perut</i>), and also to those (villagers in general) who follow the <i>Batin</i> .
3	<i>enek sedara</i>	ZS, ZD, BS, BD	Nephew, niece	Used as a term of address
4	<i>moi/ma'</i>	M	Mother	
5	<i>bapai/bah/ayah</i>	F	Father	
6	<i>chuchu'</i>	SS, SD, DD, DS, ZSS, ZSD, BDD, BDS	Grandchild	Classificatory
7	<i>genoi/wan</i>	MM, FM, MMZ, MFB	Grandmother	Classificatory
8	<i>aki</i>	FF, MF, FFB, MFB	Grandfather	Classificatory
9	<i>chichid</i>	SSS, SDD, DDD, DSD, ZSSS, ZSDD, BDDD, BDSS	Great-grandchild	Classificatory
10	<i>moyang</i>	MMM, FMM, MMMZ, FMMZ	Great-grandmother and great-grandfather	Also includes his or her spouse. Also has the meaning of ancestor.
11	<i>pupu'</i>	FBS, FBD, FZS, FZD, MBS, MBD, MZS, MZD	First cousin	In the form <i>se pupu'</i> means first cousin.
12	<i>ade/adik</i>	FFBSS, FFBSD, FMBSS, FMBSD, FFZDS, FFZDD, FMBDS, FMBDD, etc	Second cousin	In the form <i>dua pupu'</i> means second cousin. Third cousin is <i>tiga pupu'</i> .
13	<i>ge-e'/abang</i>	Younger B and Z, and younger <i>pupu'</i>	Younger sibling or cousin	
14	<i>gæ-o'/kakak</i>	Older B and older male <i>pupu'</i>	Older male sibling or older male cousin	<i>Abang</i> is a Malaysian national language (frequently used nowadays)
		Older Z and older female <i>pupu'</i>	Older female sibling or older female cousin	<i>Kakak</i> is a Malaysian national language (frequently used nowadays)

15	<i>tiri'</i>			Non-blood relation through remarriage	<i>Moi tiri'</i> means stepmother
16	<i>inak</i>	Parents' <i>ade'/adik</i> (female) and younger D of MMZ, MMB, MFZ, MFB, FFZ, FFB, FMB, FMZ		Aunt	Usually used to refer to younger aunts
17	<i>mamak</i>	Parents' <i>ade'/adik</i> (male) and younger S of MMZ, MMB, MFZ, MFB, FFZ, FFB, FMB, FMZ		Uncle	Usually used to refer to younger uncles
18	<i>tuartuo</i>	Parents' <i>ge-o'/kakak</i> and older S of MMZ, MMB, MFZ, MFB, FFZ, FFB, FMB, FMZ		Aunt	Usually used to refer to older aunts
19	<i>wak</i>	Parents' <i>ge-e'/abang</i> and older S of MMZ, MMB, MFZ, MFB, FFZ, FFB, FMB, FMZ		Uncle	Usually used to refer to older uncles
20	<i>ibubapa</i>	MB		Mother's male sibling	Also refers to older males within a matrilineal descent group
21	<i>menantu'</i>	S and D -in-law		Child's spouse	Son-in-law and daughter-in-law
22	<i>mentohak</i>	F and M -in-law		Spouse's father or mother	Father-in-law and mother-in-law
23	<i>ipar</i>	B and Z -in-law		Spouse's sibling	In-laws
24	<i>biras</i>	BWB, BWZ, ZHB, ZHZ		Sibling's spouse's sibling	In-laws
25	<i>bisan</i>	DHM, DHF, SWM, SWF		Parent's of child's spouse	In-laws
26	<i>kawan</i>			Spouse	Term of address used when introducing one's husband or wife to someone not known well
27	<i>biri</i>	W		Wife	
28	<i>laki</i>	H		Husband	
29	<i>waris</i>			Relative	Also used to refer to members of the same matrilineal descent group. Also used to refer to Malays with which one has a close relationship.

Based on Baharon (1973: 373-376)

Teknonymy: Teknonyms are in common use in Kampung Durian Tawar and other Orang Asli villages in the surrounding area. For example, expressions such as “older child mother” and “older child father”, *mah Wira/ayah Wira*, are standard, these two expressions showing that the person is married and that they have children. Even when a parent’s own child marries and a grandchild is born, he or she then refers to his or her married child using a teknonym. In such a case the person who has become a grandmother or grandfather changes to being referred to with the expressions *Wan* and *Aki* in front of his or her name. As we can see, the teknonyms are used to indicate a person’s generational position.

I was called Rantau by the villagers, but often I was called *wak Rantau/mamak Rantau* by couples with young children. These expressions mean “Uncle Rantau”. This was uttered to teach the couple’s young children the appropriate term of address to use towards me, but on many occasions the terms *wak/mamak* were used towards me even when the children were not about. I am often called *wak/mamak* by people who should call me *abang/adik/gao*. This seems to be because it is probably more polite to call me *wak/mamak Rantau* rather than *abang/adik*. In contrast, however, it is not possible for me to use *wak/mamak* towards people who I should term *abang/adik*. This is because I was not married and I had no children.

This kind of use of these kinship terms can be seen as a teknonymy-related phenomenon. In any case, as we can see here that the use of kinship terms often prioritizes the generation factor. This means that one comes across situations where an older brother uses the term “uncle” towards his younger brother despite their actual relationship. This seems confusing to outsiders, but for those using the kinship terms it reflects a clear understanding of the mutual kinship relations between them.

In their everyday lives in Kampung Durian Tawar, the villagers tend to be conscious of bilateral kinship relations. By contrast, in the succession to titles or in the passing on of property such as durian orchards (and in weddings), the tendency is to follow *adat* and its emphasis on matrilineal principles. We can therefore say that a unique situation concerning kinship relations has arisen in Kampung Durian Tawar. Matrilineal *adat* has been “introduced” into a situation where the principle of a bilateral society is maintained (involving at the most basic level the tracing of kinship relations bilaterally). As a result of this, matrilineal principles operate in several important situations within village society.

Although the surrounding Malays basically follow matrilineal *adat*, their matrilineal principles are disappearing due to the effects of social change and Islamic rules. However, in Kampung Durian Tawar the stance of maintaining the “borrowed” matrilineal *adat*, in contrast to the situation in Malay society, results in the throwing into relief of the “matrilineal society” characteristics.

Taking a broader view of kinship relations in Kampung Durian Tawar,



Plates 37 & 38: The author's "relatives" . Plate 37 is a picture with my sister's family. On the right of the picture is Milong, my brother, who married into this village. The couple now have one daughter and one son. On my right is Wira, who became the driver of the Negeri Sembilan state government's official car. Based on his recommendation, his brother and sister later also worked for the state government. [NT-1998]

we can see several larger kinship groups.³ In these, women rather than men occupy the central role of linking people. In the village, uxorial residence is the norm. As a result, we can discern kinship groups centered around the kinship relations between mothers and daughters and between sisters.⁴

The concept of leader selection by the women of a particular matrilineal descent group (women known as *telapak waris*) also exists in the village.



Plates 39 & 40: A growing girl. This girl was three years old in 1998 (Plate 39). In 2008, she stayed in a hostel to attend lower secondary (middle) school, having done well at primary school the previous year. [NT-1998, 2007]

This is a practice where the women themselves select the leaders to protect them. Titleholders should relinquish their titles if they incur opposition to their leadership from the women within their own *waris*. In short, the women decide who the leaders are.

While power relations in village politics are most evident among the men, the categories existing among the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar are, in fact, based on the relations between the women, not the men.

Titleholders: Upper People and Lower People

In this section I examine the inheritance of titles as a means of understanding the historical formation of the upper people and the lower people categories. The titleholders in the village have the authority to settle village-level conflicts. They are also the practitioners of various rites and ceremonies. In particular, the people of the village recognize the holder of the Batin title as the inheritor of the descent (*keturunan*) of the villagers' ancestors and of knowledge of magic (*ilmu*, including sorcery in this village's context).⁵

In Kampung Durian Tawar the *adat* norm for the inheritance of the Batin title occurs under matrilineal principles. Accordingly, two of the earliest holders of the Batin title, Siuntung and Bongsu (whom we



Plates 41 & 42: Twin girls and their elder sister. These twin sisters were two years old in 1998 (Plate 41). In 2008, they will enter lower secondary (middle) school. They have dreams of becoming school teachers. [NT-1998, 2003]

encountered in my outline of the history of the village), can be seen as temporary titleholders who filled the position until the legitimate inheritors grew to maturity. In other words, only those who belong to the same matrilineal descent group as the first Batin, Baning, are regarded as legitimate inheritors to the title. Considering the actual process of the inheritance of titles in Kampung Durian Tawar, however, we can see that not all titles were inherited under matrilineal principles. It is evident that inheritance to titles was manipulated, so to speak, according to the village politics of the time.

Having described the line of inheritance of the title of Batin (from Batin Baning to Batin Janggut), in the following section I examine the history of the inheritance of other titles in Kampung Durian Tawar, basing my examination on Baharon's discussion (1973: 115-27) (see Figure 7).

Primarily the Batin or the person with the most influence at the time decides who is granted the other village titles. In this sense, the history of title succession is also the history of politics within the village. It is also important to note here that in the past the Batin position was one of leadership of the people (the kinship group), not of controller of the land (the village). The leadership of present-day Kampung Durian Tawar does, indeed, extend to the physical area of Kampung Durian Tawar itself. Yet for the villagers, whose history is one of repeated movement from place

to place, the idea of leadership arguably centers on the binding together of the kinship group.

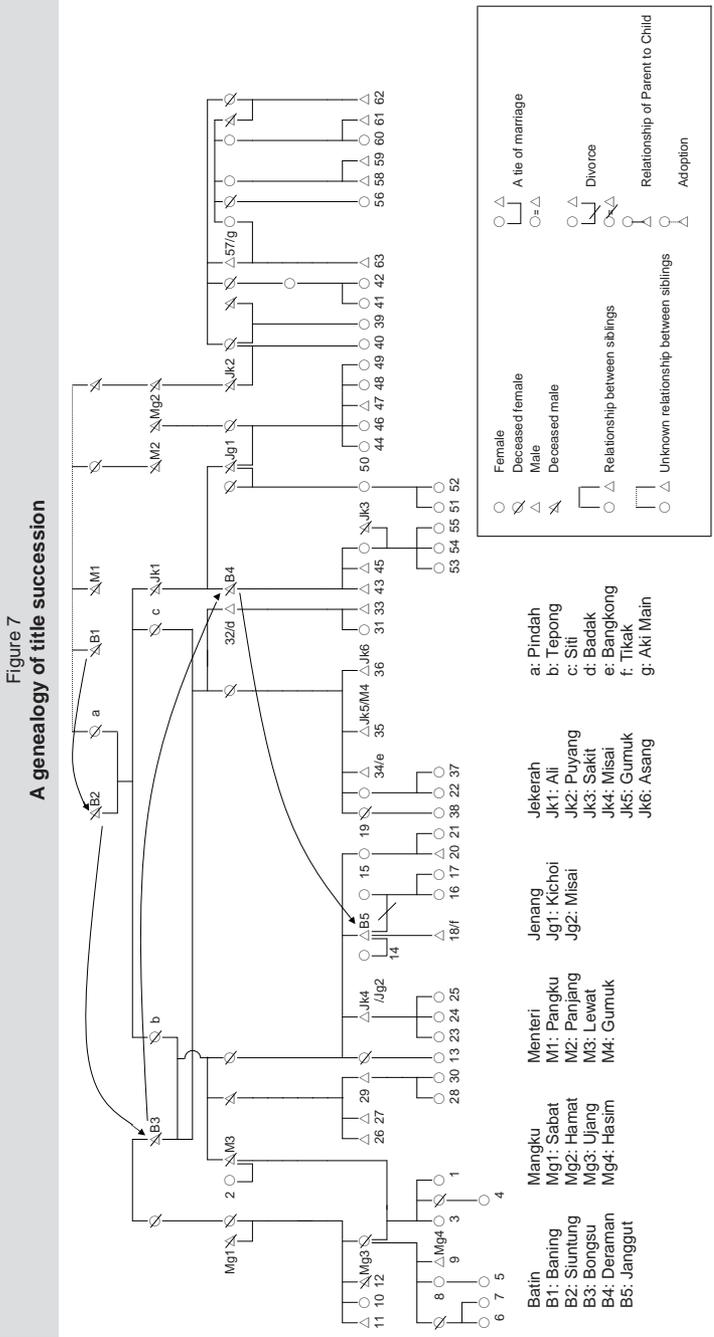
Titleholders can be viewed in terms of the periods of the five Batins of Kampung Durian Tawar.

(1) *The period of Batin Baning*: During the period of Batin Baning (B1) there was only one other titleholder in the village, this being Pangku (M1), who held the title of Menteri. Pangku was a matrilineal cousin of Batin Baning.

(2) *The period of Batin Siuntung*: When Batin Baning was attacked and killed by a Malay tiger, the candidates for succession to Batin were Ali (Jk1) and Panjang (M2). However, both were too young for the role. As a result, Siuntung (B2) succeeded to the title of Batin, even though he should not have, given that he was Malay and was not in the appropriate kinship position. After Siuntung became Batin, Ali became the holder of the Jekerah title, and Panjang succeeded to the title of Menteri. Two influential factors in Siuntung's succession to the Batin title were his individual ability and the fact that his succession was recognized by the Malay ruler, the Undang.

(3) *The period of Batin Bongsu*: When Batin Bongsu (B3) succeeded to the title of Batin, the above factors were again influential. On this occasion, Ali and Panjang again arose as candidates for succession to Batin. Although they were now both of an appropriate age, people at the time did not see them as possessing the necessary leadership characteristics. Ali, himself, explained to Baharon that succeeding to the title of Batin after his father Siuntung would have incurred *tulah* (the belief that an act of disrespect to the elders of the village, by someone of his age succeeding to the position of Batin, would bring calamity upon them). Batin Bongsu was the husband of Batin Siuntung's daughter (*menantu*). In this position, he should not have been eligible to succeed to the title, but was able to due to his support among the people.

The title of Mangku was introduced during this period. When Sabat's (Mg1) daughter Murai married Batin Bongsu's son Lewat, Sabat moved to Kampung Durian Tawar from Kenaboi and continued to use his title of Mangku, as he had in Kenaboi. He later moved back to Kenaboi. When he died, Hamat (Mg2) succeeded to the title of Mangku. Hamat was Malay but he moved to Kampung Durian Tawar when his daughter Lebar married Ali's son Kichoi. He lived in Kampung Durian Tawar for several years, though he eventually returned to his home village, where he later died. We can see, then, that in the beginning the title of Mangku was used by Batin Bongsu and Jekerah Ali as a way of showing respect for their in-laws.



Note 1: Batin is the highest *adat* leader, Mangku represents the Batin when the Batin is not in the village, Menteri is the Batin's deputy, Jenang is an executor and protector of the *adat*, and Jekerah is a protector of the villagers as a whole.

Note 2: The numbers refer to house numbers. Uxorilocal residence is the standard practice in the village, though there are exceptions. The genealogy shows kinship relations between households; for the most part spouses (husbands and wives) who have married into a household have been omitted.

(4) *The period of Batin Deraman:* When Batin Bongsu died, his sons became candidates for succession to the Batin title. This was in keeping with the view that the legitimate successors were those belonging to the same matrilineal descent group as Batin Baning. Jekerah Ali is said to have opposed Batin Bongsu's sons as candidates because succeeding to the title of Batin after one's father would incur *tulah*. Jekerah Ali was already an elder of the village and, as such, his words carried particular weight. Because of his influence, Ali's son Deraman (B4) succeeded as the next Batin. In addition, Ali's son Kichoi was given the title of Jenang (Jg1). Lewat (M3), who had been one of the candidates for succession to the Batin title, succeeded to the title of Menteri. The Lewat group saw Ali's influence on his son's succession as being "against *adat*" (*melanggar adat*).

Ali's own title of Jekerah was succeeded to Poyang (Jk2), the grandson of a matrilateral cousin of Ali's mother. Therefore, all the titles in Kampung Durian Tawar were held by members of the Ali group, with the exception of Menteri Lewat. By this time, the people of the Ali group had moved to Sialang. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar were thereby split both physically and psychologically into the Lewat group and the Ali group. Later, during the period of Batin Deraman, conflict arose between Batin Deraman and Jekerah Poyang, and the latter came to be banished (*halau*) from the village.

(5) *The period of Batin Janggut:* When Batin Deraman died, Misai, Janggut, Badak and Bangkong arose as candidates for the next Batin. Once again, Ali had the greatest influence over the final selection. Badak and Bangkong were removed from the list due to age and lack of ability, the choice then being between Misai and his younger brother Janggut. A messenger was first sent to Misai, announcing his selection as candidate for Batin, but he declined the offer, saying, "I'm not sufficiently familiar with the *adat* and I cannot leave Dusun Kubur, my wife's village" (succeeding to the title meant returning to one's home village). The messenger was then sent to Kampung Dalam, where Janggut was living, and Janggut agreed to the offer to succeed to the title of Batin.

Given that succession to a title is decided on matrilineal principles, the fact that Misai and Janggut's father was Chinese was no obstacle, although Ali had reservations about Janggut's behavior. Misai and Janggut were both employees of the JHEOA. Additionally, they were eloquent speakers, and were recognized as having leadership qualities.

At the same time as the decision about the next Batin was carried out, Ujang (Mg3) succeeded to the title of Mangku, which had been vacant.

He was from Chergon, near Kampung Dalam, and he and his siblings' relations formed a distinct group in Kampung Durian Tawar. It was as the leader of this group that he was chosen to succeed to the title of Mangku. His older sister is Menteri Lewat's wife, Murai. Succession to the title of Jekerah, which the banished Poyang had held, was also decided at this time. Sakit (Jk3) (from Pahang) was the successor. He was the husband of Deraman's daughter Entak. After Batin Deraman's death, then, the Lewat group came to hold the three titles of Batin, Menteri and Mangku, while the Ali group held the two titles of Jenang and Jekerah.

Following Ali's death, Batin Janggut stripped (*lutur*) Jekerah Sakit of his title on the grounds that he lacked the ability to do the job properly. Sakit had not been performing his duties as Jekerah and had lost the people's trust. Badak and Bangkok (members of a matrilineal subgroup descended from Siti) were the first to be approached as candidates for the next Jekerah. According to the *adat*, it is considered ideal that the matrilineal descent subgroups take turns in holding titles. It was for this reason that members of Siti's matrilineal descent group, Badak and Bangkok, were approached first. However, they turned down the offer on the grounds that they were too young and did not "know the *adat*".

In the end, Misai, a member of the matrilineal descent subgroup that has Tepong as its original ancestor (a group to which Menteri Lewat and Batin Janggut also belong), arose as a candidate, and he agreed to succeed as the next Jekerah (Jk4). Later, after the death of Kichoi, Misai succeeded to the title of Jenang (Jg2), and Gemuk (Jk5) succeeded to his Jekerah title. Gemuk (Bangkong's younger brother) is a member of the matrilineal descent subgroup of Siti.

After the death of Ujang, Hasim (Mg4) succeeded as the next Mangku. He was Menteri Lewat's stepson (a son of Murai by her previous husband). Ujang and Hasim belong to the same matrilineal descent group and it was agreed that succession to the title of Mangku would come from within that matrilineal descent group. It was also agreed at this time that the other titles would be succeeded to alternately by two matrilineal descent subgroups contained within the matrilineal descent group that has Pindah as its ancestor. This meant that the Ali group no longer had any titleholders. When Menteri Lewat died in November 1996, Gemuk (M4) succeeded to the title of Menteri. The title of Jekerah, which Gemuk had held, was succeeded to by his younger brother, Asang (Jk6).

Since Batin Janggut's succession to the title of Batin, the titles used in the village have become concentrated among members of the Lewat group (to the point that nowadays it can be described as the Batin Janggut

group). As discussed previously and in the next section, the people of the Lewat group (the upper people) came to live on the hill in the village as the result of a housing construction project.

Batin Janggut, with the backing of the JHEOA and utilizing the ideology of the matrilineal *adat*, returned the situation in the village to one where the titleholders belonged to the Batin Baning matrilineal descent group (the core of the Lewat group). Batin Janggut concentrated the titles among his close relatives, and made these changes in order to emphasize that he was the truly legitimate successor to the title of Batin. As the one who asked the JHEOA to undertake development projects in Kampung Durian Tawar, he also had tight control over development matters in the village, in particular over the distribution of development funds.

Categorization

As mentioned above, the people of the Lewat group moved, as a result of their participation in the 1970 housing construction project, from the area of Old Kampung Durian Tawar to their current residential area on the village hilltop. These were the people, in other words, who followed Batin Janggut's leadership and participated in the JHEOA-promoted housing construction project (the upper people in houses Nos. 1-39 in Figure 5). The people of the Ali group, on the other hand, did not participate in the housing project and at that time remained in Sialang. Later, however, most of them moved to the Jelawai area of Kampung Durian Tawar.

The people of the Aki Main group (Nos. 56–63), who had moved from Kampung Bukit Lanjan in Selangor to Kampung Durian Tawar in the second half of the 1970s, lived initially in the residential area of the upper people. Later, however, strains emerged in their relations with the upper people and they moved to the edge of the Jelawai area.⁶

The people of the Ali and Aki Main groups live at the bottom of the hill and, as already mentioned, have come to be known as the lower people (Nos. 40-63).

The above categorizations of the villagers are based on the geographical positions of the particular areas of residence, but also reflect, at a fundamental level, the oppositional split between the kinship groups of the Lewat and Ali groups. In the context of succession to the titles in the village, the Lewat group has, at its core, the legitimate successors to the first Batin, Batin Baning. The Ali group, as the name suggests, is a kinship group centered on the descendants of Ali. According to the kinship principles of the matrilineal *adat*, members of the Ali group should not be successors to the village titles. The fact that the titles of Batin, Mangku,

Jenang and Jekerah have been bestowed on members of the Ali group is largely due to Ali's influence (Ali himself was a legitimate successor to Batin Baning).

Viewed from a different perspective, the categories of upper people and lower people express differentiated economic classes. As can be surmised from their participation in the JHEOA housing construction project, the great majority of the upper people have actively participated, under the leadership of Batin Janggut, in state-led development projects since the 1970s. These residents of the village switched their livelihood from a subsistence economy centered on hunting and gathering activities to agriculture centered on rubber tapping. The lower people, on the other hand, opposed initially to the development projects and having declared that they would not participate in them, subsequently became excluded from the development projects. As a result they have been forced, whether they like it or not, to continue pursuing livelihoods centered on a subsistence economy.

The economic relationship between the two groups is discussed in the next chapter. To rush to a conclusion, however, it can be said that as the number of development projects has increased, the economic inequality between the two groups has expanded.

The land cultivated by the lower people, including that of the new members, the Aki Main group, is much smaller than that of the upper people, who have actively opened up new land (in regard to the scale of land under cultivation per household see Table 15, and for a comparison of the land under cultivation between the upper people and the lower people see Table 16). For those lower people without land, livelihoods center on hunting and gathering activities for cash, and day laboring for Chinese or Malay employers.

As a result of forest logging, deforestation and the development of areas of forest land, the forest environment around Kampung Durian Tawar has changed. This has caused a reduction in the animals available for hunting and forest products for gathering. As such, it is now difficult to live solely on a subsistence economy. Seen in this way, the lower people are the victims of development, and have been forced into greater poverty.

***Adat*, Religion and Drunk Groups**

The categorization of the villagers into the *adat* group, the religion group and the drunk group reveals a process of reconstitution of the existing class order of upper people and lower people in Kampung Durian Tawar (see Figure 8). This reconstitution occurred under the influence of the government's Islamization policy.

Table 15
Land under cultivation

House number	Number of householders			Interview survey		Rubber smallholdings under development project				
	Male	Female	Total	Durian orchards (acres)	Rubber smallholdings (acres)	JHEOA (acres)	RISDA(1) (acres)	RISDA(2) (acres)	RISDA(3) (acres)	Total (acres)
1	3	3	6	3	10	3	2.2	5	3	13.2
2	0	2	2	0.5	2	0	0	6	7.7	13.7
3	1	3	4	2.5	8.5	0	0	3	2.7	5.7
4	1	2	3	0	2.5	0	0	0	0	0
5	3	3	6	13	11	3	0	8	4.8	15.8
6	1	2	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
7	2	3	5	1	2	0	0	0	2	2
8	4	2	6	10	6.5	0	2.2	2.2	2.7	7.1
9	3	6	9	13	25	0	2	3	0	5
10	5	6	11	2	10	0	3	4	10.1	17.1
11	5	3	8	0.5	9	0	2	3	0	5
12	2	4	6	10	10	0	0	3	0	3
13	6	3	9	10	19	0	6	5	4.8	15.8
14	11	11	22	39	14.5	0	8.2	3	0	11.2
15	0	2	2	4	5	0	3	3	0	6
16	2	5	7	3	3	3	0	9	8.9	20.9
17	2	1	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
18	2	5	7	10	18	3	5	0	0	8
19	2	4	6	13.5	25	4	4	8	9	25.0
20	2	4	6	4	5	0	0	0	0	0
21	2	4	6	0.5	9	0	5	0	0	5
22	5	1	6	0.5	9	0	4.2	2	2	8.2
23	2	2	4	0.25	3	0	0	0	0	0
24	4	3	7	1.75	30	0	3	8	11.8	22.8
25	3	4	7	4	5	3	0	0	0	3
26	2	1	3	6.25	8	0	7	4.4	2	13.4
27	1	0	1	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	6	6	12	5	12	0	4.2	5.2	6.5	15.9
29	2	1	3	3	2.5	0	5	0	0	5
30	1	4	5	0	2.5	0	0	2.2	2	4.2
31	3	1	4	0.5	7.5	0	2.2	0	4.6	6.8
32	1	1	2	0.25	5	0	0	2.2	2.2	4.4
33	4	4	8	0	3.5	0	0	0	1.8	1.8
34	3	5	8	2	10	0	3	1.2	5.5	9.7
35	7	4	11	8	18	4	3	0	2.5	9.5
36	6	1	7	1	12	3	0	0	6.7	9.7
37	3	2	5	2	7.5	3	6.2	2	0	11.2
38	4	3	7	0.5	5	0	2	0	0	2
39	0	2	2	3	5	0	0	2	2	4
40	2	1	3	0.5	5	0	0	3	2	5
41	3	3	6	2	6	3	0	3.2	0	6.2
42	4	3	7	2	9.5	3	0	0	3.5	6.5

House number	Number of householders			Interview survey		Rubber smallholdings under development project				
	Male	Female	Total	Durian orchards (acres)	Rubber smallholdings (acres)	JHEOA (acres)	RISDA(1) (acres)	RISDA(2) (acres)	RISDA(3) (acres)	Total (acres)
43	1	0	1	0.25	4	0	0	0	0	0
44	3	4	7	0.5	3.5	0	0	0	0	0
45	5	6	11	4	9	0	4.3	0	2	6.3
46	4	5	9	1	6	3	0	3	7.2	13.2
47	4	3	7	2	5	0	3	3	6.5	12.5
48	1	2	3	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
49	5	4	9	2	4	0	0	2	3	5
50	2	2	4	2	5	0	3	3.2	2.7	8.9
51	4	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
52	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
53	2	5	7	5	3	0	0	3.2	3.2	6.4
54	5	1	6	0	2.5	0	0	0	0	0
55	3	2	5	6	9	3	0	0	0	3
56	5	1	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
57	3	3	6	1.5	3	3	0	0	0	3
58	3	4	7	0.5	3	3	0	0	0	3
59	2	2	4	1.5	3	0	0	0	0	0
60	6	6	12	0.5	3	0	0	0	0	0
61	5	1	6	0	8	3	2	2	1.1	8.1
62	5	1	6	0	2.5	0	0	3	0.7	3.7
63	1	4	5	1	3.5	0	0	0	0	0
Total	197	191	388	217.25	448	50	94.7	120	139	403.9

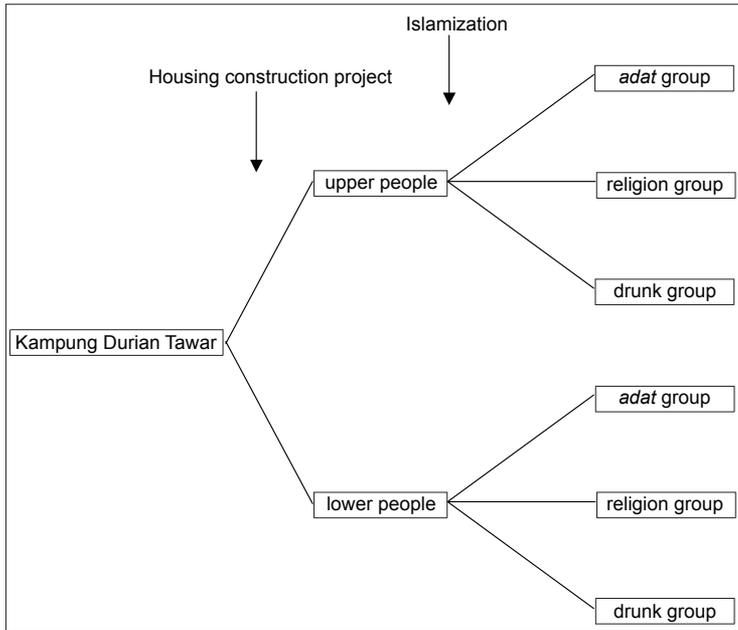
NB: Based on the author's survey of household and source material of JHEOA and RISDA.

Table 16
Comparison of land under cultivation

	Number of householders			Interview survey		Rubber smallholdings under development project				
	Male	Female	Total	Durian orchards (acres)	Rubber smallholdings (acres)	JHEOA (acres)	RISDA(1) (acres)	RISDA(2) (acres)	RISDA(3) (acres)	Total (acres)
Upper people	2.97	3.15	6.13	4.6	8.9	0.7	2.1	2.4	2.7	8
Lower people	3.38	2.83	6.21	1.5	4.2	0.9	0.5	1.1	1.4	3.9
Village as a whole	3.13	3.03	3.16	3.4	7.1	0.8	1.5	1.9	2.2	6.4

NB: A comparison of the average figures per household.

Figure 8
 Categorizations of the villagers



Batin Janggut spoke of these categories in public at a village meeting held in January 1997. Below I discuss the content of that village meeting.

On January 11, 1997, I attended a village meeting held in the *adat* hall. It was held in the wake of an Islamic missionary meeting held the previous December under the auspices of the JHEOA. In keeping with the custom of such discussions, almost all the matters covered were pronouncements delivered by Batin Janggut. Of the various items discussed at the meeting, I provide a summary of three items.

(1) *Regarding the current situation in Kampung Durian Tawar:* Batin Janggut said that the village was currently split into an *adat* group (those who followed *adat*), a religion group (those who had converted to Islam or Christianity) and a drunk group (those who ignore the Batin's advice and warnings and spend their days drinking). He also remarked that the religion group had a tendency to not follow *adat*, and that the drunk group

followed the leadership of a different “Batin” (Aki Main). He further commented that his son Tikak was planning to be the next Batin, and that some people in the village supported him.

(2) *Regarding adat*: Batin Janggut said that Kampung Durian Tawar should follow matrilineal *adat* (*adat mempatih*), not the so-called patrilineal *adat* (*adat temenggung*).⁷ If matrilineal *adat* is followed, he said, the villagers divide into *enekbuah pusaka*, *enekbuah bakar* and *enekbuah mendatang*. *Enekbuah pusaka*, he said, are the legitimate successors to Kampung Durian Tawar’s ancestral property (*pusaka*: land and the titles used in the village, and so on). *Enekbuah bakar* are the descendants of the titleholders who, according to the uxorilocal residence rule, should otherwise be living in other villagers. And *enekbuah mendatang* are those who have married into families in Kampung Durian Tawar or who have moved to the village from somewhere else. The only ones who can succeed to the titles of *adat* leaders, he said, are *enekbuah pusaka*.

(3) *Regarding religion (Islam)*: The original purpose of the village meeting was to consider how to respond to the government policy of Islamization. In relation to this, Batin Janggut said that conversion to Islam was permitted, but that nominal conversion for cash or aid was not permissible. He also said that situations where family members followed different religions led to trouble within the family. To deal with this, he continued, a request from a wife for a divorce, which had been forbidden under *adat*, would now be permitted. He said that obtaining a divorce would also be made easier. He went on to say that rites and ceremonies held in accordance with *adat* would no longer be held for those who had converted to Islam or Christianity. For example, those who had converted to Islam would have to find someone else to hold rites and ceremonies (such as those for weddings and funerals).

Below I explore the particular background to these three pronouncements made by Batin Janggut.

(1) *Regarding the current situation in Kampung Durian Tawar*: Among the upper people, conflict has arisen between Batin Janggut and Tikak, his son by his first wife, over leadership regarding development projects. Batin Janggut’s comments here are a public reference to the conflict that has been causing discord among the upper people.

The categories of upper people and lower people refer to those who, respectively, did and did not participate in the development promoted by Batin Janggut. During the development projects, however, conflict arose among the upper people themselves, which in turn has had an effect on the lower people. In opposing Batin Janggut, Tikak sought to expand his

power and influence not only among the upper people but also among the lower people. This resulted in the formation of a group that supported Tikak.

Batin Janggut's reference to the drunk group arises from the following background. Although Batin Janggut is not Muslim, he drinks neither liquor nor beer, and is very critical of alcohol consumption. Tikak is not Muslim either but he does drink. In fact, he is known for his liking for liquor and beer. The members of the Aki Main group are not Muslim either, and many are alcoholics who frequently get into fights. Batin Janggut's mention of the drunk group is a veiled reference to the members of the Aki Main group, which supports Tikak.

Batin Janggut's reference to a religion group is connected to the emergence of Islamic converts among the lower people, a phenomenon stemming from the state-led policy of Islamization that first appeared at the village level in the 1990s. Batin Janggut says that Tikak encouraged the lower people to convert to Islam. He claims that Tikak did this in order to fulfill a "promise" he made to outside (Malay) forces (those in the JHEOA supporting Islamic missionary activity and members of UMNO, which permits Islamic missionary activity), whose backing he had obtained. Therefore, Batin Janggut insinuates that the category of religion group applies to those Islamic converts who support Tikak.⁸

As we can see, then, Batin Janggut's categorizations of the villagers results from Tikak having brought under his own influence the groups of people who had challenged Batin Janggut's authority. In bringing anti-Batin groups under his influence, Tikak is mounting a challenge to Batin Janggut's authority. Batin Janggut has labeled the people in the Tikak group as constituting either a religion group or a drunk group, while referring to his own supporters as an *adat* group. In doing this, he has made clear the opposition between his own group and the Tikak group. Neither Tikak, the people of the Aki Main group referred to as the drunk group nor the Islamic converts attended the meeting.

(2) *Regarding adat*: In response to the emerging Islamic converts, Batin Janggut's pronouncement regarding *adat* was aimed at constructing his own supporters' identities through highlighting an *adat* emphasizing non-Islam-ness. As a discourse opposing the Islamic forces behind the religion group, which supports Tikak, Batin Janggut's comments emphasized that the *adat* group was supported by the *adat*.

The drunk group comprises people from the Aki Main group who have moved to Kampung Durian Tawar. They tend to follow the bilateral *adat* of their home village and not that of Kampung Durian Tawar. Batin

Janggut regards their *adat* as patrilineal (*ikut ayah*) and makes a clear distinction between it and matrilineal (*ikut mah*) *adat*. A second aim of Batin Janggut's pronouncements was to emphasize, in response to the confusion expressed over *adat*, that the *adat* followed in Kampung Durian Tawar is matrilineal.

Batin Janggut's comments regarding the *enekbuah* classifications relate to Tikak's method of distribution of development funds, and to the emergence of *adat* leaders from among the younger generation who are opposed to Tikak's high-handed way of doing things. Batin Janggut's pronouncements on *enekbuah* reflect the fact that the fortunes of the *adat* leaders (*enekbuah pusaka*) from the younger generation and that of Batin Janggut are one and the same. Under matrilineal *adat*, *enekbuah bakar* such as Tikak, and *enekbuah mendatang* such as the members of the Aki Main group, cannot succeed to the village *adat* leader titles such as Batin. Naturally, those who have converted to Islam are also unable to succeed to these titles. The younger-generation candidates of *adat* leaders support Batin Janggut, for he guarantees the legitimacy of their authority.

(3) *Regarding religion (Islam)*: Batin Janggut had received a letter, via the JHEOA, from the Malay traditional ruler, the Undang. The gist of the letter was that Orang Asli *adat* could not be applied to Islamic converts among the Orang Asli. Batin Janggut's pronouncement regarding *adat* rites and ceremonies, and Islamic converts in the village, was a public announcement, in response to the JHEOA's policy, of the fact that *adat* would no longer be applied to the Islamic converts in the village.

Politics of Title Succession

In his study, Baharon (1973: 123) wrote that "it is clear that the requirement of *keturunan* (descent), let alone matrilineal descent, had not been adhered to consistently in all the successions to the five offices". In other words, he points to the process of succession to titles in Kampung Durian Tawar as evidence that matrilineal *adat* had become something followed in name only (Baharon 1973: 123-25). At the same time, however, he also points out that the villagers continue to be ever-conscious of matrilineal *adat* as the ideal model of title succession (Baharon 1973: 127).

The situation he is pointing to here, namely the intention to follow matrilineal *adat* in the process of title succession, has become much more of a reality in Kampung Durian Tawar since Baharon's study in the 1970s. Indeed, following matrilineal *adat* in the process of title succession has become much more pronounced. This is manifested in the concentration of the titleholders among the Batin Janggut group. During the period of

my study (1996-98), the norm that title succession should occur under matrilineal principles was put into practice to a most complete degree.

Under Ali's influence, there was a time when several members of the Ali group held village titles. Since Batin Janggut succeeded to the title of Batin, however, there has been a concentration of titles among the members of the Lewat group (now the Batin Janggut group). In other words, this is a tale of the regaining of power, within the context of title succession, by the Lewat group, these being the legitimate successors to the first Batin, Batin Baning.

The concentration of titles among the members of the Batin Janggut group has occurred in Kampung Durian Tawar in parallel with a progression of development projects undertaken with Batin Janggut acting as mediator between the JHEOA and the villagers. Because the people of the Ali group declared at the outset that they would not participate in the initial housing construction project or in rubber development projects, they became excluded from development projects. The recipients of distributed development funds in such projects were concentrated among the Batin Janggut group. It was because of this economic development and the authority gained from having the support of the JHEOA that the Batin Janggut group came to hold the reins of political power.

As development projects progressed, economic inequality began to appear between the upper people, who followed Batin Janggut and who had participated in the housing construction project, and the lower people, who had not participate in the project and who, in opposition to Batin Janggut and the JHEOA, had shown no interest in the rubber development projects. Expressed in terms of the earlier categories, this means that economic inequality began to appear between the people of the Lewat group and the people of the Ali group.

The categorizations of the villagers into the upper people and the lower people arose out of the housing construction project in the early 1970s. Behind it, however, was the conflict between the kinship groups of the Lewat and Ali groups. In the process of accepting the development projects, the people of the Lewat group, with Batin Janggut as their new leader, asserted their legitimacy as the titleholders by utilizing the ideology of matrilineal *adat*. Through this, they came to have a hold on the traditional political power involved with the titles and also on the new political power involved with the development projects. Conversely, the people of the Ali group were excluded from the development projects and lost possession of the titles, and as a result lost their hold on power. This is the process of the formation of the upper people and the lower people categories.

A Brief Review

The history of Kampung Durian Tawar begins with the story of the village ancestors moving into the current area of Kampung Durian Tawar from “somewhere around Tampin”. Following this, the people of the village moved repeatedly, often scattering and regrouping, due in part to splits among them. Having experienced the periods of upheaval of the Japanese occupation and the Emergency, after Malaysian independence the villagers were included in the ethnic category of Orang Asli. Later, when Batin Janggut (a JHEOA official connected to the government department responsible for the village) was appointed Batin, the development projects became concentrated among the members of the kinship group of which he was the central figure (i.e. the descendants of the former Lewat group). Using the backing his position enjoyed from the JHEOA, Batin Janggut used the ideology of matrilineal *adat* and concentrated the *adat* leader titles (which had previously been concentrated among the members of the Ali group) among the members of the Lewat group (the Batin Janggut group).

Before Batin Janggut’s period as Batin, Kampung Durian Tawar was a thoroughly ordinary Orang Asli village, having no particular links with the government. Considering the fact that it had had a Malay Batin (Batin Siuntung) in its past, it could even be said that it was so ordinary as to render it doubtful that it was indeed originally Orang Asli. However, just at the time Batin Janggut was appointed Batin, the relationship between the Orang Asli and the government changed significantly. It was in this historical context that Kampung Durian Tawar transformed, with Batin Janggut playing the crucial mediator role, from an ordinary village into a special one – a model village of development.

The history of Kampung Durian Tawar since the beginning of Batin Janggut’s leadership can be understood as a stratification of village society caused by state-led development projects. It can also be understood in the context of Batin Janggut gaining a firm grip on political power within village society through his active introduction of the state-led development projects. Even more importantly, within this context the ideology of matrilineal *adat* was used in the succession to titles and, through this, it gained greater prominence and strength within the village.

Through the development projects, then, stratification among the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar has occurred and has come to be expressed in the categorization of the villagers as upper people and lower people. More recently, Batin Janggut has put forward a categorization of the villagers as an *adat* group, a religion group and a drunk group.

These new categories are an expression of a process of reconstitution of the class order of the upper people and the lower people occurring under the influence of the government's policy of Islamization.

If the upper people, who have gained greater economic power through the development projects, had converted to Islam and had merged with or assimilated into Malay society, then in the eyes of the relevant government departments the projects would have been a success. This has not been the case. Most of the upper people have rejected conversion to Islam, and in contrast to the JHEOA's initial intention, Islamic converts have begun appearing primarily among those who have been excluded from the development projects, the poorer lower people. In response to the appearance of the religion group, primarily composed of these Islamic converts, and to the appearance of the alcoholics, the drunk group, *Batin Janggut* and the upper people have begun to reconstruct their identity by highlighting *adat*, which emphasizes non-Islam-ness. The categorizations of the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, then, give a direct indication of how the social, political and economic situations of the villagers have changed rapidly through development and Islamization.

Notes

1. The difference between a house (*rumah*) and a hut (*pondok*) is that the former has a sturdy structure and is able to bear long-term use, while the latter is constructed on the spot and is only intended for temporary use. *Rumah sawah* is the term used for a paddy field hut, but the term for a durian hut is *pondok durian*. In addition, in Temuan villages in the past the longhouse style of housing structure was to be seen (Baharon 1973: 65).
2. Baharon is of the opinion that up until the fourth generation people are regarded as being members of the same matrilineal descent group (Baharon 1973: 69).
3. Concerning the kinship groups in Kampung Durian Tawar, see Appendix 1.
4. Pelez (1988) has emphasized the importance of sibling relations in the Minangkabau Malay society in Negeri Sembilan. Applying this to kinship relations in Kampung Durian Tawar, sibling relations such as those between sisters can be said to signify horizontal kinship relations

involving only the living, in contrast to the vertical kinship relations of matrilineal descent (which include the dead). In the sense that they both involve “being born from the same womb/belly (*perut*)”, however, they are the two sides of the same coin.

5. In the past the Batin was endorsed by the traditional Malay leader, the Undang, who bestowed the title of Batin upon him. As such, the position of Batin was contained within the traditional political structure of the Malay Kingdom. Tsubouchi (1984) has argued that in Negeri Sembilan the political structure of the traditional kingdom was maintained through the bestowing of titles. The title of the leader of the Orang Asli, Batin, can be seen as a part of such a political structure.
6. They moved from Kampung Bukit Lanjan, I gather, because most of the land that they had been using for durian orchards and other farming/cultivation there had been taken from them under a development project. While I was undertaking my field research in Kampung Durian Tawar, the newspaper and television media carried items depicting Kampung Bukit Lanjan as ruined, claiming that its location by a freeway construction site and urban renewal development had caused it to cease functioning as a village. The media also discussed the government’s forced removal of houses in the village that were occupied by people staging a sit-in against the development project. Members of POASM attempted to force their way into the Prime Minister’s office in protest against the forced removal, but this was not broadcast in the media (Nicholas 2000: 187).
7. Strictly speaking, *adat perpatih* (in Kampung Durian Tawar *adat mempatih*) refers to matrilineal *adat*, and *adat temenggung* refers to *adat* other than *adat perpatih* and not solely to patrilineal *adat* (Hooker 1972: xi). In other words, all *adat* apart from matrilineal *adat* (i.e. both patrilineal and bilateral *adat*) are *adat temenggung*.
8. In the past there have been Christian converts amongst the upper people. Batin Janggut, who is supported in his position by JHEOA (which is opposed to Christianity), banished them from the village.

Chapter 6

Economic Relationship

When Baharon undertook his study in Kampung Durian Tawar at the beginning of the 1970s, economic disparity among the villagers was not particularly marked, despite the existence of the ruling social stratum of *adat* leaders (*lembaga adat*) headed by the Batin. When I undertook my anthropological study in the village (1996-98), however, economic disparities among the villagers had increased, due to the state-led development projects and the introduction of the market economy.

Before I undertook my study of Kampung Durian Tawar, I lived in Kampung Banning. Kampung Banning has a primary school (with a dormitory) for Orang Asli children. Orang Asli children from the various districts in the area stay there. One such child was Salim, the son of Arif (No. 42) from Kampung Durian Tawar, with whom I became friends. He later went on to middle school (lower secondary school in Malaysia) but dropped out soon after that.

When I heard Salim say that “The upper people in Kampung Durian Tawar are wealthy (*kaya*) and the lower people are poor (*miskin*)”, I was at first a little puzzled, given that all Orang Asli are supposed to be “poor”. However, any doubts I had about the veracity of his comments were dispelled when I actually went there. The upper people and the lower people were indeed different. The appearance of their houses, the clothes the people wore, and even the way they thought were all so polarized that it was hard to imagine that they were people from the same village.¹

When I first settled into Kampung Durian Tawar, I frequently heard people making distinctions between the upper people and the lower people. Examining the situation more closely, however, I discovered instances in which the formula of upper people equals wealthy and lower people equals poor did not necessarily apply. Nonetheless, among themselves



Plate 43: Catching a snake. Haji Konin, seen here handling a snake, is an Islamic convert and the son of Batin Deraman. For all intents and purposes, he is an Islamic convert in name only. [NT-1998]

many villagers certainly subscribed to the upper/wealthy, lower/poor stereotype. It should be noted, however, that when I speak of wealth here, this only refers to the economic ability, within the context of wider Malaysian society, to live an ordinary life.

Not long after settling into Kampung Durian Tawar, I began to collect data regarding rubber sales at the rubber trader's shop in the village. I would go there in the mornings and record the amount and price of the rubber sold that day. When I was temporarily away from the village I asked the manager, Aman,² to record the data for me, but apart from that I did this almost every day during my fieldwork.

I recorded this information because I wanted to gain a picture of the economic situation in Kampung Durian Tawar from the perspective of rubber-tapping work. Underlying this, however, was the more basic aim of verifying whether, in fact, there really was economic disparity between the upper and lower people. A month of this recording work would probably have made clear the situation regarding any economic disparity. However, this recording activity became an integral part of my daily activity, and I ended up continuing this for over a year. This enabled me to obtain some unexpected results.

The data presented in this chapter regarding income obtained from durians is based on data I collected from October to December 1997.



Plate 44: Cooking a monkey. This picture was taken at a camp in the forest during a rattan gathering trip. While the men gathered rattan, they also hunted for wild animals such as monkey and wild pig. The women also helped in gathering rattan and did the cooking (having brought rice, seasoning, dried fish, etc., to the camp). The man on the left is a Semelai from Pahang. He married a woman of Kampung Durian Tawar and while his parents have converted to Islam, he did not. [NT-1997]

I asked my fieldwork assistant, Asat, to help me with this but he was busy harvesting his own durians. Therefore, I mainly collected the data by going around to the various places where the durians were sold and asking the durian wholesalers and villagers about the volumes and prices of the durians sold. This was difficult when people threw away the notes provided by the wholesalers that recorded the numbers sold and prices paid. Selling would also often occur simultaneously in a number of places and I would have to go around to the villagers later and ask them for this information. As a result, my data collection was not complete, but I believe that I managed to obtain a general picture of the relevant information for all of the villagers.

The purpose of my survey of durian sales was, of course, to collect information regarding the income obtained from durians. But this survey also provided additional material. Walking around the durian orchards every day over a period of about two months, chatting to the villagers as I went, a number of impressions regarding their relationship to the forest emerged. In addition, going out to the durian orchards in the forest and actually carrying durians from there to where they were to be sold, and then selling them, gave me an understanding of how difficult it is to transport durians. These side benefits of my durian survey are reflected in this chapter.



Plates 45-47: Cutting up a wild pig [NT-1997] In Plate 45, men pour hot water on a hunted wild pig to make it easier to scrape off its bristles. It is then cut up. The young man in Plate 45 is helping out even though he had converted to Islam (in order to marry a Muslim Orang Asli woman from another village) and so cannot eat pork any more. [NT-2003, 2003, 1997]

In this chapter I present and examine data regarding the details of the rubber tapping, of the durian harvest and of household incomes. The conclusion I draw regarding economic disparity within the village is that, generally speaking, the upper people form an economic upper class and the lower people form an economic lower class. Having first provided an overview of the features of the means of livelihood pursued in Kampung Durian Tawar, I then report on the information obtained regarding rubber-tapping work and the durian harvest.

Livelihoods

Villagers' means of livelihood in present-day Kampung Durian Tawar are as follows: (1) agriculture centered on rubber tapping, on fruit tree cultivation of durian (*Durio zibethinus*), rambutan (*Nephelium lappaceum*), bananas (*Musa spp.*) and so on, and on the cash crop cultivation of vegetables and so on; (2) gathering forest products such as rattan (*Calamus*), *petai* (*Parkia speciosa*) and *kerdas* (*Pithecellobium microcarpum*) (varieties of the bean family), aromatic wood (*Aquilaria sp.*), honey and so on; (3) hunting wild pigs, monkeys, squirrels, birds, tortoises, monitor lizards (*Varanus spp.*), porcupines, snakes, frogs and so on; (4) fishing in fresh water rivers and streams; (5) day laboring (road construction, housing construction and agricultural work involved in rubber tapping, sugarcane cultivation and so on) as coolies (*kuli*) under Chinese and Malay boss (*tauke*) employers; (6) factory and seasonal work away from the village; (7) cultivating cassava (*Manihot dulcis*) and vegetables for personal consumption; and (8) farming fish in fishponds and breeding domestic animals such as chickens.

The villagers' ancestors' primary means of livelihood were hunting and gathering, dry rice cultivation and the swidden cultivation of cassava. By comparison, the present-day village economy is characterized by the predominance of the cash economy and the marginalization of the subsistence economy. Most symbolic of the increasing presence of the cash economy has been the abandonment of wet rice cultivation, which began in the 1970s, and the increase of rubber-tapping work.

Kato (1991) has written that during the British colonial period the introduction of rubber-tapping work in Negeri Sembilan brought about a corresponding decline in wet rice cultivation. Although I am focusing on the recent decades, the same shift is occurring in Kampung Durian Tawar. In parallel with the abandonment of wet rice cultivation, there was a progressive development of rubber smallholdings.³ The villagers had previously grown their own rice but began purchasing rice from the money they earned from rubber tapping.

For the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, most of the above-mentioned means of livelihood are premised on “looking for money” (*cari wong, cari duit*) (cf. Gomes 1986). “Looking for money”, the villagers say, is the same as the “looking for food” (*cari makan*) they pursue when hunting and gathering. The cash economy, in other words, has to a large extent penetrated their daily lives.⁴

Yearly Cycle

By looking at the monthly data for the amount of rubber sold and the income received from rubber sales across the year, we are able to get a broader view of rubber-tapping work and of other means of livelihood pursued in the village (see Figure 9).

When I was staying in Kampung Durian Tawar between 1996 and 1998, the beginning of February was a long holiday, this being Chinese New Year (the old lunar New Year) and Malay Hari Raya Puasa. Because of these festivals the rubber-processing plant was closed, as was the rubber trader’s shop as a result of the closure of the plant.

In relation to rubber-tapping work in Kampung Durian Tawar, Chinese New Year (rather than Hari Raya Puasa) has the greatest impact because the rubber trader’s shop closes for about a week. By contrast, if the Chinese owners do not take a holiday during Hari Raya Puasa, the rubber trader’s shop remains open at that time. Therefore, the yearly calendar for Orang Asli livelihoods is forced to fit in with the annual events celebrated by the Chinese.⁵

When business recommences after Chinese New Year in late February, the price fetched for rubber is generally high. This continues through to March and April. At this time of year, however, new leaves are shooting on the rubber trees, and tapping the younger rubber trees would hinder their growth. Although apparently there is no problem with tapping older rubber trees in these months, the trees’ nutrients are absorbed by the new leaves, resulting in less rubber being available for tapping. For this reason, the amount of rubber tapped in March and April is low despite the good prices during these months.

Viewed the other way around, it is precisely because the amount of rubber tapped is low that the price is good. Among the Chinese traders, there are those who close their businesses during this period, viewing it as a holiday period for rubber tappers. According to the manager of the rubber trader’s shop, Aman, not many trees or plants in this area, being the tropics, follow an annual cycle, but the rubber tree, originating from Brazil, does do so.⁶

From May through to July, rubber tapping maintains a stable output. In May, however, the increased amount of rubber tapped is accompanied by a downward trend in the price it fetches. As a result, in June and July there is a slight drop in the desire to carry out tapping work. This results in less rubber being tapped, and a further decrease in the amount of money that can be attained through this kind of work. To make up for lost income in August, some of the villagers gather forest products. This enables them to bring their income back to the level it had previously been with the rubber-tapping work. Some of the villagers gather forest products in conjunction with rubber tapping, while others devote themselves solely to gathering activities. Of the people I observed who were engaged in gathering activities at this time of year, most devoted themselves largely to gathering *petai*, a vegetable of the bean family.⁷

As incomes are being supplemented through gathering activities in the forest, September comes around and the price of rubber returns to its previous levels. Increases in the amount of rubber tapped in September are in part due to rises in the rubber price. However, it is due primarily to the major Hari Kesedaran festival (modeled on Hari Raya Puasa) held in Kampung Durian Tawar on October 1. Each household prepares a variety of dishes and sweets for the festival, with most of the money for this coming from income obtained through rubber tapping. Towards the end of September large numbers of villagers gather at the rubber trader's shop and sell rubber for this purpose.

In October and November the volume of rubber tapped again declines, despite high rubber prices. This is because in Kampung Durian Tawar the durian harvest occurs at this time of year. In addition, the rambutan harvest occurs during the later part of the durian harvest. Both naturally growing trees and cultivated trees bear fruit at this time of year. As we shall see, income obtained from the durians is well in excess of that obtained from rubber tapping. The villagers are extremely busy harvesting the durians during these months, leaving no time for rubber tapping. The only people undertaking rubber tapping at this time are those villagers who do not own a durian orchard.

In December, when the durian harvest is almost complete, the wet season arrives. Because of the weather, rubber tapping is not possible on many days, even though the rubber price is good. Unlike August, however, when people have to switch to forest product-gathering activities to supplement their incomes, most people have put aside money obtained from the durians over the previous month or two. They can therefore manage financially at this time, despite the lack of rubber-tapping work.

In January, when the wet season has passed, rubber tapping recommences and the amount of rubber tapped again increases. The Chinese New Year holiday period begins in the second half of January. The amount of rubber sold increases in January and February. This is in part because the rubber is sold before the holiday period commences, and also because rubber stored up during the holiday period is sold in bulk after the holiday is over. The amount of rubber tapped and sold then remains high through February, and continues until the new leaves are again in bud.

Rubber

Rubber and Other Cash Crops

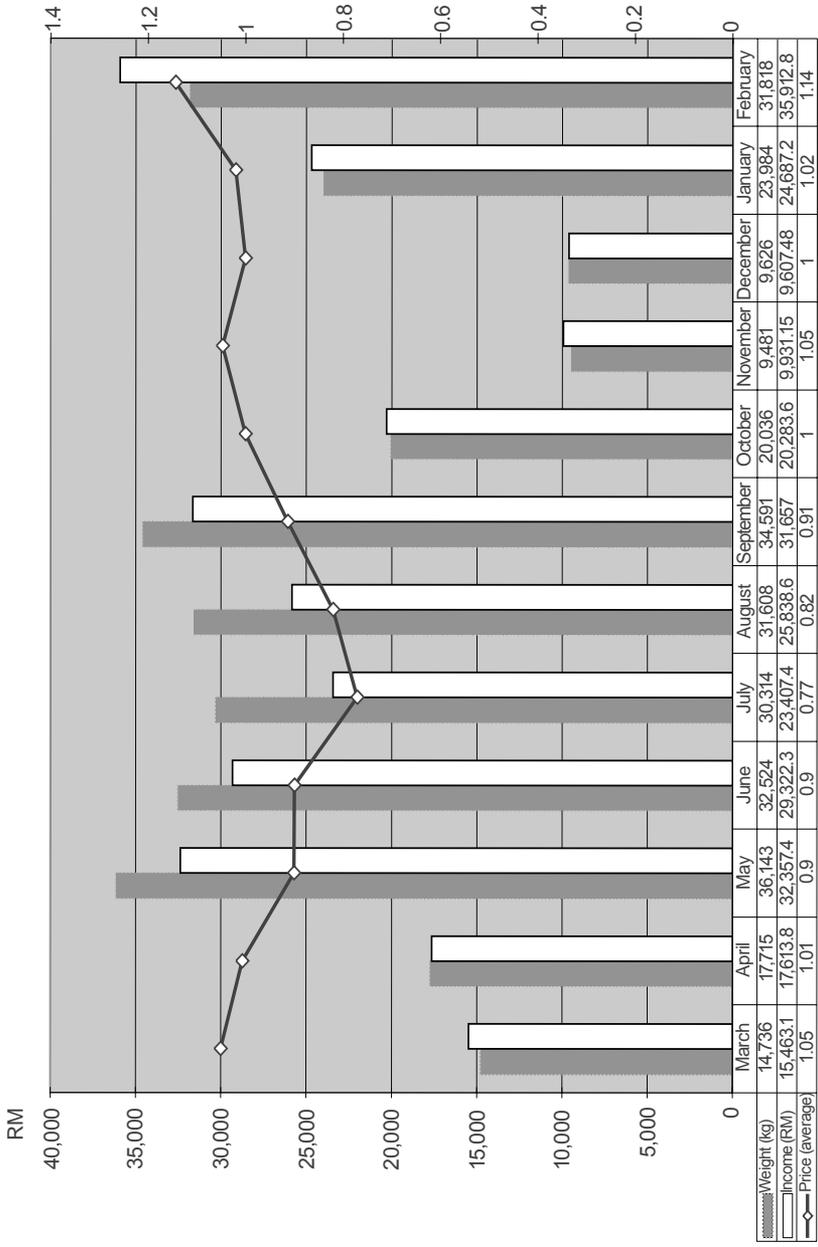
Rubber tapping is the primary means of livelihood in Kampung Durian Tawar.⁸ The villagers describe rubber tapping as, “like going to the bank and withdrawing cash”. For those who own them, the rubber trees are like a bankbook. When in need of money to purchase everyday items or to pay the water and electricity bills, they do some rubber-tapping work, sell the rubber at the rubber trader’s shop and receive the cash. Setting aside the labor expended, the process of rubber tapping is, for them, just like going into town and withdrawing money from the bank or post office.

Edibility is the primary difference between rubber and other cash crops. Durians, bananas and vegetables can be eaten if they are not sold as commodities. If rubber is not sold as a commodity, however, it remains simply resin. During Baharon’s study in Kampung Durian Tawar, he asked Ali why he rejected rubber-tapping work, to which Ali replied, “we can’t eat rubber” (Baharon 1973: 203). Ali’s reply is interesting, as it goes to the heart of what rubber-tapping work means to the villagers.

Forest products such as rattan, aromatic wood (*gaharu*) and resin (*damar*) are, of course, similar to rubber in that they are inedible. In the past, however, rattan was used in the construction of houses. It came to be sold as a commodity later, when an external demand for it arose. In response to that external demand, excessive amounts of rattan were gathered indiscriminately and most of the supply growing wild in the forest was soon exhausted. Once a product of the forest, nowadays rattan is cultivated to be sold as a commodity.

Similarly, *gaharu* and *damar* was gathered indiscriminately and, like rubber, are purely goods for exchange. In terms of being a resin, *damar* is the same as rubber. The difference between *gaharu* and *damar*, on the one hand, and rubber, on the other, is that a stable supply of *gaharu* and

Figure 9
A Rubber tapping annual income cycle



NB: Based on data recorded from March 1997 to February 1998



Plates 48 & 49: Rubber tapping. Asat incised the bark of a rubber tree with a rubber tapping knife, carving from upper left to lower right. The white latex drained into a vessel where it soon solidified naturally. Having tried my hand at tapping (Plate 49), I realize that tapping rubber is a skill in itself. [NT-1997, 2007]

damar cannot be supplied in response to external demands for them as commodities. Gathering these forest products requires special knowledge and skills concerning the forest; even then, results are, to an extent, determined by chance.

Rubber Tapping

In comparison to the gathering of forest products, rubber tapping requires no special forest knowledge or skills. Apart from days when it is raining, it can be done almost every day and simply involves going to the rubber gardens each morning and following the fixed practice of making a mark on the surface of the rubber tree with a special rubber-tapping knife.

A white latex oozes to the surface of the bark where a mark has been made, usually diagonally from upper left to lower right. A series of marks is called a “*pelan*” (plan in English). The latex that oozes out flows down the mark and into a bowl placed securely below. One *pelan* is complete when these marks, which begin from higher up the tree, reach the bottom of the tree. When one *pelan* is complete, the tapper begins a new one on the opposite side of the tree. The rubber latex accumulated in the bowl solidifies naturally, but it is sometimes washed away by rain before this occurs. As a result, the rubber is usually solidified by adding formic acid (*cuka getah*) as a solidifying agent. The act of adding the solidifying



Plate 50: Rubber garden [NT-2007]

agent is called mixing (*godek*). The solidifying agent is often added without waiting for all of the latex to flow into the bowl, and this act often completes a day's work. When the solidifying agent is not used, however, the work finishes earlier.

The greatest amount of rubber latex flows during the cooler hours before dawn and in the early morning. This is the best time to carry out the work, as one can efficiently produce the greatest amount of rubber for the energy invested. Hard-working (*rajin*) people, such as the Chinese, tie a lamp to their heads and begin rubber tapping before dawn.⁹ In the days when rubber prices were particularly good, many of the villagers from Kampung Durian Tawar also began tapping work before dawn. When I undertook my study in the village, however, the price of rubber was low¹⁰ and few people began rubber tapping before dawn. Lazy (*malas*) people, such as the Malays, head off to do their rubber-tapping work after their morning sleep-in, and as such do not collect much rubber.¹¹ Overall, the Orang Asli fall into the latter of these two types, although there are some, particularly among those with Chinese ancestry (e.g. a Chinese father), who do the "hard-working" type of rubber tapping.

The villagers carry out their rubber-tapping work as follows. They set off to work in the same way as the Chinese, but most commence a little later (although almost all upper people do commence early in the morning). They carry out the tapping work in the rubber gardens but do

not collect the solidified rubber from the previous day as they go. Instead, they take the solidified rubber out of the bowls and leave it on the ground (usually at the foot of the tree). They “rest” the garden trees, either by doing the tapping every second day or by tapping for two days and then leaving it a day. In either case, it is the norm to give the rubber trees a rest. When the rubber-tapping work is finished, the villagers rest, and then they mix the solidifying agent. Some people regard the solidifying agent as too expensive, and so do not do the mixing work. The decision over whether or not to mix in the solidifying agent is also influenced by the weather; by whether, in other words, it looks like it is going to rain in the afternoon. If it rains, the liquid rubber one has gone to the trouble of tapping will be washed away. If it seems that rain is unlikely, however, they do not mix in the solidifying agent.

After carrying out tapping work in this way for two or three days, the solid rubber is collected and transported, usually by motorbike, to the rubber trader’s shop and sold. The children are usually mobilized “to take up” (*tating*) the rubber during the collection work, so most of this is carried out on Saturday or Sunday when the schools are closed. Most often, therefore, the parents do their tapping work during the week and then the whole family sets off together to do the rubber collection work on the weekend.

Those who rent rubber smallholdings, such as the Chinese and Mandailing, make a particular effort to sell the rubber on the day it is tapped.¹² This is both to avoid conflict and to obtain cash for their work as quickly as possible. The rubber gardens used by renters are well looked after, in order that work can be done as efficiently as possible. However, maintaining the rubber gardens in good condition (e.g. by using chemicals on weeds) provides an opportunity for thieves, who can see the tapped rubber waiting to be collected. With the exception of the rubber gardens of Batin Janggut, Jenang Misai, and those of the Mangku and the other *adat* leaders (and their close relatives), the rubber gardens used by the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar have a general impression of being untidy and disorderly. Grass grows to waist height, water collects here and there due to poor drainage, and fields spread up the slopes of hills.

Swarms of mosquitoes usually inhabit the rubber gardens because of the dark shade of the trees and the rain water that collects in bowls and puddles on the ground. It is essential to use mosquito repellent coils while working in the rubber gardens. In the cool of early morning, work can be carried out in relative comfort, but after 10 am the tropical climate makes its presence felt and a sweat-inducing heat pervades even the dim and



Plate 51: Rubber trader's shop. The rubber trader's shop is operated by Aman (Plate 51. at left), grandson of Menteri Lewat. Menteri Lewat was the first person who planted rubber trees. During the Japanese Occupation, Aman's mother was adopted by the Orang Asli because her Chinese parents were killed by the Japanese soldiers. Because of his Chinese descent, Aman has become a member of the Chinese rubber traders' group in Pertang. [NT-1998]

shady rubber gardens. I have experienced this myself; working in these conditions is harder than one might imagine. As if this was not enough, rubber has an unpleasant smell. Rubber latex that gets onto your clothing or skin is difficult to remove, even with soap. The smell is so strong that, no matter how many times you scrub your clothes and wash your hands with soap, it does not go away. The monotony of the work, the mosquitoes, the heat, the smell, any number of reasons can be given for why the villagers dislike rubber-tapping work.

In comparison to rubber-tapping work, traditional hunting and gathering is seen in a positive light. Though physically demanding, the work is not monotonous, and hunting in particular is regarded as exciting. In the forest, especially where there are large trees, it is cool during the daytime, there are not many mosquitoes and there are no noxious smells. For the men of the village, hunting and gathering activities provide opportunities for testing their skills against each other. These factors influence whether a person chooses to foreground the monotonous but financially secure work of rubber tapping, or conversely chooses the financially insecure but stimulating and exciting activities of hunting and gathering. However, even those who prefer hunting and gathering activities have been forced to switch their "livelihood" to rubber tapping and agriculture.



Plates 52 & 53: Rubber trader's shop. A unit price of rubber in 1998 was RM1 per kilogram. But in 2007 the unit price went up to RM3.50 per kilogram in response to the skyrocketing world petroleum prices. This allowed the rubber trader to expand his shop. However, rubber prices fell again in late 2008 due to the world economic downturn. [NT-2007]

Ownership

Not all the rubber smallholdings owned by the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar contain rubber trees that can be tapped. This is because it takes more than seven years from the time of planting until the trees can be tapped. Almost all the rubber smallholdings in Kampung Durian Tawar were established through aid received for government development projects. Aid for the establishment of rubber smallholdings began in 1982, but the majority of rubber development projects undertaken by RISDA have occurred since the 1990s. To the extent that not all the rubber smallholdings a person owns can be tapped, having a large number of rubber smallholdings does not mean that one is undertaking tapping work in all of them. Additionally, having tappable rubber smallholdings does not necessarily mean that rubber tapping takes place in them.

In particular, some households (Nos. 10, 18, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 42, 47, 48 and 60; see Figure 5) rent out (using a method called *pajak*) rubber smallholdings to the Chinese and others.¹³ These households supplement the household budget with the rental money (e.g. 150 ringgit per month, or 1,500 ringgit per year). There are also cases where the owners undertake rubber tapping themselves and rent out part of their rubber smallholdings to the Chinese. As such, there is not necessarily a direct correlation between ownership of rubber smallholdings and income gained from them.

Owning a rubber smallholding certainly has an influence on income obtained from rubber tapping. The significant amount of land owned by the successor of Menteri Lewat, Mangku Hasim (No. 9), and by Batin Janggut (No. 14) and his female siblings (No. 13 and No. 19) is particularly striking. Many of these rubber smallholdings are held in the names of their sons and daughters. The influence of *adat* leaders in development projects can be seen in this kind of distribution of the rubber smallholdings.

The amount of labor devoted to rubber tapping is directly reflected in the income received for the work. We see here an obvious fact: regardless of how many fields a person owns, if that person does not actually do the rubber tapping, then he or she will not earn money. Additionally, the energy expended on rubber tapping does not guarantee a fixed amount of rubber latex, as the amount of latex that can be obtained varies according to physical terrain and other factors. Some rubber gardens are located on level ground, while others are on the sides of hills and mountains, with each terrain requiring differing expenditures of labor.

Therefore, in addition to ownership of rubber smallholdings, the labor involved and the condition of the rubber trees and of the rubber gardens all need to be considered. These factors combine in a complex way to influence the income obtained from rubber-tapping work.

Income

With the exception of certain people, income obtained from rubber tapping is an important source of cash income for the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar. Indeed, in most cases income from rubber tapping is the mainstay of the villagers' household budgets. Without the incomes from rubber tapping, in fact, economic life in Kampung Durian Tawar would collapse. The subsistence economy represented by hunting and gathering activities, which were previously the primary means of livelihood, has now become marginal. Even hunting and gathering have changed in that these are now undertaken, for the most part, to obtain cash.¹⁴

Village politics has a direct influence on the incomes obtained through rubber tapping. Particularly influential is the distribution of rubber smallholdings by *adat* leaders in the development projects, as well as their leadership in promoting rubber-tapping work based on the ideal of "hard work".

Close relatives of Batin Janggut and other *adat* leaders have generally taken up the work ethic promoting "hard work". Viewed the other way around, the degree to which this work ethic has been taken up reveals the extent to which people follow the advice (*nasihat*) of the *adat* leaders.

Among the upper people who have benefited from the development projects, the income received from rubber tapping by those who have followed the *adat* leaders' advice and who work hard is, unsurprisingly, high. Conversely, the rubber tapping income of "lazy" people who have not followed the leaders' advice is low. Rubber-tapping incomes are also low for those who give priority to hunting and gathering and rent out their rubber smallholdings; incomes are also low for those people (most of them members of the lower people) who do little rubber-tapping work.

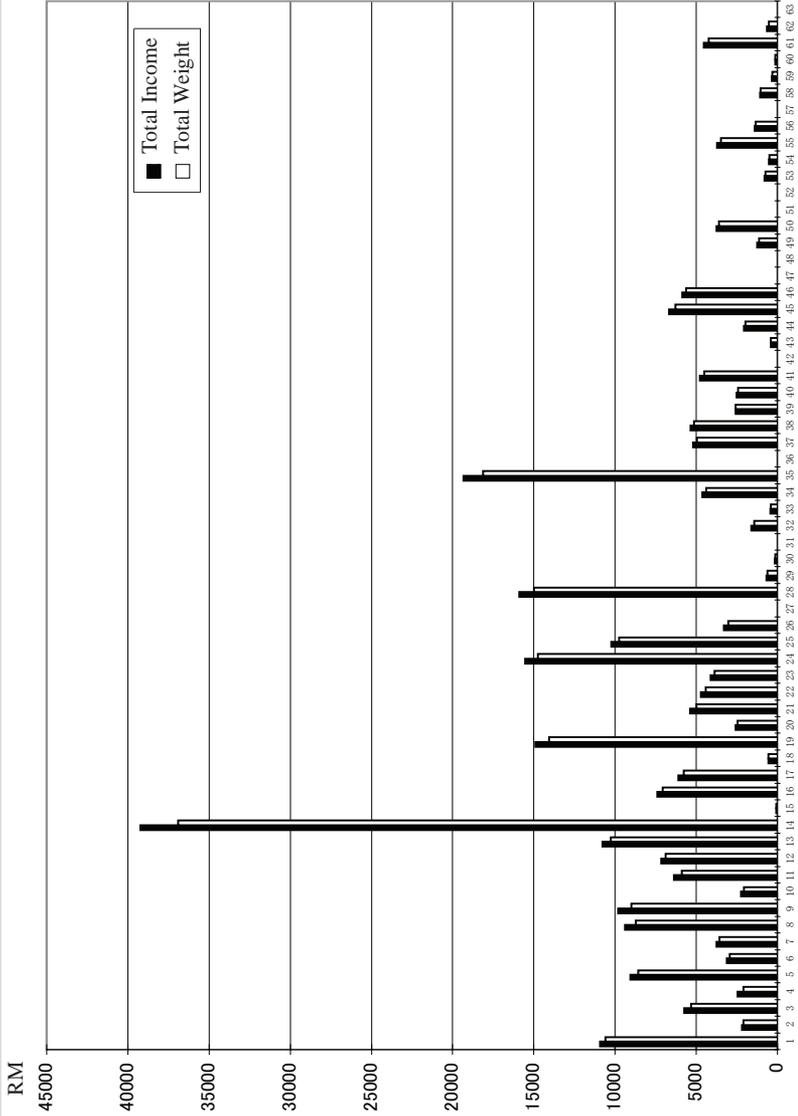
Data regarding rubber-tapping income per household are represented in Figure 10 and Table 17. Batin Janggut's household (No. 14) has the highest level of income obtained from rubber tapping. However, it is not only Batin Janggut himself who undertakes rubber-tapping work but also his wives, their children and his daughters' husbands. Apart from the rubber smallholdings he owns in Kampung Durian Tawar, Batin Janggut also owns rubber smallholdings in Kampung Dalam. For the most part, his rubber tapping work is done in Kampung Dalam.¹⁵

Therefore, the income shown for rubber tapping in Kampung Durian Tawar for his household is not the total income that his household receives for rubber tapping. In addition, his children, who undertake rubber tapping in the smallholdings in Kampung Durian Tawar, have an agreement to pay their father a variable percentage (generally around forty per cent) of their rubber-tapping income per month for the use of these fields. This differs from the rental method of *pajak*, where monthly payments are fixed. *Pajak* is regarded as a rental method that originated with the Chinese. However, the Chinese also introduced the variable payment system in recent years, and Batin Janggut borrowed the idea from them.¹⁶

Menteri Gemuk's household (No. 35) has the next highest level of income obtained from rubber tapping, followed by the households of Ajoin (No. 28), Jenang Misai (No. 24) and Ukal (No. 19). As is the case with Batin Janggut and his children, Jenang Misai's rubber smallholdings and durian orchards have been passed on to his married children (Nos. 22, 23, 24 and 25). This is also the case with Ukal and his children (No. 20 and No. 21).

Most of the new rubber smallholdings established through development projects have been distributed either to married households or to the children (mostly daughters, married or unmarried) of the *adat* leaders. Mangku Hasim (No. 9) has also passed his rubber smallholdings on to his children. Mangku Hasim and his wife, and his daughter and her husband obtained an average income from rubber tapping, but if we add the income obtained by his sons Darap (No. 5) and Aman (manager of

Figure 10
Rubber tapping income per household



the village rubber trader's shop) respectively, his rubber-tapping income certainly ranks in the upper levels.

Other households ranking in the upper levels of income received from rubber tapping are those of Menteri Lewat's daughter and her husband (No. 1); Menteri Lewat's daughter-in-law and her husband (No. 8); Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai's deceased younger sister's daughter and her husband (No. 13); and Jenang Misai's daughter and her husband (No. 26).

Therefore, most of those whose incomes from rubber tapping rank in the upper levels are relations of the *adat* leaders. More specifically, those ranking in the upper levels are primarily from the kinship groups of Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai, and from those of the children (including Mangku Hasim) of the now deceased Menteri Lewat. These members of the *adat* leaders have secured the distribution of their rubber smallholdings to the next generation within their kinship groups. They have also distributed rubber tree replanting projects, which in a few years will be ready for tapping.

In contrast, most of the households whose rubber-tapping income falls well below the average are those whose kinship relations are distant from the *adat* leaders. In the distribution of rubber smallholdings established through development projects, those apportioned to these households have mostly been no more than one lot in area (in Kampung Durian Tawar this equates to about three acres). This may be sufficient to provide for the current generation, but not for the next. This is, at least in part, because many of the previous generation showed no interest in rubber tapping. This lack of interest is reproduced from the parents through to their children's generation. On top of that, in the context of power relations in Kampung Durian Tawar, those whose kinship relations are distant from the *adat* leaders have been largely excluded from the distribution of rubber smallholdings established through development projects.

Because of these factors, these people undertake rubber tapping only when they need cash, and even if they happen to own a rubber smallholding, they rent it out. Being unable to make a living from owning the smallholding, they engage in hunting, gathering and other activities in the subsistence economy. As a result, their incomes from rubber tapping are inevitably low. For them, rubber tapping is a temporary, secondary activity undertaken when cash is necessary. This is reflected in the income from rubber tapping shown above.

Let us look at those households whose incomes from rubber tapping are particularly low. One is that of Batin Janggut's divorced third wife (No. 15). She does her rubber-tapping work together with her daughters

Table 17
Rubber and durian data

House number	Rubber		Duriens	
	Weight(kg)	Income(RM)	Weight(kg)	Income(RM)
1	10.908	10,873.15	2.377	3,624.00
2	2.171	2,081.50	106	159.00
3	5.724	5,319.60	1,373	2,148.20
4	2.440	2,091.50	0	0.00
5	9.042	8,568.65	908	1,376.40
6	3.104	2,923.15	674	1,032.80
7	3.723	3,563.81	345	537.80
8	9.360	8,719.56	2,938	4,446.20
9	9.794	8,993.20	7,719	10,801.50
10	2.238	2,048.00	1,077	1,509.55
11	6.361	5,889.60	1,986	2,888.20
12	7.149	6,859.66	3,443	5,077.40
13	10.760	10,258.25	3,575	5,541.80
14	39.214	36,906.22	2,911	4,617.50
15	51	46.90	213	434.40
16	7.379	7,067.84	97	151.20
17	6.084	5,744.00	0	0.00
18	545	550.96	806	1,477.95
19	14.897	14,035.05	3,488	5,199.60
20	2.553	2,441.50	472	752.50
21	5.379	4,987.73	329	577.50
22	4.699	4,410.68	93	173.50
23	4.087	3,844.70	46	75.00
24	15.515	14,738.10	2,709	4,796.60
25	10.208	9,743.82	518	1,017.10
26	3.274	3,025.71	837	1,180.90
27	0	0.00	105	139.65
28	15.876	14,976.81	5,320	7,677.30
29	667	597.05	1,463	2,228.70
30	148	131.44	1,331	1,891.65
31	0	0.00	1,282	1,970.50
32	1.590	1,427.90	0	0.00
33	415	404.40	272	479.20
34	4.597	4,368.74	243	394.80
35	19.307	18,119.10	1,653	2,554.30
36	0	0.00	1,390	1,931.40
37	5.173	4,949.75	102	125.40
38	5.338	5,111.59	2,063	2,952.00
39	2.560	2,553.70	694	787.00
40	2.505	2,423.45	1,171	1,370.00
41	4.775	4,495.85	70	145.00
42	0	0.00	63	96.00
43	401	396.20	1,339	1,833.90
44	2.038	1,970.00	608	822.40
45	6.648	6,262.05	567	852.10
46	5.859	5,598.10	672	1,284.46
47	0	0.00	1,329	2,295.70
48	0	0.00	1,698	7,564.60
49	1.248	1,124.60	649	1,242.75
50	3.735	3,575.65	2,145	2,914.85
51	0	0.00	0	0.00
52	0	0.00	0	0.00
53	784	718.90	532	724.40
54	523	473.70	20	25.80
55	3,693	3,461.40	701	1,025.95
56	1,380	1,313.49	0	0.00
57	0	0.00	672	1,000.10
58	1,055	1,033.10	0	0.00
59	324	313.20	0	0.00
60	133	122.70	24	39.00
61	4,523	4,224.40	0	0.00
62	622	501.50	437	550.20
63	0	0.00	423	678.90
Total	292,576	276,381.61	68,073	107,194.61

RM = Ringgit Malaysia

NB: The rubber data is based on data recorded at the village rubber trader's shop from March 1997 to February 1998. The durian data is based on data recorded during the durian harvest season from October 1997 to December 1997.

(No. 16 and No. 17), with their separate names (and therefore households) being used when they sell the rubber. The household of Batin Janggut's son Tikak (No. 18) is another whose income from rubber tapping is meager. He rents out two lots of rubber smallholdings to the Chinese (receiving approximately 3,000 ringgit per year). In addition, Tikak rents out a rubber smallholding to Ajoï's household (No. 28) using the variable payment method.

Bolok (No. 27) is deaf and is cared for by the households of Poteh (No. 26) and Ajoï (No. 28). Kedai's (No. 45) household looks after Ajam (No. 43), who is regarded as "mad". The household of Surak (No. 29) contains only Surak and his wife, both of whom are elderly. Only their son-in-law, who has a disabled left foot, does any rubber-tapping work, and he only does so when they are in need of cash. The household of Sieu (No. 30), an Islamic convert, owns rubber smallholdings, but few of these rubber smallholdings could be tapped at the time of my study and were rented out as security for a loan. The households at Nos. 31, 32 and 33 also rented out their rubber smallholdings as security for loans. Most of the income from rubber tapping for these households was obtained either with or without the permission of the people to whom they had rented out their rubber smallholdings.

Asang (No. 36), the holder of the Jekerah title, had also rented out his rubber smallholdings as security for a loan. Having done so, he engaged in hunting and gathering activities. This was a practice following that of Tikak. Once bestowed with the title of Jekerah, however, he followed Batin Janggut and the other *adat* leaders' advice and ceased renting out his rubber smallholdings. In April 1998 he began rubber-tapping work himself. Arif (No. 42), once bestowed with the title of Panglima Perang, also turned away from the Tikak group and began to do rubber-tapping work, probably because he had begun to follow Batin Janggut.¹⁷

No. 47 and No. 48 are the households of the son and daughter of the former Jenang, Jenang Kichoi. These households do not undertake rubber tapping; instead, they rent out their rubber smallholdings. Doyes's (No. 48) husband is Chinese and is more interested in durian cultivation than rubber tapping. The household at No. 49 is also that of a daughter of Jenang Kichoi (Gat's wife is Jenang Kichoi's daughter). Nos. 50, 51 and 52 are the households of the children of Jenang Kichoi's daughter. They owned five acres of rubber smallholding, but I did not ascertain the labor and income flows stemming from them. In any case, the total income for these three households is shown under No. 50 in Figure 10.

No. 53 is the household of Batin Deraman's daughter, and No. 54

is, in turn, that of her daughter. Her husband, Inan, does not do any rubber tapping. The income obtained from rubber tapping for these two households comes from the women in the households. It is well known that Inan is a drunk (*mabuk*). He often gets into fights with people and causes a lot of trouble for the villagers. According to village gossip, most of the income he obtains by gathering *petai* or through day laboring is spent on alcohol. No. 55 is the household of Entak's daughter. Her husband, Gobek, was showing signs of leaving the Aki Main group and following Batin Janggut. He has relatively numerous rubber smallholdings and obtains a reasonably good income from rubber tapping. The household at No. 56 is a member of the Aki Main group but its income from rubber tapping, in the smallholding given to it by Batin Janggut, is small.

Aki Main's household (No. 57) generates no income from rubber tapping. Apart from the income received from Aki Main's work as a "medicine man", the members of the household gain their livelihood from hunting and gathering or day laboring. Aki Main's income as a "medicine man" was apparently at least 100 ringgit per "consultation". His son, Sudin (No. 63), is dependent on his father's income and, as far as I could observe, his job was as a chauffeur for his father. In addition, part of their income also came from compensation for land they had owned in their home village of Kampung Bukit Lanjan.¹⁸

Kioop, the younger brother of Lodoh at No. 62, is, like Inan, known as a drunk, and is also something of a troublemaker in the village. He has rented out to a Chinese trader the rubber smallholding he received from his parents, and engages in day laboring. He also apparently spends all the money he earns on liquor and beer. Kioop's older brother Awas (No. 61) has started, in the same way as Gobek, to follow the Batin Janggut group, and as a result has even moved house. This change to following Batin Janggut is arguably reflected in the income he has obtained from rubber tapping.

Durian

Durian Tawar means "tasteless durian". It is a pseudonym, but is also the name the village had before it moved to its present site.¹⁹ Nearby is a town called Simpang Durian. Given that a town and a village have "durian" in their names, this district evidently has a long history of being renowned for its durians. The majority of durians from Kampung Durian Tawar are sold to Chinese wholesalers, who then sell them in Singapore.²⁰ Durians have a special significance for Orang Asli. When Orang Asli land is taken for freeway or airport construction, the compensation they receive is not



Plate 54: Distant view of a durian orchard. This area is a durian orchard owned by Tikak, one of Batin Janggut's sons. The durian orchard is located in the middle of the basin, which is referred to as the stolen cultivated land (*cerobo*). Tikak rents out this durian orchard to a Chinese, who takes care of the durian trees. Beyond this durian orchard, there is a rubber garden owned by a daughter of Jenang Misai. [NT-1997]

for the land itself.²¹ Rather, it is in the form of a sum of money for each durian tree on that land.²² In other words, for the Orang Asli durians are symbolic of property.

From Forest Product to Cash Crop

Durian trees originally grew wild in the forest, and in the past were harvested as follows. The people led a nomadic life, moving through the forest and practicing swidden cultivation (of cassavas, dry rice and so on), and hunting and gathering. When the durian season (*musim durian*) arrived, they would settle temporarily in the area of the durian trees (over which they claimed “ownership”). When the durian season was over, they would again move on in search of forest resources. Nonetheless, their basic areas of habitation were the places where durian trees grew. They would live there and eat the durians and the wild animals that came in search of the durians.

Some of the seeds cast aside from the durians would germinate and grow into new trees. Seeds having passed through the digestive systems of wild animals and then excreted would also germinate and produce new durian trees. As a result, the durian trees naturally tend to grow in groups. This is how the “durian orchards in the forest” (*dusun durian dalam hutan*) gradually formed, around which the people temporarily lived.



Plate 55: Inside the durian hut of Kedai with Asat. Kedai, in the middle, lives separately from his wife and children, but he is not divorced from his wife. When this picture was taken, he lived in the durian hut, but I did not know of Kedai's family situation. Kedai is a master of traditional handicrafts and blowpipe making. Asat, at left, seems to like him and sometimes visits Kedai and tries to learn traditional knowledge and skills from him. [NT-2003]

If they were able to gather many durians, the people would apparently invite their relations living in neighboring areas and distribute (*bantai*) the durians among them.

Originally, the people would collect the durians from the ground (where, when ripe, they fall naturally) and eat them – they were a fruit for people's own consumption. They were, at that time, truly a forest fruit, and any left over fruit would simply be discarded. Durians only came to be seen as a cash crop after their value as a commodity was discovered.

When I asked the villagers about this, they told me that durians first came to be salable (*boleh jual, laku*) when Chinese laborers arrived from outside and worked at the nearby tin mines. This was during the British colonial period. The villagers at the time would sell durians to these laborers. At this point, however, commodification was simply a matter of receiving money for excess durians given to the Chinese.

When the Japanese forces invaded, the villagers fled to the durian orchards in the forest. Most of the current durian orchards in and around the village are located where the ancestors of the present-day villagers lived before they were relocated during the housing construction projects in the early 1970s.

After the Emergency period, the people returned to the village and recommenced durian harvesting. In the resettlement areas they had learned

to do rubber-tapping work; they now began to think of undertaking the proper selling of the durians as a commodity. They planted (*tanam*) durian trees enthusiastically, with a view to their future sale as commodities. The villagers' conscious planting of durian seedlings marked the change from durians as forest product to durians as cultivated cash crop. According to the villagers, Kampung Durian Tawar's durian harvest began to increase from the second half of the 1980s.

Durian Harvesting

Harvesting durians as a forest product simply involves collecting the durians that have fallen to the ground. When the durians were gathered simply for personal consumption, the collection process was straightforward. Fallen durians that were not eaten would begin to rot within two or three days, and so were simply discarded. With the arrival of the market economy, however, the potential exchange value of durians increased. Soon the villagers no longer saw the durians as a self-sustaining forest product but as a cash crop.

When durians are considered as a cash crop, the work involves, in addition to collecting them, protecting them from wild animals and insects, and transporting them to wholesalers or consumers. First, the villagers have to protect the durians (*jaga durian*). I initially thought this meant protecting them from thieves. However, it actually involves protecting the durians from wild animals such as monkeys (of the *buruk* type), squirrels (*tupai*), wild pigs (*babi hutan*) and porcupines (*landak*).

The monkeys knock the durians from the trees and come back to eat them several days later when they have split open. Squirrels bite into the skin and eat only part of the fruit. In such a state, the durians cannot be sold as a commodity. Small white worms called *ulat* also eat the durians. Additionally, in the past a large number of wild animals such as tigers, bears and deer would come to eat the durians. Protecting the durians involves driving off these wild animals and ensuring that they can not return to eat them.

The durian season is also the hunting season. It is because of the durian season that wild animals can more readily be hunted. The villagers do not have to go out and look for the game – in search of durians, the game comes to them. The hunters usually use blowpipe darts, but they also use hunting rifles to drive off the animals or to catch them.

During this time of year, you frequently see the villagers eating such game or earning income by selling it to Chinese traders (which is illegal). In the durian season, therefore, the villagers obtain income from hunting,

as well as the durian harvest. Indeed, it is a season when nature provides them with a great “blessing”.

In addition to protecting the durians, transporting the durians (*dukung durian*) is a labor-intensive aspect of durian harvesting. If the durian orchards are close by, this is not a particularly demanding task. But for durian orchards in the forest, or if the roads are muddy, this is hard work. Just as when rattan is gathered in the forest, harvesting durians from the forest requires the villagers to set up camp in the forest and to protect the durians, as well as gathering and transporting them.

In 1997 when I was collecting data, transporting durians during the durian season was extremely difficult. This was because of the smoke haze that covered large parts of Indonesia and Malaysia, and because the durian season coincided with the wet season, making the roads very muddy.²³

It is certainly true that durian harvesting in the present day is a repetitive process of picking up and collecting the durians, and then selling them to the wholesalers. This work nonetheless requires quite a lot of physical strength. In the tropical heat, the transporting work is particularly demanding. In the past, the villagers would carry the durians by foot to where the wholesalers (Malay or Chinese) were waiting at the edge of the forest. The durians collected in the early morning would be sold to the wholesalers in the afternoon, and the villagers who had carried them to the wholesalers would again return to the forest.

The durian orchards were usually located on hilly or mountainous parts of the forest. The villagers would transport the durians by foot along the steep paths through these mountains and hills.²⁴ More recently, motorbikes have made the transporting work less onerous, but it still requires heavy labor. The major work for the villagers is still that of transporting the durians from the orchards to where they are sold to the wholesalers (the durian wholesalers’ cars (jeeps) can generally not get very near to the orchards). Women, as well as men, pick up and collect the durians, but generally only the men transport the durians by motorbike. Regardless of this, any income from the durians goes to the individual who collects them.

The strong-legged (*kaki kuat*) elderly, both men and women, do not seem to mind these mountain paths, but since the introduction of motorbikes (in around 1985), the young, who do not like the transporting work, no longer go into the durian orchards in the forest. Where the transporting work can be done by motorbike, this is done so.²⁵ In all other places, the durians have to be transported by foot; this is why some young people no longer

go into the durian orchards in the forest. Even nowadays, villagers who do not own a motorbike transport the durians by foot or by bicycle.

From Forest to Village Area

Durian orchards in the forest are only tended during the durian season, when the weeds and grass around the trees are cut. For the rest of the year they are abandoned, with no particular maintenance occurring at all. In the case of the durian orchards in the forest, protecting the durians from wild animals and transporting the durians to the wholesalers symbolize the Orang Asli as forest product gatherers.

However, people who feel that transporting the durians from the forest is too difficult focus instead on the durian orchards in and around the village, where the task of transporting them is relatively easy. In addition, these people have given up their durian orchards in the forest to younger people in their kinship group who did not own any (or at most, very few) durian orchards and wished to transport the durians. No matter how many durian orchards in the forest a person might own, if he or she cannot transport the durians, the situation is no better than if he or she owned no orchards there at all.

In comparison to durian orchards in the forest, transporting durians in areas close to the village is relatively easy. Having discovered the commodity value of durians as a cash crop, the villagers began to plant durian seedlings for durian orchards, which until then had only seen wild, natural trees. When these new seedlings were planted, the durian orchards in the area around the village, which can be harvested more efficiently, began to supplant those in the forest.

In other words, with the arrival of the market economy, emphasis was placed on how the durians could most efficiently be sold as a commodity. The villagers were no longer the “forest people” who gathered forest products; they had now become “farmers” who cultivated durians as a cash crop. The movement away from durian orchards in the forest and towards those in the area around the village shows the connection between the arrival of the market economy and the villagers’ increasing distance from the forest.²⁶

Ownership

Most of the durian orchards owned by the villagers are located either in the areas of Old Kampung Durian Tawar and Sialang, where the villagers used to live (the village area orchards), or in forest areas (the orchards in the forest). There is a correlation between where the durian orchards are

now located and where the villagers lived in the past. The households of the upper people own many durian orchards in the area of Old Kampung Durian Tawar. The durian orchards owned by Batin Janggut and the upper people in the Sialang area were apparently “purchased” from lower people.²⁷

For those durian orchards in the forest and in the village area where the transporting work is comparatively difficult, ownership of the orchards is not the only influence on the income obtainable. Individual ability also has an influence. For example, even if one owns (*pegan*) a durian orchard in the forest (owns, that is to say, the durian trees), such an orchard is “useless treasure” if one does not have the ability to protect and transport the durians.

Most of the durian orchards whose durians can be transported comparatively easily have been inherited as ancestral property (*pusaka*) and are owned by individuals (mostly women). When family members and relations participate in the harvesting at such orchards, they pay the owner of *pusaka* a commission of a certain percentage of the money they earn.

What matters in the case of durian orchards in the village areas, then, is not individual ability and strength (as is the case of those in the forest), but rather the owner’s lineage. The durian orchards are inherited under matrilineal principles. In addition, the owner of the durian orchard can receive commissions, through which people have begun to rent out their durian fields to outsiders, such as the Chinese. In the past, one generally obtained money for transporting durians, but now one can obtain money from the durian trees themselves. In other words, the durian trees have become “money trees” for their owners.

Selling

Durian harvesters in Kampung Durian Tawar (and Malaysia generally) wait for the fruit to ripen and fall (*gugur*), and then collect them from the ground. Due to the nature of the fruit, the durians have a commodity value for only two or three days. Because of this, durians of Kampung Durian Tawar are not commodities sold in response to changes in the unit price.

Rather, as commodities the challenge is how quickly they can be converted into cash by being sold efficiently and at the highest possible price. If the durians are not sold quickly, they soon have no value.

When the durian season arrives the villagers devote themselves solely to the harvesting work. The challenge lies entirely in swiftly collecting

and selling as many durians as possible. If the fruit is rotten, damaged or unripe (*tak masak*), it is unsuitable as a commodity.

The unit price of the durians is highest at the beginning of the season, due to the relations of supply and demand. After the beginning of the season, demand decreases and supply increases, causing the unit price to drop in value. The unit price does not rise again towards the end of the season when supply again decreases because by the end of the durian season demand for durians has almost disappeared. (Regarding the correlation between weights, monetary amounts and prices for Kampung Durian Tawar as a whole, see Figure 11)²⁸

The villagers have quite a lot to say about the selling of the durians, an activity that has brought them much annoyance and trouble. There have been countless instances of the wholesalers cheating the villagers and, conversely, of villagers cheating the wholesalers. This situation continues today.

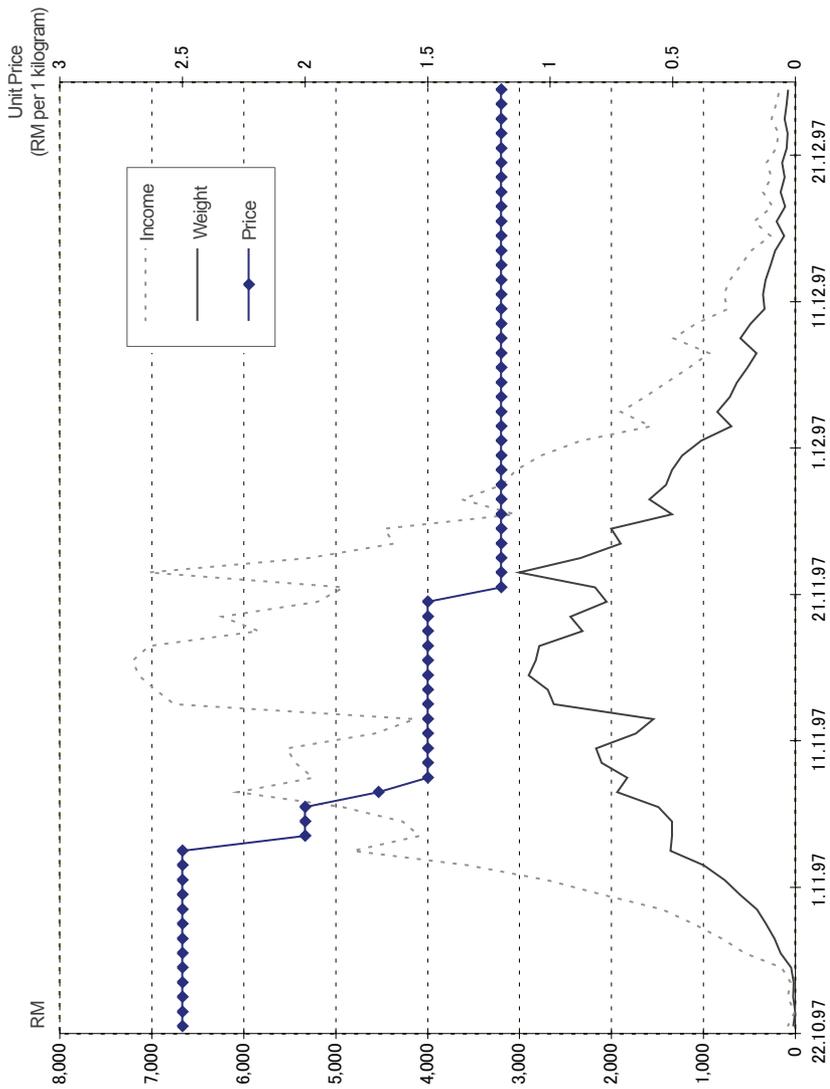
As one would expect, there have been cases of wholesalers (the Chinese or Malays) taking an “extra cut”. In part this is because, regardless of whether the villagers trust a particular wholesaler or not, they have no choice but to sell them the durians they have collected.²⁹ It is also because, prior to the current system, other methods of selling the durians made it easy for the wholesalers to take an extra cut. These included the wholesaler making a lump sum payment before the durian harvest season,³⁰ or buying all the fruit harvested from a durian tree at a set lump sum per tree. I was also told of cases in which parents and children made separate contracts for the same durian trees with more than one wholesaler (i.e. “double booking”), and cases where Malay wholesalers had paid the villagers late or not at all. Looking for a “good” wholesaler (*cari tauke*) when brokering or selling is an important element of the durians as commodity.³¹

Income

The ability to protect and to transport durians is reflected in the income figures obtained from them, as is the number of durian orchards one owns. As is the case with other forest products, cash income obtained from durians is in most cases the income of those who have collected them (strictly speaking, of those who have been given permission to gather durians by the orchard owner). That is to say, it is the income of an individual.

Despite the fact that it is more difficult to transport durians from the forest than from near the village, the price paid for the durians is virtually the same. Therefore, harvesting durians from the forest is relatively

Figure 11: The durian harvest for Kampung Durian Tawar as a whole





Plates 56-61: Selling durians. There are several places for picking up durians in Kampung Durian Tawar. The villagers collect durians in the durian orchards and carry the durians by bike or by foot to these places. They sell durians to the Chinese trader or the Malay trader. At the



beginning of durian harvest season, the Chinese traders pick up durians early in the morning. But during the peak season, the Chinese traders pick up the durians twice a day, in the morning and evening, because a lot of durians are collected. [NT-1997]

inefficient. Indeed, durians harvested from the forest sometimes receive a lower price. This is because of the cost incurred by the durian wholesalers going into the forest to purchase the durians. The poor roads in the forest often cause damage to the wholesalers' cars. The wholesalers incur a certain degree of risk, then, when they go into the forest to purchase durians.

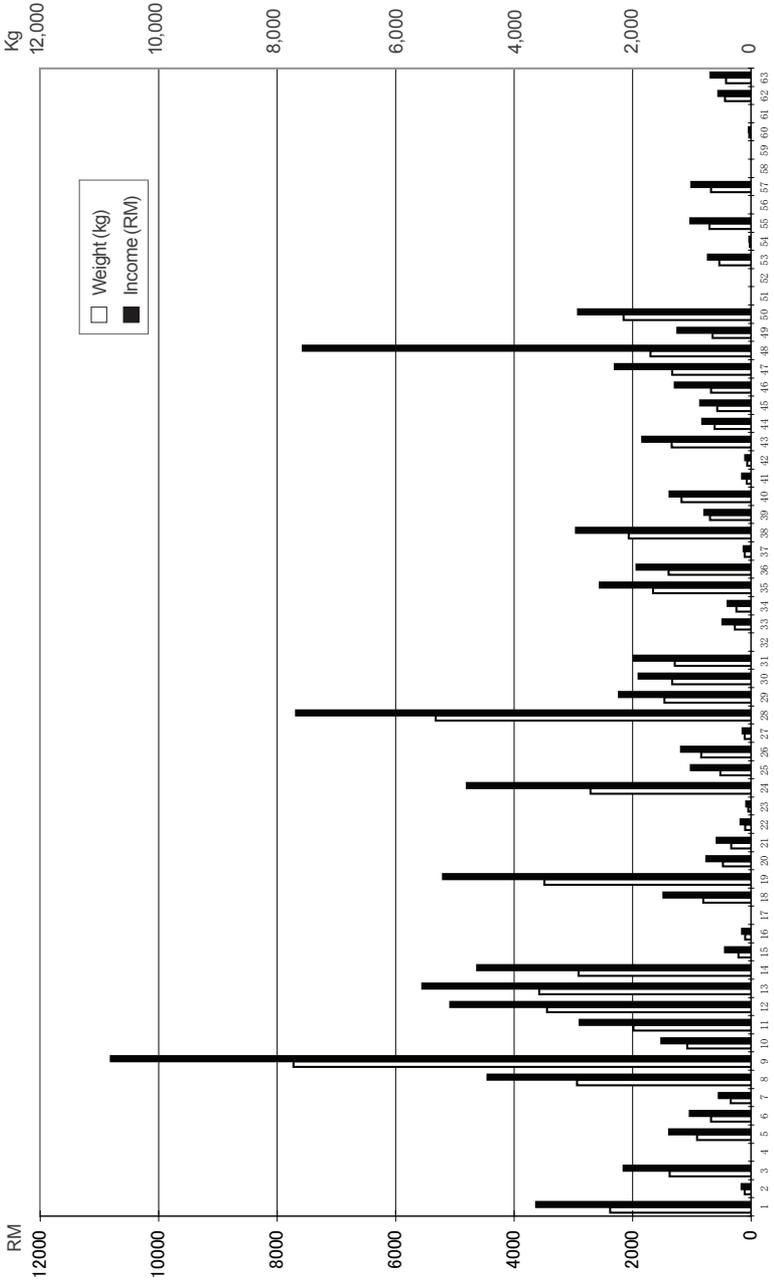
In this section, I will look at household incomes from durians in the village in light of the above-mentioned characteristics. If income obtained from rubber tapping is comparable to "making a withdrawal from a bank", income obtained from durians is like receiving a quarterly or yearly bonus.³²

If we look at the income data for durians in Kampung Durian Tawar (Table 17 and Figure 12), we see the prominence of Mangku Hasim's household (No. 9). Mangku Hasim is the son-in-law of Menteri Lewat and his de facto successor, and his household owns many durian orchards that were inherited from Menteri Lewat. However, in addition to the quantity of their durian orchards, another important factor is their agricultural management practices (the planting and maintenance of their durian trees). Mangku Hasim's sons have expanded their durian orchards and planted more durian trees.³³ The high level of income that the Mangku Hasim household obtains from durians reflects its agricultural management practices. By expanding their durian orchards and planting durian trees, they have increased the number of durian trees under their ownership and transformed the durians from being a forest product into a cash crop.³⁴

The people in the former Menteri Lewat group (i.e. the current Batin Janggut group) have planted durian trees enthusiastically. The durian orchards of Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai have already been passed on to their children, and so the incomes from these durian orchards appear under separate households. The same situation has occurred in the case of Menteri Lewat and his children. Ajoï (No. 28) is in a "cousin marriage" (a marriage within the village), such that he and his wife both have durian orchards inherited from their parents. Because of this, along with the fact that after inheriting these durian orchards Ajoï and his wife planted new durian trees, their household's income from durians is high.

Doyes's (No. 48) husband, who is Chinese, manages a durian orchard. Although his durian orchard is not large, he grows *durian kahwin*, which are tasty and good in quality and so sell at a higher unit price. For this reason, he receives a high income from durians.³⁵

Figure 12
The durian harvest per household



Economic Disparity

Rubber and Durian

No matter how many rubber smallholdings a villager may own, he or she needs to carry out rubber tapping in order to obtain money from them. Income obtained from rubber reflects actual labor undertaken almost every day. On the other hand, the more durian orchards a person owns, the greater the income she or he will obtain from the durians. In addition, the number of durian trees a person owns, rather than the size of the orchard or orchards, is the primary measure of the income that can be obtained from them.

In contrast to rubber smallholdings, villagers strongly conceive of durians as symbol of inheritable property. The durian orchards planted (or discovered in the forest) by preceding generations of parents, grandparents and ancestors have become the property of their descendants. Durian trees grow naturally from seeds cast aside. In the case of rubber, however, one has to wait about seven years from the time the rubber seedlings are planted before the trees are mature enough to be tapped. In addition, rubber trees can apparently be tapped for approximately forty years, but after that they are no longer productive and so are cut down and the wood is sold. In short, durian trees can be passed on to the next generation; rubber trees cannot.

By comparing the incomes obtained by the upper people and the lower people from rubber tapping and durian harvesting, we see a clear difference between the two groups (see Table 17).³⁶

If we look at the upper levels of income obtained from rubber tapping, the following households are prominent: Menteri Lewat's children (Nos. 1, 5, 8 and 9); Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai and their siblings (Nos. 13, 14, 19, 24 and 25); the descendants of Menteri Lewat's younger brother (No. 28); and Menteri Gemuk (No. 35). All of these are the households of titleholders or their close relatives, and all own a large number of rubber smallholdings.³⁷

If we look at the upper levels of income obtained from rubber tapping among the lower people, we find that they are all households that follow the leadership of Batin Janggut (Nos. 40, 41, 45, 55 and 61). While the members of these households are among the lower people, they are not in opposition to the upper people. Indeed, they actively engage with them. This stance is reflected in their rubber-tapping work. Most of the households in the upper levels of income obtained from rubber tapping, including the households of Islamic converts (No. 46 and No. 50) are those

Table 18
Comparison of income from rubber and durian

	Rubber		Durian	
	Weight (kg)	Income (RM)	Weight (kg)	Income (RM)
Upper people	6,470.00	6,112.14	1,409.06	2,121.24
Lower people	1,676.92	1,583.68	546.63	1,019.42
Village as a whole	4,644.06	4,387.01	1,080.52	1,701.50

RM = Ringgit Malaysia

NB: A comparison based on average figures per household.

of the children of Batin Deraman and Jenang Kichoi (the Ali group). With the exception of the household at No. 61, which follows the leadership of the upper people, the figures for the households of the Aki Main group (comprising newly arrived inhabitants in the village who have few rubber smallholdings) are low. Most of the people in these households engage in day laboring.

If we look in detail at the income obtained from durian harvesting, the following households occupy the highest positions among the upper people: the children of Menteri Lewat (Nos. 1, 8 and 9); Mangku Ujang's children (No. 12); Batin Janggut's siblings (Nos. 13, 14, 19 and 24); Menteri Lewat's younger brother's descendants (No. 28); Menteri Gemuk (No. 35); and Jekerah Asang (No. 36).

In the case of the lower people, on the other hand, the incomes of Jekerah Poyang's daughter (No. 40), Batin Deraman's son (No. 43), and Jenang Kichoi's son (No. 47) and daughters (No. 48 and No. 50) are prominent. As Ajam (No. 43) is unable to manage money, his income obtained from durians is included in the household income for his older brother Kedai (No. 45), who manages his money. Doyes's (No. 48) husband, who is Chinese, grows durians that sell for a high unit price; the income for that household is therefore high. The incomes of members of the Aki Main group (Nos. 57, 60, 62 and 63) are obtained solely from the durian trees owned by Aki Main (No. 57).

Income obtained from durians is not connected to actual labor; rather, it is largely connected to a particular household's kinship relations. This is shown by the fact that the households of the descendants of previous *adat* leaders occupy the positions of highest income obtained from durians.

By contrast, young couples' households tend not to own durian orchards. However, if they have kinship relations with the owners of durian orchards, they can receive the benefits of the durian harvest through helping out with transporting and other kinds of work.

If we now compare the average incomes for households of the upper people and the lower people, we see that the income of the former group obtained from rubber is on average approximately four times that of the latter. For income obtained from durians, the average income for the upper people is approximately twice that of the lower people (see Table 18). These relative differences can be attributed to factors such as actual labor expended, the level of ownership of rubber smallholdings or durian orchards, and specific characteristics of each type of income.

Other than couples who have newly established a household, most households own some durian orchards, though the sizes of the orchards vary. In contrast to rubber smallholdings, which have either been developed by individual households or obtained through development projects, most durian orchards have been passed on to children by their parents. The villagers in the former Ali group, who have shown no interest in rubber-tapping work, also own durian orchards. They originally used the orchards to provide fruit for their own consumption, but now use them for cash crops. Even the people of the Aki Main group, who moved into Kampung Durian Tawar from outside, derive some income from durians (from the durian orchards owned by Aki Main), though this is relatively small.

People who do not undertake rubber tapping participate in durian harvesting. Couples who do not own durian orchards are occasionally given some durian harvesting work, and so on these occasions can also obtain income from durians. Though there are certainly differences in income obtained from durians, durian harvesting is nonetheless a benefit enjoyed by all the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar.

A number of factors combine to explain the different incomes obtained from durians. These include levels and types of investment in the durian orchards (i.e. expenditure on planting trees or maintaining orchards with pest control chemicals), the actual durian harvesting work, and the size of durian orchards inherited from preceding generations. Income obtained from rubber tapping (where the diligence and hard work of the individual is reflected in the income obtained) and that obtained from durians differs in that the individual's kinship relations have an influence on the latter.

If the parents' generation has assiduously maintained its durian orchards, then their children are able to obtain a certain amount of income

even if they undertake no maintenance work on the orchards. This tendency is particularly evident in the case of the descendants of the former Ali group. Though they do not actively plant durian trees, or maintain them, they are still able to receive the benefits of the orchards left to them by their parents' generation. This is also true of the siblings Surak (No. 29) and Poteh (No. 26) and their descendants (including Ajoï's household (No. 28)). They have received the benefits of the durian orchards left to them by their father, who was the older brother of Menteri Lewat. Incidentally, Surak sold part of these orchards to Batin Janggut.

In contrast to the private nature of the rubber smallholdings, the durian orchards are more communal. In fact, some of the durian orchards are the common property of members of a particular matrilineal descent group (e.g. Dusun Sergah and Dusun Ilam). It is no exaggeration to say that in Kampung Durian Tawar relatives are linked together by durian orchards. The durian orchards are inherited through kinship relations, and only the descendants of a particular kinship group are permitted to undertake durian harvesting from a particular durian orchard. In this way, the relatives using the same durian orchards form a type of community.³⁸

Apart from the differences in income between the upper people and the lower people, we should also note the high incomes of the households of the *adat* leaders (and their close relations). Through analysis of the incomes of individual households, we can see the development of a stratification, though slight, among the upper people. The phenomenon of wealth being concentrated in the Batin and his family is common in Orang Asli villages, but such a concentration of wealth is particularly striking in the case of Kampung Durian Tawar.

Finally, although incomes obtained from rubber and durians may be low in the case of particular households, this does not necessarily mean that the total incomes for these households are low. Such households gather forest products or engage in day laboring to supplement the household budget. Indeed, there are households where income obtained from such activities is the principal means of livelihood. Even so, in the case of Kampung Durian Tawar it is appropriate to take income obtained from rubber and durians as an index of overall income. This is because, within the economic life of the village, rubber-tapping work (from which the villagers can obtain stable cash income) is the principal means of livelihood, and also because particularly large durian harvests occur there. In addition, the income disparities in rubber and durian incomes are also reflected in the differences in household conditions for the upper people and the lower people. Let us now look at these differences.

Table 19
Comparison of household conditions

	Upper people	Lower people	Kampung Durian Tawar as a whole	Urban Orang Asli	Rural Orang Asli	Orang Asli as a whole	Malay Peninsula as a whole
Average number of householders	6.13	6.21	6.16	...	...	...	...
Average number of bedrooms	2.74	1.96	2.43	...	...	...	...
PPRT percentage	5.1%	45.8%	20.6%	...	...	...	...
Gas kitchen	69.2%	37.5%	57.1%	...	...	...	...
Electricity	87.2%	50.0%	73.0%	...	...	36.2%	...
Water	100.0%	25.0%	71.4%	...	...	46.4%	...
Telephone	66.7%	12.5%	46.0%	29.6%	1.8%	6.0%	34.0%
Television	76.9%	45.8%	65.1%	75.8%	30.7%	37.6%	82.1%
Video player	7.9%	20.8%	15.9%	28.7%	3.4%	7.3%	32.6%
Radio	79.5%	58.3%	71.4%	72.2%	49.3%	52.7%	78.3%
Refrigerator	33.3%	4.2%	22.2%	59.5%	8.3%	16.1%	63.5%
Washing machine	12.8%	0.0%	7.9%	...	...	...	...
Car	17.9%	8.3%	14.3%	29.2%	4.1%	7.9%	34.2%
Motorbike	89.7%	75.0%	84.1%	39.8%	35.0%	35.8%	52.9%

NB: Data for Kampung Durian Tawar is based on the author's survey of households. Data for the Orang Asli is based on Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (1997).

Household Conditions

I undertook an interview survey of households in Kampung Durian Tawar in 1997. Here I compare the household conditions of the upper people and the lower people based on the data I obtained. For reference and comparison, I have also provided data from the Malaysian Department of Statistics in 1991.

For electricity and water, statistical data exists for the Orang Asli as a whole. For ownership of telephones, televisions, video players, radios,

refrigerators, cars, motorbikes and bicycles, statistical data from 1991 (with separate data for city and rural areas) exists for both the Orang Asli as a whole and for the Malay Peninsula as a whole (see Table 19). The particular items under consideration have been spreading rapidly among the population. Therefore, any comparisons between the 1991 data and the 1997 data I gathered for Kampung Durian Tawar must be treated with caution. Keeping this qualification in mind, a comparison can offer some general ideas of the economic situation in Kampung Durian Tawar.

If we compare the ownership of items in Kampung Durian Tawar with those among the Orang Asli as a whole, we can see that the former far exceeds the latter. Ownership by the upper people exceeds that of the Orang Asli to an even greater degree. In comparison with ownership among city-dwelling Orang Asli, the rurally located people of Kampung Durian Tawar have higher ownership of several items. In addition, ownership by the upper people virtually equals that of city-dwelling Orang Asli, and on some items even exceeds it. Further, ownership among the upper people, as with city-dwelling Orang Asli, is approaching ownership levels of the Malay Peninsula as a whole.

Ownership by the lower people is at around the same level as that of the Orang Asli as a whole. In the context of the Orang Asli as a whole, therefore, the lives of the lower people are average. Why is it, then, that their lives appear strained when compared to the upper people living in the same village? Is this simply how they seem, relative to the upper people? When compared to ownership levels of the Malay Peninsula as a whole (which includes Malays, the Chinese, the Indians and other ethnic groups), ownership among the Orang Asli as a whole is low. We can therefore see that calling their poverty “relative” is too simple. In addition, the upper people appear to be wealthy only within the context of Kampung Durian Tawar. If we consider them in the context of the Malay Peninsula as a whole, it cannot be said that they are particularly prosperous.

Our main goal here is to compare the household conditions of the upper people and the lower people. If we compare ownership of items between these groups, with the exception of video players, the upper people show a higher rate of ownership.³⁹ In addition, the lower people have received a higher percentage of housing aid projects distributed by PPRT. These household conditions of the upper people and the lower people are connected to the disparities between them in terms of income obtained from rubber and durians.

If we look at economic matters in present-day Kampung Durian Tawar using such indices as rubber tapping, durian harvesting and general

household conditions, we can identify decisive economic disparities between the upper and lower people. Although not dealt with in this book, children with higher levels of education are also concentrated among the upper people, as are villagers with official positions in UMNO and POASM. In other words, the economic disparity between the upper people and the lower people is accompanied by unequal distributions of political power within the village. The economic disparity is therefore likely to reproduce itself in the future.

Notes

1. For example, the upper people say that the lower people do not save any money but, rather, spend it as soon as they earn it.
2. The manager of the rubber trader's shop is Aman, Mangku Hasim's son. Aman's mother (Mangku Hasim's wife) is a Chinese whose parents were killed by the Japanese forces. When she was small, she was taken in and raised by the Orang Asli. Mangku Hasim's father-in-law was Menteri Lewat, who owned the rubber trader's shop. Perhaps because Aman has some Chinese ancestry, the rubber trader's shop in Kampung Durian Tawar is a member of a rubber traders' guild in Pertang formed by the Chinese rubber traders. The guild operates as a sort of black market cartel, and due to this the rubber trader's shop in Kampung Durian Tawar is able to maintain financial stability (incidentally, the guild does not permit membership by Malay or Indian rubber traders). The guild controls the price of rubber in the area. As such, even when the price of rubber actually drops, a certain amount of profit can still be made. Aman determines the price paid for the rubber, based on the quality of the rubber (on, for example, how much water it contains). The villagers are unaware that the price paid for the rubber differs slightly depending on which rubber trader one deals with. Once the rubber has been sold to the rubber trader, the guild sells it on to a rubber-processing plant.
3. The villagers themselves, however, do not understand the situation this way, at least that is not how they talk about it. Rather, what they present as the reason for abandoning wet rice cultivation is a change in the forest environment occurring in conjunction with deforestation, the construction of dams and the like. With the damage these

phenomena cause to the forest environment, the forest's ability to retain water is said to have declined. The villagers have experienced this for themselves. Decreased water retention in the forest has led to greater levels of soil and gravel in the rivers and streams, which in turn has led to an increase in the water levels and a loss of stability in the water supply for wet rice cultivation. As a result, the villagers say, the paddy fields became unproductive and, at least for the time being, wet rice cultivation became impossible. Whatever the reason for the abandonment of wet rice cultivation, rubber development projects were being implemented at the same time, and in order to survive the villagers switched to rubber-tapping work.

4. On the surface, the villagers' hunting and gathering activities seem to be based on a subsistence economy. However, they now pursue these activities for cash and, as such, are involved in the market economy. For example, when they catch wild pigs or squirrels they may sell them as game to Chinese traders, and then use the money obtained from the sale to buy vegetables or chickens. This sort of activity exemplifies the economic lives of present-day villagers. The livelihoods of the villagers in Kampung Durian Tawar, then, are now based on the logic of the market economy, and this change has occurred over a period of time. In this situation of livelihoods based on the market economy, rubber-tapping work and the harvesting of durians provide the most stable cash income.
5. A festival was previously held in Kampung Durian Tawar at the same time as Chinese New Year. In some Orang Asli villages that have a close economic relationship with the Chinese, the village festival is held to coincide with the Chinese holidays. Lee (1976) has written about the religious and economic influence of the Chinese on the Temuan in Melaka state.
6. Regarding the introduction of the rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) from Brazil in South America to Southeast Asia, the economic effects it has had in Southeast Asia, and differences between rubber and other cash crops, see Ishikawa (1997: 587). Ishikawa discusses from a political-economy perspective the effect rubber cultivation, influenced as it is by the fluctuating unit price of rubber, has had on village economies. In this book I do not deal with a macro perspective but focus on the effects rubber cultivation has had on the village economy at the micro level. Ishikawa's article nonetheless provides many useful insights and

much relevant information for the discussion of rubber in this chapter. Kato (1991) discusses from an historical perspective the influence of the introduction of rubber cultivation on the agricultural economy of Negeri Sembilan.

7. *Petai* is harvested approximately every three months. At this time, the price at the beginning of each harvest season is about 20 ringgit per 100 bunches of *petai*. Even when the price is at its lowest you can still get about 12 ringgit per 100 bunches. In a gathering of *petai* that I participated in, 600 bunches (17 ringgit/100 bunches) were gathered.
8. Those who engage in rubber tapping usually enter “rubber tapping” as their occupation on documents presented to government institutions such as schools and municipal offices. People who own a rubber smallholding and to some extent engage in rubber tapping work, and even those for whom rubber tapping is only part of their total income, write “rubber tapping”. Most who do not enter “rubber tapping” on these forms enter “forest product gathering” instead. People who write “forest product gathering” either do not own a rubber smallholding or, if they do, do not engage in rubber-tapping work. The fact that so many people enter their occupation as “rubber tapping” is arguably because this is advantageous when dealing with the government; advantageous, that is to say, in terms of receiving development projects.
9. The Chinese who rent rubber smallholdings in Kampung Durian Tawar do rubber-tapping work almost daily, allowing only natural circumstances such as rain to stop them. Coming to the rubber gardens they rent in Kampung Durian Tawar by motorbike early in the morning, they mark the rubber trees with their knives and at the same time collect the rubber that has solidified from the previous day’s work. By the time they finish rubber tapping for that day, they have collected all the rubber tapped on the previous day. They pack this solidified rubber into special rubber-holding containers made of iron, or into old bags previously used for holding chicken feed or rice, and head off to make sales at the rubber trader’s shop. If the Chinese rent more than one rubber smallholding, they then go to the other rubber garden(s) and repeat the same procedure. If they also sell latex (rubber in liquid form), they collect the liquid rubber latex after having first completed the day’s tapping and having collected, during that tapping, the solidified rubber from the previous day’s work. In other words, they collect both solidified rubber from the previous day’s work and liquid

rubber from the present day's work. (When I was in Kampung Durian Tawar there was only one person, a Chinese woman, who collected liquid rubber in addition to solidified rubber.) The solidified rubber is then sold at the rubber trader's shop in Kampung Durian Tawar, and the liquid rubber is sold at a rubber trader's shop that deals in liquid rubber in Pertang. Some of the Chinese renting rubber smallholdings in Kampung Durian Tawar allow the rubber trees a day of "rest" between tapping work. However, most of them do the work almost every day, as, after all, they do not own the rubber smallholding. The villagers once engaged in work producing rubber sheets from liquid rubber. They no longer do this, however, as profits gained do not equal time consumed.

10. When I was undertaking my study, the price was good; a kilogram fetched 1 ringgit 5 sen. When the price is bad, a kilogram only fetches about 90 sen.
11. Differences in methods of rubber tapping appear evident across the racial groups. Indeed, the people themselves see things in this way. It is also the case, however, that rubber tapping is talked about in terms of racial stereotypes, which have nothing to do with how the different ethnic groups actually carry out the work. The "hard-working" Chinese and the "lazy" Malays is one such stereotype. The Orang Asli are generally described as falling into the same category as the lazy Malays. Indeed, the Orang Asli describe themselves as "lazy" in comparison to the hard-working Chinese.
12. The Chinese and Mandailing (Muslim Batak who are regarded as "Malay", but who are in fact different from the Malays) who rent rubber smallholdings in Kampung Durian Tawar sell the rubber they have collected on the same day that they do the rubber tapping. This seems to be either because they do not own the rubber smallholdings, or because they fear that thieves will steal the rubber. In at least one instance, someone stole rubber tapped by the Chinese (the culprit was a villager from Kampung Durian Tawar).
13. Owners rent out their rubber smallholdings for a variety of reasons. They may prefer hunting and gathering activities to rubber tapping, or the rubber smallholdings may be offered as security for a loan to the Chinese traders. In most cases, they do so for the latter reason. When a person has rented out his or her rubber smallholdings, he or she can no longer undertake tapping work and has no option but to

hunt and gather or perform day laboring for the Chinese employers. As far as I was able to ascertain, the only owner renting out rubber smallholdings as a true “landlord” was Tikak at No. 18. All others offered their rubber smallholdings as security for a loan. Loans in which rubber smallholdings act as security are often exploitative, in that unaware Orang Asli take on unlawful loans (Mohd. Tap 1990: 76-77). Many traders coming into the area from outside to purchase durians and forest products perpetrate similar kinds of exploitation, as do several officials from JHEOA (Mohd. Tap 1990: 84).

14. The sayings “no money, no friend” and “no money, no talk” frequently used by the Chinese apply not only to the Chinese society; but to Orang Asli society as well. The expressions “*nyap duit, nyap kawan*” (“no money, no friend”) and “*nyap duit, nyap cakap*” (“no money, no talk”) are frequently heard amongst Orang Asli. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with the money worship suggested by these expressions, this forms a certain sort of economic value in Kampung Durian Tawar.
15. According to rumor, the cultivated land (rubber smallholdings and durian orchards) Batin Janggut himself has opened up, including that which he mobilized his sons to open up, is in total as much as 150 acres. Given that Batin Janggut owns cultivated land not only in Kampung Durian Tawar and Kampung Dalam but also in Kampung Baning, this rumor may well be grounded in fact. At the same time, many of his rubber smallholdings and durian orchards have actually been passed on to his married children.
16. Some of Batin Janggut’s rubber smallholdings have been given to his divorced third wife (No. 15) and her daughters (No. 16 and No. 17), and to his son Tikak (No. 18). At present, the aforementioned variable system no longer exists between Batin Janggut and the children with whom he is in conflict. All the income they obtain from rubber tapping remains their own.
17. The rubber-tapping work begun by these two households, however, does not appear in the data being considered here because they did not begin to do rubber-tapping work until after the period in which I was gathering the data.
18. This was taken from them for a development project; their compensation is not actually for the land itself but for the durian trees that were on it.

19. Although Kampung Durian Tawar was formed under a resettlement policy, its current location is close to where the villagers used to live. The area of the Orang Asli reservation alone in Kampung Durian Tawar is approximately 800 acres, making it the second-largest Orang Asli village in Negeri Sembilan (the largest is Kampung Dalam, which is approximately 1,500 acres). The “forest” (forest reservation) at the center of Negeri Sembilan surrounds Kampung Durian Tawar, and the durians and forest products gathered from this forest support the lives of the villagers. The village where I began my field study, Kampung Baning, did not have many durian trees. This was because in the 1960s an Orang Asli reservation (of approximately ninety acres) was newly established in Kampung Baning, into which Orang Asli from the area were gathered. As a result, Kampung Baning is surrounded by parts of the Malay village in which it was established, and by government land opened up for development projects undertaken by FELDA.
20. During the durian season in Malaysia, it is a common sight nowadays to see durians, with their strong, distinctive aroma, being sold in the markets and by the side of the road. Many Malays, enticed by the aroma of the durians, stop their cars, and buy and eat the durians on the spot. There are various types of durian, with the *durian kahwin* (an improved variety of durian formed through the grafting of different types of durian) selling at a high price. There are even durians sold in hotels, aimed at the tourist market.
21. Most of the land is in the forest reservation and therefore is not regarded as owned.
22. One rate I heard was 200 ringgit per tree. As income earned from one durian tree, this is low.
23. Having watched the transporting work with my own eyes, I can confidently state that carrying durians from halfway up a mountain is very demanding. The villagers carrying several dozen kilograms of durians along narrow, hilly paths could only impress the durian wholesalers and me.
24. There are a variety of types of baskets carried on the back. As examples, *amung* is a basket made of *rotan*, *garas* is a basket made from *langkap* (a tree of the coconut family) and *bankal* is a basket-type container made of *rotan*.

25. Sometimes all the income earned from the durian harvest ends up being spent on repairs to a broken-down motorbike.
26. This shift is also connected to the slight increase in the number of villagers planting an improved variety, developed through grafting, of *durian kahwin* (e.g. the D24 variety). Being of good quality, the price of *durian kahwin* is high, but they require fertilizer, chemicals, and the removal of grass and weeds. The villagers spend practically no money on fertilizers and chemicals for “ordinary durians” (*durian biasa*), and so *durian kahwin* further symbolize for the villagers the switch from durians as a forest product to durians as a cash crop.
27. As already mentioned, some durian orchards were formed through letting the durian trees grow naturally where the villagers had eaten them and discarded the seeds. Others were formed by those who planted new durian trees with a view to selling the durians as a commodity. Still others were formed in places in the forest where their ancestors were thought to have lived, where villagers happened to find the trees growing in the wild. Finally, there are also durian orchards that were formed out of durian seedlings planted in the forest by villagers fleeing the invasion of the Japanese forces.
28. The fact that there are days when the number of durians harvested is low is due to such things as the villagers having stopped harvesting to attend a POASM meeting being held in the village, or due to a change in the unit price.
29. The villagers sometimes have to sell their durians to wholesalers who may be known to take an unfair “extra cut” or are otherwise untrustworthy.
30. A form of advance payment is also seen in the case of the gathering of forest products such as rattan. Sometimes the amount harvested falls short of the amount of advance payment received, causing an increase in debt for the person involved.
31. Batin Janggut’s father was Chinese and Batin Janggut can speak Chinese. He also has an established network with the Chinese in the district, most of whom regard him as a partner (as “Chinese”, in other words). Since wholesalers with close relations with the Batin have become involved in the durian sales, the selling has been conducted relatively fairly. Groups in conflict with the Batin (like the Aki Main group) and those people who do not think that the Chinese wholesalers

can be trusted do business with Malay wholesalers. After I had finished my study and returned to Japan, a wholesaler in Kampung Durian Tawar, a Chinese male, married one of Batin Janggut's daughters.

32. In fact, many of the villagers use their income from durians to obtain a driver's license or to purchase furniture, household electrical goods (such as a radio) or agricultural machinery. In other words, they often use this income for items requiring a substantial amount of money.
33. This was carried out under the leadership of Mangku Hasim's "Chinese" wife. She is particularly skilled at agricultural management, actively maintaining the household's durian orchards and vegetable fields. If there are any unused areas, she ploughs them up and grows fruit trees or vegetables. For the Orang Asli, who in the past lived in a subsistence economy, gathering fruit and vegetables growing wild in the forest was "commonsense", and in this the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers were no exception. The women gathered edible vegetables growing in the wild and tended orchards and cassava fields to provide food for their own consumption and they virtually never cultivated such fruit and vegetables to obtain money. Nowadays, many women continue to grow vegetable and other crops for their own consumption; only a few grow such crops to sell the surplus for cash – the Mangku's wife is a principal example.
34. Although almost all of the villagers in fact harvest durians growing wild in the forest, in Mangku Hasim's orchards in the forest they have planted new durian trees. The durians growing in the forest, therefore, are now a stable commodity. Sometimes a harvest season in the forest occurs outside the usual durian season, at which times the unit price is high because of the small number of durians on the market and the Mangku Hasim household obtains a higher than usual profit.
35. Even though the villagers are aware of the higher unit price for *durian kahwin*, most of them do not grow them because they require investment in chemicals and maintenance to prevent insect damage. As far as I was able to ascertain, Mangku Hasim's son Aman, Ukai and Tikak have recently planted *durian kahwin*, but they are not yet mature enough to provide fruit.
36. A comparison based on the average or mean figure per person would also be possible. However, because in this chapter I am comparing the group of households that participated in the housing construction

- project (the upper people) with those who did not (the lower people), the important comparison is that of the average figure per household.
37. The household (No. 18) of Batin Janggut's son Tikak, who is in conflict with his father, has a low figure. This is because he has rented out most of his rubber smallholdings to the Chinese (the rental income received, under yearly contracts, is approximately 3,000 ringgit). Tikak's wife and children do the rubber tapping in that household.
 38. Such "communities" are not just formed by matrilineal descent groups, the ideal in Kampung Durian Tawar; they are also formed by kinship groups that follow kindred lines bilaterally. Regardless of how the particular community is formed, common ownership based on kinship relations can be seen in the case of durian orchards. This feature is absent from rubber smallholdings.
 39. Ownership of video players is high amongst the lower people because households belonging to the Aki Main group employed in day laboring have received video players as presents from their Chinese employers. In the household survey I undertook, several households amongst the lower people owned video players where electricity was not even connected to their houses.

Chapter 7

Developing the Forest

To conclude Part II, in this chapter I consider how the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, and in particular the upper people, have responded to development. To do so, I take into account the villagers' relationship with the forest.

A History of Forest People

The history of Kampung Durian Tawar begins in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the ancestors of the villagers moving into the present territory from Tampin in Negeri Sembilan. The first areas in which they settled are where the present-day durian orchards in the forest are located.

Later, under the leadership of the Malay warrior Batin Siuntung, they came out of the forest and settled close to a Malay village. In this new area they undertook wet rice cultivation. In the later stage of the British colonial period, some villagers intermarried with the Chinese and friendly contacts with the Malays occurred. In their contacts with other ethnic groups, the villagers gradually changed from being "the people living in the forest" to, increasingly, those living outside the forest.

However, this situation changed with the invasion by Japanese forces. People took refuge in the forest, severing the contact and exchange they had maintained with other ethnic groups until then: having emerged from the forest, they went back into it, this time as refugees. In contrast to their relatively free and mobile lives as forest people, as refugees circumstances were extremely difficult both economically and psychologically. They had trouble finding food and sometimes had to eat a kind of yam (which they normally would not have done). When Japanese soldiers appeared in the area, they had to move elsewhere.

When the Japanese forces left and British soldiers told them that the war was over, they came out of the forest and resumed the life they had been living before the war. Several years later, however, fighting broke out again on the Malay Peninsula. This time it was between the Chinese-led Communist insurgents and British Commonwealth forces.¹ This was the period of upheaval known as the Emergency.²

Having lived through these periods of upheaval, the people who returned to Kampung Durian Tawar were no longer the same group of people who had previously lived in the village. Much of the knowledge on traditional rites, ceremonies and magic had been lost. In addition, most of the traditional knowledge for living in the forest had also been lost, due to the deaths of most of those people who had remained in the forest during the upheavals. Their lives as refugees had even changed their means of livelihood.

As refugees in the resettlement camps, the villagers had come to learn rubber tapping as a means of obtaining a cash income, and they became more accustomed to town and village life near the camps. The waves of the market economy were lapping at their door; these were to have a significant impact on their lives.

Their relationship with the Malays, who had taken political control after Independence, also changed. The British colonial welfare policy towards the Orang Asli was taken on by the Malaysian government as an assimilation policy. Those categorized as Orang Asli in the new nation were seen, partly due to the poverty they experienced as refugees, as a poor people in need of development and future assimilation into Malay society. The Malaysian government implemented a development policy concerning the Orang Asli who had recently emerged from the forest. The Orang Asli themselves also brought about changes to their lives.

As discussed in Chapter 6, development and the arrival of the cash economy caused significant changes to economic life in Kampung Durian Tawar. This is symbolized by the abandonment of wet rice cultivation and the increase in rubber tapping in the mid-1970s. This was a significant turning point for the villagers in terms of their livelihoods, their economic lives, their relationship with the forest, and their view of the natural environment and the world in general. The introduction of rubber tapping rapidly increased the importance of the cash economy in the village.

In Chapter 6, I also touched on the qualitative change that occurred to hunting and gathering in Kampung Durian Tawar. Although appearing to be part of a subsistence economy, these hunting and gathering activities are now undertaken for cash. Nowadays most forest products are sold



Plate 62: Dusun Ilam. Dusun Ilam is one of the durian orchards in the forest. Before the durian harvest begins, the owners of durian orchards clear the undergrowth around the trees. Durian orchards in the forest are often the common property of a matrilineal descent group. At first, the matrilineal descent group of Menteri Gumuk and Jekerah Asang took care of Dusun Ilam, but later the matrilineal descent group of Genreh and Asat acquired ownership over Dusun Ilam. [NT-1998]

to traders, and animals caught through hunting are occasionally sold for cash. In other words, in present-day Kampung Durian Tawar most of the activities that once constituted the villagers' livelihoods are now undertaken to "look for money" (cf. Gomes 1986).

Under the principle of the subsistence economy, it was enough to gather forest products for direct consumption or usage.³ With the arrival of the market economy, these products have been pillaged both to meet outside demand and through the villagers' own desires for cash. As commodities easily converted into cash, forest products that were readily accessible have now become scarce. The market economy has dried up many forest resources. In response, tree planting as a part of development has become important. Currently rattan is planted in between the rubber trees in gardens. The government provides aid for some of the rattan cultivation.

To consider the relationship between the villagers and the forest in the context of development and the market economy, I now look at durian cultivation in Kampung Durian Tawar.

Forest Developers

The spread of the cash economy into the villagers' lives also brought about a change in their identity, from forest people to farmers, and from nomads to a settled people. They came out of the forest to establish their lives in a village. Once they had experienced life in the village, it was difficult for them to return to their lives in the forest. On the other hand, the phenomenon of a return to the forest by the people who have come out of the forest is also evident. This phenomenon is connected to the practice of tree planting; in other words, development work in the forest. The practice of tree planting is different from forest clearing (logging and deforestation). Forest development, in this sense, does not entail the felling of trees and the clearing of land to open up new fields; rather, it is the forming of fields through planting durian seedlings where durians have long been growing wild in the forest. The act of planting durian trees would have been unimaginable in the worldview of the hunter-gatherers, who gathered products growing wild in the forest.⁴

Within the general trend of moving away from the forest, in present-day Kampung Durian Tawar there is a movement to again develop the durian orchards inside the forest. This movement centers on the upper people. The emergence of limitations concerning the durian orchards in the village area (i.e. a lack of land) and a re-evaluation of the quality of the forest durians⁵ are both factors in this movement towards developing the forest. As the harvest season for durian orchards in the forest sometimes occurs at a different time to that in the village area, developing these forest orchards can also yield higher prices for the durians. For example, the story is sometimes recounted of the profit Mangku Hasim made when he was able to sell the durians from his rich crop in the forest at a high price (those in the village area had produced a poor crop).

However, this return to the forest does not constitute the people's return to being the "forest people". The villagers, especially the upper people, go into the forest on motorbikes, using the logging roads and new roads they themselves have opened up. They also use durable materials, such as tin roofs, to construct huts by durian orchards in the forest. In addition, the upper people have redeveloped the durian orchards in the forest, planting new seedlings and cultivating durians, which require hot weather and cool soils.

The villagers, especially the upper people, are, in the fullest sense of the word, forest developers. The durian orchards in the forest are not the semi-wild orchards of the past, left alone and used only during the durian harvest. Now they are maintained as orchards and have permanent huts

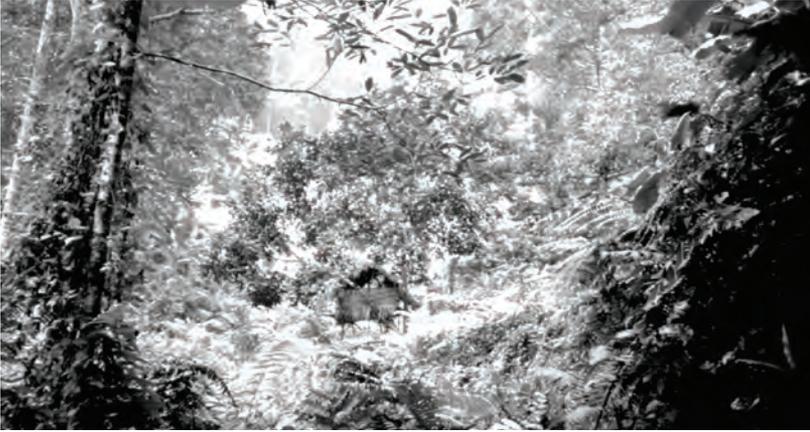


Plate 63: Durian orchard in the forest. It takes about one hour by bike to go to Dusun Serdang, which is owned by Mangku Hasim. During the durian season, Mangku Hasim and his family will stay overnight at the durian hut (in the middle of the picture) to collect durians and protect the fruit from wild animals. [NT-1997]

built in their vicinity. The villagers have created orchards in the forest, just like those in the village area. Locating the durian orchards in the forest is also a strategic choice: they are undetected by outsiders, like government officials and Malay villagers.

The harvest season for the durian orchards in the forest coincides with the wet season, making transporting work difficult. The villagers intentionally leave the roads in a virtually impassable condition; this is part of their strategy. The Chinese wholesalers say to the villagers, “These roads don’t get much sunshine and it takes a long time for them to dry out. You should cut down the trees alongside the road.” The villagers said to me, “We deliberately don’t cut down the trees because we are afraid of being discovered by the officials of the Department of Forestry”.

The villagers also know that opening up a new road would allow them to reach the durian orchards in the forest without having to traverse the mountains. However, this alternate route (which uses the old road running from Titi to Pertang) passes a Malay village. The villagers are afraid that the Malays would easily enter the forest and collect forest products, and may even destroy the durian orchards. This sort of thinking reveals the villagers’ strategy concerning the durian orchards in the forest. For the villagers, the forest and the durian orchards in it are “treasures”, which they do not want destroyed by outsiders.

Although the upper people have left the forest, they have in this way become forest developers. The upper people have gained knowledge enabling them to cultivate durians, as well as agricultural knowledge in general. They now have the economic ability to provide funds for such things as fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, and wooden boards and tin roofs for their huts at the durian orchards in the forest. As forest developers, they have begun a new form of involvement with the forest.

In contrast, the lower people have also left the forest but have become impoverished and are now unable to reuse it. The lower people do not have the knowledge or the funds to cultivate durians and so are unable to take advantage of such forest development. Currently they only sell the small number of durians they obtain from the trees they own in the forest and those in the village area left to them by their ancestors. They do not develop new durian orchards or plant new durian trees.

Identity of Forest People

The upper people have become forest developers. They have returned to the forest, but they are not the same people as they were when they lived there. They are now forest developers who have carried durian seedlings and tin roofs into the forest on their motorbikes. In fact, they have developed areas that should normally not be used for cultivation because they lie inside the forest reservation area. The land the villagers have developed for durian cultivation in the village area beyond the borders of the Orang Asli reservation is referred to as stolen cultivated land (*tanah corobo/ceroboh*). The borders of the Orang Asli reservation are complex, and government officials have turned a blind eye to this development of stolen cultivated land. In exchange for turning a blind eye, and to keep the officials happy, the villagers send them durians as “bribes” during the durian season. By contrast, outsiders are completely unaware of the durian orchards in the forest. The villagers deliberately leave the roads leading to the forest orchards in poor condition. In these secret places, they plant durian trees and obtain extra money from the orchards.

The identity of the forest people is a relic of the past. Based on their memory of the fact that their ancestors were forest people, however, the forest developers are forging a new relationship with the forest. They carefully protect the forests from outside intrusion and, at the same time, develop the durian orchards in the forest and gain a profit from them.

The forest hides the villagers’ secret durian orchards. While this remains the case, the villagers’ lives will, for the time being, be secure. However, the forest is gradually disappearing through development. In

addition, the forest environment has become polluted, the durian season is now irregular and unpredictable, and the quality of the durians themselves has decreased. Despite these problems, it seems to me that the “forest developers” can still be described as “forest people”. This is because, though it goes without saying, they are the only ones who are able to develop the forest productively rather than destructively.

Certainly, in the past the forest people plundered the forest resources, in that they simply took the forest products. However, given their use of forest resources for personal consumption only, they had a negligible influence on the forest environment. With the arrival of the market economy, however, forest products were indiscriminately gathered and forest resources dried up. The limit of the previous plundering type of relationship with the forest was soon surpassed. In response to this situation, the upper people as forest developers are re-establishing a sustainable method of forest resource management. The fact that they are forest people enables them to have this new relationship with the forest; in other words, they are people with a thorough knowledge of the forest.

Their use of the forest resources, however, maintains a delicate balance. In other districts, the Orang Asli relationship with the forest has produced a variety of tragic situations. For example, forest resources have been exhausted through indiscriminate gathering of forest products. Others have failed in their attempts to switch to being forest developers (i.e. to switch to settled agriculture or, due to development on forestland and logging and deforestation, to retain forest territory they owned in the past). There is also evidence of impoverishment and social maladjustment due to changes in the forest environment.

Regarding the current situation in the forest, a villager states the following:

Development undertaken by the government has destroyed the forest and changed it so completely that it is unable to reproduce itself. Who knows what will happen? Whatever happens, though, is the government’s responsibility. There is nothing we can do. Certainly we do not have enough power to resist what is happening.

The villagers’ use of forest resources does not fundamentally alter the forest environment in the ways that forest logging, deforestation and forest development projects do. Their method of forest management is in accordance with the customary practice of using only a part of the forest.

In Part II, I identified the division of Kampung Durian Tawar villagers into the upper people and the lower people (a division the villagers themselves make) and discussed the two groups’ responses to government-

led economic development. I have also looked at the economic disparity resulting from these different responses. To conclude Part II, in this chapter I have looked at the responses of the villagers to the development and the market economy, through a consideration of the villagers' relationships to the forest.

The responses of the villagers (particularly of the upper people) to development and the market economy considered thus far are intimately connected to their use of *adat*. I discuss this further in the following chapters. The villagers' response discussed in this chapter, while influenced by the "logic" of the outside world, is one of fitting development to the villagers' particular circumstances. The villagers have thereby re-established a new relationship with the forest through revitalizing what had become a moribund forest for them. The villagers' response to Islamization using *adat* will be discussed in the following chapters, but can be summarized in the following way: in response to the friction the villagers experience with the outside world in the form of Islamization, they have re-constructed their identity using *adat* as a discourse of resistance that emphasizes non-Islam-ness and serves as a counter to Islamization.

Notes

1. The British Commonwealth forces moved Orang Asli living in the forest to resettlement camps surrounded by barbed wire. In some cases trucks suddenly appeared and the people were forcibly removed from the forest. Orang Asli who sided with the Communist insurgents died fighting the British Commonwealth forces. Many of the people living in the resettlement camps also died, either from malnutrition or from being unable to adjust to life in the camps. Along with the period of Japanese occupation, the period of the Emergency was tragic for the Orang Asli.
2. This time the battleground was the forest, the basis of the peoples' lives and resources. The Communist insurgents used the forest as a base from which to engage in their resistance against the British. They also used the Orang Asli as food providers, as guides and as fighters against the British. Many Orang Asli sided with the Communist insurgents and participated in the fighting. The repression of Communism was to have a subtle effect on future policies towards the Orang Asli.

3. The villagers speak of how the wild animals of the forest were both food (*lauk*) and at the same time friends (*kawan*) or companions (*sahabat*). Here we get a glimpse of their awareness that the forest resources were previously not harvested indiscriminately.
4. This is evident in the fact that even nowadays villagers (mostly the lower people) still lead a hunter-gatherer lifestyle and never plant durian trees. According to them, buying durian seedlings is a “waste”. For people accustomed to a system where forest products growing naturally in the wild are gathered for personal consumption, and where any surplus is sold to wholesalers to obtain money, investing a lot of energy in forest products that grow naturally in the wild is inconceivable. If the new, planted trees are not successful, they reason, an unnecessary “loss” of energy is incurred. For the villagers who think along these lines, it is even a “waste” to clear the grass and weeds from around the trees before the durian harvest so that the fallen durians can easily be spotted. Consequently they very rarely engage in this sort of practice.
5. Because of the environment in the village area, sometimes the growth of the durians is hindered and the durian fruit does not mature. This has prompted a re-evaluation of the commodity value of the more natural forest durians.

PART 3



Living with Islamization

PART 3

Living with Islamization

As discussed thus far, Kampung Durian Tawar has been given the role as a model for development and has been positioned close to the state by the JHEOA and other government authorities. Many incidents relating to Islamization in the village, therefore, call for attention beyond the village level and must be considered in the context of its relation with the state.

In Part III, I describe various incidents caused by Islamization in Kampung Durian Tawar, and focus on the responses of the Orang Asli to state-led Islamization. Many of the incidents described occurred between 1996 and 1998, when I was staying in the village.



Plate 64: Undang's visit and Islamic missionary activities. The purpose of this program was to promote Islamic missionary activities at Kampung Durian Tawar. PERKIM, the state government, and the JHEOA invited the Undang of Jelebu to visit the village and to meet the villagers. Batin Janggut and the village leaders could not refuse to allow this program because they heard that the honorable Undang (Malay regional chieftain) had hoped to visit their village. [NT-1998]

Chapter 8

The Taboo of Incest

I begin this chapter with a myth passed down in Kampung Durian Tawar. The mythological history of the village begins with “incest”.

In a village on the island of Percha lived Gentar Alam (to shake the heavens) and his younger sister Bumi (the earth). They lived together in their house. Gentar, a warrior, was often away in battles. On one such occasion, Bumi discovered she was pregnant. Suspecting that Gentar was the father of the child Bumi was carrying, the villagers accused the brother and sister of incest. Gentar and Bumi could not bear the abuse. They fled the island with their kinfolk to the Malay Peninsula. Bumi gave birth to a child, named Batin Pah Galang, who became our ancestor.

Incest is a taboo found in most societies. However, the definition of incest varies from society to society, as do the sanctions applied to offenders. Incest is also forbidden in Kampung Durian Tawar, and certain vindictory sanctions under *adat* are taken against those who violate the taboo.

Nevertheless, I have come across cases of what I will call “unresolved incest”. In these situations, incest occurred but no sanctions were implemented. The enforcement of the Islamization policy on the Orang Asli since the 1980s has had a significant effect on the cases of incest I discuss in this chapter. As a result of the state-led Islamization policy, the number of Islamic converts among the Orang Asli is increasing, which is a threat to the social order of the village. For example, in one case the parents of a girl who committed incest had converted to Islam, and were now in conflict with the village *adat* leaders.

In this chapter and next chapter, I discuss Orang Asli *adat*¹ and village politics in respect to marriage. Cases of incest, such as those discussed in this chapter, are classified broadly as “incorrect marriages”, which is a topic discussed in the next chapter. I examine Orang Asli *adat*, which is one variety of *adat*, in relation to Islam.

Village *Adat*

The *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar is influenced by that of the matrilineal Minangkabau. Inheritance (in the past of paddy fields), succession of *adat* leadership titles and marriage customs are practiced under matrilineal principles. The Minangkabau influences, however, are of little significance to the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers.

In this book I argue that the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers may have “borrowed” their *adat* from the Malays in neighboring areas, but they nonetheless actively control what they adopt and how they put it into practice (cf. de Certeau 1987). From this standpoint, we can understand their rationale when they describe their *adat* as comprising their own practices (*cara kita*) rather than something influenced by the Malays. They often insist that their *adat* is free from Islamic elements and therefore is “the genuine *adat*” (*adat benar*). They also criticize the Malays in Negeri Sembilan for being caught in a dilemma between patrilineal Islam and matrilineal *adat*.

The Orang Asli’s ability to maintain their own *adat* arises from their special legal status. In the Orang Asli policy of 1961, the government granted the Orang Asli rights to maintain their customs, political system, laws and institutions, as long as these did not contradict the national legal system. The policy goes further, stating that these means of social order must be used as much as possible in dealing with crimes committed by Orang Asli (Nobuta 1996a: 113). The administration also leaves the judicial power with the *adat* leadership headed by the Batin, unless this conflicts with the national judicature (Nobuta 1998: 15). When it does conflict, the police or the national law deals with the case. For example, sanctions enforcing physical action, such as banishment, could clash with a national law. Hence, the sanctions taken by *adat* are in most cases restricted to financial punishment such as fines.

The villagers are especially afraid of the magical powers (or sorcery) of the Batin in his role as judge. In a “trial” the credibility of a witness can be tested by the use of the Batin’s sword (*keris*). When a witness makes a dubious statement, he/she may be asked if he/she is prepared to step over the *keris* (as proof of telling the truth). If she/he is lying, the witness is said

to be too fearful of the Batin's magical power to step over the sword and will eventually confess the truth.

This principle of judicial independence functions reasonably well, as long as all the parties concerned are Orang Asli. However, when a dispute involves an outsider, be the outsider Malay, Chinese or other, it is dealt with through the outsider's law or by negotiation with the outsider. In a criminal case, such as rape or murder, the police may well remain uninvolved, provided that both the offender and the victim are Orang Asli and that the case is settled. The court intervenes if the victim is Malay or any other non-Orang Asli.

There was a rape case in Kampung Durian Tawar a few years ago. This was not reported to the police, and the offender was fined.² One case involving an outsider had a different outcome. In 1996 a young villager raped a Malay woman. He was later arrested, tried and given a jail sentence, which he is still serving.

This principle also applies to marriages. When a villager marries an outsider, in most cases the marriage conforms with the latter's marriage law, whether Malay or Chinese. Problems often arise when the marriage partner is a Malay Muslim (Mohd. Tap 1990: 136-57). The Orang Asli partner has no choice but to convert to Islam when he/she marries under Islamic law, which prohibits marriage with a pagan.

When an Orang Asli and an outsider wish to marry under Orang Asli *adat*, the marriage usually takes place according to the *adat* of the village to which the Orang Asli partner belongs. In relation to the state, the marriage custom of the Orang Asli is respected, but there is no state law that covers their union. Related to this, the Orang Asli do not have the custom of registering a marriage. The JHEOA, with its jurisdiction over marriages, conducts a household census but does not provide a so-called marriage registry. In the situation where Orang Asli "customary law" is not incorporated within the national legal system, the lack of a marriage registry places Orang Asli marriages out of the reach of state law. Such marriages require that both parties be Orang Asli and that, in compliance with the village *adat*, a dispute over the marriage be resolved without any involvement of outside authorities, such as the police.

In most cases when both the bride and groom are Orang Asli, the wedding ceremony is conducted in conformity with the village *adat*. However, this practice is changing as more Orang Asli convert to Islam. Now a marriage between a Muslim Orang Asli and a non-Muslim partner can cause friction. The wedding party faces difficult decisions about the law or model on which the marriage ceremony is to be administered, about

who officiates during the ceremony, about whether or not the non-Muslim must convert, about who prepares what for the feast, and so on.

The emergence of Islamic converts among the Orang Asli has given rise to socially and legally sensitive issues. Islamic converts are expected to follow Islamic law. With the Orang Asli, however, this is not so simple. In Negeri Sembilan, on the one hand, the JHEOA issued a statement that Muslim Orang Asli did not have to conform to *adat*. The statement was sent from Undang Johol to the Batins via the JHEOA in Negeri Sembilan and Melaka. The notification laid down the principle that Muslim Orang Asli abide by Islamic law. The Aboriginal Peoples Act, on the other hand, allows an Islamic convert or any other religion to remain Orang Asli, suggesting that Muslim Orang Asli do not necessarily have to obey Islamic law. Hooker points out that the legal status of Islamic converts remains equivocal even today (1991: 53, 55-57, 61, 70-71).

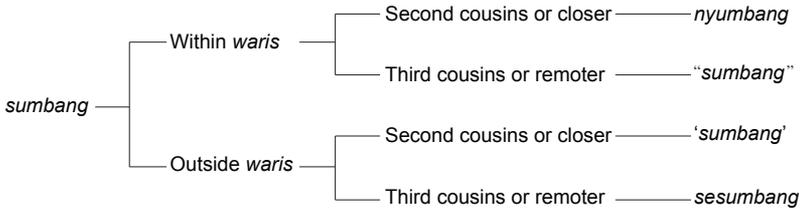
In Kampung Durian Tawar, in response to the notification from the JHEOA, Islamic converts are in principle expected to follow Islamic law, without having to obey *adat*. However, in reality many of the converts who defy the village *adat* do not necessarily follow Islamic law either.

As mentioned in Part II, the lower people can be related to the upper people by kinship or by marriage but there are no members of both matrilineal descent groups holding the title of *adat* leadership. Such people have a marginal standing in the power structure of the village. Therefore, conversion to Islam by some of these people has not been a significant threat to the upper people. However, it can cause a dispute among the lower people, which often leads to friction among the upper people over the village leadership. This in turn makes it difficult to resolve the original dispute. In one of many aspects of the “unresolved incest” case discussed in this chapter, we see a leadership struggle among the upper people over a dispute among the lower people.

***Adat* Solution to Incest**

As presented in their own myth, those who commit incest are usually cast under suspicion by the rest of the village until they can no longer stand the humiliation and flee. Even today, newcomers are often rumored to be fugitives from their home villages where they have caused an incest-related problem. In one neighboring Orang Asli village, a father and his unmarried daughter were living together when the daughter was found to be pregnant. Suspected of incest, the father killed himself out of shame (*malu*). This story shows that incest, or even circumstances that draw suspicion of it, is a violation to which social sanctions are due.

Figure 13
 Concepts of *sumbang* in Kampung Durian Tawar



Sumbang is the Orang Asli (or Malay) term for incest. Its original meaning is “to violate *adat*”, but in its actual usage it expresses the concept of sexual or marital relations between opposite sexes that violate *adat*. In Kampung Durian Tawar *sumbang* derives a number of subordinate concepts.

Figure 13 is a simplified chart that explains the concept of *sumbang*. All sexual behavior between relatives of opposite sexes that violate *adat* are called *sumbang*. In Kampung Durian Tawar, *sumbang* applies approximately to relatives that are second cousins or closer. As degrees of consanguinity are subject to the villagers’ memories of their genealogy, second cousins do not always form the threshold, but they do generally serve as the reference point, which I will express as ‘*sumbang*’ in this chapter. When incest involves third cousins or more distant relatives in a matrilineal descent group (*waris*), the villagers also use the term *sumbang*. I will express the latter usage as “*sumbang*” in this book to distinguish from the standard, ‘*sumbang*’.

Sesumbang is a word derived from *sumbang*. This concept covers a much wider scope. In the usage of this word, it does not matter whether or not the man and the woman concerned are related. *Sesumbang* includes acts by a man and a woman of being together on their own (*sesumbang pemandangang*), talking on a topic of a sexual nature in the presence of a person senior to them (*sesumbang percakapan*) and going out together (*sesumbang ikut-turut*).

The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar strongly believe in strict segregation of the sexes. Unmarried men and women are prohibited from coming into physical contact with a member of the opposite sex. Premarital sexual relations are forbidden, and the sinners must face sanctions in some form, imposed by *adat* in this world or in the world after death (Baharon 1973: 73-74). Repeat offenders of *sesumbang* either receive sanctions

(*hukum*) or are forced to marry each other. Nevertheless, while these are general rules, in practice they are not strictly applied in all cases.

Tangkap basah is the term for a situation in which a man and a woman are arrested by the woman's relatives and brought to the *adat* leaders to resolve their offence with "either sanctions or marriage". This is another concept considered to have been borrowed from the Malays. To Malay Muslims, for a man and a woman who are not wed to each other to be alone in an enclosed space is considered behavior against Islamic precepts, and is called *khalwat*. If caught by the Islamic religious police, the offenders are arrested and fined. *Tangkap basah* is the Malay term to refer to such a situation (Mizushima 1993: 87). This Islamic idea of segregation of the sexes was adopted by Orang Asli society, where it has developed subtle differences in meaning and content. In the Orang Asli version of *tangkap basah*, it is the woman's relatives who "arrest" them, not the religious police. According to the villagers' accounts, the practice of *tangkap basah* was introduced after they encountered Malays.

Offenders of sexual incorrectness (*salah*, more generally, "wrong") in most cases marry each other to avoid a situation of '*sumbang*' or *sesumbang*. In other words, in Kampung Durian Tawar, where extramarital sexual relations are forbidden, a potential situation of '*sumbang*' or *sesumbang* is absolved by the means of marriage.

I now discuss this in the context of matches between cousins. If the couple are cross cousins who are second cousins or closer, their marriage in most cases is not disputed, even though their relationship comprises '*sumbang*'. Most often, however, theirs is not a normal marriage that follows an engagement. It takes place in the form of *tangkap basah* preceded by a pregnancy (*bunting*). When the match is between two second or closer patrilineal parallel cousins, their union is specifically called "hot" marriage (*kepanasan*), which comprises '*sumbang*' and is vigorously prohibited. However, this is also resolved by the means of marriage, mainly under *tangkap basah*.

A match involving two matrilineal parallel cousins, which I will discuss further in this chapter, draws the greatest disapproval. In the past, such cousins were never allowed to marry. Apparently, as punishment for this offence the man and the woman were bound and immersed in water seven times each (*sangkar rendam tujuh kali*). If they survived this punishment, as further punishment they would be given some food and then be banished (*halau*) from the village at midnight. Regardless of whether or not these punishments were actually carried out, this shows that the taboo was regarded as especially abominable. Today, the villagers

say, these punishments cannot be carried out, as the perpetrators would be arrested by the police.

The taboo of a union between matrilineal parallel cousins relates to the matrilineal aspects of village *adat*, in which matrilineal lineages are central to kinship relations. Strictly speaking, the matrilineal lineages are called *perut*, meaning womb or abdomen. In Kampung Durian Tawar, where inheritance and titles (*pusaka*) are passed on according to matrilineal principles, the villagers more commonly use the term *waris* (the successor of *pusaka*) to refer to their matrilineal descent groups. The taboo of a union between matrilineal parallel cousins is connected to that of sexual relations and marriages within a *waris*. While all sexual relations and marriages between a parent and a child, a brother and a sister, and first and second cousins are taboos, those within a *waris* are more strictly forbidden and, more specifically, are called *nyumbang* or *penyumbang* (I use the former expression here).

Matrilineal parallel cousins can marry in instances where the kinship between them is distant. From my genealogical survey, I observed that the villagers' genealogical memory seems to play a role, in that it is primarily concerned with the living, while memory of the deceased is generally short.³ Today, villagers are named in the Malay or Islamic style, with the individual's name followed by that of his/her father. We can ascertain that Ayof bin Ekal's father is Ekal, but nothing in his name tells us who his mother is. If Ayof's mother died when he was very young, he most likely would not know her name.

Villagers do not remember the names or genealogical relations of most of the deceased. Accordingly, grandparents (*aki/wan*), great-grandparents (*moyang*) and their contemporaries are generally beyond their memory. However, Batin Janggut and other *adat* leaders possess extensive knowledge of the genealogy of the village population. This enables them to pass judgment on who may or may not marry whom. When they decide that the kinship relations of a particular man and woman are remote enough (with second cousins being the threshold), they may allow them to marry. Thus, incest between third cousins or more distant relatives within a *waris* can be resolved by marriage, as is the case with '*sumbang*' mentioned earlier. This incest is expressed as "*sumbang*" in this chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 5, kinship in Kampung Durian Tawar can be seen as bilateral with a matrilineal ideology (matrilineal *adat*). If we examine the concept of *sumbang* with this in mind, it becomes clear that the Kampung Durian Tawar *adat* combines a number of different norms. First, '*sumbang*' involves the taboo of sexual relations and marriage

between a man and a woman whose kinship is scrutinized according to both matrilineal and patrilineal lineages. Second, segregation of the sexes found in the concept of *sesumbang* reflects the Islamic values of Malay Muslim society. Third, *nyumbang* is a concept related to the ideology of the matrilineal principle.

I will seek to identify the miscellany of norms that comprise the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. I will also focus on how the Orang Asli have adopted these apparently contradictory norms and put them into practice as their own. A concrete example of this is *tangkap basah*, which resolves “incorrectness” by having the offenders arrested by their own relatives rather than the religious police. Another is the resolution of ‘*sumbang*’ by marriage after imposing sanctions according to the *adat*. Yet another is found when the rule for “*sumbang*” is applied to offenders of *nyumbang* to make them marry, as mentioned above.

Cases of Incest

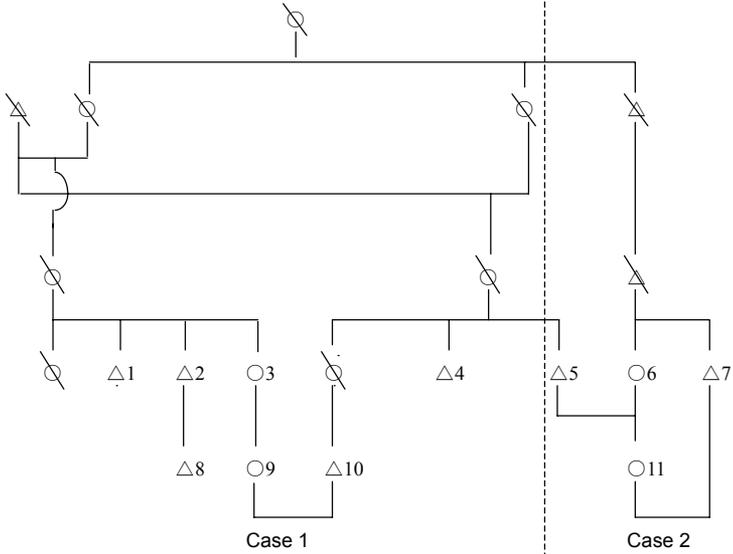
Resolved Incest (Case One)

Here I discuss a couple who married as a consequence of “*sumbang*”. The pair married under *tangkap basah* in February 1985, when the bride, Zaida, was pregnant with their first child. As of 1997, thirty-year-old Zaida and her thirty-four-year-old husband Konchon had an eleven-year-old son, an eight-year-old daughter and one-year-old twin girls.

According to the genealogical chart (Figure 14), Zaida and Konchon can be regarded as either second or third cousins. If their kinship is tracked down from the sisters in the first generation, they would be considered third cousins. If it is tracked down from the half-sisters by different mothers, however, they would be second cousins. In terms of status in Kampung Durian Tawar, both are members of the group holding *adat* leadership titles, including that of the Batin. Among other things, this distinguishes Zaida and Konchon from the couple discussed in Case Two.

When Zaida was first pregnant, there was confusion as to how the case should be dealt with under *adat*. It was later decided that they must marry. Batin Janggut, the brother of Manyo (Zaida’s mother), made the decision. According to the Batin’s interpretation, the two young members of the same *waris* were third cousins (not second cousins) and, therefore, were offenders of “*sumbang*” who must marry. A wedding ceremony is normally officiated by the *ibubapa* (the head of the bride’s matrilineal descent group) or an *adat* leader (*lembaga adat*). Batin Janggut took on the role himself. He explained that no other *adat* leader could have borne

Figure 14
Genealogical chart



○	Female
⊘	Deceased female
△	Male
⊠	Deceased male
○ — △	Relationship between siblings
○ — △	Unknown relationship between siblings
○ — △	A tie of marriage
○ = △	
○ — △	Divorce
⊘ — ⊠	
○ — △	Relationship of Parent to Child
○ — △	Adoption

Upper people | Lower people

- 1 Jenang Misai
- 2 Batin Janggut
- 3 Manyo
- 4 Jekerah Gemuk: later promoted to Menteri
- 5 Adunan: Head of the Muslim converts
- 6 Buntu: Islamic convert
- 7 Pondo: Islamic convert
- 8 Tikak
- 9 Zaida
- 10 Konchon
- 11 Merah: Islamic convert

the misfortune that the act of marrying the pair would invite, such was the significance of the decision. The families and relatives of both Zaida and Konchon were fined and the couple were divested of their rights (of inheritance, succession and usufruct) concerning *pusaka* of the *waris* of which they had been members.⁴

Marriage under '*sumbang*' also carries monetary penalties for the relatives of the couple. Zaida and Konchon's case differed from '*sumbang*' in that they were stripped of their rights as members of their matrilineal descent group. This brings to the fore the issue of how to treat their four children. The solution is that, while Konchon and Zaida will never have their *waris* membership reinstated, their children can claim their rights. According to the villagers, the children must wait until Batin Janggut, who married their parents, is replaced by a new Batin, and then they must perform a ritual of *merujuk* to seek a pardon from Manyo (the head of the *waris*) (in this instance not on the husband's side but on the wife's). The formalities demand that the children receive sanctions (*minta hukum*) from the Batin and ask the pardon (*ampun*) of the *waris*.

A factor that helped to make Zaida and Konchon's marriage possible was the amicable association between Zaida's parents, Manyo and Ukal, and the *adat* leadership of Kampung Durian Tawar. This presents a contrast to Case Two, in which the father, Adunan, was in opposition to Batin Janggut and other *adat* leaders. Following Zaida's marriage, nevertheless, her parents were said to have fallen ill and to have suffered madness (*gila*), and her sister, Zainon, suffered insomnia. Some villagers are of the opinion that they suffered in retribution for the marriage, while others dismiss such a view.

To the matrilineal descent groups that the *adat* leaders belong to, this marriage is tainted. To the groups in opposition, it serves as a focus for their criticism. Dissidents against Batin Janggut accuse him of having married a couple guilty of *nyumbang*.

Unresolved Incest (Case Two)

I heard of the second case of incest (Figure 14) when I was conducting an interview survey of households in Kampung Durian Tawar. I was at the residence of Jekerah Gemuk (later promoted to Menteri) with my field assistant, Asat, when Jekerah Gemuk asked me if marrying the daughter of one's sister was allowed in Japan. I answered that in Japan such a scenario was impossible. He explained that Merah, the daughter of his brother, Adunan, lives in a de facto married with Pondo, her mother's brother, with whom she has children. "But isn't it wrong (*salah*)?" I asked, to which he replied, "It is. But we cannot do anything. They are Muslim".

By that time I had learned of some unusual marriage practices among the Orang Asli, but this account of incest disturbed me greatly. The fact that they had produced children surprised me. I inquired if they had no concern about possible mental and physical disorders in such offspring. Jekerah Gemuk, as well as Asat, replied that the couple had no choice but to raise the children. In fact, there is quite a high rate of consanguineous marriages in Kampung Durian Tawar, of which the villagers are aware. They often say that the so-called mad men/women (*orang gila*) and the physically disabled in the village are results of consanguineous marriages.⁵

Later in the survey, I obtained more information about the couple in Case Two. The woman's parents had converted to Islam. Because of the village politics surrounding Islamization, I was unable to talk directly to them.⁶ The information that I did manage to collect can be summarized as follows. From the perspective of Pondo, he "married" his sister Buntu's daughter, Merah. In 1997 Pondo was twenty years of age and Merah seventeen, and they had two children. Presumably, they "married" when Pondo was about eighteen and Merah fifteen. A majority of families in Kampung Durian Tawar are uxori-local. As such, Merah and Pondo lived in the same house as Buntu (Merah's mother and Pondo's sister). Pregnancy preceded their "marriage". When Merah's parents found out that their daughter was expecting a baby, they brought the matter to the *adat* leaders in charge of marriage.

The problem was too great for the village *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar to manage. As it was impossible to marry the couple under *adat*, Merah's father, Adunan, and the *adat* leaders disputed it. Adunan and his wife had converted to Islam by then, and had been showing strong signs of defying the *adat*.

My informants seemed to believe that the marriage would have been granted if the couple had been Muslim.⁷ Pondo had apparently attempted to convert to Islam. Subsequently, his identification card was confiscated, and he applied to the JHEOA for a new one. On his new card, he allegedly wrote his matrilineal grandfather's name in place of his father's (an identification card normally carries the cardholder's father's name following his own name and the conjunction *bin/binti*). Pondo went to another village and obtained its Batin's signature to verify the new card.

My interpretation of the rumors about Pondo's conversion and identification card is as follows. An Islamic convert loses his/her old name and registers a new one.⁸ The anticipation is that the names of the incestuous couple would be deleted; thus, in this case their Orang

Asli descent would also have motivated Pondo to convert. The system automatically cancels the convert's old identification card. However, this had probably not been Pondo and his family's intention. They may have been after no more than a name change. This explains his reapplication for a new card. He could not seek Batin Janggut's signature, with whom he was in strife. Having obtained the signature of a Batin in a neighboring village instead, he falsely reported to the JHEOA that he had lost his old card, in order to receive a new card carrying his grandfather's name.

Pondo's siblings, who are non-Muslim, have confirmed that he is an Islamic convert. With both of her parents being converts, Merah is most likely to be a convert as well. They are Muslim, at least formally, once they have registered themselves with the Department of Islamic Affairs. Convert or not, if, as alleged, his name was changed, any conflict with Islamic law is probably no longer an issue, because the new name does not carry his descent. It is difficult to believe that Pondo and his family willfully carried out the fabrication. However, one thing is clear: conversion to Islam and the accompanying name change enables a villager to lose his/her descent and former name.

It is slightly plausible that the Department of Islamic Affairs pays no attention to the case on the grounds that the couple are Orang Asli. Apparently, this incest has not been known among Malay residents in the neighborhood.

The non-Muslim siblings of Merah's parents frowned as they talked to me about this "marriage". Many of the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers show their outrage when they say that this "marriage" is incorrect (*salah*). They also say that it is a "shame" (*malu*) that the situation is ongoing.⁹ It is worth noting, however, that the offenders and their parents countenance the incest. Batin Janggut's son, Tikak, said that he was also critical of his estranged father for having failed to marry the couple according to the *adat*.

Pondo and Merah concluded that they also could not marry in the Islamic way. Before they continued their cohabitation, they stayed away in a forest for a week, which they decided served as their banishment by *adat*. Two children have been born to them. From the couple's perspective, they could not expect the *adat* leadership to resolve the incest. They therefore took matters into their own hands and carried out what they thought should have been done under *adat*. They have no reason to doubt that "the incest has been resolved".

The *adat* leaders are not happy about the solution, but they cannot directly intervene. Merah's parents are Islamic converts, who are defiant

against the Kampung Durian Tawar *adat*, especially when the *adat* leaders administer it. Although the “marriage” obviously violates Islamic law, the Department of Islamic Affairs pays no attention to the case on the grounds that the couple are Orang Asli. They are Islamic converts but their “marriage” is not registered in the department. This may be the reason why the authority cannot handle the case under the Islamic law.

Incest in the Periphery

In Malaysia, where Malay Muslims dominate, the non-Muslim Orang Asli constitute one of the marginal societies. Since Malaysia achieved its independence, Malay discrimination against the non-Muslim Orang Asli has been on the increase. Discriminatory views and attitudes of the Malays towards the Orang Asli have also spread to the Chinese and Indian populations (Mohd. Tap 1990: 444). In other words, the Chinese and Indians also disrespect the Orang Asli and display discriminatory behavior towards them. Hence, relatively few interracial marriages occur between an Orang Asli and someone outside the minority community. Although often found before and during the British colonial period, interracial marriage with a Malay has become almost impossible.

Today most inter-ethnic marriages are between an Orang Asli woman and a Chinese trader (*tauke*) or a marginal member of the Malay society. Marriages between Orang Asli women and migrant workers from Indonesia are also on the rise. In short, it is most often a marginal man of the respective society who marries an Orang Asli woman.

With these limited opportunities of intermarriage, endogamy among the Orang Asli is rising. This is because the pool of prospective partners for Orang Asli is restricted. This tendency has become even stronger as the numbers of Islamic converts increase in the Orang Asli community. Some Orang Asli give up a match because, to marry their Muslim Orang Asli partner, they would have to convert. The class structure that exists in Orang Asli society also restricts the choice of a spouse. In Kampung Durian Tawar a male member of the lower people is highly unlikely to marry a female of the upper people.

From Pondo’s perspective (Case Two), his choice of a wife was extremely limited. He could not hope for a partner from the upper people or from a non-Orang-Asli community. Even if he was willing to convert to Islam, he could hardly have found a Malay woman who would marry an Orang Asli who was generally perceived as poor. Exactly what made him begin sexual relations with his own niece will remain a mystery, but it is clear that he had to choose a wife from an extremely short list.

Significance of the Adat

Sanctions by *adat* carry more than economic significance. The incest in Case One was clearly a violation of *adat*. The *adat* leaders interpreted this as a matter that could lead to a more dangerous (*bahaya*) situation unless resolved by means compliant with *adat*. It resolved the violation in the form of marriage under the *adat* to abort the sexual relation between the unmarried man and woman. With this logic of the *adat* leaders, unresolved incest is a dangerous situation, which would cause illnesses, accidents and other misfortunes for the guilty party and their relatives. Although sanctions were imposed by the *adat* in Case One, the offenders' own responsibility (*tanggung sendiri*) was still stressed. A child with disabilities, confusion of kinship, illness fallen on a family member or whatever, the consequences of incest must be resolved, after all, under the offenders' own responsibility. The *adat* leaders can only impose sanctions to remove some of the possible causes of the misfortunes, to abort a dangerous situation and to recover order. Sanctions by *adat* possess magical significance, which seems to be the principle on which the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar works.

Execution of sanctions under *adat* also serves as a brake on the third party, and ends slanders and rumors. As *adat* is virtually a law within kinsfolk, the executor and the executee of the sanctions are kin to each other. A fine imposed by *adat* is little more than a formality. Besides, the fine is not large.¹⁰

As noted earlier, to resolve such disputes as in Cases One and Two by *adat* is legal because of the special status of the Orang Asli and because their custom lacks a marriage registry. *Adat* is restricted, however, when it contradicts state law. With the incest in Case Two, for example, the village *adat* calls for the death penalty by drowning and banishment, which is presumably against the state law.

Contradictions to the state law aside, it is believed that if the guilty parties in Case Two receive some form of sanctions by *adat*, the village will be saved, at least to some degree, from danger. Pondo and Merah stayed away in a forest for a week, which they interpreted as banishment and hoped would prevent misfortune. In their interpretation of *adat*, their action resolved the incest. In the *adat* leaders' interpretation, on the contrary, sanctions must be executed according to the *adat* administered by themselves, and makes many villagers in Kampung Durian Tawar concerned about the possible disputes and misfortunes that may arise from the incest.

Power Relations

Merah's parents and Batin Janggut's son Tikak see the incest in Case Two as acceptable only because Batin Janggut approved the marriage of the incest offenders in Case One. Adunan and Tikak interpret the incest in both Case One and Case Two to be *nyumbang* (incest between second cousins or closer relatives within a *waris*). Batin Janggut resolved Case One after his decision that it was '*sumbang*' (incest between third cousins or more distant relatives within a *waris*). He decided that Case Two was *nyumbang*, which does not allow marriage as an option and requires vindictory sanctions by *adat*. This discrepancy between the two interpretations of *adat* is a product of the politics in Kampung Durian Tawar.

When comparing the cases of incest, it is worth examining the kinship factors. With the exception of Merah's father, Adunan, none of the families and relatives involved in Case Two belong to the groups holding a title of *adat* leadership. In fact, they all fall under the category of lower people. Adunan and Tikak, who are in conflict with the *adat* leaders, including Batin Janggut, belong to the upper people. There is friction among the upper people over the village leadership and it is in light of this situation that the incest of Case Two is often discussed. It is also said that Adunan's alienation from Batin Janggut prompted him to convert to Islam.

In this context we can understand why Case One has been resolved but Case Two has not. To the upper people, Case One presented a serious violation of the *adat* that they advocate and therefore required resolution by the *adat*. The incest in Case Two was a "tool" in the power struggle among the upper people, to whom, after all, the case was merely the business of the lower people. The latter have animosities towards the former and tend to defy the solutions advocated by the *adat* leaders. Because Merah's parents are Islamic converts, and because the offenders themselves have converted, the *adat* leaders could risk being labeled as anti-Islamic if they intervened. The *adat* leaders have come to the conclusion that they will not become actively involved in the effort to resolve the case.

In effect, the *adat* leaders have neither tried to, nor can they, resolve Case Two by *adat*. Endorsed by Islam, so to speak, the Islamic converts among the lower people confront the *adat* leaders. Also, among the upper people, an anti-Batin Janggut group led by Tikak has been challenging the authority of the Batin, often with the backing of Islam and the state. This confrontation in the realm of village politics has created a situation that leaves the incest unresolved.

Adat, Islam and the State

Today in Kampung Durian Tawar norms by *adat* do exist, as do those of Islamic law and of institutions of the state such as the police and the courts. If someone unsatisfied with sanctions imposed by *adat* reports this to the police, the solution by *adat* can instantly lose its effect. If a sanction by *adat* contradicts the state law, in principle the state law overrules to resolve the dispute.

In Kampung Durian Tawar most consanguineous marriages of *sumbang* incur sanctions according to the village *adat*. Although outsiders find some of the sanctions unacceptable, they are accepted within the village. Malays and other outsiders generally disapprove of *sumbang* being resolved by marrying the incestuous couple after going through the formalities of sanctions by *adat*, but this is permitted in Kampung Durian Tawar.¹¹

Discrepancies in the concept of incest between Islamic law and Orang Asli *adat* (of Kampung Durian Tawar) make the situation more complex. Not all of the marriages found guilty of *sumbang* (including both ‘*sumbang*’ and “*sumbang*”) under *adat* and subject to its sanctions contravene the Islamic law. The “*sumbang*” in Case One does not constitute a form of marriage forbidden by Islamic principles.¹²

Case Two inevitably involves Islamic law, as Merah’s parents are Islamic converts and the offenders of the incest (Merah and Pondo) probably are too. As noted earlier, the JHEOA in Negeri Sembilan issued a statement that Islamic converts among the Orang Asli do not necessarily have to follow their Orang Asli *adat*. In fact, the incest in Case Two, which should have been strictly forbidden, has not been resolved under *adat* as the *adat* leadership led by Batin Janggut had hoped. The rule that makes *adat* inapplicable to Islamic converts of the Orang Asli provides opportunities for Islamic law to invade the village. At the same time, it justifies the converts’ defiance of their *adat*.¹³

The laws observed by the Malays, the Muslim Orang Asli and the non-Muslim Orang Asli in relation to marriage are shown in Table 20. The question that arises here is the legal status of the Muslim Orang Asli. If conversion to Islam makes them Malay, they are supposed to follow the *adat* of the Malays and the Islamic law. Legally, however, they are never made Malay but remain Orang Asli, as noted in Part I. As they are Muslim, they are left to observe Islamic law.

In practice, however, a convert to Islam at a village level is unlikely to follow Islamic law. Like a majority of the Orang Asli observing their custom, Pondo and Merah did not register their marriage. They are in a

Table 20
Islamic laws and *adat* on marriage

	Malay <i>adat</i>	Islamic law	Orang Asli <i>adat</i>
Malays	○	○	×
Muslim Orang Asli	×	△	×
non-Muslim Orang Asli	×	×	○

○: Compliant, △: Defiant, ×: Neither

de facto relationship, so to speak. It might be the case that they converted to Islam but have not had their marriage registered in the Muslim way. If Pondo and Merah actually are Muslims committing incest, this situation would make it extremely difficult to apply the Islamic law to them. In examining the legal status of Islamic converts of the Orang Asli and the actual situation involving the people at a village level, it becomes clear that there are no legal means to apply.

In this chapter, through discussions of the Orang Asli rules and practices concerning incest, I have described a situation of unresolved incest as a consequence of Islamization. Non-conformity to *adat*, Islamic law or state law leaves the Islamic converts in Case Two in a legal vacuum. Thus, the emergence of converts and the issue of their legal status could erupt in various forms of conflict and produce disorder in Orang Asli society in terms of law and norms with *adat*, Islam and the state law. The confusion of norms is likely to have a grave effect on the identity of Orang Asli and their practices.

Notes

1. *Adat* is a Malay term that arose from an Arabic word *ada*, meaning “customs and practices” or “traditional order and customary law”. The term is widely used in southern Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern Philippines (Maeda 1986: 5). *Adat* was originally defined as “local customs”, as opposed to Islamic law (Sharia), which is imposed universally on the entire Muslim world (Miyazaki 1999: 305).
2. There have also been murders among the Orang Asli. In one case, the murderer fled to another village and the victim was buried with the cause of death undetermined.
3. As Pelez (1988) pointed out, the villagers’ kinship does not revolve around a family or ancestry but around siblings. The emphasis on sibling relationships is considered to have a negative effect on the span of their genealogical memory. In Negeri Sembilan, kinship tends to be traced bilaterally, with an overlapping matrilineal ideology. The multilayered view of kinship exerts an influence on Orang Asli society.
4. These measures are merely a formality. In reality, there is an intimate relationship between the couple and the members of the *waris*.
5. The villagers are all related to each other in one form or another. Therefore, a majority of the marriages within the village are between relatives. Any correlation between the consanguineous marriages and their mental “illness” is difficult to substantiate. Out of the village population of approximately 400, five or six are so-called *orang gila* and about a dozen more have experienced “a state of madness” or mass hysteria. “Incorrect marriages” (consanguineous marriages) are often to blame for these cases. Incidentally, more than twenty villagers are in the state of *latah* (Winzeler 1995), which is considered to be a mental “illness” peculiar to Malay society (Nobuta 2000b).
6. Some Islamic converts, including the couple’s parents, refused to allow me to conduct household and other surveys. Their refusal was due mostly to my position in the village (I had been conducting surveys on the side of the village leadership headed by the Batin). They would still greet me when they saw me, and never confronted me publicly.
7. They formed this view of Islam because they lacked knowledge about it. In Malaysia Islam is taught at government-run primary and middle

schools to all students, including the non-Muslim Orang Asli. However, few Islamic converts in the village received school education. They had nothing but hearsay from which to source their knowledge on Islam. Rather than reflecting their ignorance and illiteracy, the issue here is that the system fails to provide them with access to information about Islam and the outside world.

8. For example, if a man called Angkin bin Ichan (Angkin being his individual name and Ichan being his father) converts to Islam, he becomes Adunan bin Abdullah, with his original name Angkin replaced by a Muslim name of Adunan and Ichan changed to Abdullah, which is a name used for a convert's father.
9. They were also concerned about possible consequences of the incest, including mental and physical disorders in the couple's children, confusion of their kinship status, and several kinds of friction among the people.
10. The fine imposed by the Batin on his villager is normally 14 ringgit and 48 sen in serious cases. A fine imposed by a leader below the Batin is 7 ringgit and 30 sen. The fines to outsiders are decided through negotiation. I heard of a fine of 2,000 ringgit imposed in one other village.
11. The Malays are often critical of Orang Asli marriage being unrestrained free (*bebas*) marriage.
12. Nevertheless, in the general Malay Muslim view of marriage, which is based on Islamic law, the Orang Asli are thought to have many "incorrect marriages" worthy of a penalty-carrying offence in the Islamic court.
13. Islamic law is incorporated into state law, and the unwritten *adat* of the Malays is taken into consideration in court decisions. In contrast, Orang Asli *adat* is noticeably left out of consideration in the state law, although it is respected in the administration guidelines of JHEOA (Hooker 1976: 177).

Chapter 9

Politics of Incorrect Marriage

Orang Asli Adat

In this chapter I continue further discussion of *adat* in Orang Asli society. By focusing on the village politics of Kampung Durian Tawar, I consider the application of *adat* to incorrect marriage (*nikah salah*). To build on the previous chapter's discussion of *adat* norms, I now turn my attention to actual *adat* practices. The generic category of Orang Asli *adat* varies in content and ranges from patrilineal to matrilineal versions.

I have mentioned that Kampung Durian Tawar has a matrilineal *adat* influenced by that of the Minangkabau-descent Malays.¹ However, Baharon argues that the Kampung Durian Tawar *adat* is separate from that of the Malays, and points to the village myth that claims that their ancestors handed it down directly (Baharon 1973: 6). According to Baharon, therefore, the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar was not borrowed from the Malays. This view is no different from that held by the village *adat* leaders, including Batin Janggut. The leaders do not recognize the *adat* of the nearby Malays as genuine, because it is Islamic. They claim that their *adat* is truly their own; that it is non-Muslim and free from Islamic influences. In their view, Islamization prompted the Malays to deviate from “the true *adat*” (Baharon 1973: 15-16).

Nevertheless, it is important to note the diverse content of *adat*. Even within the same Temuan group, *adat* varies from one region to the next. For instance, the *adat* of the Temuan in the neighboring state of Selangor is bilateral. The *adat* of the Orang Asli in Negeri Sembilan is also diverse. Baharon records that Kampung Durian Tawar villagers insisted that the *adat* of a neighboring Orang Asli village was an “outside” *adat* (*adat luar*) with Malay influences (Baharon 1973: 16).

Any discussion of *adat* must include its relationship to Islam. In the context of enforced Islamization, *adat* is antithetical to Islam. The position of the Malay *adat* in relation to Islam is different, as the Malays are Muslim. As far as the Malays are concerned, their *adat* is positioned within the framework of Islam. For the Orang Asli community, especially in Kampung Durian Tawar, *adat* is positioned on a separate plane from Islam, as is captured in the saying “Islam is Islam, while *adat* is *adat*”.

Non-Muslim Orang Asli use *adat* as an un-Islamic counter discourse to Islamization. Placing a special emphasis on the un-Islamic nature of *adat*, they claim that they do not convert to Islam because they follow *adat*. In this context, *adat* is more than a custom or a customary law; it is a symbol representing their identity.²

In concrete terms, *adat* is emphasized in situations involving marriage and death. The method and place of burial of the deceased vary according to whether Islamic, Christian or *adat* principles are adopted. In Kampung Durian Tawar, where conversion to Islam is a recent phenomenon, Islamic converts have not yet passed away. Marriage, by contrast, often causes a dispute when it comes to how the wedding is officiated. The problem is particularly serious in a Muslim wedding because it requires the bride or groom to convert to the religion. From the *adat* leaders’ perspective, it is especially important that the wedding ceremony is conducted according to *adat*. The *adat* leaders even insist that Muslims are not permitted to have an *adat*-based wedding in the village.

At a village level, all disputes and tensions over the procedures of rituals come down to the single issue of who has the power to carry out a ceremony. The officiators of ceremonies in the village are those who administer *adat*, namely *adat* leaders. They perform funeral and wedding rituals. *Adat* leaders also have “judicial power”. To the leaders, who are in charge of *adat*, village compliance with *adat* is crucial for their very existence. As long as this is the case, the authority of the *adat* leaders is not in danger. There are occasional power struggles, of course, but these all come and go under control of *adat*.

Things changed, however, when villages came under pressure from outer forces such as development, Islamization and state power. Some villagers, such as converts to Islam, began to abandon *adat*. Muslim villagers are required to perform Islamic rituals, which the *adat* leaders have little authority to officiate. Because of this crisis, *adat* is being re-interpreted and re-defined. While this is the case in both Orang Asli and Malay communities, the *adat* pursued by the non-Muslim Orang Asli and that of the Malays are separated by subtle but significant differences.



Plates 65-66: Going to the cemetery. These plates are pictures of a burial ceremony at a nearby Temuan village in Kenaboi, Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan, which is conducted according to the *adat*. However, in practice, the method and place of burial varies depending on whether the deceased was a Muslim, Christian or followed the traditional religion. There were no Islamic funerals during the time of my fieldwork in 1998 as Islam was still a new phenomenon then in this village and in Kampung Durian Tawar. [NT-1998]

Village Politics

In Part II, I described a phenomenon of class division in Kampung Durian Tawar that arose as a consequence of the government's development policy since the 1970s. The villagers are divided into two social strata, the upper and lower people. The former include the *adat* leaders as their core members and constitute the top layer of the village hierarchy. They accept the development policy and comply with *adat*. The lower people are excluded from development and are economically disadvantaged.

Although the lower people felt antipathy towards Batin Janggut, they followed *adat* because they were afraid of his magical power. In other words, the authority of Batin Janggut with the government's backing was invincible. People would say, "He knows who speaks ill of him behind his back, and uses his sorcery to make the person fall ill or even die". This remains true even today. No one openly expresses his or her opinion against Batin Janggut.

Batin is the supreme title in the village. As the titleholder, Batin Janggut plays the roles of village headman and mediator between village and government. Until retiring in 1985, Batin Janggut worked for the JHEOA. He was closely involved in development projects, while at the same time rejecting the Islamization policy. Being of mixed blood with a Chinese father, Batin Janggut is subject to the animosities of the "pure" Orang Asli. However, the villagers never dare to express dissatisfaction, and are afraid not only of his political power but also of his ability to strike them with his magic (*ilmu*).

However, outside influences have caused a fine crack to appear in Batin Janggut's authority. As the JHEOA implemented the Islamization policy, relations between the JHEOA and the Batin, who rejected the policy, deteriorated. The JHEOA and other government authorities aimed to convert the upper people to Islam; having reached high economic levels, the upper people would stand as a model of the Islamization of the Orang Asli. During negotiations over development projects, the JHEOA officials repeatedly pressed Batin Janggut to convert. The *adat* leaders accepted development but not Islamization, and continued to refuse conversion. Controlling Batin Janggut became increasingly difficult, so the government sought to undermine Batin Janggut's authority by supporting other leaders (e.g. his son Tikak, who leads development among the Islamic converts). Batin Janggut refers to these moves as "colonization".

Batin Janggut often comments, "In the past, the white people (*orang putih*) colonized (*menjajah*) the Malays and the Orang Asli; today, it's the Malays (*orang Melayu*) who colonize the Orang Asli". He also says,

“The government’s Orang Asli policy has turned Kampung Durian Tawar into a village of confrontations”. These arguments are a sharp critique of the government’s enforced Orang Asli policy, and they convey a tinge of sarcasm about the village’s lack of monolithic solidarity with which to resist the policy. In Batin Janggut’s view, the government’s Orang Asli policies promoting development and Islamization are ultimately to blame for the class division and frictions within the village. Batin Janggut’s “argument of the colonized” is an assertion that the Orang Asli are in a colonial situation no different from that of the British colonial period. In fact, the Batin and his son Tikak have become estranged over issues of leadership in development. This has divided the village into two factions supporting the Batin and Tikak, particularly in election periods.

Tikak’s power derived from his positions as branch president of the ruling UMNO, as a JKKK committee member, and as a holder of other significant offices in the Malaysian politics of development.³ Through these offices, he simply followed the politics of development in the “Malay-style”. Tikak’s bribes to government officials and other methods did not win his father’s support and became unacceptable to the upper people. Tikak gradually brought the lower people under his control by allocating rubber projects of RISDA and PPRT projects to them.⁴ Like his father, Tikak has attempted to channel many benefits to the villagers. Unlike his father’s case, however, the upper people have met Tikak’s efforts with little appreciation and even with repulsion.

Among the upper people, a young generation of leaders is emerging and is headed by Genreh, who is the son of Manyo, the younger sister of Batin Janggut. According to the matrilineal *adat* advocated by Batin Janggut, these are the rightful successors to the *adat* leadership. Better educated by village standards, they are the elite of the community, and are involved in POASM. The new leaders support Batin Janggut’s contention.

In March 1998 an UMNO party election was held in the Kampung Durian Tawar branch. Branch president Tikak wanted to monopolize the village delegation to support a Malay parliamentary candidate. The Batin Janggut faction, led by the Batin and Genreh, supported a rival Malay candidate. Tikak shut the Batin’s opponents out of the election venue, claiming they did not have voting rights, and his supporters dominated the meeting. When it came to the vote by a show of hands, however, those who had agreed to support Tikak voted in opposition to his plan. This was a “brave revolt” considering that they raised their hands against Tikak in his presence. The election resulted in a victory for the delegate opposing Tikak and, in the state parliamentary election that followed, the Malay candidate whom Tikak supported lost his seat.

In a fit of anger, Tikak circulated a rumor that his father Batin Janggut used sorcery in the election. Until then, Tikak had been increasingly taking control from Batin Janggut over development affairs in the village. The event, however, had a serious impact on village politics in Kampung Durian Tawar.

Among other things, development caused an influx of people from other areas. A highway development project in a settlement in Selangor drove the Orang Asli from that area. Some sought help from their relatives in Kampung Durian Tawar and settled in the village. They moved to the area of the lower people because of differences with the upper people over customs and village leadership, and are now followers of Aki Main. Dependent on their medicine man (*dukun*), Aki Main, they openly accuse Batin Janggut of using sorcery.

The waves of Islamization, which began in the 1980s, reached Kampung Durian Tawar in the 1990s with the village's first converts. While converting to Islam was an act of defiance against the village *adat*, having acquired Islam as their cause they became even more defiant. As it was unwise to have disputes with Muslims in a country where Islam is the state religion, the *adat* leadership and the upper people actively avoided public confrontation. They were, nonetheless, disgruntled over the phenomenon.

In response to the JHEOA-organized Islamic missionary seminar held in Melaka the previous month, in January 1997 a village council meeting was held in the *adat* hall. Much of the agenda is discussed in Chapter 5, so here I focus specifically on matters of *adat*, Islam and village politics. In the meeting Batin Janggut declared that villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar were divided into three groups: the *adat* group (*puak adat*), the religion group (*puak ugama*) and the drunk group (*puak mabuk*). Once divided into the upper and lower people, the increase of Islamic converts under the Islamization policy had caused this regrouping of the villagers (refer to Figure 8). This categorization served to symbolize the new structure of the village. In this chapter I draw on Batin Janggut's categorization to explain the village politics of the period.

The *adat* group consists mainly of the upper people who follow *adat*. The religion group comprises converts to Islam branching out from the former Ali followers (descendants of Jekerah Ali) and some Christian converts. The drunk group normally means Aki Main and his followers, but here also implies Batin Janggut's son Tikak and his supporters.

Batin Janggut began the meeting by asking if those present complied with *adat*. After they confirmed that this was the case, he began to explain

it. He declared that the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar was matrilineal (*adat mempatih*), not non-matrilineal (*adat temenggung*). The *adat* of Aki Main and his followers who migrated from Selangor is not matrilineal (according to Batin Janggut it is patrilineal, but I regard it as bilateral). This discrepancy was frequently causing frictions over the formalities of funeral or wedding rituals. Batin Janggut said that under the matrilineal *adat* neither Tikak nor Aki Main had the right to succeed as the next Batin.

With regard to religion, Batin Janggut stated that villagers were allowed to convert but, in a veiled criticism of many in the village, were not to do so “in name only” in order to get cash and other benefits. He went on to advise the converts that they had to ask Malay or other outsiders to officiate at their weddings and funerals because they could not follow the village *adat*. Batin Janggut thereby made clear his stance that the *adat* leadership would not take responsibility for converts’ weddings and funerals. This was his countermeasure to the government policy prohibiting *adat* from being imposed on the Muslim Orang Asli. It was no less than a declaration that he would never associate with Islamic converts.

Incorrect Marriage and the *Adat*

Marriage Patterns

Baharon (1973: 74) points out that, like the Malays, villagers in Kampung Durian Tawar adhere to marriage formalities much more than do other Orang Asli communities. He also observes that their wedding ceremonies have much in common with those of the Malays living in the area (Baharon 1973: 75). Similarities include the rituals of exchanging particular gifts between the matrilineal uncles (*ibubapa*) of the bride and of the groom and the wedding reception called *bersanding*.

There are differences, however. First, in Kampung Durian Tawar an *adat* leader officiates at a wedding and marries the bride and groom, unlike at Malay weddings where an Islamic leader of prayer (*imam*) fulfils this role. Second, a wedding ritual in Kampung Durian Tawar does not involve Islamic prayers. In short, the lack of Islamic elements distinguishes it from that of their Malay Muslim neighbors.

There are three major marriage patterns in Kampung Durian Tawar. I collected details of 105 marriages in the village: twenty-seven observed an engagement, forty-two couples wedded in a simplified ceremony without an engagement period, and thirty-six were married by *tangkap basah*.



Plates 67 & 68: Wedding of Jenang Misai's granddaughter. This couple got married without an engagement ceremony i.e. they followed Pattern Two. Whether a wedding ceremony is considered simple style or not depends on the menu of the meal. In this case, biscuits and cakes were served with tea and coffee. After this wedding ceremony, however, a *joget* (outdoor disco) was held at night. [NT-2005]

Pattern One: Marriages that follow an engagement in recent years have often been found among the children of the influential members of the village, such as *adat* leaders, who can now afford it. In this pattern, formal engagement and wedding ceremonies are held.

Pattern Two: Some couples marry without an engagement ceremony (*singkap daun ambil buah*: to turn up a leaf and take fruit from under it) for reasons such as economic difficulties and untimely pregnancy.



Plates 69 & 70: Engagement of Batin Janggut's daughter. This is the engagement ceremony of a Pattern One marriage. The actual wedding ceremony was held at a later date (See Plate 36). The Batin's daughter is now a primary school teacher. After marriage, her husband moved to Kampung Durian Tawar to live with her family, in accordance with the uxorilocal residence rule of *adat*. At the beginning, they resided in Batin Janggut's house. However, after the first child, a son, was born they built their own house next to the rubber trader's shop. [NT-1997]

The marriages of couples who are “arrested” under *tangkap basah* and negotiate with *adat* leaders to have a simple ceremony fall under this category. Some call this a “marriage with a handful of rice” (*nikah nasi seguluk*). The simple wedding ceremony with a feast (*kenduri*) is not normally conducted in a *tangkap basah* marriage (Pattern Three).

Pattern Three: A marriage under *tangkap basah* has a minimal ceremony. Unlike their formally dressed counterparts in Patterns One

and Two, the bride and groom are often in everyday clothes. They are married on the same day they are “arrested”. Some call this a cowboy marriage (*nikah koboi*), likening it to the way a cowboy suddenly has a female companion.

All marriages other than those of Pattern One are generally seen as “incorrect” – Pattern Two marriages without an engagement ceremony and Pattern Three marriages under *tangkap basah* (as I explain in more detail). The boundary between the latter two categories is rather ill-defined. Most couples who find themselves in an incorrect marriage do not undergo the formal engagement and wedding procedures. They marry in a situation of *tangkap basah*. *Tangkap* means “to catch” and *basah* means “wet” or “immoral”. This custom of arresting a couple “in the act” shows an influence of *khalwat* (impropriety) from the Malay community. With the Malays, the Islamic religious police carry out the arrest, while with the Orang Asli the woman’s relatives do so. *Tangkap basah* signifies a situation in which the woman’s relatives catch the couple in the act of sleeping together.

A woman can take advantage of *tangkap basah* to marry a man whom she fancies. By having her relatives find her and her man meeting alone or sleeping together, she can, so to speak, push him to the altar. However, if the man does not wish to marry her, he may choose the alternative solution of paying a fine to the *adat* leaders of the village where she lives. In extreme cases, a rape (*rogol*) is resolved by a marriage under *tangkap basah*.

If a woman is found to be pregnant before she and her partner are caught under *tangkap basah*, they marry without going through an engagement. Such a case is categorized as a Pattern Two marriage, rather than a Pattern Three *tangkap basah* marriage. Although a man may manage to fend off a *tangkap basah* marriage, he has virtually no choice but to marry his partner if she becomes pregnant. In any case, all are considered incorrect marriages, except for the Pattern One marriages and those in Pattern Two that for economic reasons do not hold an engagement ceremony.

Adat Solution to Incorrect Marriage

In an incorrect marriage, an *adat* leader hands down a ruling (*hukum*) in the wedding ceremony and imposes a fine (*denda*) on both the man and the woman. The sum of the fine that leaders can impose is fixed. The degree of seriousness of an offence determines which leader will impose the fine. A normal, insignificant offence is fined by the Jekerah, the lowest ranking *adat* leader. In the past the sums varied at the discretion of individual

Table 21
Changes in ruling by *adat* leaders

Title	Rulings (Early 1970s)	Rulings (1997)
Batin	Banishment (<i>halau</i>)	N/A
	Ostracism (<i>pulau</i>)	Ostracism (<i>pulau</i>)
	Fine (RM48)	Fine (RM48)
	Fine (RM14)	Fine (RM14)
Mangku	Fine (RM7.30)	Fine (RM7.30)
Menteri	Fine (RM7.30)	Fine (RM7.30)
Jenang	Fine (RM7.30)	Fine (RM7.30)
Jekerah	Fine (RM3.30)	Fine (RM7.30)
Panglima	Fine (RM1)	N/A

RM = Ringgit Malaysia

leaders. Today all fines imposed by the leaders, with the exception of those by the Batin, are pre-determined.

Most cases of incorrect marriage discussed here are serious offences, which require the Batin to pass a ruling and impose a fine on the offenders. They are not only incorrect in the broad sense of the term but also involve serious elements such as incest and unions between cross-generational men and women, in-laws or other forbidden partners (*sumbang pemanggil*), or adultery (*menchuri*, *merampas*, *berjahat*). I explain the respective cases with particular focus on the method of ruling rather than on the content of incest (which I examined in the previous chapter).

The Batin hands down the ruling if the incestuous offenders are from the same matrilineal descent group, while in other incest cases one of other *adat* leaders, usually the Jekerah, does so (Table 21). Marriage is strictly forbidden between relatives who are second cousins or closer within a matrilineal descent group (Table 22). In the past, the Batin imposed a water penalty (virtually a death penalty) on couples guilty of this offence. Marriage between third cousins or remoter relatives within a matrilineal descent group is also considered a serious offence, requiring the Batin to hand down a ruling for the offenders to relinquish their membership within their matrilineal descent group.

Incest is divided into two broad categories. The first includes cases in which marriage is allowed after a ruling is handed down and a fine is

Table 22
 Concepts of *sumbang* and solutions of dispute

	Kinship	Concepts of <i>sumbang</i>	Marriage	Ruling	Other punitive sanctions
Within a matrilineal descent group	Second cousins or closer	<i>nyumbang</i>	Disallowed	Batin	Drowning Banishment Ostracism
	Third cousins or remoter	" <i>sumbang</i> "	Allowed	Batin	Diverstiture of matrilineal descent group membership
Outside a matrilineal descent group	Second cousins or closer	' <i>sumbang</i> '	Allowed	Other than Batin	
	Third cousins or remoter	<i>sesumbang</i>	Allowed	Other than Batin	

paid. The second category of incest includes *nyumbang* and other cases in which marriage is completely disallowed. The incest taboo covers not only matrimony but all sexual relations. Offenders of *nyumbang* are denied marriage and must receive a ruling and pay a fine or alternatively receive some form of sanction (such as ostracism). Ordeal by water and banishment are no longer practiced today, as the executor would be arrested by the police.

A match between non-relatives can also be an incorrect marriage. In particular, marriages between individuals of different generations tend to be avoided (Baharon 1973: 94). Marriage between a man and a woman who in their daily life address each other by classificatory kinship terminology such as "uncle", "niece" or "aunt", or "nephew" is considered a serious offence, which calls for the Batin's ruling and fine. A match between affines is also an incorrect marriage, which receives his ruling and fine. Polygamy is allowed in Kampung Durian Tawar, in that a husband can have more than one wife. In one case, a Batin married two sisters. The story goes that after the death of Batin Bongsu's wife, he married her younger sister (Baharon 1973: 95). By contrast, a man who is married to two sisters at the same time is in an incorrect marriage requiring the Batin's ruling and a fine.

If a cross-generational or affinal pair marries, it changes their terms of kinship. For example, the groom's older brother (*abang*) (classificatory kinship terminology) could become his father-in-law (*mentuha*). Their marriage is discouraged and is called improper address (*sumbang pemanggil*).

In Kampung Durian Tawar, where polygamy is practiced, sexual relations between an unmarried woman and a married man are not seen as adultery, and are resolved in the form of the man's marriage. Adultery is an offence when a married woman has sexual relations with a man, whether or not he is married. In such cases, it is not the woman but the man who is fined or ordered to compensate the woman's husband (Baharon 1973: 90-91). The most serious of these cases call for the Batin to hand down a ruling and a fine.

Cases of Incorrect Marriage

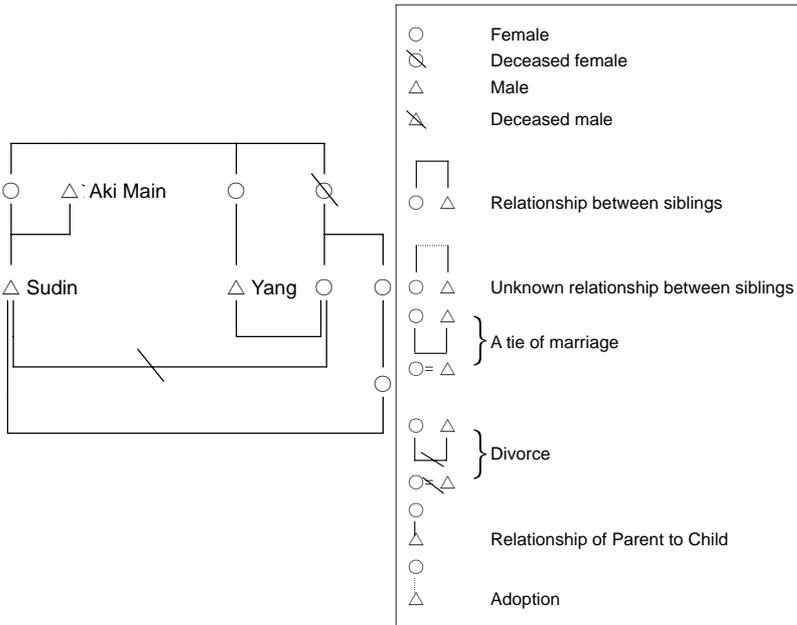
Contrary to the popular belief that *adat* is an immutable tradition, it is in fact flexible and ambiguous enough to be subject to both intentional and unintentional changes (Maeda 1986: 5). This is because *adat* is in most cases an oral tradition. The *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar is no exception. *Adat* leaders amend *adat* through discussion, as the occasion demands. The question is whether, in dispute situations, *adat* leaders follow the norms to carry out sanctions that are just and satisfactory to all the villagers. Because the resolution of disputes involving a love affair or marriage is considered the responsibility of the *adat* leaders, they become involved as "guardians" when either or both disputants belong to their kin or villagers. *Adat* is, so to speak, customary law that applies to kinsfolk.

A dispute over a woman with three suitors is often cited as one of the most difficult cases to handle. Under *adat*, polygamy by women is not allowed. The solution is to have her choose one of the three men in a rite wherein *adat* leaders and her relatives act as witnesses. This may seem a simple procedure, but *adat* leaders know from experience that it is not. Batin Janggut lectured me, a student of *adat*, over the many disputes that arise from love affairs, and gave the example of a woman with three suitors. The Batin stressed the importance of resolving such issues, which made me acutely aware that, once entangled, a love affair can lead to violence or even murder.

Drunk Group

Aki Main's son Sudin married his first wife in *tangkap basah*. She is one of his matrilineal parallel cousins. They later divorced and she married

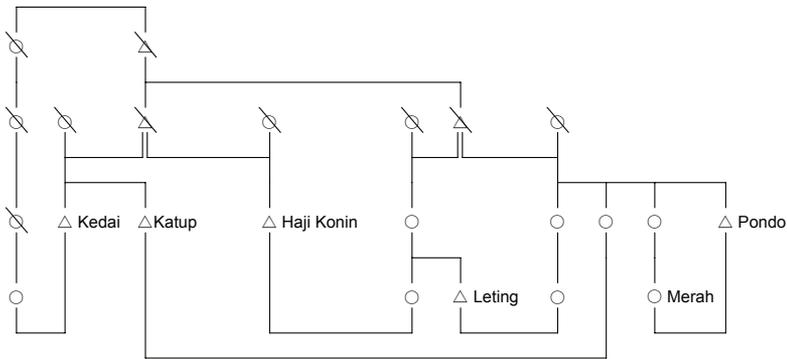
Figure 15
 Incorrect marriages in the drunk group



Yang, another of Sudin's matrilineal parallel cousins, again in *tangkap basah*. She and Yang are also matrilineal parallel cousins (Figure 15). According to the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar, neither marriage is permissible, as they each involve incest within a matrilineal descent group (*nyumbang*). Sudin also remarried. His second wife is also a member of his matrilineal descent group and is one of his nieces. She was about fourteen years old when they married. As well as being a cross-generational match, the Kampung Durian Tawar *adat* views their relationship as incestuous (*nyumbang*) and forbids their marriage. As mentioned earlier, Aki Main and his followers observe their own bilateral *adat*, which is indifferent to the membership of a matrilineal descent group. They simply decided that Sudin and Yang's marriages are *sumbang* but permissible.

The *adat* group often cites such cases of incorrect marriage as evidence of defiance to the Kampung Durian Tawar *adat*. The *adat* leaders do not

Figure 16
Incorrect marriages in the religion group



intervene in marriages in the drunk group. Even for *tangkap basah* cases, the *adat* leaders do not hand down fines; the drunk group does not bring the cases before the *adat* leaders in the first place. Aki Main and his followers continue to conduct rituals without consulting the *adat* leaders, and he presides over the rituals as the leader of the drunk group.

Religion Group

Kedai is not a convert to Islam but is closely related to the religion group. He is married to an elder sister of Konchon (Figure 16), whom I discuss in the next section. Many villagers claim that their marriage is incorrect. First, Kedai and his wife are a generation apart. Second, Kedai's wife is said to have fallen into a state of madness (*gila*) as a result of the marriage. Her daughter is also said to have suffered the same fate after seeing her mother in a deranged state. Kedai's wife had several miscarriages and one of their sons is speech-impaired. Villagers often talk of the family's ordeal as retribution for their incorrect marriage.

Kedai's brother Katup is married to his patrilineal parallel cousin. A match between patrilineal parallel cousins is called a "hot" marriage (*kepanasan*) and is forbidden. Katup's wife is also said to be in a state of madness, which villagers again say was caused by their incorrect marriage. Islamic convert Haji Konin is married to a woman of a different generation. Their match is also considered an incorrect marriage. Haji Konin's father and his wife's grandfather are brothers.

Leting lost his wife to Aru (this is discussed in the next section). He later married one of his cousins. Leting and his new wife share a grandfather. As they have different grandmothers, the matrilineal *adat* does not object to their marriage but it is still incestuous. She is about twenty years his junior and has been divorced twice.⁵

Merah's marriage, as discussed in the previous chapter, is *nyumbang*. Sexual relations within a matrilineal descent group and between an uncle and his niece are among the strongest of the taboos, both in Islamic law (as it applies to Muslims) and in the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. Merah's is a case of incorrect marriage in which marriage is in theory impossible. It is, indeed, an extremely bizarre marital relation when viewed in isolation. It is, however, possible to see it simply as "a blundered choice of partner" when viewed in the wider context of the religion group's marital network.

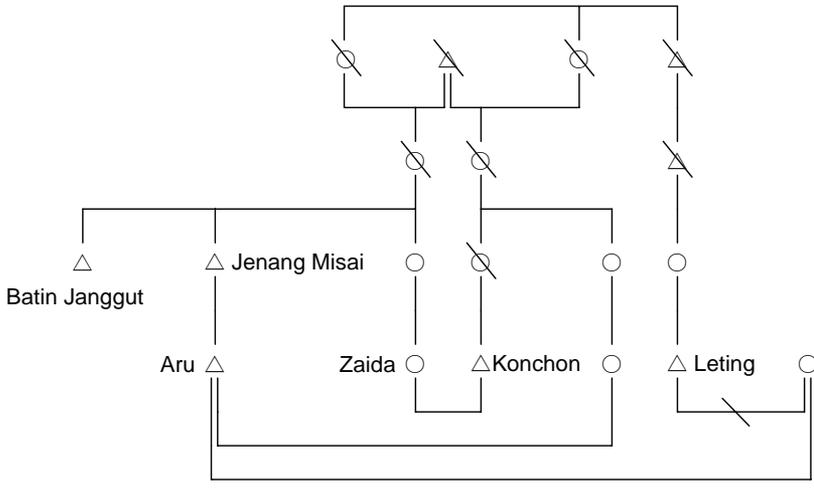
The religion group is over-represented by marriages between close blood relatives. This can be explained by the fact that they are poverty-stricken and have little interaction (*kurang campur*) with other villagers and outsiders. Batin Janggut says that the parents and kin should be sensible enough to give a warning before they "marry". However, the *adat* leaders refrain from interfering in the affairs of the Islamic converts even when they know that a couple is in an incorrect marriage. The members of the religion group, particularly those converts hostile to Batin Janggut, do not bring their disputes before the *adat* leadership, nor do they put the solution of their dispute into the hands of the Department of Islamic Affairs or the Malays around them. This means that such disputes remain unresolved.

Adat Group

Among the marriages in Figure 17, that of Konchon and Zaida has been discussed in the previous chapter. Their marriage is a match between matrilineal parallel cousins within a matrilineal descent group, one of the biggest taboos in Kampung Durian Tawar. Their relationship became known when Zaida became pregnant.

In another case, Aru, the son of Batin Janggut's elder brother Jenang Misai, who was married to his patrilineal cross cousin, entered into an adulterous relationship with the wife of his third cousin, Leting, and produced children. Leting did not seek compensation and the affair continued for a long time. In late January 1997 Batin Janggut handed down his ruling on the extramarital sexual relationship and imposed a fine. Leting and his wife promptly divorced and she and Aru married

Figure 17
Incorrect marriages in the *adat* group



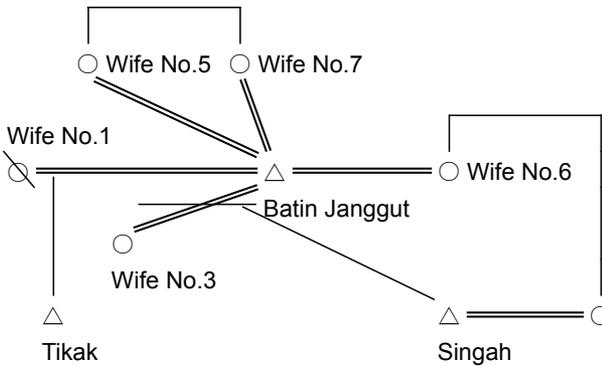
in a ceremony officiated by Batin Janggut. According to *adat*, Leting was entitled to seek compensation from Aru. Nonetheless, Leting was nowhere to be seen at either the ruling or the marriage ceremony. He was a drunkard who barely looked after his wife and children. Aru had supported Leting's wife and their children (though not Leting's children) since they started the affair.

At the ruling Batin Janggut said to those present that Aru's behavior was not commendable. However, he added that he was only human and that mistakes do happen. According to the Batin, the biggest problem in terms of *adat* would be if Aru was to continue the adulterous relationship. He went on to say that it was important that *adat* resolve the situation. He also explained that if resolved by *adat*, it would stop the circulation of rumor and slander. Marrying Aru and Leting's divorced wife resolved the adultery. From Leting's perspective, Aru was indeed guilty of the serious crime of stealing his wife. Leting apparently felt dissatisfaction against Batin Janggut's ruling, but did not publicly protest.

Batin Janggut

As far as incorrect marriage relationships are concerned, Batin Janggut is no exception (Figure 18). As of 1997 he is sixty-two years old and has had

Figure 18
Incorrect marriages of Batin Janggut



seven wives. They have given him a total of thirty-three children, some of whose names lapse from his memory. Some of his wives are deceased or have been divorced, leaving three women currently considered to be his wives. They are Batin Janggut's fifth, sixth and seventh wives. The fifth and seventh wives are sisters, and his sixth wife is the younger sister of the wife of his son, Singah, from his marriage to his third wife.

Batin Janggut married his sixth wife when he was in his forties and she was approximately twenty. She became pregnant before the marriage. Batin Janggut's relationship with the young woman caused immense scandal in the local Orang Asli community (to make matters worse, she was the younger sister of his son's wife). Islamic law forbids marriage within an affinity.⁶ Singah interpreted the situation as "his mother (his father's third wife) being dumped". He strongly objected to the marriage, as did Tikak, a son from the Batin's first marriage.

Singah and Tikak (at the time an employee of the JHEOA) went directly to Baharon, the then Director-General of the JHEOA, seeking that the marriage be suspended. Taking no heed of their plea on the grounds that Orang Asli are not Malay, Baharon kept his distance from Batin Janggut's marriage. He later informed Batin Janggut of his sons' plea. Baharon was correct to state that, unlike Malays, Batin Janggut did not have to follow Islamic law. The Batin himself was well aware that his marriage was a violation of Islamic law and that it was incorrect. He considered these

circumstances and chose to explore how to use *adat* in order to find a compromise with the Muslim Malay view of marriage.

Batin Janggut followed the *adat* of Kampung Dalam, the birthplace of his new wife. He paid a fine to the Batin of the village before marrying her. Batin Janggut and the Batin who passed judgment on him were close kin. The latter was the former's son-in-law (*menantu*), the husband of his step-daughter (*enek betina tiri*). That aside, Batin Janggut made a case that he had admitted his incorrectness and that he had at least been sanctioned according to *adat*.

Later, Batin Janggut "married" his seventh wife, his fifth wife's sister. A pregnancy preceded this marriage also. Islamic law prohibits concurrent marriage with sisters. As mentioned earlier, Batin Janggut's grandfather, Batin Bongsu, married two sisters, but this did not contravene Islamic law. Batin Janggut's marriages were prohibited because he was married to both sisters simultaneously. Singah and Tikak opposed the marriage on the grounds that it conflicted with Islamic law (the Malay view of marriage). This case, too, was resolved when the marriage was approved following a procedure of *adat* sanctions similar to those for his sixth marriage.

As a consequence, Batin Janggut and his third wife divorced. His opponents accuse him of dumping the old wife in order to replace her with a younger one. The Batin's repeated incorrect marriage offences estranged him from his son Tikak (from his first marriage) and his children from his third marriage. The divorce further strained their relationship. The discord between Batin Janggut and his children over his incorrect marriages continues today.

Rethinking Orang Asli Adat

According to Miyazaki (1999: 305), *adat* in its contemporary sense is often taken to be a synonym for "indigenous tradition". He argues that today's *adat* is antithetical to modernity as a whole, if "indigenesness" is to be defined in contraposition to anything. If Orang Asli *adat* is to be seen as an indigenous tradition, the indigenesness of the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar must be redefined in opposition to modernity, which is, specifically, Islam and the state.

Village Adat

My household survey in Kampung Durian Tawar included the following question: "What is your religion (*ugama*)?" Most villagers answered, "I have no religion (*tidak ada ugama/nyap ugama*)". Their traditional belief is recognized as a belief but not as a religion. The JHEOA classifies their

religious beliefs as animism. In the face of being defined by outsiders and in particular by aggressive Islamization, I suggest that the villagers first came to use *adat* to arm themselves against such forces.

Batin Janggut named those villagers who followed *adat* as the *adat* group. This was an effective means of reconstructing their identity centered on *adat*. Having until then had no terms to identify themselves except as “having no religion”, the villagers embraced the claim, “We belong to the *adat* group”. The Batin placed the religion group and the drunk group in opposition to the *adat* group.

Because of the Islamic and Christian converts, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar face a dilemma over how to conduct wedding and funeral rites. In situations relevant to *adat*, Batin Janggut places *adat* in opposition to Islam and Christianity. In other words, he considers the *adat* of his village to be comparable to, and therefore nothing less than, a religion.

Batin Janggut strongly asserts to the drunk group that the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar is matrilineal. Different *adat* naturally bring about different interpretations of an incorrect marriage. Reminding the drunk group that its *adat* is outside the community, the Batin stresses that matrilineal *adat* is the rightful set of rules to be observed.

When the *adat* leaders punish offenders within the *adat* group for incorrect marriages, it serves to demonstrate that they follow *adat* both inside and outside the community. The self-punishment does have an effect, even if outsiders may see it as a self-centered interpretation of *adat*. Their execution of *adat* ultimately works as a buffer against intervention by Islam and the government. The *adat* leaders stop short of imposing sanctions against those faithful to other laws, even if they are in incorrect marriages. This can be seen to weaken Batin Janggut’s influence, but it is more important to note here that different sets of norms are openly observed in the village. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Kampung Durian Tawar. Many Orang Asli communities are polarized into the Islamic converts, Christian converts and pagan/animists (including those who follow *adat*). In some cases, people even move residence to form segregated areas within the same village.

Incorrect Marriage

As they have little contact with outsiders, the Orang Asli tend to marry within their kin. This phenomenon is foremost a result of the social distance caused by economic disparity, discrimination and religion, rather than the living environment that isolates them living deep in the forest. In

the region discussed here, the Orang Asli populations are small and the residents are closely related. With this demography, it is not surprising that incorrect marriages occur that should otherwise be prevented by *adat*.

Batin Janggut handles these situations by using *adat* to legitimize an incorrect marriage. Since there is little that the Batin can do to prevent the violation of *adat*, he evades criticism by using punitive sanctions as a form of “ritual of atonement” (cf. Uchibori 1973: 165) to demonstrate to the outside world that the case complies with *adat*. Batin Janggut’s rationale is that an incorrect marriage is cleared of wrongdoing once it has been punished by *adat*. The incorrect marriages within the *adat* group, including his own, have been dealt with under this principle.

Adat is rarely applied to incorrect marriages in the drunk group and the religion group. Incorrect marriages in these two groups do not go through the ritual of atonement of an *adat* sanction. This presents a grave problem to the *adat* leaders, who are the officiators of rituals, because there is no way to evade the danger to the community brought about by the violation of the norms that forbid incest (cf. Uchibori 1973: 165-66). However, in order to avoid unnecessary tensions, Batin Janggut’s *adat* leadership stays clear of incorrect marriage in these groups. Particularly with regard to incorrect marriage involving a convert to Islam, the *adat* leaders express their non-interventionist stance to avoid confrontation with the state authority, which, they perceive, is behind the scene.

Each incorrect marriage case asks about the rightful law of Kampung Durian Tawar. Batin Janggut argues that it is the matrilineal *adat*, as opposed to the alien bilateral *adat* of the drunk group and the Islam of the religion group. The real state of affairs in Kampung Durian Tawar, however, is much worse than the traditional *adat* can cope with. Tikak and Islamic converts stand against Batin Janggut. Backed by the government, they are not only defiant of *adat* but also increasingly critical of the Batin’s *adat*-based method of dispute resolution. The drunk group, onside with Tikak, conducts its own rituals without following *adat*.

The population to which *adat* applies is in decline, a fact that attests that Kampung Durian Tawar’s *adat* is being redefined. The legitimization of a violation through sanctions is a declaration that *adat* followers, or the *adat* group at least, will resolve their own disputes independently and without the intervention of alien laws. In connection with this, the decreasing population to which *adat* applies means elimination from the majority *adat* group of those dissenters who belong to the drunk group and the religion group.



Plate 71: Ritual for the learning of the *adat* Before learning the *adat* from Batin Janggut, candidates who want to be *adat* leaders, including myself, got together in the Batin Janggut's house for the 'learning of the *adat*' ritual. The number of candidates was restricted as the knowledge of the *adat* is a secret one. We had lessons on the *adat* every night for almost a month. [NT-1998]

Politics and Adat

Batin Janggut was once backed by the JHEOA. To justify his authority, in village politics he used *adat*, which was the one and only absolute law in the village. Knowledge concerning *adat* was the monopoly of the *adat* leadership and no one other than successors to the leadership titles could learn it. To the outside world, the villagers' conformity to *adat* proved Kampung Durian Tawar to be an "orderly" society. In its development drive, the JHEOA took the view that vesting Batin Janggut with authority would lead to a smooth implementation of the projects.

The situation, however, has changed remarkably. The JHEOA began to promote Islamization more aggressively and grew impatient with Batin Janggut's refusals to accept Islam. There has even been a rumor that the JHEOA would appoint Batin Janggut's son Tikak as the Batin in the next term. Since losing the backing of the JHEOA, Batin Janggut's authority has been in such decline that the drunk group and some other villagers openly defy him.

Sensing the coming crisis, Batin Janggut told the village council that the succession of *adat* leadership had to follow the matrilineal principle of *adat*, thereby denying his son Tikak and Aki Main's candidacy as *adat* leaders. This was an expression of Batin Janggut's resistance against the JHEOA's power to appoint a Batin. He guarded himself by emphasizing

that the Batin-ship of Kampung Durian Tawar must be succeeded under *adat*.

In contrast to Batin Janggut, young leaders within the *adat* group have been using the Batin's authority and the lawfulness of *adat* to increase their political influence. Batin Janggut has approved them as legitimate successors to the *adat* leadership. Here Batin Janggut's tactics using *adat*, some concealed and others not, are evident. Indeed, the young leaders give their support to Batin Janggut, who approves their power, and any support they might have offered Tikak is further diminished. The village politics of Kampung Durian Tawar now present confrontations between Tikak and the young leaders, as well as between Batin Janggut and Tikak.

However, it is important to note here that *adat* today is not what it once was. It is no longer linked with government authority. Sometimes it even represents an ideology that opposes the government. Since he lost the backing of the JHEOA, Batin Janggut has been reiterating to the young leaders that the village has *adat* and therefore does not need Islam. When I revisited Kampung Durian Tawar for a short period in March 2001, I found that people once on the periphery of the *adat* group had converted to Christianity. Although the exact reasons for this are unknown, it is feasible that the so-called people of "no religion" found themselves unable to identify with the *adat* group and, being unwilling to convert to Islam, were subsequently converted by their nearby Christian relatives.

Aru's first wife converted to Christianity because her sisters and brothers had converted. Her conversion resulted in their divorce. Their children were taken into the custody of Aru and his second wife. When I was revisiting Kampung Durian Tawar, one of the children attempted suicide by consuming agricultural chemicals. Perhaps the villagers had these sorts of cases in mind when they tried to explain the misfortune caused by an incorrect marriage.

A booklet on Orang Asli culture jointly produced by UNICEF and Malaysia's Ministry of Education states that the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar is also used in Temuan society.⁷ This is because primary school teacher Genreh was involved in the preparation of the booklet. This booklet was used as evidence for the government in a court case between the Temuan in Selangor and the government over a piece of land (Colin Nicholas, personal communication in 1998). According to Nicholas, the government used the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar as Temuan's *adat* for its argument that a Temuan land claim was void. However, the land had been inherited under bilateral *adat*, which the Temuan in Selangor insisted was their *adat*.

Adat has proven effective against Islam but it is now obviously being abused in a different context. In other words, the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar is being codified as representative of all *adat* among the Temuan, diminishing the diversity of bilateral *adat* down to one fixed set of matrilineal *adat*. This indicates the birth of the official *adat*.

Notes

1. Among the studies of *adat* in Malaysia, the matrilineal *adat* of the Minangkabau-descent Malays in Negeri Sembilan is well known (e.g. De Jong 1952, 1960; Swift 1965; Hooker 1970, 1972; Tomizawa 1984, 1986; Pelez 1988; Norhalim 1988; Kuwahara 1998).
2. When placed against the national religion of Islam, the Orang Asli *adat* is their “community religion” (cf. Maeda 1976).
3. Shamsul has pointed out that UMNO and JKKK have become closely linked in development projects since the New Economic Policy (or Bumiputra Policy) (Shamsul 1986). Being a branch president of UMNO and/or a committee member of JKKK is effective when seeking the government’s approval for various applications.
4. Aid bodies include PPRT and the Amanah Saham Bumiputera (Bumiputra Investment Trust), which offer 5,000 ringgit loans. Although the aid recipients are mainly Malays, the Orang Asli are also eligible.
5. Each of her previous “marriages” (each of which was simply a cohabitation lasting only a week) were to Chinese men. It is understood that Leting and the young girl became “husband and wife” under *tangkap basah*, which was established by Katup catching Leting in the act of sneaking to her bed. There was no wedding ceremony.
6. Islamic law identifies the categories of affines and consanguines that a person is prohibited from marrying. People with whom a person has established an affinal relationship and with whom it is prohibited to marry include parents-in-law, step-parents and step-grandparents, step-children and sons- or daughters-in-law. The consanguines who are barred from marriage to an individual consist of one’s own parents, grandparents, children, siblings, nieces and nephews, and uncles and aunts (Sharifah and Sven 1997: 39–40).
7. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia & UNICEF, 1998, “*Budaya, Pantang Larang dan Amalan Kesibatang Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia*”.

Chapter 10

Conversion and Resistance

As I have mentioned often in this book, Islamization has been progressively forced upon the Orang Asli since the 1980s. In this chapter I present a grassroots account of the actual situation in Kampung Durian Tawar and discuss Orang Asli responses to Islamization.

Islam is the national religion of Malaysia and is protected by a number of government policies on religion. In the 1980s the international wave of Islamic resurgence reached the country, prompting the Malaysian government to introduce a range of Islamization policies. As a part of this resurgence movement, as noted in Chapter 1, the government set out to “Islamize” the non-Muslim Orang Asli and from the 1980s implemented the policy.

In the face of Islamization, tensions between Islamic converts and those who refuse to convert have been on the rise in Orang Asli society. As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, I encountered a number of such disputes during my fieldwork. Although Islamic converts are in the minority in the predominantly non-Muslim Orang Asli villages, the slightest incident between convert and non-convert can turn into a confrontation between the government (which supports the converts in its Islamization campaign) and the Orang Asli, who are primarily non-Muslim. This makes it difficult for the non-Muslim Orang Asli to address the situation.

As I also mentioned earlier, previous studies have devoted little discussion to how the non-Muslim Orang Asli are responding to the Islamization policy.

Problems of Islamization

Refusal to Convert

The Orang Asli showed different reactions to the Islamization policy. Some people converted to Islam, while others refused to be converted to Islam. In the census of religious population among the Orang Asli, the numbers of Muslim Orang Asli have been increasing since the 1980s.¹

Conversion to Islam has had a great impact on socioeconomic and political order at the village level. For instance, in cases in villages where Batins and their kin converted to Islam, they monopolized interests of socioeconomic development projects. In cases where politically marginalized people in villages converted to Islam, socioeconomic and political order in the village changed drastically. Likewise, in several villages people were divided into three religious groups, such as Muslims, Christians and animists, and therefore dwell separately. In any case, the Islamic converts were still in a minority and most Orang Asli refused to be converted to Islam.

The Orang Asli can get political and economic benefits if they convert to Islam. However, in spite of the benefits offered, most refuse to be converted to Islam. Why do they reject the conversion? Dentan et al. mention several reasons for rejecting conversion: (1) fear of circumcision,² (2) food restrictions, (3) prevalence of traditional belief, (4) dislike of Islamic missionaries and (5) refusal to “become the Malays” (Dentan et al. 1997: 148-49).³ The details are as follows.

- (1) The Orang Asli are afraid of the Islamic circumcision, because they have no custom of circumcision except for the Semelai, the Jakun and the Jah Hut (Dentan et al. 1997: 148).
- (2) The Orang Asli themselves often mention food restrictions as a reason for rejecting conversion (Dentan et al. 1997: 148). They usually eat foods such as wild game, which is strictly forbidden according to Islamic food taboos.
- (3) The Orang Asli refuse to be converted to Islam because they hold firmly to their traditional beliefs. Likewise, their beliefs, prohibitions and rituals are intricately woven into their everyday lives (Dentan et al. 1997: 149).
- (4) Dislike of Islamic missionaries occurs because Islamic missionaries do not sufficiently understand the Orang Asli's lifestyle and culture. Many Islamic missionaries show little

respect for the Orang Asli and, unlike Christian missionaries, they seldom venture into the back-country where most of the Orang Asli live; also, they never actually live with those who they hope to convert, instead preferring to make brief visits to them (Dentan et al. 1997: 149). Converting the Orang Asli is of marginal concern to missionaries in terms of the government's budget and human resource allocations (Hood 1991: 141-45).

- (5) The Orang Asli might refuse not only to become the Malays but also to “stop being the Orang Asli”. Most of the Orang Asli prefer to live among their own people, and they derive a sense of security from being part of their community and kinship network (Dentan et al. 1997: 149). The Malay society's lack of acceptance of those who have converted and become Malay has also been cited as a contributing factor in the Orang Asli's refusal to convert (Mohd. Tap 1990: 226, 453).

Converts among the Elite

Although the Islamization policy was not officially announced until the 1990s, the existence of the positive discrimination policy was fully recognized by the Orang Asli themselves.

For instance, it was widely known that school education pursued its goal of persuading the Orang Asli to convert to Islam. In a 1989 meeting, a JHEOA official said that Orang Asli school teachers should be oriented so that, in addition to teaching Orang Asli children, they should also conduct Islamization activities among the Orang Asli communities (Dentan et al. 1997: 145-46). In fact, this statement was contrary to the Aboriginal Peoples Act, which prohibits giving religious education to any Orang Asli child without a parent or guardian's prior consent (Dentan et al. 1997: 146). However, the actual situation was different: “education” was used as a means to achieve assimilation or integration (Nicholas 2000: 128).

In my fieldwork I encountered cases where parents refused to send their children to school for fear that they might convert to Islam. In other cases, parents often allowed their children to miss school. In the primary and middle schools where Orang Asli children are taught together with Malay, Chinese and Indian students, discrimination and bullying against the Orang Asli were found. Although it is not clear whether these were contributing factors, there remained a high rate of dropouts among the Orang Asli students. It has also been reported that Malay teachers discriminate and are biased against Orang Asli children. For example,



Plate 72: PTA meeting at the Kampung Baning primary school. Pupils study in this special primary school for the Orang Asli. Most of them stay at the dormitory. They come from Kampung Akai, Kampung Baning, Kampung Air, Kampung Durian Tawar, Kampung Dalam and some Temuan Kampung in Pahang. Batin Janggut and Batin Awang are seated on the front right first two seats. [NT-1997]

many teachers regard the minority children as intellectually less capable (Nowak 1984: 11). In some cases reported in the Mah Meri, Orang Asli children converted after they were made to feel ashamed of being “without religion” while mixing with Malay children (Mathur 1986: 177-78).

The Bumiputra policy gives priority to the Bumiputra in the field of education. The JHEOA provides support to the Orang Asli up to the high school level. However, the JHEOA offers little to help them advance to university. In university education, the positive discrimination policy that favors Islamic converts is applied in the scholarship selection process. Under this system, a non-Muslim Orang Asli student cannot obtain a government scholarship and, due to economical constraints, often gives up higher education, even if the university sets aside student places in the Bumiputra quota. Without converting to Islam, it is impossible for students to win a scholarship, which leaves them little chance of attaining a higher education.

Orang Asli public servants in the JHEOA and in Senoi Pra’aq form the elite of the Orang Asli community. They are under pressure to convert, which has a direct bearing on working conditions and prospects for promotion. Those who resist have no choice but to give up a promotion or to leave their jobs. Because of the positive discrimination policy in

education and among public servants, an increasing number of the Orang Asli elite are converting to Islam. It can be imagined that this will continue through the next generation. The elite Orang Asli families tend to live in cities or towns, quite separate from the predominantly non-Muslim Orang Asli villages. Although they may be of Orang Asli background, for many their world is the urban-based Malay society.

These Islamic converts provide the government's best model in relation to its Islamization policy. They could be seen as the modern version of the Malayization phenomenon, which has continued in various forms since the pre- and early colonial days. Given this Islamization accompanied with Malayization, the converts leave the Orang Asli community, where non-Muslims form the social core, and move their social life to the Malay community. In doing so, the elite converts have little direct impact on the social order of Orang Asli villages.

Converts in Villages

Islamization of the elite Orang Asli detaches the converts from the predominantly non-Muslim society: at the village level, however, conversion effects a penetration of Islamic converts within the society. In the latter case, the converts stay in the Orang Asli villages, where facets of the positive discrimination policy manifest directly in the face of the non-Muslim Orang Asli.

In the positive discrimination policy, Islamic converts receive disproportionately large funds for development projects. In Kampung Durian Tawar, for example, converts are the first to receive the housing subsidy for the poorest. A male villager openly admitted to me that he received assistance immediately after telling an officer of the JHEOA that he was willing to convert to Islam. Converts were also the favored recipients of the project that offered a subsidy to build chicken coops.⁴

Projects like these are in theory open to all Orang Asli, including non-Muslims, but when it comes to the actual granting of the aid, Islamic converts are given priority in most cases.

Based on my household survey of Islamic converts in Kampung Durian Tawar, each adult convert receives 150 ringgit per month. This amount is enough to live on in the village. In another village, Islamic converts apparently each received a television because it was deemed necessary for their worshipping practices (to view the prayer programs). It is also reported that Islamic converts living in the state of Terengganu were given motorbikes to enable them to go to their mosques (Dentan et al. 1997: 144-45).

The Orang Asli who form the lowest stratum of Malaysian society live in extreme destitution. Since the 1980s the government has neglected the development of the non-Muslim Orang Asli, while promoting the positive discrimination policy. As a result there are increasingly serious problems such as alcoholism, refusals to attend school and avoidance of development projects (having, as they do, hidden agendas of converting participants to Islam), especially among the poorest of the poor. Children have died due to malnutrition. Many of the Orang Asli villagers in this category converted to Islam in the 1990s.

In most cases, both husband and wife convert to Islam. Often poverty makes the wife convert first and then the husband follows. A new convert needs to apply to the Department of Islamic Affairs for registration. The documents require the applicant's signature or thumbprint. I heard that some men had to sign or seal with the thumbprint of their wives or relatives who had already converted. After the application to the state department office, the convert receives a document carrying his or her Islamic name, which is effectively an identity card. For example, Sieu bin Dodek in this process becomes Mohd. Idris bin Abdullah. New converts abandon their old name and receive a new one, regardless of their wishes.

When they die, Islamic converts are buried in a nearby Malay cemetery, not in the cemetery of Kampung Durian Tawar.

Many of the Islamic converts in Kampung Durian Tawar hold marginal political, economical and social positions. At the time of my survey (1996-98), the village population was approximately 400, out of which thirty or so were Islamic converts. Most of them were lower people who had lived in the forest and rejected the government's economic development and school education.

However, development and logging had reduced forest resources and caused changes in their forest environment, such that living in the forest was no longer possible. Unable to adjust to these changes, they became trapped in poverty. Converting to Islam was one of the few options they could take for their own survival.

However, most villagers resist conversion in the face of the positive discrimination policy and seek to adjust to the new environment by changing their livelihoods. These are the upper people. In the eyes of these people, the behavior of the poor who use conversion to Islam to receive benefits is treacherous and worthy of condemnation. Consequently, the converts are severed from the social network of non-Muslim Orang Asli.

Village Situation

Villagers convert to Islam for a number of reasons. As suggested above, the reason in many cases is not purely religious. This is evident in their post-conversion lifestyles, which are often very different from those that the government and the Department of Islamic Affairs officials expect good Muslims to follow. Although they are supposed to live a Muslim life, the village converts do not devote much attention to being Muslim.

The converts' behaviors are somewhat unorthodox in comparison to the common practice of Islam in Malaysia, where religious resurgence is quite marked. Village converts eat taboo food such as pork and neglect fasting and prayers. To the concern of the Department of Islamic Affairs, some converts claim that they are not Muslim once they have moved interstate. Some buy alcohol with alms given to support them. Of those who received chickens in the above-mentioned chicken coop building project, some sold the birds when Chinese buyers made an offer. Their chicken coops became storage sheds within a few months. Others even say they want to "quit Islam" when aid money ceases or when the religious discipline becomes too burdensome.

Non-Muslim Orang Asli and Malays alike often criticize these converts as being "Muslims in name only" (Dentan et al. 1997: 147). Nonetheless, government authorities, including the JHEOA, are not interested in improving the situation. Their primary goal is to see constant increases in the number of Islamic converts. They tend to focus only on boasting about the Islamic missionary activities they have carried out for the Orang Asli. There is even speculation that the JHEOA alters census results and exaggerates the numbers of Muslim Orang Asli (Dentan et al. 1997: 147).

A Divorce Case

I have so far presented a primarily macro view of Islamization among the Orang Asli. Here I discuss Islamization in Kampung Durian Tawar by examining a divorce case in the village. The divorce process began when the wife converted to Islam. The state became involved through "the Muslim missionary",⁵ the JHEOA and the police. In response, the non-Muslim *adat* leadership tried a number of actions. This case grew into a confrontation between the minority Muslim Orang Asli and the majority non-Muslim Orang Asli under challenge by the state-led Islamization policy. Behind this confrontation were the history of the Orang Asli-Malay relationship and the issue of the status of Islamic converts in Orang Asli society.

The couple started a quarrel, which would eventually lead to their divorce, after a seminar in December 1996 organized by the Negeri Sembilan and Melaka offices of the JHEOA. Batins were invited to attend the seminar, in which a lecture was given to help them understand Islam and where the Orang Asli were encouraged to convert. In other words, the Batins were urged to cooperate with the missionary activities held by the Department of Islamic Affairs and PERKIM. Biru, who would later divorce her husband, had already decided to convert.

Biru's Conversion

One can surmise that Biru converted to Islam for economic reasons. Her husband Bangkong had no farming business ability. Having suffered business failures in rubber and sugar cane farming, Bangkong's family was rumored to be in debt. According to the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar, Bangkong is an heir to the Batin and other titles. The villagers say, however, that he lacked leadership. Bangkong's risky farming business caused him to lose the land inherited from his parents, as well as the land he had cleared himself, most of which was kinship-related inherited assets. His debts rose because of this, and yet he continued to purchase expensive items including a television and a car, putting the family further into debt.

Bangkong's brother Adunan is believed to be the leader of the Islamic converts. He and his wife, who had already converted, encouraged Biru to convert as well. The Muslim missionary also urged her to convert. A rumor circulated among the villagers that the officers from the JHEOA persuaded her to convert by saying that this would make it easier to receive benefits such as a development project subsidies.

The Changed Adat

Following the abovementioned seminar, Batin Janggut convened a village meeting to explain what he had learned and what course the village would have to take. Complying with the JHEOA's request, Batin Janggut declared to the villagers that he would allow religious conversion, whether to Islam or Christianity. Having always disapproved of conversion to any religion, Batin Janggut's decision was evidently a compromise. On declaring the permission to convert, Batin Janggut announced how he would treat converts. After establishing a consensus that all weddings, funerals and other ceremonies in Kampung Durian Tawar would be held in compliance with the *adat*, the Batin told the villagers that there would be a change in divorce procedures.

He explained that if religion, especially Islam, is the reason for a divorce, the wife would be able to file a case. This, according to the *adat*, was not allowed. The *adat* was in large part amended to deal with Islamic law, which forbids a marriage with a non-Muslim partner. In Islamic law, when a wife or a husband converts to Islam, the marriage is illegal unless his or her partner also converts. The Batin addressed the conflict with this Islamic principle by changing the *adat* to open the way for a wife to initiate a case and make divorce easier. Batin Janggut's announcement might have been a compromise to the Islamization being pressed forward by the government, but in practice his aim was to stop more villagers from converting.

Appropriation of the Adat

As repeatedly mentioned, the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar can be considered to have been influenced by the Minangkabau-descent Malay *adat* known to be matrilineal. In the village, inheritance, succession of the leadership titles and marriage rules are practiced according to matrilineal principles. To the villagers, however, whether or not these came from Minangkabau-descent Malays has little bearing. Their *adat* may or may not have been “borrowed” from the Malays in the surrounding area; whatever the case, they actively appropriated the borrowed *adat* and put it into use in their own way. Citing the dilemma of having both patrilineal Islamic elements and matrilineal principles in the *adat* of the Minangkabau-descent Malays living in Negeri Sembilan,⁶ the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers boast of their own *adat* as a true *adat* (*adat benar*), free from Islamic elements.

It is worth noting that the *adat* “borrowed” from the Malays is being used against Islamization. The only counter discourse the villagers have against Islamization is their *adat*. Having given up their forest life in the face of government policies and other forces, and having lost a wide range of their customs, culture and tradition, the villagers increasingly see the *adat* as the source of their identity.

The identity of Kampung Durian Tawar villagers is at risk every day. They buy daily essentials at shops run by Chinese people. When they dress formally, they tend to wear Malay clothes. Orang Asli brides and grooms often wear Malay wedding costumes, because they hire costumes from Malay rental shops. Funerals, too, are no exception. They buy the tools required to set up a gravestone from Chinese or Malay shops and, as such, end up copying both the Chinese custom of burning paper money and Islamic burial practices. There is not a single Orang Asli restaurant.

They eat and drink at establishments run by Malays, Chinese and Indians. During Ramadan, they cannot eat out⁷ for fear of being mistaken for Malays and being arrested while eating at a restaurant. Even the names shown on their identity cards render them unsafe. Orang Asli names are altered in the Malay style (or the Islamic style with a *bin/binti*) when they are copied on the forms at hospitals or at the JHEOA offices on behalf of those who are non-literate.⁸

In these circumstances the Orang Asli meet the tightening of state-led Islamization by proportionally strengthening their *adat*. Against the Islamization, the villagers focus on the un-Islam-ness of their *adat* without paying much attention to its content. In fact, aspects of many of the rituals laid down by the *adat* carry Islamic influences. Detailed examination of the *adat* also reveals in its procedures (for example, for divorce and remarriage) Islamic elements not unlike those in the Malay *adat*, which the Orang Asli are believed to have borrowed (cf. Tomine 1975: 28-51, Tsubouchi 1996: 136-37). Because of this, some Malays assume that the implementation of Islamization in the Orang Asli villages is easy. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, however, are not much concerned about whether or not their rituals contain shades of Islam. What matters to them is who performs the rituals. For them, in other words, it is important that they themselves execute the *adat*, which represents “their own way”.

If a ritual is performed in the Malay way, the *imam* officiating at the worship and other proceedings inevitably intervenes and takes the right to perform the ritual out of the villagers’ hands. When Muslim Orang Asli attend a ritual, they rarely stay for the reception to eat the food prepared by non-Muslims. When a Malay official or parliamentarian has a meal in the village, Malay cooks are called in to prepare the food using the tableware and utensils they bring with them.⁹ Malay and Muslim interventions in ritual leadership and proceedings diminish the villagers’ autonomy and self-determination.

In this situation, the village *adat* becomes an identity issue. In their appropriation of the *adat* borrowed from the Malays, non-Muslim villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar focus on the un-Islam-ness of the *adat* and use it to counteract Islamization and maintain their own identity.

Relationship with the State Laws

The villagers have some discretion over how they apply their *adat* because, as discussed in Chapter 8, they have special legal status as Orang Asli. I will not repeat that discussion here, except insofar as to consider how the law treats Islamic converts.

The lack of a marriage registration custom prevents state law from intervening in the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. Although the government's registration office handles marriage applications, only the JHEOA has any knowledge of Orang Asli marriages. Few Orang Asli couples register their marriages, even though marriage registration has been encouraged, as was the case at the JHEOA seminar mentioned earlier. The villagers' non-involvement with marriage registration has in effect protected them against the interventions of state and Islamic laws.

However, waves of Islamization are encroaching on the autonomy of the Orang Asli *adat*. This is most evident in the treatment of Islamic converts (Hooker 1991: 53, 55-57, 61, 70-71). In Malaysia, the Malays, who are Muslims, must in principle comply with Islamic law in matters of marriage and divorce. In such cases, controversies often arise over a contradiction between the unwritten *adat* and the written Islamic law (Pelez 1998: 303-19). As far as the Orang Asli are concerned, marriage and divorce procedures are matters of their own discretion. As they do not register marriages, any marital laws other than their *adat* do not apply.

Conversions to Islam among the Orang Asli were the beginning of legally complex problems. Islamic converts are Muslims, and Muslims are obliged to follow Islamic law. The reality of this principle is not so simple, as I have described in the previous two chapters. In Negeri Sembilan, the JHEOA issued a statement that the Muslim Orang Asli need not follow their Orang Asli *adat*. Nonetheless, the Aboriginal Peoples Act allows the Orang Asli to retain their ethnicity after conversion to Islam or any other religion. It is therefore not clear which law applies to the Islamic converts. In practice, many of the converts defy the village *adat* but they also do not necessarily comply with Islamic law.

Kinship and Power Relations

Here I consider the context of kinship relations as it applies to the divorce under discussion. The husband, Bangkong, is a member of a matrilineal descent group that holds leadership titles. The wife, Biru, is from another descent group holding leadership titles. The two descent groups together hold the political power of the village. Adunan, who converted to Islam, was also a member of Bangkong's group. After conversion, Adunan lost the right to succeed to a title and to the usufruct of the common assets (such as the durian orchards) owned by the group.

Although some are related to the upper people by blood or by marriage, the lower people of Kampung Durian Tawar are primarily those outside the two matrilineal descent groups. In other words, they have only marginal

status in the village power structure. To the upper people at the center of the power, the conversion to Islam by a portion of the lower people is not a serious threat. Biru or Adunan, however, are a different story. They belong to the upper people (although, incidentally, Adunan's wife belongs to the lower people). Their conversion is seen as the penetration of Islam into the core of their village society, such that the upper people can no longer consider Islam as someone else's problem.

In addition, there is confrontation among the upper people over the village leadership, which has some bearing in the dispute over Islam. Here I describe an incident in which the JHEOA summoned the *adat* leaders. Adunan's betrayal to the JHEOA directly prompted the authority's action, but apparently Batin Janggut's son Tikak was scheming behind the scenes. Tikak is non-Muslim. The friction between Batin Janggut and Tikak has ramified into confrontations over development projects and the village leadership. Tikak, once an officer of the JHEOA and now the branch president of UMNO,¹⁰ has strong connections with the Malay community and with the JHEOA and the state government. In accordance with the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar, Batin Janggut states that Tikak cannot become the successor of an *adat* leadership title. Tikak's late mother was from another village. Batin Janggut suspects that Tikak was scheming for Adunan's conversion. His suspicion is that Tikak aimed to cause a rift between Batin Janggut and Adunan, who was eligible for a leadership title, and to seize power with the backing of the government. Batin Janggut further said that Tikak also encouraged Bangkong, the husband in the divorce dispute, to convert.

In the meeting with the *adat* leaders, the JHEOA officials only raised questions relating to their land. However, it was later revealed that a letter, allegedly forged by Adunan, Tikak and other opponents of Batin Janggut, had been sent to the government. The letter, bearing the forged signature of the Batin, stated that Islamic converts would be punished (including the death penalty) according to the *adat*. This forged document, with its anti-Islamic message, prompted the officers from the police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to visit Batin Janggut for questioning. It also started a rumor that the government was moving to arrest Batin Janggut on charges related to the Internal Security Act. This incident marked the beginning of the second bout with Islam in Kampung Durian Tawar, which I discuss in the following chapter (the Islam-related incidents are chronicled in Table 23).

As described above, the Islam issue involves not only the conflict between the Orang Asli community and the state, but also that within

the community. The conflict within Kampung Durian Tawar is twofold. It revolves around the antagonism between the upper and lower people, which in turn is compounded by the power struggle for the leadership among the upper people. Those living in the marginal world suffer from troubles within, even when they are trying to resist the power of the state. This is indeed a direct result of how the state at the center of the power structure deliberately divides the marginal world and prevents its members from uniting.

Incidents Relating to Divorce

Divorce Consultation

The rumor of the possible divorce of the convert Biru and her husband Bangkong began circulating in March 1997. Since Biru had decided to convert in December 1996, the family constantly fought over the issue. One evening, a meeting to discuss their divorce was held at the village *adat* hall. The husband and wife, their families and relatives, and the *adat* leaders attended the meeting. Batin Janggut sat in the front, as did the other *adat* leaders. Biru and her children (including those married) took seats in the center opposite the Batin. The families and relatives kept a distance away, surrounding Biru and the children. The husband, Bangkong, sat beside the leaders. Tikak was present, but not Adunan (see Figure 19 for the people involved in the dispute).

Batin Janggut began by asking Biru and each of the children if they had converted to Islam or, if not, were intending to.¹¹ All the children stated that neither case applied to them. When one of the sons answered in a very quiet voice, his *ibubapa* (mother's older brother) Ukal said to him, "We can't hear you. Speak up". Batin Janggut turned to Biru and said, "I hear you've converted to Islam. Is that true?" Biru answered, "I am a Muslim (*Aku Islam*)". Batin Janggut then asked if she could prove that she was a Muslim, adding, "I'm not a Muslim but I can cite Islamic prayers" and went on to do so.¹² Having not learned the prayers, novice convert Biru was silent. The Batin went on, "If you have converted to Islam, you must give up the *adat*. Did you convert knowing that?" Biru could not answer. Batin Janggut then turned to her family and relatives and asked, "She has been converted; what are you going to do?" They all shouted at her, the message being, "Now that you are a convert, we can no longer get along with you like before. We are no longer relatives".

Batin Janggut turned to Bangkong and said, "The situation has become this bad; is divorce not your only option?" Bangkong replied,

The atmosphere changed from quietness to shock and despair. The children began to cry as they saw their father collapse and the scene became quite chaotic. Manyo, Batin Janggut's sister and leader of the women of the descent group, shouted, "Be quiet!" The people calmed down. Batin Janggut suddenly stood up. He cleared his way through those who were trying to give some water to Bangkong and picked him up. When the Batin hit Bangkong twice strongly on the chest, he recovered consciousness, sipped some water and settled down.¹³ Meanwhile, Biru had disappeared, probably because she was upset. Some people said that she might kill herself by taking an agricultural chemical, and began to look for her.¹⁴

Gemuk, who was then the Jekerah, acted on behalf of Bangkong's family and relatives. He paid 10 sen to Batin Janggut as the evidence (*tanda*) of the divorce. This was considered to complete the *talak tiga*¹⁵ procedure to make the divorce disallowing remarriage official. Biru was later found bemused at a fishpond and was said to have agreed to the divorce. Having witnessed the execution of the *talak tiga*, the people left for home in small groups.

A Beating Incident

The divorce was officially executed according to the *adat* and the dispute was considered to be settled. However, in practice this was not the case. To make the outcome of the procedure doubly certain, Batin Janggut went to the Kementerian Dalam Negeri (the Ministry of Home Affairs) with my research assistant, Asat, to explain the divorce but the dispute did not end there. A few days after the divorce was settled, Bangkong beat the Muslim missionary with the handle of a machete. The missionary had heard of the divorce by the village *adat* and visited Bangkong. He allegedly said to Bangkong, "You did not have to divorce. You should have converted to Islam". Biru had already left the family home and was living in a hut in a rubber garden.

As Islam does not approve of marriage between a Muslim and a pagan, the only options were a divorce or Bangkong's conversion. The village leaders solved the dispute by carrying out divorce proceedings according to the *adat*. The Muslim missionary, on the other hand, suggested that Bangkong should convert. Having hardly recovered from the divorce, Bangkong responded impulsively to the missionary's suggestion by beating him. Bangkong had been upset that the missionary had made Biru convert. He stopped short of attacking the officer with the blade because, as he later put it, he did not want to ruin the upcoming ceremonies of Batin



Plates 73-75: Preparing for the inauguration ceremony. In preparing food for a ceremony, men and women work separately. For example, in the case of making lemang (a glutinous rice cake wrapped in bamboo leaves), women's work is to put in glutinous rice and coconut milk into the bamboos. Men then grill the bamboos. [NT-1997]

Janggut's thirtieth anniversary in office and the promotion of one of his siblings to an office in the leadership.

The incident was reported to the police. Both parties, as well as Batin Janggut, Bangkong's younger brothers Asang and Adunan, and another village convert were called to the police for interviews. There was a violent exchange of arguments between the Batin Janggut and Adunan parties. According to Batin Janggut, nevertheless, the police blamed



Plates 76-78: Inauguration ceremony. The author is at left in Plate 76, followed by Batin Janggut, Menteri Gemuk, Jenang Misai. In Plate 77, with their backs to the wall are, from the left, Genreh (Panglima Tuha), Mangku Hasim, and Batin Janggut. In plate 78 (bottom) are the members of the traditional dance troupe with the *adat* leaders. This picture is still displayed at Balai Adat in Kampung Durian Tawar. [NT-1997]

the Muslim missionary's action and banned him from the village for two months. After this incident, Bangkong threatened Islamic converts, warning them, "You'll have to take more than a machete next time". As a member of Ikatan Relawan Rakyat (Peoples Voluntary Corps), Bangkong was licensed to keep a shotgun; as such his words could be interpreted to mean, "I will shoot you dead". The alarmed Islamic converts reported this to the police. After that, the police frequently patrolled the village.¹⁶

Inauguration Ceremony

At the end of March 1997 a ceremony was held to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Batin Janggut's office. The celebration coincided with other rituals, including bestowing the title of Menteri, the office of which had been vacant since the passing of the previous bearer (Menteri Lewat) in November 1996. The newly appointed Menteri was Gemuk, who had been the Jekerah. In another appointment, Asang was promoted to the title of Jekerah. The new Panglimas were also appointed in the joint celebration.

The beating incident was the topic of the day. Batin Janggut revealed to those present that he had turned down an offer from the JHEOA to hold a feast (*kenduri*) to express the JHEOA's gratitude for the villagers' "understanding" for Islamic missionary activities and to promote the exchange between Islamic converts and the villagers. Batin Janggut had worked for the JHEOA as its officer, an experience that certainly taught him how to deal with the government. He did report to the police when the divorce took place, which shows that he was aware of possible ramifications of not accepting the JHEOA's offer. Nonetheless he did turn it down, in consideration of the divorce being caused by Islam and of the friction between the villagers and the converts. The Batin chose the village circumstances before its relationship with the government. His action, although a passive one, could be interpreted as an objection to the government and to Islam. Batin Janggut's decision later complicated Islam-related disputes in Kampung Durian Tawar, for Islam was the very cause of such disputes.

A Muslim Divorce

There was a wedding in April the same year. Lunas married a Chinese widower in a simple wedding, no more than a feast attended only by their families and relatives. Before the wedding, a rumor started among the villagers as the big day approached. People were saying that Edy, the Indonesian (Javanese) husband of Lunas's younger sister Bangli, would oppose the match and work black magic on the couple.¹⁷ The rumor was based on further rumors that Edy and Bangli were not getting along and that he was scheming to marry her sister Lunas.

The wedding went smoothly, and no-one was poisoned at the reception. Prior to the feast, Batin Janggut soothed the people's anxiety by performing a ritual to seek help from the ancestors (*minta moyang*); he often "makes a request to the ancestors (*seru*)" using the *keris* (sword), which is an ancestral property or *pusaka*. A few days after the wedding,



Plate 79: Making a request to the ancestors. Batin Janggut is making a request to the ancestors with *keris*. The *keris* has been covered by a bamboo, which contains rice, medical herbs, oranges that have to steal in the neighboring garden. When making a request, Batin Janggut always burn *kemian* (special resin for magical use). [NT-1997]

the Batin performed a ritual to thank the ancestors (*bayar niat*) for the lack of any incident.

A few days later, Edy and Bangli decided to divorce. Although the *adat* does not allow the wife to initiate a divorce, the village meeting had (in January 1997) approved the exception for Muslims. After a fight, Edy left their home. His suspicious wife reported to the police that he was trying to steal a bike. As a result, the case blew out of control and the dispute (*hal*) was brought before Batin Janggut.

When marrying Bangli, Edy chose to wed according to the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. As a Muslim, he was expected to register his marriage according to Islamic law, but neglected to do so. The marriage between Bangli and Edy was therefore outside the state legal system of both the civil and religious laws that cover matrimony. They therefore did not follow Islamic law when they divorced. Instead Batin Janggut, the executor of the *adat*, conducted the procedure.

The police was eventually brought into the dispute after Edy sought a portion of the acquired property (*harta dapatan*: property acquired by the work done by the husband during the marriage). Edy claimed that his acquired property comprised crops in the rubber and banana gardens and the fish in the farming ponds where he had worked, and argued that he was eligible for his portion, worth 1,200 ringgit. He had already received 700

ringgit from Lunas after making the same claim. Edy's action outraged Bangli, who reported this to Batin Janggut.

Although Batin Janggut and other leaders expressed their anger at Edy's demands, they decided to accept them pending a letter of agreement stating that this would be the last of his claims. Meanwhile, rumors about Edy were circulating among the villagers. One claimed that he was attempting to sell his wife and daughter; another that he had been selling the electric appliances that belonged to his wife. While the veracity of the rumors was not clear, it was at least obvious that the village was filled with anger and distrust against Edy. The distrust was further fueled by the fact that Edy was a Muslim and yet habitually drank liquor and beer, gambled and ate pork.

The night he was supposed to talk with Batin Janggut, Edy was too scared to step into the village. He instead reported to the police, and the Batin was called in. The agreement was exchanged in the presence of the police. Edy was made to promise never to visit his wife's house again. In any case, people were saying that they would not hesitate to shoot him with a blowpipe if they caught sight of him in the village. One Muslim was in effect evicted from the village.¹⁸

JHEOA Summons

At the end of April 1997 Batin Janggut received a letter from the JHEOA to summon the village *adat* leaders to a hall in Kuala Pilah on May 3. It did not state the reason.

On the night of May 2, the leaders held a meeting to discuss their response to the summons. Given the beating incident and the canceled feast, Batin Janggut was certain that Islam was on the agenda. At the meeting, it was decided that I (the author) would not attend the talks with the JHEOA. At the time, rumors about the Islam-related problems in Kampung Durian Tawar were heard even among the officials in the state government. I once visited the District Office (*Pejabat Daerah*) to obtain government documents for my research, when an official told me that Kampung Durian Tawar was "in trouble with Islam-related problems". The *adat* leaders and I were concerned that my research could be terminated if I was involved in the meeting with the JHEOA. Below I reconstruct the talk with the JHEOA, based on what I later heard from the leaders.

The village was represented by a thirteen-member delegation including five *adat* leaders and some junior leaders, together with Batin Awang from Kampung Banning. Those representing the government included not only officers from the JHEOA in Negeri Sembilan and Melaka, but also

the director of the Division of Research and Planning (Pengarah Bahagian Penyelidikan dan Perancangan)¹⁹ from its Kuala Lumpur headquarters, as well as officers from the Department of Islamic Affairs and PERKIM. The talks were taped on video and cassette recorders brought by the government representatives, in the hope of finding fault with the *adat* and being able to use it as evidence.

The JHEOA representative began by questioning Batin Janggut about the village *adat*. Their exchange rambled on. Hearing the talks going nowhere, a Malay officer from Negeri Sembilan said to the villagers that the director did not understand the *adat*. Irritated, the director said, “What you are saying makes no sense, Batin”. Batin Janggut’s response was hardly short of abuse: “In the *adat*, you’re as *kaki empat* (four-legged, hence meaning an animal) as the chair over there!” The *adat* is an accumulation of different sayings. Its interpretation is extremely difficult. Batin Janggut attempted to explain it using the logic of the *adat*, while the director tried to understand it using government logic.

The Batin was puzzled over why he had been asked about the *adat* at all. As the questioning continued, he became increasingly impatient. When the Batin’s patience was about to run out, one of the young leaders, Genreh, asked the director to explain why he was asking about the *adat*. Genreh, a primary school teacher and former officer of the JHEOA, had recently been promoted to the position of Panglima. The director revealed that the JHEOA had received a complaint from a village convert, fearing that, in light of his conversion, the *adat* might dispossess him of the land inherited from his father. Batin Janggut later told me that the director should not have wasted everyone’s time and should have come to the point sooner.

Batin Janggut told the director that the issue was subject to the father’s will and the method of succession, and that the *adat* could not dispossess the man of his land simply because he had converted to Islam. As he began explaining the *adat* rules on inheritance of land, the video and cassette recordings were stopped and the talks came to an abrupt end without any definite conclusion.

Cohabitation of the Divorced Couple

In June 1997 people began talking about the divorced Biru and Bangkong. As mentioned above, Biru lived in a hut in a rubber garden, where she worked with Bangkong and shared tea breaks with him. Her life remained largely unchanged, except that she apparently stayed out of the house where Bangkong lived. A rumor claimed that Biru had been at the house

living with Bangkong again. Against the condition of their divorce, which did not allow remarriage, they had resumed their life together. Bangkong was in breach of the *adat* and Biru was in breach of Islamic law. Their living arrangement was, so to speak, cohabitation without remarriage.

Although it is unclear how aware they were of the implications of their actions in the eyes of the *adat* or the Islamic law, Bangkong and Biru were indeed living together without remarrying. The upper people as the core members of the Kampung Durian Tawar community could not allow their behavior to continue. Given the earlier discussion by their relatives over the divorce settlement, Bangkong and Biru presented a challenge to the authority of the upper people.

Jenang Misai, one of the *adat* leaders, suggested that they remarry by *cinabuta*. This is a method in the *adat* that allows remarriage of a couple who have been divorced and prohibited to remarry each other. The *cinabuta* method is also found in Islamic law (Tomine 1976: 28-51; Tsubouchi 1996: 136-37), although the villagers are not aware of this.

The *cinabuta* method works as follows. The wife (or the husband) first finds a new partner, who is also called a *cinabuta*. They marry and live as husband and wife for the next three days and nights (*tiga malam*). They may share a bed in some cases. They then divorce before the original couple can remarry.

The suggestion was eventually turned down, mainly because Biru was an Islamic convert. Another reason was that Biru's relatives had not forgiven her behavior and therefore publicly refused to perform the *cinabuta*-related rituals for her. The *ibubapa*, or head of the matrilineal descent group acting on behalf of the person concerned, performs many of the rituals in the village.

From the outset, Batin Janggut was against the remarriage of Bangkong and Biru. They had brought their dispute involving conversion to Islam before the *adat* leadership, resulting in divorce under the authority of the *adat*. The Batin condemned Bangkong for being ignorant of the significance of the *adat* decision. He was also critical of Bangkong's siblings, Menteri Gemuk and Jekerah Asang. They were responsible for Bangkong.

Islamic converts in the village began to frequent Bangkong's house. Bangkong stopped attending village rituals and meetings, and people said that he would eventually convert to Islam. The couple continued living together without remarrying in breach of both the *adat* and Islamic laws.

Aspects of Islamization

In the case of Kampung Durian Tawar, Islamization among the Orang Asli can be explained in light of the relationship between the upper and lower people. It is evident in that a portion of the lower people who have antipathy towards the upper people turn to Islam. Some among the upper people also convert as a part of their strategies to attain actual village leadership. It therefore seems appropriate to interpret the phenomenon of Islamization among the Orang Asli in the context of the village power structure.

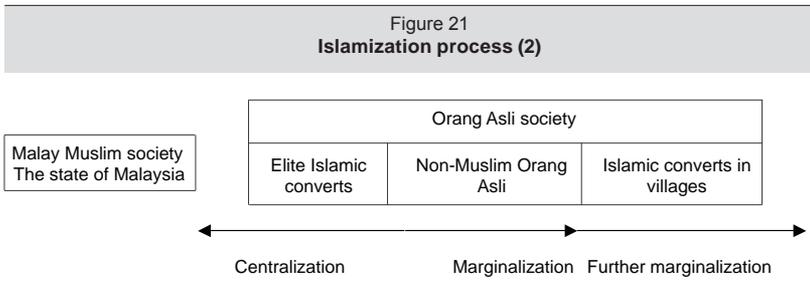
It must be remembered that power relations in Kampung Durian Tawar have in large part been formed through the interventions of state power. The government's development policy since the 1970s and Islamization policy since the 1980s have contributed to the upper/lower class division and to the frictions within the upper people. This is the very reason why people in the peripheral world are unable to forge a unified response to Islamization. As mentioned in earlier cases, Adunan (the leader of the village converts) and Tikak (Batin Janggut's estranged son) are involved in such state interventions, including those by the police, the JHEOA and the Department of Islamic Affairs. Backed by the state and by Islam, they are challenging Batin Janggut and his leadership. The situation illustrates yet another aspect of Islamization among the Orang Asli; this being state and religious intervention in village leadership struggles.

The phenomenon of Islamization among the Orang Asli cannot be fully understood without considering relations between the state and Kampung Durian Tawar. For this very reason, I dedicated Part I to a historical account of Islamization and ethnicity as well as the Islamization policies, while the current and following chapters focus on the Orang Asli responses towards Islamization, in particular through relevant incidents that occurred in the village.

Islamization among the Orang Asli has various intertwined aspects, and the complexity of these aspects makes it impossible to understand the whole phenomenon. For the present, therefore, I attempt to summarize the phenomenon in the frameworks of center and periphery, conversion and resistance, and tactic for resistance.

Center and Periphery

Where are Islamic converts placed in the Orang Asli community? In the context of the relation between the Orang Asli and Malay Muslim communities, Islamic converts in Orang Asli society are being assimilated or centralized to the Malay Muslim society. At the same



not assimilate (centralize) them to the Malay Muslim society. Orang Asli society has a marginal position in the wider Malay Muslim society. The village converts are a new category of marginal people within the marginal world under state-led Islamization. Further marginalization best describes this situation.

The structures shown in Figures 20 and 21 are not separate from each other; rather, they comprise a mechanism to illustrate the process of Islamization. In the present situation the village converts do not assimilate (centralize) to the Malay Muslim society. Certainly, this situation can change; no one can deny the possibility that village converts will assimilate (centralize) with the mainstream society. However, here I stress that Islamization, explained by the structure shown in Figure 20, must be more accurately considered as a transition containing the structure shown in Figure 21.

Conversion and Resistance

In responding to state-led Islamization, the Orang Asli's two major options are conversion and resistance. Some choose to convert in order to survive in the education and employment system or to benefit from the government's development projects. At the village level, people convert for sheer survival, but as a result are excluded from the Orang Asli community. Taunted as "Muslims in name only", they nonetheless choose to convert in order to better sustain their day-to-day existence.

Deviations from Islam in the behavior of the "in name only" converts can be interpreted as the feeble resistance to state-led Islamization exercised by the weak in the Orang Asli community (cf. Scott 1985). In Kampung Durian Tawar some villagers may convert because they regard Islam as a useful political tool, and thereby simply use state authority and Islam in their struggles over village leadership. Although their behavior

is a kind of resistance, it is essentially different from those who refuse to convert.

Among the Orang Asli resisting Islamization pressures, some convert to Christianity or Baha'i²⁰ in order to avoid conversion to Islam (Nicholas 1990: 75; Mohd. Tap 1990: 457). Although the government tries to keep non-Muslim missionaries away, at least 1,500 Orang Asli had become Christians by 1984 (Dentan et al. 1997: 150).

Some Orang Asli parents refuse school education mainly because of the fear that it might convince their children to convert. The Islamization policy has caused great resentment towards the government and the JHEOA in particular. The Orang Asli resist joining regroupment schemes in part because doing so exposes them to relentless pressure to convert to Islam. They also resist taking government employment, such as joining the JHEOA and the Senoi Pra'aq (Dentan et al. 1997: 150). Although the efforts to propagate Islam do little to increase interaction and integration of the Orang Asli and the Malays, the Islamic missionary activities have contributed to the increase in tensions between the two communities (Mohd. Tap 1990: 455).

Orang Asli resistance to Islamization leads to their objection to the state. However, this is rarely publicly declared, and can be seen as "resistance without victory". Neither cunning nor flexible, the Orang Asli resistance derives from a sense of rejection so acute as to be inexpressible with words.

In state-led Islamization the state welcomes an increase of Islamic converts. The national authority is expected to respond to obstacles that hinder the increase, such as anti-Islamic speech and behavior, by resorting to the Internal Security Act. The explicit refusal of an Islamic missionary activity (as in the example of Batin Janggut declining the feast offered by the JHEOA) and the hostilities against the Muslim missionary would be labeled as anti-Islamic. These circumstances restrain the upper people led by Batin Janggut from taking direct action against the converts among the lower people and the Batin's opponents backed by the state and Islam, even if they are affronted by their behavior.

Tactic for Resistance

Through divorce, the *adat* leaders resolved the trouble caused by Biru's conversion to Islam. One of the purposes of the *adat* resolution was to prevent Bangkong from converting, as encouraged by the Muslim missionary. The divorce would sever the convert from the Orang Asli community. The alternative solution suggested by the Muslim missionary

amounted to an encroachment of Islamic converts into the Orang Asli community. The *adat* leaders chose to resolve the case with a divorce by the *adat*, which was the only “resistance tactic” available to them in the circumstances. However, this resistance tactic apparently failed, as it consequently created the situation of the couple’s cohabitation without remarriage. A resolution by the *adat* is extremely tenuous, as its binding power depends on whether the parties concerned follow the *adat*. Islamic converts, in other words, are rendering the village *adat* dysfunctional.

The current state-led Islamization policy toward the Orang Asli has produced Muslim Orang Asli, which was unheard of in previous Islamization and Malayization movements. As discussed in Part I, the emergence of Muslim Orang Asli reflects the change from the principle of integration in the British colonial government’s “divide and rule” policy to assimilation in the state-led Islamization policy since the 1980s. It is also a result of the discrepancy between the cultural and legal perspectives in the Orang Asli policy.

To this point in this chapter, I have described the Orang Asli’s responses to state-led Islamization, based on the cases found in Kampung Durian Tawar. My task in this chapter is to illustrate how the non-Muslim Orang Asli are coping with the circumstances in which the national authority backs the minority Islamic converts. The state and Islam are too powerful for the non-Muslim Orang Asli to form an effective counter-strategy. They can only respond to the nemeses with a temporizing “deal” or tactic.

In Kampung Durian Tawar the conversion of some lower people has caused changes in the village social order and in the allocation system of development funds. At the same time, opponents of Batin Janggut have been challenging his leadership, often with the backing of the state and Islam. In these circumstances, the upper people, who are the core members of the village, choose not to convert and persist in their resistance against Islamization, which is also seen as resistance to the state.

This makes one wonder where their resistance arises from. The easy answer to this question is that they resist the converts among the lower people and the anti-Batin Janggut group out of self-respect as the holders of traditional authority and wealth. Their instinctive rejection of the state-led Islamization exemplified by the positive discrimination policy maintains their resistance against the state and Islam. In short, their resistance derives from their pride as Orang Asli and their anger against the state. They resort to the *adat* as the ideological base of their resistance. Although the Malays understand that the Orang Asli borrowed aspects of their *adat* from them, the upper people use it against Islamization by

focusing on its un-Islam-ness. In this context, the *adat* ideology signifies the identity of those who put up the resistance.

As mentioned in Part II, the upper people's close economic ties with the Chinese make them confident of their economic survival independent of state-funded development projects. One report claims that the Orang Asli are strengthening their relations with the Chinese and Indians to cope with the hasty enforcement of Islamization (Mohd. Tap 1990: 447, 452-53). The Orang Asli also have "a world of their own" made up of magic and other things particular to them. This world could provide force for their resistance. Batin Janggut once explained to me that he would not convert because, given his magical powers, he did not have to depend on a religion.

In this chapter I noted a tactic for resistance involving use of the *adat*. Considering that this resulted in Bangkong and Biru's cohabitation without remarriage, the tactic seems to be unsuccessful. However, one thing is certain. The fact that the *adat* is discussed in a dispute over conversion to Islam proves that it is invoked as a counter-ideology to Islamic domination. The fact that the Orang Asli community discusses its own identity and the significance of its *adat* reflects the awareness of Islamization and other social realities surrounding them.

Notes

1. Nowak (1984: 11) argues that conversion to Islam includes changes in diet and eating customs, renunciation of traditional religious belief, and acceptance of Islamic values including, especially among the women, the belief in male superiority.
2. A document from the early twentieth century records circumcision and diet as the reason the Orang Asli (or the Sakai as they were called) do not convert to Islam (Machado 1902: 31). It also cites dislike against Malays (Machado 1902: 30).
3. Maeda noted the Orang Asli's dislike against Malays (Maeda 1969: 84). I also noted this dislike on various occasions during my fieldwork. On the other hand, Malays have a deep-rooted discriminatory view of the Orang Asli. This is especially strong in respect to religion, in which they regard the Orang Asli as *kafir* or pagan and therefore unworthy of belonging to their Muslim community (*ummah*) (Mohd. Tap 1990: 59, 101, 224).

4. Jointly supported by PERKIM and JHEOA, this development project was designed to encourage Islamic converts to eat chicken instead of pork.
5. His official title is Penggerak Masyarakat, and he was sent by JAKIM under the Prime Minister's Office (Jabatan Perdana Menteri). The true role of this officer is to convert Orang Asli to Islam (Nicholas 2000: 220). Since he came to the village in 1991, the number of Islamic converts has increased. The authorities involved in the Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli include JHEOA, a special unit called Cawangan Dakwah Orang Asli within the Islam Center (Pusat Islam), and the state governments' Departments of Islamic Affairs (called the Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam).
6. As reported by Kato (1980), there is flexibility that enables combined use of matrilineal *adat* and patrilineal Islam in Minangkabau. The Orang Asli see the *adat* and Islam as two incompatible choices. They believe an Islamic convert must give up *adat*.
7. This has also been reported by Baharon (1972: 6) and Mohd. Tap (1990: 137).
8. It has been pointed out that carrying a Malay name is the first stepping stone to Islamization (Mohd. Tap 1990: 229).
9. Baharon (1973: 37-40) discusses Muslim and non-Muslim diets, based on his own experience. Islamic taboos include meats of hunted wild animals (as well as pork), meals cooked by non-Muslims, and use of dining utensils that have touched taboo food. At the *adat* hall, pork is banned and other measures are taken in consideration of Malay visitors being Muslim. The villagers often said to me with a smile, "Rantau (the author) eats like us" (*macam orang kita*), by which they meant that they were happy about my lack of dietary barriers.
10. Non-Muslims are admitted into the ruling UMNO for a couple of possible reasons. For one, they are considered to be Malays, with their personal name carrying the Islamic *bin/binti*. For another, they have little political influence, unlike the non-Muslims in the state of Sabah. It was after the New UMNO was formed that they joined the party.
11. Because of the notice issued by JHEOA, it is important in arbitration to clarify whether the parties concerned are Islamic converts.
12. The office and residence of the Muslim missionary is next to the hall. Everyone was concerned that the officer might hear Batin Janggut reciting the prayers, which is an insult to Islam.

13. Batin Janggut is a medicine man. Called a *bomboh*, *pyang* or *dukun*, he is especially well known to possess the *ilmu* (magic, including sorcery), not only among the villagers but also in the neighboring regions including the Malay community and throughout the Orang Asli community. People are afraid of his magical power.
14. In Kampung Durian Tawar there had been two incidents in which a villager committed suicide by taking an agricultural chemical. At the time, a girl who had converted to Islam in another village also committed suicide in this way.
15. *Talak tiga* means divorce made irrevocable by uttering *talak* (divorce) three times.
16. One of the police officers was rumored to be persistently urging villagers to convert to Islam. He was believed to be giving advice to the Islamic converts.
17. In Malaysia, Indonesians are believed to be able to use *ilmu* or black magic. This belief indicates the mixed emotions of fear and discrimination that the Malaysians hold towards Indonesian migrant workers.
18. Bangli and Edy's daughter died of dengue fever in August 2002. Edy had since married a Malay woman and lived in a nearby village. He was seen weeping bitterly at his daughter's funeral.
19. This division of JHEOA is responsible for Islamic affairs.
20. According to the Islamic Encyclopedia in Japanese, Baha'i is a new religion founded by Baha' Ullah in the nineteenth century and with an influence of Bab (Kuroyanagi 1982: 304). In Iran the religion is considered heretical and is banned. Based in the Palestinian city of Haifa, Baha'i continues its missionary activities, which reach Europe and North America.

Chapter 11

Islamic Mission

Islamization from Above

Open discussion of Islam in Malaysia is considered taboo. People are aware that Islam is a sensitive issue and that, as the national religion, it is best to refrain from making critical comments about it. Under these circumstances, outsiders to Islam such as the Orang Asli tend to see the religion as dangerous. Yet often they do not have a good understanding of this religion. People who are subjected to something often find it difficult to see the logic and reality behind their subjugation. Whatever the case may be for the Orang Asli, the term “Islam” has many different meanings. The following anecdote reveals part of the picture.

When the anthropologist Endicott was conducting field research into the Batek people, an ethnic group of the Negrito, he asked a Batek man why his family had fled from the regroupment scheme development project. He reportedly answered with a single word, “Islam” (Dentan et al. 1997: 149). In this dialog, the man’s answer did not offer an explicit explanation, yet those familiar with the reality of Islamization among the Orang Asli would readily understand his point. Behind this terse answer, they would recognize the effects of conversion to Islam and almost compulsory participation in Islamic missionary activities, packaged together with the state-led development projects. They would also sense the very forcefulness of the Islamization being imposed on the Orang Asli, as well as their fierce resistance to it. Here, then, we see that Islamization among the Orang Asli is not merely a religious phenomenon to those people who are subjected to it.

Discourse on the development projects and Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli often stresses the marginality of the indigenous people. But these days, the Orang Asli community advocates not only

its political demands but also its attempts to revitalize its traditional and cultural identity (Zawawi 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). As Kagami (2000: 204–05), Tsing (1993) and others point out, the marginal community is seeking to overcome its political and cultural marginality. The Orang Asli policy is aimed at those on the margin, and could thus be interpreted as a “policy to domesticate ethnicity by the nation-state” (Kato 1993; Yamashita 1993). However, the Orang Asli are not just responding passively. This becomes obvious when looking at what is occurring in the Orang Asli community. As far as resistance to government policy is concerned, the Orang Asli are attempting to adapt the government policy to themselves, or perhaps better to adapt themselves positively to the policy.

The main characters in this chapter are Batin Janggut and the people around him, and the central theme is their response, in the conditions described above, to Islamization. The chapter is about the tensions between the Orang Asli community and the state-led Islamization in the periphery.

Following on from the previous chapter, I discuss the relationship between the problem of Islam and particular events in the village. The outline is as follows (see also Table 23). In September 1997 a rumor circulated that the arrest of the allegedly anti-Islam Batin Janggut under the Internal Security Act was imminent. In March 1998 a talk was held with the government, and in the following month, the Malay traditional ruler, the Undang in Jelebu, paid a visit to Kampung Durian Tawar, where Islamic missionary activities were being conducted.

On the next day Batin Janggut made “anti-Islamic remarks” at the POASM general meeting near Kuala Lumpur. After being labeled anti-Islam again, Batin Janggut went into hiding, where he received the news that a son was getting married and converting to Islam.

This series of dramatic events concerning Islam, unfolding right before my eyes, illustrates vividly how the Islamization policy has thrown the Orang Asli into turmoil. This series of events provided me with ideal study material for better understanding the Orang Asli’s response to the government’s Islamization policy.

In reality, it also tested my own responses and the value of my fieldwork. I am not sure if I responded to the ongoing events adequately as a field researcher; all I could do was attempt to describe and analyze the Orang Asli’s responses and struggles against Islamization. In the following section, I describe in more detail the events that occurred in Kampung Durian Tawar.

Table 23
A record of events surrounding Islamization

Date	Events
December 1996.	<p>The Batin were called up for lectures on Islam, to gain their support for Islamic missionary activities (organized by the JHEOA)</p> <p>Around this time, Biru decided to convert</p>
January 1997.	<p>A village meeting to discuss important issues was held in order to change the <i>adat</i> rules Wives were now able to seek divorce on religious grounds</p>
March 1997.	<p>A talk on divorce took place between Bangkong and Biru</p> <p>The assault of an Islamic missionary staff member by Bangkong</p> <p>A 30th anniversary ceremony was held for Batin Janggut</p>
April 1997.	<p>The cancellation of the <i>kenduri</i> feast ceremony organized by the JHEOA</p>
May 1997.	<p>An Indonesian divorce case</p> <p><i>Adat</i> leaders were called up by the JHEOA</p>
June 1997.	<p>A rumor is spread about Bangkong and Biru living together</p>
July 1997.	<p>Batin Janggut "fainted"</p>
August 1997.	<p>A wallet was stolen</p>
September 1997.	<p>Police questioned Batin Janggut</p>
October 1997.	<p>Hari Kesedaran</p>
January 1998.	<p>The wedding of a daughter of Batin Janggut</p>
February 1998.	<p>Ayip's <i>tangkap basah</i> dispute</p>
March 1998.	<p>Negotiations took place with the government concerning the Islamic missionary activities</p>
April 1998.	<p>A visit by Undang and the implementation of the Islamic missionary activities program</p> <p>POASM's annual general meeting was held</p>
May 1998.	<p>Ayip's conversion to Islam and his wedding</p> <p>Ribut's rape incident</p> <p>The <i>kenduri</i> feast ceremony was held at Kampung Dalam</p>

Prelude

After the JHEOA-sponsored lecture on Islam in December 1996 (the main aim being to seek assistance for the Islamic missionary activities), to which all the significant Batins in Negeri Sembilan were invited, a cascade of events occurred in the village. These were obviously the result of the Islamization policy. An increasing number of people began converting to Islam, or at least declared their intention to do so; family feuds between a married couple flared up due to such conversions; an assault took place on the Muslim missionary and there was a subsequent police interview and summons of the *adat* leaders; and so on. Then things seemed to settle down, but beneath the surface a second act was in progress.

Because Batin Janggut seemed “uncooperative” in his dealings with the government regarding Islamic missionary activities, most government staff assumed that he was anti-Islam. The government was equally concerned about the Islam issues in Kampung Durian Tawar, as frequently there were fights and other incidents involving police. The government issued all sorts of direct and indirect advice and warnings to Batin Janggut in order to contain anti-Islam activity, even though this did not exist in the first place.

Police Visit

In mid-September 1997 a police officer from the headquarters in Kuala Lumpur came to question Batin Janggut at his home. He asked Batin Janggut if he had anti-Islamic sentiments. It was later revealed that a forged letter had been sent to the police, allegedly signed by Batin Janggut, stating that “punishment (including the death sentence) will be applied to anyone converting to Islam”. The police came to see if Batin Janggut really had anti-Islamic beliefs, to which he told them that he did not. The officer told him that an anti-Islamic letter signed by the Batin had been sent to them. When the Batin said, “I’ve never written such a letter”, the officer replied, “it may have been written by one of your relatives (*daging*, meaning flesh)”. Though it was not possible to be certain who had written the letter, Batin Janggut guessed it was part of a conspiracy involving his son Tikak. Batin Janggut suspected that Adunan, the leader of the Islamic converts, must have played a part in it as well. The police visit did not result in Batin Janggut’s arrest, but it certainly was effective in delivering a “warning shot”.

In 1997 the annual Hari Kesedaran festival took place on October 1. Hari Kesedaran in Kampung Durian Tawar is the Orang Asli version of the Malay Hari Raya Puasa festival, which is held after the fasting month

and involves visiting relatives and holding feasts. It so happened that on that evening a recording for an Orang Asli program on the nationwide Radio Malaysia was being conducted in the village. The recordings included songs and dances of the village youth, as well as an open-air concert by Malay singers.

Many dignitaries were invited for the occasion, including the principals of the primary and middle schools that the Orang Asli children attended, a senior bureaucrat from the JHEOA, a representative from POASM,¹ and state and federal Members of Parliament. On that evening, a state Member of Parliament warned Batin Janggut that he should be careful about what he said and did, as some people in the government were advocating his arrest. The *ibubapa* (brother of the mother) of this Member of Parliament was a well-known village medicine man (*dukun*) and was very influential in the area. As a fellow medicine man, he had contact with Batin Janggut, and had once advised the Batin to stop using sorcery. This Member of Parliament said to Batin Janggut, “I am giving you an unsolicited warning because you are close to my *ibubapa*”.

Since then, similar warnings have come to him from various sources. One was from the now-retired Malay headman (Penghulu) of the Pertang area (Mukim Pertang). The son of the Penghulu, who worked at the police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, accessed Batin Janggut’s file and then informed his father of its contents. Being on close terms, the retired Penghulu told Batin Janggut what he knew and to watch his words and actions. The file apparently contained a copy of the abovementioned letter with the forgery of Batin Janggut’s signature. A warning also arrived from POASM. A member of POASM, who was also a JHEOA staff member, stated that a file on Batin Janggut contained the now infamous letter. The same POASM representative who had attended the Hari Kesedaran festival told Batin Janggut this. Batin Janggut thereby learned what was going on in the government from various sources. In short, they all warned him “to be careful what he said and did, as he was an anti-Islam suspect”.

Seclusion

Batin Janggut took these warnings seriously, and from October 1997 began spending more time in Kampung Dalam, the native village of his sixth wife. Kampung Dalam is situated deep in the forest, where a jungle fort once stood during the Emergency. With 1,500 acres of reserve, the village is known as the largest Orang Asli reserve in Negeri Sembilan. We must note that Batin Janggut was involved in the development of both this village and Kampung Durian Tawar, which has 800 acres of reserve. As a

staff member of the JHEOA at the time, he had significant influence in the initial application and approval process for the reserves in these villages.

Life deep in the forest in Kampung Dalam, where there was no running water and no electricity, was nothing like that in Kampung Durian Tawar, where development was in full swing. On top of this, Batin Janggut's house in Kampung Durian Tawar was by Orang Asli standards a mansion, while the one in Kampung Dalam was nothing more than a shed. In that tiny hut, Batin Janggut (in his mid-sixties) lived with his sixth wife (who was just over forty), and occupied himself with rubber tapping and gardening. *Adat* recommends that a husband live in the birthplace of his wife. In this light, Kampung Dalam was the appropriate place of residence for Batin Janggut. In fact, it had been his home before he inherited the title of Batin. But after the title was given in 1967, he had relocated with his third wife and children and based himself in Kampung Durian Tawar. Most of his sons with his third wife are now settled in Kampung Dalam, having married local women. Because his sixth and current wife came from the village, he began living with her in Kampung Dalam.

Batin Janggut began his life of seclusion in Kampung Dalam for another reason also. He was in dispute with his sons by his third wife, now living in Kampung Dalam. His dispute with Singah and his other sons concerned RISDA, and centered in particular on the distribution of profits from logging forests and rubber trees. This dispute had spread through the whole village and fighting was taking place routinely between the supporters of Batin Janggut and those of Singah in Kampung Dalam. During this time, Singah and others enlisted an Orang Asli magic medicine man (*pyang*) in Pahang to "curse Batin Janggut to death".² In fact, Batin Janggut fainted (*pengan*) more than twice in July 1997 due to this "curse".

In Kampung Durian Tawar in August 1997 a dispute erupted whereby the daughters of his daughter of his third wife accused his daughter by his sixth wife, who lived next door, of stealing their father's wallet. After running out of patience with them and their parents, and with his own daughter and her husband because they had long issued similar insults, Batin Janggut stormed into the house of his daughter by his third wife. During the confrontation, Batin Janggut declared, "I know you are hiring a *pyang* to kill me". In the end, a superficial reconciliation was brought about by police officers, but the lingering distrust between them was only to worsen.

Batin Janggut's house with his sixth wife in Kampung Durian Tawar stands next to that occupied by his former third wife. Because the wife of

Singah, his eldest son with his third wife, is also the elder sister of his sixth wife, the relationship between the two families is filled with complicated tensions and emotions. Batin Janggut, who is also in dispute with his son Tikak and with the Islamic convert Adunan, considered that living in Kampung Durian Tawar would only further incite those against him. Of course, Singah and other brothers were living in Kampung Dalam, but the houses there were so sparse that one could get by without making daily contact. In contrast, in Kampung Durian Tawar there is increased possibility of conflict.

As in Kampung Durian Tawar, Singah's sympathizers would not dare to attack Batin Janggut directly in Kampung Dalam. To some degree, this may be because he is their father, but it is more likely due to his magical power. The very fact that Singah and others employed a *pyang* to cast a curse of death on Batin Janggut is proof that Singah and others are afraid of their father's curse. Yu, the husband of Batin Janggut's daughter with his third wife, openly claimed that the foot injury he carried was the result of the Batin's curse. Batin Janggut's move to Kampung Dalam put a stop to Singah and the other followers' brazen behavior in the village. As mentioned, they directed their "attacks" not at Batin Janggut himself but at his sympathizers. Sometimes, drunken followers of Singah burgled a sympathizer's house. Had Batin Janggut not lived in Kampung Dalam, his ever-dwindling sympathizers there could have all been persuaded to switch sides. Since taking up residency in Kampung Dalam, many of his sympathizers have moved closer to his house out of fear that Singah's group may attack them.

When any troubles broke out in Kampung Durian Tawar, accusatory fingers were pointed at the alleged anti-Islam Batin Janggut, and, almost without exception, the police questioned him. When Bangkong assaulted the Muslim missionary in March 1997, Batin Janggut was questioned. He was labeled anti-Islam if he gave any wrong responses. Having heard a lot of advice and numerous warnings with regard to his imminent arrest, he grew careful not to get involved in any conflict over Islam.

With Batin Janggut absent from Kampung Durian Tawar, his opponents in the village lost the target of their attacks. In fact, while he in Kampung Dalam negligible overt conflicts occurred between the opposing groups. Unlike their counterparts in Kampung Dalam, the supporters of Batin Janggut in Kampung Durian Tawar were well organized under the leadership of Genreh and other *enekbuah* of Batin Janggut.

When Batin Janggut was living in relatively accessible Kampung Durian Tawar, government officers such as the JHEOA staff would call

him or drop in at his place. But in Kampung Dalam, which is inaccessible by car (except for jeep) and has no telephone connection, no bureaucrats would attempt to contact him unless the matter was of very high importance. When they found Batin Janggut was no longer living in Kampung Durian Tawar, they simply gave up. For him, the simple hut in Kampung Dalam was an ideal “hide-out”. Thus, until the end of December 1997, when the “curse attack” by the *poyang* was supposed to have ended, Batin Janggut lived a life of seclusion in Kampung Dalam. As a result, during this period the issue of Islam did not rise to the surface.

Tangkap Basah

In January 1998 the wedding of Batin Janggut’s daughter by his fifth wife was held in Kampung Durian Tawar. As such, in this period he often went back to the village.

In the following month news arrived of Ayip, his son by his fifth wife, and his encounter with the *tangkap basah* in an Orang Asli village in Selangor. Ayip’s partner was a Muslim Orang Asli. In April 1997 he had met with the *tangkap basah* and, with this same girl, arranged a marriage. Since then, Ayip had bided his time before seeking his father’s approval. Because of his dislike for Islam, and because of other issues, Batin Janggut would not approve his son’s marriage (which would also mean conversion to Islam). Ayip’s siblings (Batin Janggut’s children by his fifth, sixth and seventh wives) opposed the marriage as well, saying, “Islamic conversion would only make the problem flare up again, due to Batin Janggut’s antagonism towards Islam”. As a result, Ayip had been unable to discuss the matter with his father.

In February 1998 Ayip visited his partner’s house and met the *tangkap basah*. Subsequently, her relatives visited Kampung Durian Tawar with a piece of Ayip’s clothing as evidence, and demanded that either the marriage be approved or a fine be paid. At the time, Batin Janggut was absent. Menteri Gemuk and Jekerah Asang, along with Batin Janggut’s fifth wife, the mother of Ayip, met the visitors. After telling the visitors that “we cannot make the decision”, Menteri Gemuk and the others left for Kampung Dalam to see Batin Janggut. In town they bumped into him; worried about what was happening, he was on his way to Kampung Durian Tawar. They sat in a Chinese cafe and discussed possible courses of action. Batin Janggut was determined not to allow his son’s marriage and conversion to Islam, and said to Menteri Gemuk and others, “I have no intention of attending any meeting to discuss this with the woman’s relatives”.

When she heard this, Ayip's mother asked Batin Mampas, her brother and Ayip's guardian, to fetch Ayip back from the Orang Asli village in Selangor, where he was "in custody". With Lan (Ayip's elder brother) driving a car borrowed from Menteri Gemuk, Batin Mampas traveled to the village. Negotiations with the woman's relatives became quite complicated, but it was eventually agreed that the marriage would be canceled and a fine (rumored to be as much as 2,000 ringgit) would be paid. On the way back to Kampung Durian Tawar after dropping Batin Mampas off, Lan, tired after the long day, fell asleep at the wheel. The car went over the railings of a bridge and smashed into an embankment. Ayip was taken to the hospital in Seremban with a broken jawbone, while Lan suffered a minor leg injury.

The 6,000 ringgit damage bill was to be paid by Lan's siblings to Menteri Gemuk, but Batin Janggut initially shouldered it. The reaction to Ayip was distant and critical; nobody showed any sympathy. Ayip was considered a "delinquent son", one who had acted recklessly despite the knowledge that his father had experienced problems with the issue of Islam. Ayip had been living in an Orang Asli village, where his elder brother Ribut lived following his marriage to a village woman. Ayip quit the factory job he had held for a short while, and was just "hanging around". When he returned to Kampung Durian Tawar he was not interested in helping with the rubber tapping, but led a debauched life of billiards, betting and drinking, and going around on a motorbike that was not fully paid for. He had a bad reputation among his siblings because he had not yet paid a telephone bill incurred when he was regularly calling his "fiancé". After this *tangkap basah* episode, his relatives gave up on him.

The relatives of the woman Ayip wanted to marry probably saw the cause of the failed relationship as Batin Janggut's refusal to allow his son to convert to Islam. Around this time, a rumor circulated in the JHEOA that one of Batin Janggut's sons, well known for his staunch anti-Islam stance, might be converting to Islam. Thus, the suspicion resurfaced that Batin Janggut was not cooperating with the Islamization process. The notion that he was in opposition to Islam was now widespread.

Implementation of Islamic Mission

Around mid-March in 1998 a meeting with PERKIM (the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organization) was held in the village *adat* hall. It was attended by Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai, as well as Adunan and other Islamic converts. For several weeks prior to the meeting, a weekly Islamic lecture with a guest Malay lecturer from the neighboring village

had been held on Thursdays at the village Islamic prayer room (*surau*). The PERKIM meeting sought assistance from the village for Islamic missionary activities such as this. The following account is my record of what Batin Janggut later told me.

Batin Janggut alleged that “the converts are disturbing the order of the village by not obeying the *adat*”. The Islamic converts kept quiet, though they must have felt anxious about receiving critical comments from Batin Janggut. The staff from PERKIM and bureaucrats from the Department of Islamic Affairs attempted to calm him down and to achieve conciliation between the Islamic converts and the non-Muslim villagers. During the talk, the PERKIM people suggested inviting PERKIM people from Kuala Lumpur to conduct an Islamic missionary activity program in Kampung Durian Tawar, in which they would present Islamic missionary programs house to house. Batin Janggut had been able to knock back the proposal to hold the feast ceremony that the JHEOA had requested in April 1997. However, given the government’s suspicions of his anti-Islam stance, this time he could not refuse this request. During the meeting, Batin Janggut again explained the *adat* that the village observed. “Because we follow the *adat*”, he explained, “we cannot be easily converted to Islam”.

Undang and Batin

PERKIM announced that the Undang (of the Jelebu district) would be invited to Kampung Durian Tawar. The Undang is well respected in the area as a guardian of Islam and of *adat*. Inviting him was a government move to counter Batin Janggut’s claim that “we don’t need to convert to Islam because we have the *adat*”. The Undang was not only the region’s *adat* leader, but also the honorary chief of the Department of Islamic Affairs of the Jelebu district; that is, the nominal head of Islam. We also see here the role of the traditional rulers, such as sultans and rajas, which had endured from the days of the British colonial period to the present, and which defined their position as the custodians of tradition as well as religion.

The Batins, the leaders of the Orang Asli community, draw their authority from their relationship with the Undang. In Negeri Sembilan, because of the historical belief that the Minangkabau, after migrating from Sumatra, married an Orang Asli woman in order to gain land rights, it is claimed that in the early days of national history the Orang Asli Batin was given the right to choose the Undang, the Malay ruler. The Batins were always invited to the inauguration ceremonies of the new Undangs (Dentan et al. 1997: 53–54). It is believed that a Batin converted to Islam

and changed his title to Undang, while Batin remained the title for the leader of the non-Muslim community. In other words, they are both of the same origin.

While the Undang derives his authority from the Batin's approval, the Batin can claim his title only through his appointment by the Undang. Tsubouchi (1984) argues that the network that arose from the conferring of titles was the backbone of the political and economic structure in Negeri Sembilan. From Yang-Pertuan Besar, the "king" of Negeri Sembilan, down to the Undang, and from the Undang to the Penghulu or Batin, the Orang Asli (or Biduanda) were also made part of the political and economic network of Negeri Sembilan society. But when in the mid-nineteenth century the Orang Asli ceased taking part in Malay politics, the Malays forgot about the Orang Asli's role in the early days of the Malay kingdom (Dentan et al. 1997: 53–54).

These traditional networks based on the conferring of titles may be found within Malay society but not within that of the Orang Asli. This is because the former "traditional" relationship between the Malays and the Orang Asli was gradually severed from the political process during the British colonial period and since independence. The Malays' relationship with the Orang Asli has become very restricted because under the special administration it is handled by the JHEOA, which means that the JHEOA appoints or approves the Batins.

Islamic Missionary Activities

On April 24 and 25 in 1998 Islamic missionary activities were carried out in Kampung Durian Tawar. On the afternoon of the first day, a PERKIM group from Kuala Lumpur visited the village, staying at the house of the Muslim missionary and at the kindergarten (the upper floor being the prayer room) while they prepared for the next day's activities. As far as I was able to observe, the visiting group included students from Universiti Malaya and teaching staff from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Also taking part in the missionary activities was an Orang Asli woman who had converted. She was a granddaughter of Aki Main from Kampung Bukit Lanjan in Selangor.

Up until this point, I had not directly observed incidents concerning Islam. A couple of negotiations had been held between the government and the village leaders. I had known of these beforehand, but did not go. However, I decided to involve myself in this missionary activity, as I thought this would be my last chance and also because it included the Undang. I had only three months left for my research, and I would not

worry too much if this was cut short. Fortunately this did not happen, but following the Undang's visit a professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia received informal enquiries about me. The professor encouraged me, saying "anthropologists cannot help encountering this kind of problem", but nonetheless the seriousness of the issue of Islam was once again brought home.

Let us return to those April days. On the morning of April 25, a children's sports carnival was held in the front square of the *adat* hall. Rather than being an actual sports carnival, it seemed that the children were competing against the PERKIM staff, while other PERKIM staff visited village houses to carry out missionary activities and distribute leaflets. They also distributed rice, eggs, tiny dried fish (*ikan bilis*) and so on. Initially *batik* cloths had also been suggested as suitable handouts, but the village leaders refused because this required a list of the names and signatures of the recipients. They were afraid that such a list might result in them being registered as Muslims without their knowledge. The leaflets distributed by Universiti Malaya students explained Islam, but were not comprehensible to the non-literate villagers. One villager gave me one, saying, "I don't need it". The Malay lecturer who had been coming to the village for the weekly Islamic lectures asked a convert if he understood the contents of the leaflet, to which he shook his head apologetically.

PERKIM's organizational staff and the Islamic converts busily prepared for the Undang's visit. The PERKIM staff had control over the program procedure with the help of the Islamic converts, while the village *adat* leaders were not asked to help. The Islamic converts, who usually did not take part in village activities, were having difficulty finding the necessary tools and cooking implements. Malays hired by PERKIM prepared the food, with no involvement from the village women. The people who would usually run village events were absent, having left the village early that morning to work in the fields. Also, a burial ceremony happened to be taking place in a neighboring village. Many villagers, who under normal circumstances would not have attended the burial because of their distant relationship with the deceased, decided to attend. Most of these villagers were pillars of the community and supporters of Batin Janggut. Batin Janggut would normally have been critical of this "disruptive" action, but it seemed he had actually encouraged and helped to plan these actions.

The villagers who presented themselves for the Islamic missionary activity were Islamic converts, several *adat* leaders including Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai, Tikak's supporters, young people who attended



Plate 80: The blowpipe dart competition. The blowpipe dart competition is always held at events that have something to do with the Orang Asli. There are two Islamic converts in this picture: one man wears a white shirt and the other wears a white Muslim skull-cap (*kopiah*). [NT-1998]

out of curiosity, and some lower people who turned up for the free meal. Tikak apparently told Genreh, “I don’t like this kind of stuff”, by which he meant Islamic missionary activities. This was an implicit criticism of Batin Janggut for giving his approval to such activities.

I observed the village preparations along with Jenang Misai and Batin Awang from Kampung Baning, who had come on a “reconnaissance” mission. We decided to go over to Batin Janggut’s house, and found him in an altercation with the PERKIM and the JHEOA staff. He looked enraged. We learned that a dispute had been raging for more than three hours. The PERKIM people seemed to be asking for more understanding for the Islamic converts in the village. Batin Janggut was accusing them of being impolite and disrespectful to the *adat*. The PERKIM people expressed their fear that, after the recent riot in Penang between Muslims and Hindus, rioting could occur among the Orang Asli. The argument went around in circles, and eventually ended in disagreement.

The PERKIM people left and I went back to the *adat* hall square. The marquee was up and preparations were in progress for the Undang’s visit. A blowpipe dart competition, indispensable to any Orang Asli ceremony, was in full swing. Several competitors were taking aim at balloons more than thirty meters away. Adunan, now wearing a Malay cap (*songkok*), led the competition.

Undang Visit

Dignitaries arrived at the village just as the blowpipe dart competition was ending to great cheers and laughter. The dignitaries included the JHEOA heads from the Negeri Sembilan and Melaka branches. Some Malays associated with the Undang were also there. The police had arrived to ensure there would be no breaches of security. A plainclothes detective asked me about Japan. An Islamic lecturer from the neighboring village who had noticed me videotaping the competition, wondered “who I was” and asked the police to stop me from filming. The police and I were already on friendly terms, and they allowed me to continue filming and taking photographs.

A solemn atmosphere prevailed as a police vehicle, followed by the Undang’s party traveling in a limousine, arrived at the square. Adunan and Haji Konin, Islamic converts from the village, were the first to greet them. After exchanging pleasantries, the Undang sat on a rattan sofa brought out from Batin Janggut’s house. The Undang’s wife sat next to him, and they were flanked by representatives from PERKIM, the Department of Islamic Affairs, a JHEOA branch leader and Batin Janggut. In front of this “stage”, the marquee was filled with the villagers and Malays from PERKIM and neighboring villages. Thus began the Undang’s welcome ceremony.

A prayer (*doa*) was performed first. The Undang, the Malays and the Islamic converts all assumed the prayer position, stretching their hands forward with up-facing palms. The non-Muslim villagers, including Batin Janggut, did not take part, and instead sat imperviously as if resisting something. It was the typical Orang Asli response evident at any Malay-organized school event or public ceremony, but here it caused a strange sense of discomfort. After the prayer, representatives from PERKIM and the Department of Islamic Affairs each gave a speech. Both stressed their hopes for reconciliation between the Islamic converts and the non-Muslim residents in the village, and for good relations between the Orang Asli and Malay communities. A reconciliation ceremony had apparently been planned between Adunan and other Islamic converts and non-Muslim residents in the village (in particular Batin Janggut), but in the end it was canceled. Neither the JHEOA nor Batin Janggut performed a greeting speech, and the JHEOA staff attended but were only given observer status.

When the Undang rose to talk, everyone in attendance stood up in deference. The microphone was moved closer to him, and he read a script prepared by either PERKIM or the Department of Islamic Affairs staff.



Plate 81: Undang visit. The Undang of Jelebu, wearing a black songkok, sits in the middle of the honour row. Batin Janggut is seated at the far right, while on his right is the JHEOA Director (Pengaroh) for Melaka and Negeri Sembilan. [NT-1998]

After reading the script, he talked about how he had been a primary school teacher near Kampung Durian Tawar before his appointment as Undang. He went on to talk about the traditional relationship between the Undang and the Batin. The PERKIM people did not seem to have expected this development. He apologized for the discontinuation of the tradition, and to Batin Janggut suggested they should take this opportunity to build a fresh relationship. In a rare response, Batin Janggut nodded approvingly. This was hardly surprising, because the historical relationship the Undang spoke of was the same as that which Batin Janggut consistently espoused. At the end of his speech, he awarded a gift to the winner of the blowpipe dart competition. Then Batin Janggut handed a gift to the Undang (incidentally, PERKIM had prepared all these gifts). At the close of these official proceedings, they went on to the reception (*jamuan*), thus concluding the missionary activities. As the members of the Undang's party left, the villagers lined up, shook hands and saw them off.

Batin Janggut and some other villagers immediately left the village for the funeral ceremony in the neighboring village. There Batin Janggut talked about the Islamic missionary activities and the Undang's visit, denouncing the government authorities and the Islamic converts. Tikak was among those listening to Batin Janggut. Back in the village, the PERKIM staff and the Islamic converts were cleaning up.

That evening I chatted with Asat, my research assistant, about the missionary activities and the Undang's visit. I expressed my fear that, if this continued, all the villagers would be pressured into Islamic conversion. Asat responded, "If worst comes to worst, we could nominally convert to Islam, like Botak". "There is a way", he added. Botak was a friend of Asat's who lived in the next village. He had converted to Islam, but restricted his devotions to the times when government officials were around, and happily dined at the Chinese cafe. Behind Asat's comment was a steely resolve that, even if forced to submit to nominal conversion, the Orang Asli spirit would not be undermined. Asat also remarked, "we don't need to take such measures as nominal conversion in Kampung Durian Tawar, because we have Batin Janggut".

Aftermath

POASM Meeting

On April 26, the day after the Undang's visit, a general meeting of POASM was held at Gombak in Selangor, near Kuala Lumpur. In December the previous year, a meeting of POASM had been held in Kampung Durian Tawar, during which Batin Janggut was appointed as a consultant to the Negeri Sembilan branch of POASM. Until then, because he had been cooperating with the JHEOA, he was not involved with non-governmental organizations such as POASM. But as his relationship with the JHEOA over the issue of Islam deteriorated, he had begun making contact with POASM, even though such a move was still considered "dangerous".

At the Gombak general meeting, Batin Janggut renewed his support for POASM.³ Towards the end of the meeting, he asked to have a final word and then spoke at length on the conflicts over Islam in his village. He spoke about the history of conflict between Islamic converts and the rest of the village, the negotiations with the government and the government responses, and concluded with the missionary activities of the previous day. He asked the participants, "What can we do (*Apa nak buat*)?"

Batin Janggut seemed frustrated and exasperated with the powerlessness of the Orang Asli against Islamization. As well as having to deal with feuds in his own family, he had been put under the spell of a *poyang*, rumors of his "imminent arrest" had been rife and his authority as Batin had been under attack. Yet, his fighting spirit did not seem to have waned at all. One of the audience members was so moved by Batin Janggut's words that he stood up and declared, "I support (*sokong*) you!"



Plate 82: POASM meeting at Balai Adat in Kampung Durian Tawar. Standing is the President of Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association, POASM. He is from a neighboring Temuan village. On the wall behind the POASM leaders are the portraits of a former Prime Minister, a former governor of Negeri Sembilan, and a former king of Malaysia. [NT-1997]



Plate 83: Exhibition of village dancing at the POASM general meeting in Gombak. The 1998 POASM General Assembly was the first time the youths performed outside the village. Since then, the traditional dance troupe have made it a point to perform at every annual village festival. [NT-1998]

At the conclusion of the meeting, a POASM member working for the JHEOA in Negeri Sembilan approached Batin Janggut to warn him that his comments on Islam were too subversive – the government had a surveillance network in place, even in non-government bodies like POASM. As such, participants at POASM meetings carefully avoided making comments on Islam.

Kenduri in Kampung Dalam

In May 1998 I went with the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar to attend the *kenduri* feast ceremony in Kampung Dalam. Strictly speaking, this ceremony is called *bayar niat* and is held to thank the ancestors for the at least temporary end to hard times. At the ceremony, Batin Janggut announced that his son Ayip, who was at the center of the *tangkap basah* story, would convert to Islam and get married. He also reported that Ribut, Ayip's elder brother who was married, had been indicted for rape in an Orang Asli village in Selangor. While their father had been fighting the issue of Islam, his delinquent sons had been involved in dishonorable behavior. People could not hide their surprise and dismay. Batin Janggut also then told me that he and other POASM leaders were under suspicion of being anti-Islam because of his comments at the general meeting. He added that he would have no choice but to spend more time in Kampung Dalam.

Struggle over Islamization

Different Viewpoints

The enforcers and the enforced upon have differing views on Islamization among the Orang Asli. From the enforcers' point of view it is more important for people to be engaged in missionary activities, in other words to show that they are involved in the Islamic resurgence movement, than to seriously convert to Islam. As a result, it does not matter much whether conversion is nominal or not. For them, Islamization among the Orang Asli is a peripheral aspect of the Islamic resurgence movement, though it must be remembered that the government's involvement in this is a peculiar feature of Malaysia (cf. Zainah 1987). For the enforced upon, Islamization is not the religious salvation of the soul. From the non-Muslim Orang Asli point of view, in other words, Islam is not a religion but a political threat to their lives. The nominal converts see it as simply a tool, a means by which they can enjoy the benefits of economic development. The religious values and awakening that religious faith may bring about are rarely considered.

Those nominally converted Muslims may bring the non-Muslim Orang Asli into conflict with the government, and the non-Muslims therefore consider them very dangerous.

When I talk about Islam, I am talking about what the non-Muslim (and nominally converted) Orang Asli mean by it, the way the subjugated see it. On occasion, therefore, this may differ widely from the definition used by the enforcers. Nonetheless, the enforcers' point of view (that the Orang Asli understanding of Islam is misunderstood and insufficient) fully explains the Islamization phenomenon of the Orang Asli. That is why this chapter dares to deal with what Islam means to the Orang Asli people – what it means to the people subjected to Islamization.

Domestication of the Orang Asli

The domestication process of the Orang Asli is carried out through the Batins. It is the Batins who negotiate with the JHEOA, the Department of Islamic Affairs, PERKIM and other government bodies in the process of Islamization. The Batins have to deal with all their advice and warnings. Calls for assistance with missionary activities are also made to the Batins through workshops. The Batins have to be present at any negotiations with the government. In the process of Islamization, government authorities make it a rule to approach the people through the Batins.

Batin Janggut's "anti-Islam" stance attracted a great deal of advice and warnings, most of which were given informally. Whenever he made a reckless comment, he was promptly warned. When rumors of his "arrest" became widespread, he had to curb his opinions and activities, regardless of whether or not the rumors were based in reality.

In the first place, the Batins have to perform their role as leaders of Orang Asli communities, and the JHEOA had for a long time followed a policy of delegating some authority to the Batins. According to the Aboriginal Peoples Act, the government has the power to appoint and dismiss the leaders of Orang Asli communities. This legal framework allows Batins chosen by the government to be appointed, no matter how unpopular they are. For example, it is even alleged (by Batin Janggut) that the JHEOA actively conspires to appoint alcoholic (*kaki engkem*) Batins (Nicholas 2000: 210). This Batin appointment system has eroded the autonomy of the Orang Asli, as it no doubt helps to domesticate the Orang Asli. Many development schemes are carried out through the Batins, and the main beneficiaries are those close to the Batins. Backed by an authority given and approved by an external authority, the Batins have exerted great power in the local communities.

Batin Janggut, a former JHEOA staff member, was typical of these Batins. His role in the history of development in Kampung Durian Tawar was extremely significant. What the government authorities (including the JHEOA) had not expected was his non-cooperative attitude towards the Islamization policy. If Batin Janggut had been positive about state-led Islamic missionary activities, most villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar would have converted.

The “domestication of the Orang Asli” is only meaningful from the subjugators’ point of view. In this phrase, one can see the whole system of subjugation, from slavery, settlement and development through to Islamization. Daring not to become a slave (i.e. to remain a “wild” Orang Asli), daring not to settle down (i.e. to remain mobile), and to resist development and Islamization is to counter subjugation. The consistent rumor about the “imminent arrest” of Batin Janggut gained currency only because he had been vocal against Islamization, one of the domination mechanisms of subjugation.

The ultimate outcome of all these events around Islamization would be, as far as I can see, the end of his authority. External pressures such as development and Islamization would contribute to his downfall. In the matter of development, the government appointed his son Tikak as a go-between. The mediator for the process of Islamization was Adunan, leader of the Islamic converts. The authority of Batin Janggut, which Tikak had already undermined in development matters, was further diminished in the process of Islamization.

Batin Janggut, though suffering from his treatment, is facing his adversaries and mounting a resistance against Tikak, Adunan and the government by enlisting the support of next-generation leaders. Whether his attempt will succeed or not depends on these leaders. The outlook does not necessarily look bright. It does not look promising for Batin Janggut because future Batins will not resist unless they are tested as severely as he has been. In the first place, the JHEOA would not approve such Batins. Even if the people chose Batins like him, the government would no doubt undermine the Batins’ authority by using others as mediators.

The Hybrid Batin Janggut

According to Batin Janggut, he cannot bring himself to allow Islamic conversion “because we have *adat* and magic (*ilmu*)”. His descent (*keturunan*), in fact, may have influenced these comments. Batin Janggut is not “pure blood” Orang Asli – he is as much Malay or Chinese as he is Orang Asli. He makes the best use of his hybrid ethnicity according

to each particular situation. For example, when dining with his family at home he eats like the Chinese, using a bowl and chopsticks. When he eats with the villagers, such as at the ceremonial feast at the *adat* hall, he eats with his fingers, just like the Malays and the Orang Asli.

He possesses knowledge of magic, botany and *adat* learned from the Orang Asli and the Malays. He has a wide network of acquaintances among Orang Asli and Malay people, obtained from his past position with the JHEOA, as well as from his present status as a Batin. His father was Chinese, he can speak Chinese and he is considered by the local Chinese to be Chinese. He has an economic network based on his Chinese ethnicity. He is an outsider in every cultural group, but has a distinctive niche in each. In understanding his responses to Islamization, his hybrid ethnicity is important. In particular, his Chinese-ness seems to have given him the confidence to resist compromise with the government by converting to Islam. Shortly after I left, his daughter married a Chinese businessman. She was in her early twenties, and he was middle-aged. Known to the villagers as Atau, he is a durian wholesaler and is very close to Batin Janggut.

It can be assumed that this marriage between a middle-aged Chinese entrepreneur and Batin Janggut's young daughter is a strategic move. The Batin's strategy for survival is to get closer to the Chinese community and to strengthen his social and economic ties with it, rather than make compromises with the Malay-centered government, which enforces Islamization. This survival strategy is only possible because his father was Chinese; this has enabled him to construct a personal network among the Chinese.

Domesticating Islam

As previously mentioned, a fusion of *adat* and Islam exists in the Malay Muslim communities, which Wazir (1992: 16) calls the “*adatization of Islam*” (when *adat* is interpreted as compatible with Islam and becomes the primary mode of articulation) or the “*Islamization of adat*” (when *adat* is interpreted as incompatible with Islam and Islam becomes the mode of articulation). The Undang is the head both of *adat* and of the Muslim community. Such fusions can exist in the Malay community because it does not follow the Western practice of the separation of religion and government.

The visit by the Undang and the Islamic missionary activities were an attempt to impose this relationship between *adat* and Islam on the Orang Asli; they were symbolic expressions of the fusion between *adat*

and Islam. What we can see here is the enforcers of Islam's notion that the Orang Asli, being followers of *adat* like the Malays, can also, like the Malays, fuse it with Islam. As the Islamic resurgence movement has intensified, the "Islamization of *adat*" has become more important than the "*adatization* of Islam". The Malays have come to place more importance on Islam than *adat* and to idealize becoming "more Islamic" (Tawada 1997). For these reason, the authorities considered it more important to conduct missionary activities than to hold a visit by the Undang.

In contrast, for those who are subjected to Islamization, such as the Orang Asli, it is not possible to fuse *adat* and Islam because, in reality, they are opposing systems. The Islamic resurgence movement, while indicating for the Malays the Islamization vector, reinforces "*adatization*" for the Orang Asli. Because of this, the Orang Asli felt the visit by the Undang to be more important than the missionary activities. As a result, the Undang's visit during the Islamic missionary activities reminded the villagers of the relationship between the Undang and the Batin. The villagers had the impression that the long-severed relationship between the Undang and the Batin had been restored to "what it should be". While the villagers felt antipathy towards the PERKIM staff and the Malay bureaucrats from the Department of the Islamic Affairs and the JHEOA, they gave the highest respect to the Undang.

Local Malays helped with the Undang's visit, while PERKIM staff and the Department of Islamic Affairs bureaucrats from Kuala Lumpur and other areas assisted with the missionary activities. The PERKIM staff and the Department of Islamic Affairs bureaucrats from the capital were more enthusiastic about the missionary activities than were the Malays in the rural areas. For the Malays in the remote and rural areas, exerting so much effort to convert the Orang Asli, with whom they have daily contact, did not seem important. Indeed, it would suit them better to keep the non-converted Orang Asli as non-Muslim. The relationship the Undang previously had with the Batin was symbolic of the preferred cohabitation between the Malays and the Orang Asli. The Undang gave the Batin a role as a leader in the forest, where the Batin ruled the "forest people". They had an economic relationship based on trading forest products. The Malay farmers also relied on labor provided by the Orang Asli during the busy seasons. The Malays in rural and regional areas, content with this relationship with the Orang Asli in the forest, did not see any need to convert them to Islam.

The Malays only came into daily contact with the Orang Asli when the Orang Asli came out of the forest. They considered them as "others"

and even today do not see them as fellow Muslim community members. Instead, they perceive the Orang Asli as outsiders and discriminate against them. It may in fact be inconvenient for the Malays if the Orang Asli are converted because this would mean admitting them as equals, and would potentially nullify the discriminatory relationship. PERKIM, the Department of Islamic Affairs, the JHEOA and others in the center control the state-led Islamization policy. They usually do not take actual opinions of local Malays and Orang Asli into consideration. In this respect, the Orang Asli reaction to the Islamization policy should also be seen in the context of center and periphery. The respect shown to the Undang by the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar indicates that the symbolic relationship between the Orang Asli and the local Malays was still intact, and indeed could be revived again.

Since the missionary activities and the Undang's visit, the Islam issue in Kampung Durian Tawar has abated for the time being – both sides could reinterpret or redefine what “Islamization among the Orang Asli” meant in their own logical framework, even though their individual interpretations might differ. Those who want to Islamize the Orang Asli achieved a certain outcome by staging the missionary activities. The other side was reassured that the Undang endorsed their *adat* and the authority of the Batin. They were also reassured that the missionary activities were just one of those occasional activities conducted by those at the center, the government. They were reassured that the local Malay people (represented by the Undang) did not share the same level of urgency to convert them to Islam. The experience of having been through the missionary activities may have marked a turning point for the villagers to gain the confidence to “domesticate” Islam, which was previously seen as a threat. After the missionary activities and the accompanying Undang visit, the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar practically never mentioned conflict over the Islamic converts, although the rumor of Batin Janggut's arrest was still rife.

This story about Islamization and the related events in Kampung Durian Tawar might well be described very differently from the perspective of the JHEOA, the Department of Islamic Affairs, PERKIM and others who were wishing to impose Islam on the Orang Asli, or by the Islamic converts in the village. There is a wide gap between how the Orang Asli are portrayed in the mainstream media in Malaysia and in this study. My perspective concords with the way the non-Muslim Orang Asli view the Islamization policy and the converted Orang Asli. I might have given the impression that Islamic missionary activities are “bad”. Then again, that

in itself may be proof that there is a fundamental lack of understanding between those who want to “Islamize” the Orang Asli, and the Orang Asli who are “subjected to Islamization”.

Future

Batin Janggut once told me that the Orang Asli will become extinct in thirty years (*tiga puluh tahun nanti, Orang Asli habis*). Their society has experienced drastic social change because of development, and they have lost what could be called their cultural tradition. They are in a state of “deculturalization” (Nicholas 2000: 111), and are destined to be assimilated with Malay society by the government’s overpowering pressure to Islamize them. Batin Janggut was worried about this future. Whether or not the Orang Asli community will be assimilated into Malay society as he feared is unclear at this stage, but it is certain that the community is greatly affected by the current Islamization policy. This will no doubt be the decisive factor in shaping their future.

The marriage of Batin Janggut’s daughter to a Chinese entrepreneur, which took place after I left the village, indicates that he is seeking a possible alternative to assimilation with Malay society. The Orang Asli may no longer be able to survive as Orang Asli. The children of the converts may live as Malays, while the children of Batin Janggut’s daughter may live as Chinese. Then again, Batin Janggut himself has lived in a peripheral and hybrid world. Those who dwell in a peripheral and hybrid world may not belong to any *one* ethnic category, but can belong to various ethnic categories. The Orang Asli could construct their own future by making the best of the ambiguous definition that is Orang Asli.

Notes

1. The POASM representative was from a neighboring village and had previously been a resident student at the dormitory for the Orang Asli in Kampung Baniang. As a JHEOA staff member, Batin Janggut used to be the caretaker there.
2. A *pyang*’s power of sorcery is summed up in the concept of *tuju* (to point) (Logan 1847: 308).
3. Without identifying who it was, Nicholas (2000: 210) describes an old Batin criticizing the practice of “JHEOA appointing alcoholic (*kaki engkem*) Batins”.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Fifty-three year old Ukal, the brother-in-law of Batin Janggut and father of Asat, once told me the following in a hut in a durian orchard: “In the past our life was poor, but it was comfortable: today our life is comfortable, but it is hard (*Dulu susah tapi senang; sekarang senang tapi susah*)”.

“What do you mean?” I asked. This in essence was his reply:

The Orang Asli in the forest used to have no clothes on their backs and the Malays and other people around them probably thought they were leading a poor life. But in reality it was more comfortable than others might have thought, because it was easy to get food from hunting and people got on with each other and helped each other out. Today we look much better off as a result of economic development. People think our life is comfortable. However, the fact is that we have to earn cash, and people fight all the time about Islamic conversion. Times are much harder now.

Ukal was expressing his concern over the state of the village, which had been torn apart by family members and relatives feuding with each other over Islamization and economic development. Just how utopian life in the forest had been is debatable, but Ukal’s observation that life is now more comfortable and harder, while seemingly cynical and somewhat paradoxical, well describes the nature of development and Islamization among the Orang Asli.

The Orang Asli were once defined by the outside world as “undeveloped” and “unreligious”. Therefore their lives must have been poor (according to reason) and the development projects and Islamization



Plate 84 & 85: Ukal making blowpipe darts, straightening a blowpipe barrel. In Kampung Durian Tawar, only a few old men, including Ukal, can make a blowpipe. Ukal makes blowpipes on request and sells them to other Orang Asli villagers or to the Chinese. He is a grandfather now, with 10 grandchildren. [NT-2003, 2007].

would deal with that poverty. But in reality their lives were, as Ukal says, quite comfortable. The outside world judges that life for the Orang Asli has “improved” since development and Islamization. But Ukal contends that life has become “harder”, certainly not “more comfortable”. This is what I have attempted to describe in this book. I have described the state of the Orang Asli, based mostly on what I saw in Kampung Durian Tawar. Now I attempt to draw some conclusions.

Revisit

In March 2001 I had the opportunity to revisit Kampung Durian Tawar for the first time in two-and-a-half years. One significant change I saw was the increase in converts to Christianity. Poteh (No. 26) had become the leader of the converted Christian villagers (*puak Kristian*). Badak (No. 32) and Kasai (No. 31) had now been employed by a Chinese as guards at a fishpond farm, and lived at the former tin mine site to the southeast of the village, a part of which had been turned into the farm. There, the Christians of the village had gathered for a church service. Aru's wife (No. 22) had become a Christian, they had divorced, and Aru had left the village with his children. The entire families of Katup (No. 44), Gat (No. 49) and Gobek (No. 55) and some of the *adat* group members among the lower people had also converted to Christianity. All were suffering from poverty. I would not have been surprised if they had converted to Islam.

The Muslim families of Sieu (No. 30) and Kepah (No. 56) have followed the Islamization program and relocated to a village for new converts (but Kepah's family could not manage there and returned to Kampung Durian Tawar). Adunan (No. 46) was very busy trying to carry out the extraordinary plan of establishing a new village between Kampung Durian Tawar and a neighboring Orang Asli village.

As for the development plans, the village had resigned from the neighboring Malay village's JKKK. When I was there, the village was applying for the establishment of its own JKKK, indicating that the influence of Tikak had waned. He had also resigned from the position of branch president for UMNO. Leadership over economic development had shifted to Genreh and other younger leaders.

Most villagers seemed to consider all the incidents I had witnessed during my previous stay as events from the long-distant past. But Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai had certainly not forgotten them. Batin Janggut told me that the three groups in Kampung Durian Tawar were now the *adat* group, the Islam group and the Christian group (*puak Kristian*). It seemed that the drunk group had lost ground, while the influence of the *adat* group had increased.

Both Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai stressed the importance of education, and looked very proud of their children and grandchildren attending universities and other tertiary education institutes. While stressing the importance of education, they were of the opinion that it was dangerous to give education to the children of converted Muslim and Christian villagers. At present, these religious converts do not have the power to assume leadership roles in the village. However, there is the

danger that their children, if educated, might do so in the future. They therefore insisted that the education of the children of the *adat* group should be given priority. During this visit, I also realized the importance of the *adat* group, those who base their identity on *adat*, as the core of the upper people.

Reaction to Islamization

In his discussion of the potential for analyzing development phenomena, Adachi (2000: 111) states:

It may be a worn out metaphor, but development phenomena is like the film “Rashomon”. The actors discuss various aspects of development based on their individual perspectives. None of them can tell the whole story, but their fragmented narratives formulate a story about “development”. Is everything then, really “shrouded in mystery”?

As for the “incidents” that occurred due to Islamization, which I described in Part III, there were many narratives based on the individual perspectives of the participants. I described the Islamization process mainly from the perspectives of members of the *adat* group. In other words, those from the non-*adat* group are not well represented. As mentioned in the Prologue, I carried out my research while constructing a rapport with the *adat* group, which often excluded the non-*adat* group from my research. Therefore, it is not possible for me to construct an informed story of the Islamization process in Kampung Durian Tawar from the narratives of the non-*adat* group.

Hierarchy

In Part II, I described in detail the stratification of the village as a result of the changes caused by development. A division between the upper and lower people has formed in the village due to development projects carried out since the 1970s.

The very meaning of the terms “upper” and “lower”, and the notion of rich and poor embodied in those words, came to the village along with development. Those who accepted development embraced not only its economic aspects but also the logic it embodied. Hunting and gathering does not fit in with the logic of development, nor does mobility. As such, these are no longer considered important by those people who have accepted development. The upper people were so deeply imbued with the logic of economic development that they criticized the economic inefficiency of hunting and gathering. This is proof that economic development alters the consciousness of those who have accepted it.

Because I became one of the upper people, I was also following the logic of development in much the same way as the rest of the upper people. The lower people's perspective went largely unnoticed. To me, the most distant "other" were the lower people. I saw the lives of lower people, surviving by hunting and gathering or day laboring, through the eyes of the upper people.

The stratification of the village society arose from the developments' unequal distribution of economic benefits. The lower people, who had been excluded from having a role in development, had no choice other than to engage in traditional hunting and gathering, or in day laboring. Development brought about a division in Kampung Durian Tawar between the "haves" and "have-nots". The "haves" were the upper people, who reaped the benefits of development; the "have-nots" were the lower people, who were excluded from development and were impoverished. Relatives became divided and behaved as though they belonged to two totally unrelated groups. The upper people, who had become rich from development and who based their opinions on a way of thinking fostered by their economic development, began denouncing traditional hunting and gathering and the more mobile way of life associated with it. The lower people, too, by accepting that economic yardstick, began to believe in such measures of poverty.

The hierarchy in Kampung Durian Tawar has been built on the uneven distribution of development projects. Only so many houses could be built during the housing construction project, and only a certain number of people could benefit from the rubber development project. Batin Janggut had control over development, and he distributed the projects primarily to those close to him. The hierarchy was thus constructed with him at the top.

Kampung Durian Tawar was the model village of state-led economic development projects, and the JHEOA definitely also wanted it to be a model for Islamization. In the first instance, economic development was meant to be a precursor for future Islamization. Ironically, the government's intention was blocked by Batin Janggut, who had earlier been heavily backed by the government. The JHEOA sought a replacement leader for Batin Janggut. Tikak, his son, was one possibility, and Adunan, the leader of the Islamic converts, was another.

From the 1980s onwards converting to Islam had become an administratively effective tool for winning development projects. In the late 1990s some of the lower people who wished to benefit from development decided to convert. As they were so impoverished due to their exclusion

from development, the only means they had to take part was by conversion to Islam. Another factor was that women with malnourished children converted to Islam out of desperation. As such, the main move towards Islamization in Kampung Durian Tawar came from the people at the lower end of the strata. This meant that the progress of Islamization would threaten the hierarchical order created by the development projects. One reason the village leaders of the upper people opposed Islamization was to protect their position. For the lower people, their chance of improving their social status increased if they became Muslim.

As a means of dealing with the threat to the upper people, Batin Janggut came up with alternative groupings such as the *adat* group, the drunk group and the religion group. As of March 2001 there were the *adat* group, the Islam group and the Christian group. While the previous distinction between the upper and lower people was based on the acceptance of the development projects, these new groupings were made according to ideologically divisive criteria. The man who had created the new groupings, Batin Janggut, talked about how threatened the *adat* group felt by Islamization. His reasoning did not include the fact that the upper people had excluded the lower people from taking part in the economic development projects. In addition, he discussed the increasing numbers of Islamic converts among the lower people in negative terms as a threat to the *adat* group. Batin Janggut talked about resisting Islamization while preserving the hierarchical structure of the village brought about as a result of development. The *adat* group comprised those people who subscribed to Batin Janggut's strategy.

Adat Group

If we follow Maeda's (1976, 1991) definition that *adat* is a "community religion", we can conclude that the *adat* group uses *adat* as a symbol of its community's autonomy against Islamization, although in this case "the community" is limited to the *adat* group, not the entire village. The Malays do not regard the *adat* of the *adat* group as having long existed in their community, but rather something that has been "borrowed". Its actual origin is regarded by the *adat* group as less important than utilizing *adat* for its own initiative.

The fact that the *adat* group uses *adat* as a symbol of autonomy is culturally significant as well. Contemporary Orang Asli society has been busy looking for symbols of its identity. "What is our identity (*indentiti kita*)?" is a question often energetically discussed at POASM meetings. The Orang Asli are looking for the cultural symbols, not

connected to Islam or Christianity, that they previously had “by right”: the *adat* advocated by the *adat* group in Kampung Durian Tawar is one such symbol. Without doubt, Islamization for the *adat* group is a major force that shakes its fundamental identity. This shows that the external pressure of Islamization can penetrate right to the core of Orang Asli society.

The *adat* leaders, though angry and critical, stood by and watched as Haji Konin (No. 52), Adunan (No. 46), Sieu (No. 30) and Kepah (No. 56) converted to Islam. By contrast, they could not resist involving themselves in Biru’s (No. 34) conversion and her subsequent divorce from Bangkong because Biru’s case directly affected the group. As they did with Biru, the *adat* leaders expelled the Islamic converts from their group.¹ If they had not done this, their reasoning held, converts could have taken over the group. Biru’s case showed a family could be torn apart by conversion among its members. This kind of tragedy became possible when state-led Islamization permeated to the family level.

The *adat* group response of excommunicating the Islamic converts was a measure taken to prevent the possibility of the Islamic converts taking over the community. The *adat* leaders were afraid that Islam might spread throughout the community like an epidemic. The Islamic converts seemed to be taken aback at being thrown out of the village’s most influential circle. Superficially, this action was extremely selfish; the *adat* leaders’ only concern was the well-being of their group members. Their response was very cruel to the converts, but we must also remember that this was the best the *adat* leaders could do to protect themselves and their own interests from the pressure of Islamization being exerted by powerful authorities.

At the same time, members of the religion group, which comprised converts to Islam and Christianity, were also forced to make a difficult choice for their own lives and survival. In their desperation, they did not have the luxury of making strategic decisions about how they would live. They had to get money from somewhere for their survival and the only option was to convert, even though this would lead to their expulsion from the community.

We can observe the hierarchical chain of discrimination where the stronger people discriminate against and oppress the weaker ones, not just in Kampung Durian Tawar but everywhere surrounding the Orang Asli. To alter this, one can try various measures: religious conversion, economic improvement through development projects, improvement of education and social welfare, and so on. Indeed, these are exactly the

measures suggested and implemented by the JHEOA and other government bodies, and were initially intended to integrate and assimilate the weaker with the stronger. For one reason or another, including resistance from the weaker ones, the measures have evolved into something completely unrecognizable from the original intention.

Source of Resistance

In the previous section I examined resistance to Islamization at the village level. In this section I would like to discuss the source of the resistance at the level of interaction with the government. I will do so with Batin Janggut and the *adat* group in mind, those who are, in reality, resisting Islamization. To reiterate what I stated in the introductory chapter, I am interested in understanding the reasoning employed by these people in their resistance to the pressure of Islamization. Why refuse, when the benefits are plainly to be seen? This is the key question I have been exploring.

The Orang Asli are a people oppressed and discriminated against by the Malays. It must be humiliating for them to convert to their oppressors' religion. Even if it is a politically sensible option, in today's context their pride as Orang Asli cannot easily be set aside. Converting to Islam means being treated as Malays, which brings about a change to their Orang Asli identity. They are deeply disinclined to abandon their Orang Asli identity and to become identified as the Malays, who despise them. On a family level, conversion to Islam means becoming Malay and separating oneself from family and relatives. The bodies of Islamic converts are not buried in the village cemetery but in a cemetery in a nearby Malay village. When these things are considered, the psychological conflicts among family members and relatives of Islamic converts are obvious.

A big difference between Christianity and Islam in Malaysia is that Christian missionary activities, unlike those of the government-backed Islamic missionaries, do not entail coercion. More people convert to Islam than Christianity out of desperation. Conversion to Christianity is also a means of avoiding conversion to Islam. As the prevalence of nominal converts indicates, most do not convert to Islam out of religious conviction.

We can conclude that resistance to Islamization is not, in fact, resistance to Islam itself but to "being forced to convert to Islam". It must be unbearable to be told by others how to live, no matter how politically and economically justified it may be. Orang Asli rage is directed at the government that imposes Islamization on them. The government forces

the Orang Asli to become Muslim. To become Muslim means to admit defeat for these persecuted people, the marginal dwellers. That is why they are angry about the forceful drive towards Islamization, and why they do not kowtow to their oppressors.

The *adat* group comprises those people who have accumulated economic wealth and are able to resist Islamization, having participated in the government-initiated development projects. They operate in the market economy and have ties with the Chinese community through Batin Janggut. These close ties with the Chinese community are especially important and have given them confidence and pride without having to make compromises with the government. Ironically, the government, itself, through the JHEOA and other departments and the economic development projects, unwittingly provided the Orang Asli with a base for resistance.

The source of resistance of the *adat* group members is their pride as the leaders of the village community, and their anger against the government that forces Islamization on them. Having gained pride and confidence through economic development and by utilizing *adat*, they can resist Islamization. In this context, *adat* has become their ideology for the reconstruction of their identity. As members of a marginal group, they cannot alter their origin as Orang Asli. Arguably, they could leave the Orang Asli society and look for a completely different life, but that decision would have to be made voluntarily. They consider it more dignified to remain as Orang Asli with their relatives in their community, no matter how difficult it is, rather than live as second-class Muslim Malays. Or perhaps they just do not want to be converted. Those who are pushing to convert the Orang Asli to Islam cannot accept their simple desires. That is why the Orang Asli are resisting.

Throughout this book, I have argued the case of development and Islamization among the Orang Asli, mostly with reference to the perspective of the *adat* group with whom I built a rapport. For various reasons, it was impossible for me to incorporate the perspectives of the rest of the people. The story told by other people would be different from the one I have told in this book. I would like to deal with that story in the future.

Notes

1. Even Christian converts are expelled from the *adat* group unless they are the relatives of *adat* leaders. “We do not carry out rituals based on *adat* for Christian converts”, say Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai. Traditionally, converting to Christianity was not as despised as converting to Islam, because it does not involve a change of identity. Christian converts are not considered to have become Malays. Having Christian converts in the family should not break up that family. However, due to an over-reaction to religion in general, the *adat* leaders forced Aru to divorce. This indicated that conversion to any religion could trigger a break-up of family and relatives. This can also be interpreted as the *adat* group reacting to Christian conversion as an aftermath of Islamization.

Appendix 1

Kinship Group Characteristics

In this appendix I look at the kinship groups in Kampung Durian Tawar in greater detail.

Upper People

Let us look first at the upper people. The Mangku Hasim (Hasim) (No. 9) matrilineal descent group consists of Ota (No. 1) through to Bedil (No. 12). It is centered on the siblings and children of Murai, a wife of Menteri Lewat (No. 2) (see Figure 22).

Previously Mangku Ujang (Ujang) (No. 12) was the *ibubapa*, but the present *ibubapa* is Mangku Hasim. Menteri Lewat's influence has been great, particularly in the realm of economics, and the results of this are still evident today. Almost all the rubber smallholdings owned by the members of this group were either directly developed by Menteri Lewat and his relatives or were developed through government aid obtained under his influence. Mangku Hasim's son Aman operates the rubber trader's shop in the village, and apparently Menteri Lewat passed it on to him. The durian orchards that this group owns in the forest and in the Orang Asli reservation have also been passed on from Menteri Lewat to his children and grandchildren.

The kinship group to which Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai belong is formed by the children of Menteri Lewat's older sister, Intan (she died in April 1997) (Nos. 13–25) (see Figure 23). This kinship group is divided into the children of Batin Janggut (Nos. 14–18), of Jenang Misai (Nos. 22–25) and of Manyo (Nos. 19–21). The deceased mother of my foster older sister, Percha (No. 13), was the younger sister of Batin Janggut and Jenang Misai and the older sister of Manyo. Due to the conflict between Batin Janggut and his now-divorced third wife and her children (Nos. 15–18), the smaller kinship group around Batin Janggut is effectively composed

Figure 22
No. 1 to No. 12

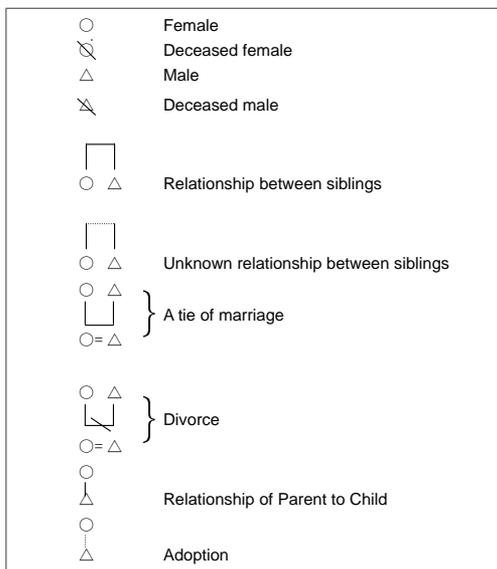
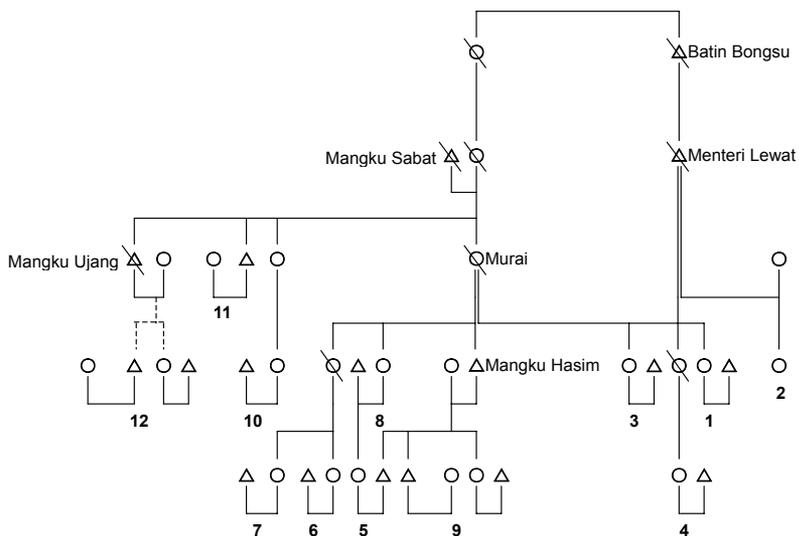


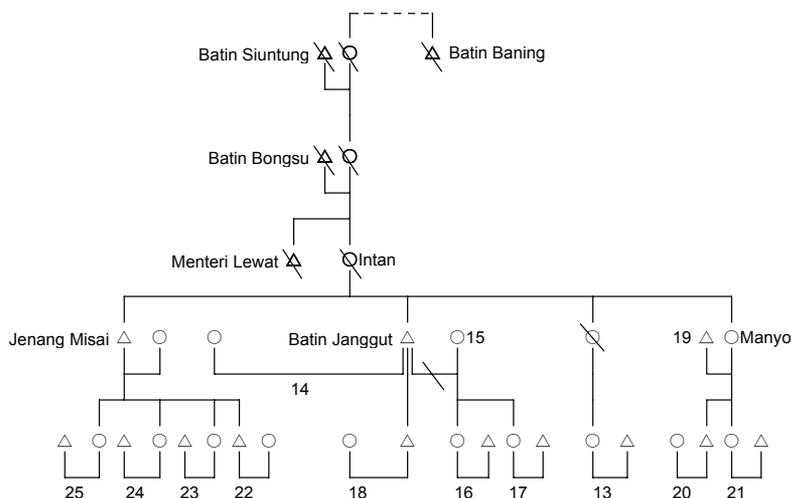


Plate 86: Kalu's family. Kalu (No.8) is a chatty old man and very skillful in the techniques of gathering and hunting. His wife (standing on his right side) is a chattier woman and is the more stronger-willed of the two. [NT-1998]



Plate 87: The author with Mangku Hasim's family [NT-2003]

Figure 23
No. 13 to No. 25



of No. 13 and No. 14. If we leave out Nos. 15 through 18, however, the smaller kinship groups within this larger overarching one have mutually close relations.

The sons of Menteri Lewat's older brother, Karim, form a kinship group (Nos. 26–30) (see Figure 24). Within this group, however, relations between the Islamic convert Sieu (No. 30) and his family and the rest of the group have soured. Under the practice of the uxorilocal principle, Karim's sons should be living with their wives. However, with the exception of Bolok (No. 27), who returned to the village after his wife's death, they have all remained in Kampung Durian Tawar since marrying. The reason for this, I gather, is that the durian orchards and rubber smallholdings passed down to them by their father are all in Kampung Durian Tawar and they figured, therefore, that living here would ensure relative economic stability.

There is a kinship group centered around Badak (No. 32), a sibling by the same father but a different mother to Menteri Lewat (Kasai (No. 31)—Longgok (No. 33)) (see Figure 24). Badak and his wife (No. 32), and his daughter and her family (No. 31), converted to Christianity following Badak's son (who, on marrying, went to live with his wife in the Orang Asli village of Beranang, Selangor). While being part of the upper people,



Plate 88: The author with Batin Janggut's family [NT-2003].



Plate 89: The author with Ukal and Manyo's family. The hut behind them was built for cooking and eating pork or monkey meat, because the adat dictates that pork and the flesh of monkey could not be brought into the main house. Manyo's daughter had suffered from a mental illness and sought traditional medical treatments from Orang Asli, Malay, Chinese and Indian shamans. In the end, she followed the strict food taboos imposed by an Indian shaman. [NT-2003]



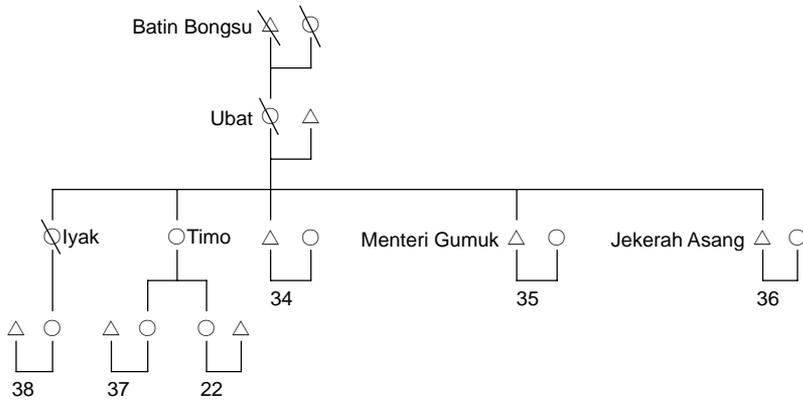
Plate 90: Badak's house. At the beginning, Badak camouflaged the fact that he and his wife had converted to Christianity. Badak's son is a Christian and lives in another village. When he revealed this, the villagers were very disappointed. Soon afterwards, Badak and his wife moved to his son's village. [NT-1997]

The above are the kinship groups classified geographically as the upper people (Bangli's household (No. 39) is located in the same part of the village, but as this is a lower people kinship group it is discussed in the next section). Almost all the people in these kinship groups belong to the *adat* group. The exceptions are Sieu's household (No. 30) and Bangkong's wife Biru (No. 34), who are Islamic converts, and Kasai's household (No. 31) and Badak's household (No. 32), the members of which are Christian converts. These people belong to the religion group.

As mentioned, there is conflict between Batin Janggut and his son Tikak. Some of the men in the *adat* group support Tikak, such as Urek (No. 10), Bedil (No. 12), Poteh (No. 26), Ajoin (No. 28), Surak (No. 29), Sieu (No. 30), Jekerah Asang (No. 36), Polan (No. 37) and Kana (No. 38). There is a strong tendency, however, for the wives of such men to support Batin Janggut, and the men themselves oppose him (not publicly). Arif (No. 42) is also in the Tikak group, but since being bestowed with the title of Panglima Perang he often supports the Batin Janggut group.

Among the upper people, the households of Batin Janggut's divorced wife and her daughters (Nos. 15–17) strongly oppose Batin Janggut. Yu (No. 17), who is the son of Aki Main, is a particular source of trouble for Batin Janggut and the upper people. He often drinks and gets into troubles with people.

Figure 25
No. 34 to No. 38

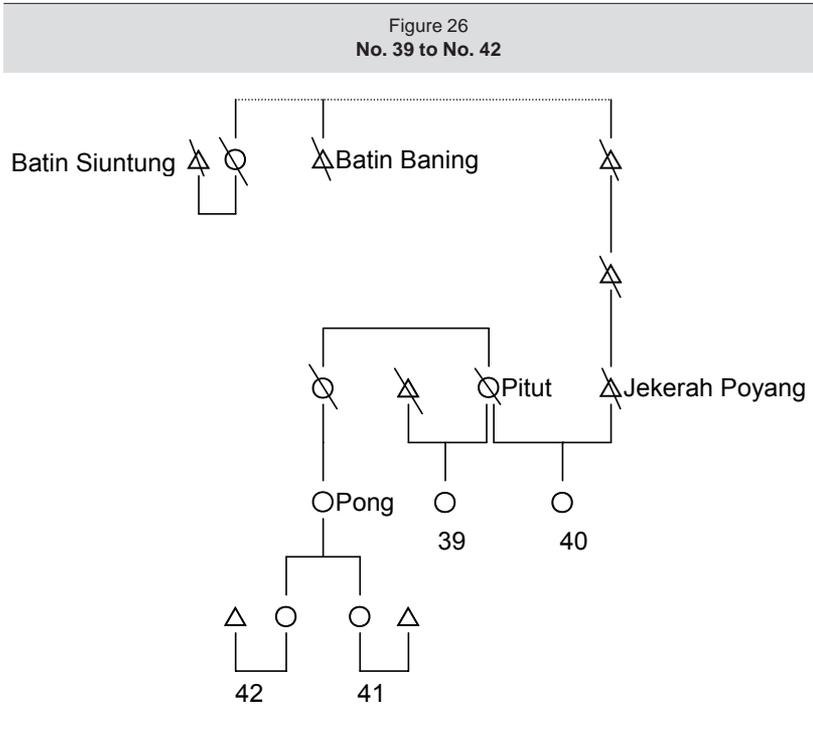


Lower People

People living in the households from Nos. 39 to 42 form one unified kinship group (see Figure 26). Bangli (No. 39) and Lunas (No. 40) are sisters from the same mother but different fathers, and Lunas and Pong (No. 41) are matrilineal parallel cousins. Lunas's father was Jekerah Poyang, who was banished from the village by Batin Deraman, and her mother was Aki Main's younger sister Pitut. Among Aki Main's other younger sisters' children living in the village are Ota (No. 1), Abai (No. 13) and Polan (No. 37), but none of them are in the Aki Main group.

After the death of the banished Jekerah Poyang, Pitut asked Batin Janggut for permission to return to Kampung Durian Tawar, and her request was granted. When she returned, she brought her younger sister's daughter, Pong, with her. No. 42 is Pong's daughter's household. In addition, Arif, who lives at No. 42, is a sibling of Mara who lives at No. 45.

The people living in the households from Nos. 43 to 55 form the core of the so-called lower people (see Figure 27). They are the descendants of the sons of Ali, Deraman and Kichoi, and they divide broadly into the children of Deraman and of Kichoi. Among Deraman's children, Ajam (No. 43), Katup (No. 44) and Kedai (No. 45) are siblings by the same father and mother, while Haji Konin (No. 52) and Entak (No. 53) are siblings by the same father but different mothers. Katup and Haji Konin are married



to a daughter and a granddaughter of Kichoi respectively. No. 54 and No. 55 are the households of Entak’s daughters. Urek (No. 10), incidentally, is also one of Deraman’s children, a sibling by the same father and the same mother as Kedai.

Among Kichoi’s children, Camai (No. 44), Bonto (No. 46), Bujang (No. 47), Doyes (No. 48) and Hapam (No. 49) are siblings by the same mother and father, and Tekok (No. 50) is a sibling by a different mother. Nos. 51 and 52 are the households of Tekok’s daughters. A son of Poteh’s (No. 26) has married Kichoi’s daughter, Camai (No. 44); a younger brother of the household at No. 35 has married Bonto (No. 46); and a son of the household at No. 10 has married Hapam (No. 49). These daughters are related by marriage to the upper people of Kampung Durian Tawar. The Aki Main group is formed around the siblings of Aki Main’s wife (see Figure 28). Aki Main’s wife is from Kampung Bukit Lanjan, located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, as are her siblings. There is almost no blood relationship linking them and the villagers of Kampung Durian

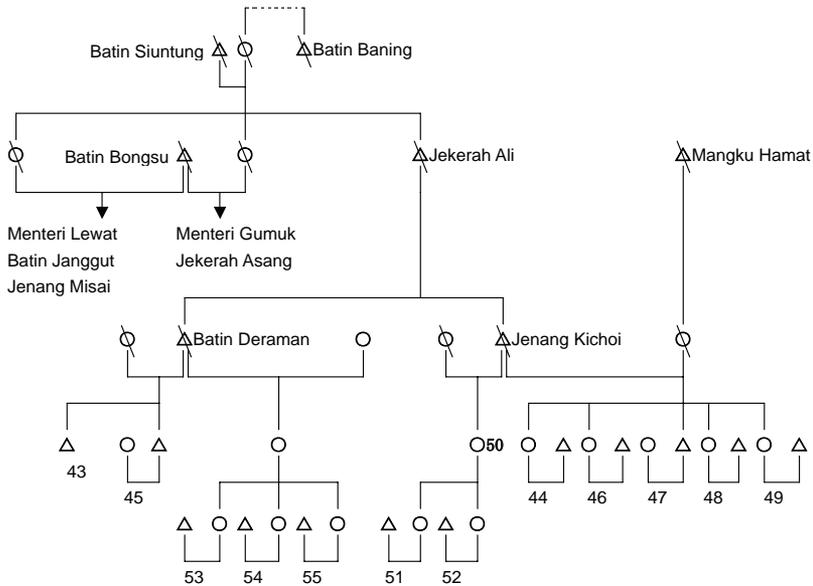


Plate 91: Ajam walking in the village. Although he has mental and physical disabilities from birth, he is able to make a living for himself. His close relatives and villagers support his lifestyle and provide him with work whenever they can. He often walks about 20 kilometers to go to the neighboring village where his relatives live. I like him very much. [NT-2007]



Plate 92: Kedai in front of the durian hut at the Sialang area. Kedai is very skilful at hunting and gathering. He is also a master at making traditional baskets. [NT-2007]

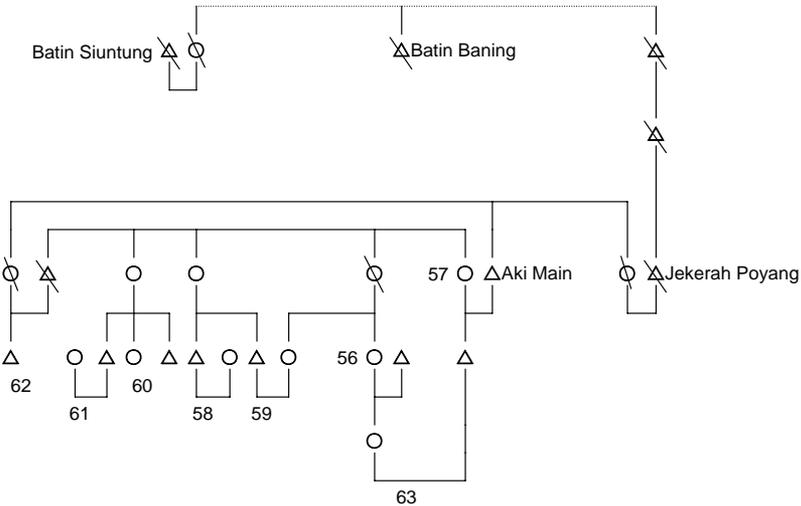
Figure 27
No. 43 to No. 55



Tawar, especially if we consider this in relation to the relationships among the women of Kampung Durian Tawar. As a result, no matrilineal links exist between them and the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar.

From the perspective of the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, the Aki Main group form the “other” people (*orang lain*). Therefore, the kinship terms that the villagers use among themselves are not applied to them. This underpins the large differentiation made between the people of the Aki Main group and the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar. Despite this, sons of Aki Main are married to women living at No. 12 and No. 16, and one of the sons (now deceased) of No. 60 was married to the daughter (now deceased) of Kalu (No. 8). That is to say, relationships by marriage have been formed between people from the Aki Main group and the villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar. In all such cases, males from the Aki Main group have married females from Kampung Durian Tawar. These are the kinship groups of the people in the village classified geographically as the lower people (with the exception of Bangli (No.

Figure 28
No. 56 to No. 63



39)). Households among these kinship groups that also belong to the *adat* group are Nos. 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 55 and 61. Gobek (No. 55) and Awas (No. 61) are from Kampung Bukit Lanjan but they have left the Aki Main group and now seek the guidance and protection of Batin Janggut and the *adat* leaders.

Those households that do not belong to the *adat* group (Nos. 46, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62 and 63) can be classified into either the religion group (Nos. 46, 50, 51, 52, 53 and 56) or the drunk group (54, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62 and 63). In other words, those households not classified in the *adat* group have family members who have either converted to Islam or are addicted to alcohol. There are, however, some people who are both addicted to alcohol and converts to Islam, so the border between these two groups is not rigid.

I have gone into such detail on the specific kinship relations within Kampung Durian Tawar because I want to show that Kampung Durian Tawar is a world where relationships between people are formed through binding kinship relations. Above all, I believe it is necessary for us to understand that this small world forms the foundation of their life-world.



Plate 93: An Islamic convert. This lady had converted to Islam in 1997. She is always wearing a head-scarf, even when work is hard and sweaty. [NT-2007]



Plate 94: A drunk. The man on the left is a drunk and a troublemaker in the village. He works very hard, but he wastes his money on alcohol. [NT-2007]

Appendix 2

Principal Individuals

Listed below are the pseudonyms of individuals who appear frequently in this book. They are crucial actors of the ethnographic account presented in this book. This list is to assist readers with description, analysis and arguments. For ethical and political reasons, I am unable to list their real names. It is necessary to protect the identity of the people.

I calculated their ages from their dates of birth as recorded on their identification cards (as of 1997). I, myself, was twenty-eight years old in 1997.

Batin Janggut (62 years old)

Batin Janggut was not just the leader of Kampung Durian Tawar; he was also considered as the leader of the regional Orang Asli community. He had previously served as a JHEOA staff member. From his seven wives (now down to three, due to death and divorce), he had thirty-three children. Many in both the Malay and Orang Asli communities knew him as a person who wielded a potent magical power. He was eloquent and had strong leadership qualities. There was an ongoing feud between him and his son Tikak, as well as with the children of his third wife. His divorced third wife, along with her daughter and her partner, lived next to the Batin's house. Because he could speak a Chinese language, the Batin was able to maintain contact with the Chinese.

Jenang Misai (63 years old)

Jenang Misai was Batin Janggut's elder brother and had gone to a Chinese primary school. While Batin Janggut excelled in his dealings with the outside world, Jenang Misai was a strong leader within the village. He knew all the relationships and the state of the households in the village.

Because he had been a foster father to Tikak, the Batin's son, he was worried about the family feud between the Batin and Tikak.

Manyo (52 years old)

Manyo was the younger sister of Batin Janggut. She was the female leader of the matrilineal descent group to which Batin Janggut belonged. She was familiar with the women and the household matters in the village. Batin Janggut had given her and her husband some plots of land and other property. Her sons, Genreh and Asat, were among the most highly educated people in the village. Manyo, herself, did not work at the rubber tapping.

Ukal (53 years old)

Ukal was Manyo's husband. He was a guardian *ibubapa* of Mangku's matrilineal descent group. He had been given the title of Panglima because he was the brother-in-law of Batin Janggut, but could not cope with the responsibility and gave it up.

Menteri Gemuk (47 years old)

Menteri Gemuk was a (second or third) cousin to Batin Janggut. The matrilineal descent group to which Batin Janggut belonged was made up of two broad groups, and he was the leader of one of them. Batin Janggut's group was much wealthier than Menteri Gemuk's. Many more converts to Islam and Christianity could be found among the Menteri's kinship group.

Jekerah Asang (38 years old)

Jekerah Asang was a younger brother of Menteri Gemuk. After his marriage, he moved to live in his wife's village, Kampung Baning, but he later returned to Kampung Durian Tawar. He had so few economic resources that, according to Manyo, he had to beg his relatives even for condensed milk for his tea. He was not trusted among the villagers. His appointment as Jekerah was due to a process of elimination of others such as Bangkong. Both before and after his appointment to this title, he had often acted together with Tikak, a tendency that deeply concerned the Batin and others.

Tikak (47 years old)

Tikak, a son of the Batin, had been employed by the JHEOA but left the job before reaching retirement age. Since becoming the branch president of

UMNO, he had become a leader in the process of economic development, which had brought him into conflict with his father, Batin Janggut. Initially the men of the village had sided with him because he wined and dined them, but because of the unfair distribution of funds to a limited number of villagers, he encountered a backlash from the villagers, especially from the women. In the end, the villagers returned to supporting Batin Janggut. Tikak's daughter had converted to Islam, and was married to a Malay.

Adunan (43 years old)

Adunan was the younger brother of Menteri Gemuk. He had been living in the residential area of the lower people since marrying one of the daughters of Jenang Kichoi (who had since died) of the lower people. When his wife had converted to Islam, he converted as well. He was in conflict with the Batin before his conversion to Islam, but it worsened after this. He was the leader of the Islamic converts and was close to Tikak.

Bangkong (49 years old)

Bangkong was the older brother of Menteri Gemuk. He had been a contender for the role of *adat* leader, but his ability was considered insufficient and he was only given the title of Panglima. Using cultivated plots such as the rubber smallholdings as security for a loan, he had repeatedly borrowed money from the Chinese. He had divorced his wife because of her conversion to Islam, but they were living together again without remarrying. He had a close relationship with his younger brother, Adunan. He was considered the likely successor for the Jekerah title, but he could not win the support of his female relatives.

Mangku Hasim (53 years old)

Mangku Hasim held the title of Mangku. He was the son-in-law of Menteri Lewat. The Mangku's side of the family originated from Chergon near Kampung Dalam. They took part in the housing construction project, following Menteri Lewat's instructions. During the rule of Batin Janggut, it was decided that the title of Mangku would be handed down within his matrilineal descent group. Mangku Hasim's wife, a Chinese, had been adopted into the Orang Asli community during the Japanese military occupation. Mangku Hasim was considered to be the wealthiest man in the village, and this certainly appeared to be the case. One of his sons had married one of Batin Janggut's daughters.

Genreh (35 years old)

Genreh held the title of Panglima Tuha. He used to be employed as a JHEOA staff member, but was now a primary school teacher. He was a senior leader of POASM, and was viewed as a leader of the next generation. Having lived for a long time in Pahang with his Semai wife while on the staff of the JHEOA, his knowledge of affairs in Kampung Durian Tawar was limited. He made an effort to mingle with the villagers, such as when he went out hunting with the Mangku's sons.

Aki Main (79 years old)

Aki Main was the oldest man in the village. During the Emergency he had been a member of the Senoi Pra'aq. He remained in the Senoi Pra'aq even after the Emergency. He had lived in Kampung Bukit Lanjan for a long period before moving back to his native Kampung Akai. He did not get on well with the villagers there and moved to Kampung Durian Tawar. His elder brother had been a well-known *dukun*, as was he. He and Batin Janggut had a long rivalry, both over their *dukun* practices and in the village leadership. It was said that Batin Janggut had suggested to Aki Main that he should set up a new village (*buka kampung*) and become a Batin, but Aki Main had declined to do so because this would have been considered an achievement for Batin Janggut rather than for him. He was a drinker, and along with his sons was a member of the so-called drunk group. He harbored feelings of hostility towards Batin Janggut. Yu, his son, had married a daughter of the Batin and lived next to the Batin's house, but he was a known troublemaker, and was often involved in fights.

Jekerah Ali (deceased)

As the son of Batin Siuntung (a Malay), Jekerah Ali had been a legitimate successor to the Batin title, but he failed because of his badness (*jahat*). Instead, he called himself Jekerah. After the death of Batin Bongsu, he had exerted supreme authority in Kampung Durian Tawar, keeping the titles of Batin and Jenang in the family by giving them to his two sons. It was said that he had been in conflict with Menteri Lewat. He lost his authority due to old age after Batin Janggut came to power. He had vehemently rejected rubber tapping, saying "we cannot eat rubber". In much the same way, he rejected the economic development projects. Ali's offspring were reluctant to embrace the development projects. His son, Jenang Kichoi, married a Malay.

Aru (31 years old)

Aru was the son of Jenang Misai. He was one of the most highly educated people in the village and was considered to be a potential future leader. He could not, however, inherit the title, because he was the titleholder's son (in other words, *enekbuah bakar*) following matrilineal principles. He had had a long "affair" with a wife of Leting and when they married they had two children. The wedding ceremony was attended by his former wife. Since remarrying, Aru spent more time in his new wife's native village. In his mother's native village of Kampung Dusun Kubur, he was in a position to be considered as a successor for the Batin title.

Asat (27 years old)

Asat was my research assistant. He was divorced, was the younger brother of Genreh, and was a contender to succeed as an *adat* leader. He also worked for the POASM and UMNO branches in the village.

Milong (33 years old)

Milong was my adopted brother. He was also a contender to succeed as an *adat* leader. He played a leading role in the POASM and UMNO branches in the village. Because he was single at that time, he was not able to satisfy the conditions required to be an *adat* leader.

Aman (34 years old)

Aman was one of the sons of Mangku Hasim. He owned the rubber trader's shop. Because his mother had a Chinese background, he had extensive connections with the Chinese in Pertang. He was an important member of the anti-Tikak group, and kept a close eye on the movements of the lower people. He was the most important informant for me on village politics and the village economy of Kampung Durian Tawar.

Batin Awang 41 years old)

Batin Awang was the Batin of Kampung Baning. In negotiations with the government, he acted as Batin Janggut's right-hand man. He had strong leadership abilities, so much so that the leading supporters of Batin Janggut in Kampung Durian Tawar were cautious of him.

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LIVING ON THE PERIPHERY

Development and Islamization among the Orang Asli in Malaysia

Nobuta Toshihiro



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A. Baer, *Asian Anthropology* (Vol.7) 2008

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