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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Roy Davis Linville Jumper entitled "Orang Asli Amidst Ethnic Diversity: A Case Study in Aboriginal Political Development in West Malaysia." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Political Science.

T. Alexander Smith, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance

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Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

ORANG ASLI AMIDST ETHNIC DIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY IN ABORIGINAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST MALAYSIA

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Roy Davis Linville Jumper

May 1996

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents

Dr. Roy E. Jumper

and

Mrs. Mary Ruth Linville Jumper

who have given me invaluable educational opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to professors T. Alexander Smith, Robert Peterson, and Betty Gawthrup for their guidance and comments.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the Orang Asli, an indigenous minority people inhabiting West Malaysia. The study of three time periods (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence) reveals the Orang Asli have developed a common pan-Orang Asli identity and political consciousness. This research contributes to applied political science by identifying a polity among the Orang Asli, and thus refutes earlier scholarly work portraying the Orang Asli as a fragmented people void of political import.

Specifically two issues -- land and Islam -- are conclusively identified as the premier motivational forces behind Orang Asli ethnogenesis and politization. Land suitable to their quasi nomadic lifestyle has gradually become scarce and state sponsored Islam is increasingly omnipresent. Thus, Orang Asli concerns about their land rights and religious freedom have over time compelled them to negotiate their precarious existence with the Malaysian state and its pre-colonial predecessors. The identification of this ongoing relationship substantiates my research hypothesis which holds that the Orang Asli are a coherent political force in Malaysia.

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DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Agung Stands for King of Kings. This position is rotated among the various Sultans.

Barisan Nasional is the ruling coalition group comprised of UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC. UMNO, MCA, and MIC stand for the Malay, Chinese, and Indian based political parties respectively. Politics in Malaysia is ethnicity based!

Bendahara Means chief minister and is the equivalent of a Prime Minister

Bugis Refers to Indonesian peoples from Sulawesi. They have a reputation as sea faring adventurers and are known to be extremely coarse. Having been imported into Malay by the Johore Sultanate many of these peoples are now of Malay stock.

Bumi Putra This term translates `sons of the soil' and is employed by the Malaysian government. It is comprised of Malays and indigenous peoples like the Orang Asli.

Dakwah Literally means to call or invite. Malaysians associate the term with an Islamic fundamentalist group.

Kafir An infidel or unbeliever (i.e., of Islam).

Kuala Lumpur The Malaysian Capital. The term means literally muddy estuary.

Malaya For convenience the term "Malaya" is often employed in place of West Malaysia throughout this dissertation and is meant to be exclusive of the Borneo territories. The word Malaysia came into being upon Malaysian independence from Great Britain and is more contemporary in terms of the holistic nationalistic images which it evokes.

Merdeka Marks Malayan independence from Great Britain in 1957.

Mikong A Sakai Raja. Powerful individuals often of Orang Asli ancestry that served as liaisons between Orang Asli and the outside world.

Orang Asli The Orang Asli are a heterogenic aboriginal people of uncertain origin confronting tenuous circumstances in polygenous West Malaysia. There are three broad overlapping categories of Malaysian aborigine subsumed under

the Orang Asli moniker. They are the Semang, Senoi, and Jakun -- each of which possesses its own various subcomponents. The Orang Asli represent less than one percent of West Malaysia's population in a numerical sense.

Orang Hulu A sub-Jakun group. A riverine people often referred to as Temuans who belong to the Jakun category and reside extensively in Malacca, Johore, and Selangor states.

Orang Laut A sub-Jakun group. A coastal/sea people of which there are various subgroups linked to specific islands.

Penghulu Sometimes spelled with an `a' as opposed to `e' and means headman, chief, or district head. The term also has a connotation associated with leadership in war dating back to earlier times.

Rukunegara Principles or articles upon which the Malaysian state is founded.

Sakai A derogatory term connotating slave, or inferior being, formerly used to identify the Orang Asli, and still employed colloquially at times.

Senoi Paraaq The Orang Asli military unit which played a decisive role during the Malayan Emergency. Senoi Paraaq means "Fighting Senoi". This unit was founded by Richard Noone.

Suku Connotates clan among the Minangkabaus and or the Orang Laut.

Surat Tauliah A letter of authority over a river valley. To some it also implies a "title deed" to such an area. Typically given by Malay Sultans to Penghulus or Mikongs.

Temiar A member of the Senoi tribe. Typically more aggressive than other Orang Asli.

Ulu Literally means upriver or headwaters.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COAC the Center for Orang Asli Concerns -- founded by Anthony Williams Hunt after he left POASM. Serves as Documentation center for Orang Asli related matters.

CT stands for Communist Terrorist. This label was given Maoist revolutionaries operating in Malaysia by Colonial authorities in order to avoid granting them any recognition of their political status.

GOM is the abbreviation used for the Government of Malaysia. Malaysia gained her independence from Great Britain in 1957 and has a Westminster Parliamentary style of government. GOM is led by his excellency Dr. Mahathir and dominated by UMNO.

JOA (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli) stands for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which was initially created during the Communist Emergency by the Interior Ministry in order to work with the Orang Asli and wean them away from MCP influence.

MCP stands for the Communist Party of Malaya and was the political organization founded by Cheng Peng, sponsored by the Peoples Republic of China, which offered ideological legitimacy to the insurgents.

MPAJA (Malay Peoples Anti Japanese Army) the ethnic Chinese guerilla army sponsored by the British to harass the Japanese in Malaya during WWII which ultimately became the MRLA.

MRLA (Malayan Races Liberation Army) the military wing of the MCP which made great use of the Orang Asli during the Malayan Emergency.

RELA denotes Ikatan Relawan Rakyat Malaysia -- the Malaysian Peoples Volunteer Crops. RELA is a paramilitary organization which draws upon the Orang Asli.

PAS Parti Islam Sa-Melayu is an Islamic political party which derives its appeal from Islam as the basis of Malay dominated society. PAS is a highly nationalist organization of a fundamentalist nature. It is very strong in Kelantan and Trengganu states but UMNO retains control over Trengganu. Kelantan and Trengganu are the poorest states in Malaysia and are populated largely by ethnic Malays.

POASM Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia is a regional Orang Asli association dedicated to protecting

their land. It operates under GOM sponsorship.

UMNO stands for the United Malay National Organization and is a political party which dominates the Barisan Nationalist Front --This front is a coalition of various ethnic groups which nominally controls Malaysian politics.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about the Orang Asli, a heterogeneous aboriginal people of uncertain origin confronting tenuous circumstances in polygenous West Malaysia. There are three broad categories of Malaysian aborigine subsumed under the Orang Asli label: the Semang, Senoi, and Jakun -- each of which possesses its own sub-components. By official estimates the Orang Asli constitute less than one percent of West Malaysia's population.

This research proposes to identify and evaluate Orang Asli political activity over time (on which little collective effort has been focused) to determine whether or not one may speak of an evolving Orang Asli polity and consciousness. Its purpose is three-fold: to identify Orang Asli motives for politization; to examine Orang Asli political development; and to assess the state of their collective external political relations with other Malaysians. These efforts are directed towards overcoming the common view, often stated or implied in various ways by scholars, that the Orang Asli tribes are essentially a minute, simple, fragmented, static, and unskilled apolitical minority seemingly incapable of profound political comprehension and or expression.

Much of the literature written during the period of British rule in Malaya marginalizes Orang Asli capabilities

and thus by implication demphasizes their political importance. The Malay's harsh treatment of the Orang Asli formed an integral part of Britain's defense of the practice of colonialism.[1] Consequently, materials about the Orang Asli, dating to this time, are often laced with descriptions about how primitive and helpless they were, both in comparison to and as opposed to the Malays.[2]

By the same token much contemporary literature about the Orang Asli continues to reflect a similar apathy towards Orang Asli political potential but for somewhat different reasons.[3] This is largely because Government of Malaysia

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[1]David N. Dodge, "The Malay-Aborigine Nexus Under Malay Rule," Anthropologica 137 (1981): 1.

[2]It was only after the Second World War that the derogatory term Sakai which meant slave or dependent was dropped in favor of Orang Asli which means original people.

[3]The writings of a number of contemporary scholars offer a negative interpretation of the Orang Asli polity. For example the noted Orang Asli scholar Iskandar Carey finds, in his otherwise objective account, the Orang Asli generally to be "economically and socially backward when compared to other races." And as regards the Semang, he writes: "The `tribe' is clearly not seen as a political concept. The Negrito tribe does not have a formal leader, and there are no political ties of any kind to link the members of the tribe into a single unit." Similarly, Professor Nicholas N. Dodge writes "...the aboriginal peoples of the Malay peninsula have never been numerically, economically or -- outside the brief period of the Communist insurgency -- politically important." While Gordon P. Means is more blunt, stating that, despite their attempts to the contrary, the Orang Asli are "politically impotent". See, Iskandar Carey, Orang Asli: The Aboriginal Tribes of

(GOM) patronage has been necessary to conduct research among the Orang Asli, especially in areas affected by the Communist insurgency. Thus, the great bulk of critical academic attention regarding independent Malaysia to date has been focused upon the political and economic development of the better known Malays, Indians, and Chinese.

As a result of these intrinsic biases there is relatively less analysis devoted to the Orang Asli per se and their unique problems. This is particularly true of scholarship directed towards Orang Asli research from outside the anthropological and sociological realms. However, this restrictive research environment has begun to change, due to a liberalization of GOM's policies toward the Orang Asli.

Generally speaking, the study of aboriginal peoples and tribal groups in Southeast Asia had been dominated by research about Australian aborigines and tribal peoples from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia and the

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Malaysia, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976), 5 and 41; Gordon Means, "The Orang Asli: Coping With a Changing Environment," in Problems of the Social and Physical Environment: Proceedings of the 14th Annual Conference, Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies Held in Wifville, Nova Scotia 12-14, October 1984, ed. Bruce Mathews (Wifville, Nova Scotia; Acadia University Press, 1984), 1; Nicholas N. Dodge, "The Malay-Aborigine Nexus Under Malay Rule," Anthropologica deel 137, 1 alvering (1981): 1.

Philippines. Several key factors have governed a tendency on the part of researchers to study peoples residing in these regions as opposed to Malaysia. In the Australian case ease of access in the host environment and an absence of language barriers spurred research. In the remaining cases problems with access and language barriers, not to mention the sheer number of indigenous groups which might be studied, simply absorbed the academic attention which might otherwise have been focused upon the Orang Asli.

This is not to say that the Orang Asli have been ignored: far from it. There has been a slow but steady maturation of research activity in this particular niche of aboriginal studies during the postwar period. Now that the Emergency is safely concluded, there will be additional opportunities to examine the Orang Asli situation and map out the changes which have been wrought upon their society over the past forty years.[4]

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[4]More generally, with the passage of United Nations Resolution 45/164 on 18 December, 1990 a new era began for many of the world's oppressed minority ethnic groups. In this resolution 1993 was proclaimed the International Year of the World's Indigenous People and once obscure matters of little concern, other than to indigenous peoples themselves, became international issues with broad publicity. United Nations involvement was extended the following year when it proclaimed an International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. Hence, there began in December 1994 a sustained focus by the United Nations upon issues central to indigenous peoples like land rights, human rights, internal colonization, health, education, cultural survival, intellectual property rights, social and economic conditions, and cultural survival. There are an estimated

In terms of specific academic material available about the Orang Asli, one may distinguish several main types with varying degrees of overlap. While much of it is ethnological, anthropological, sociological, or historical in nature, most studies contain data useful for political and economic analysis. However, it all lends itself well to a comprehensive multidimensional examination of a specific ethnic group within a cross-cultural context.

This body of academic studies is supplemented by other materials ranging from Malaysian newspapers (which are censored) to documents issued by GOM and the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JOA) regarding official policy towards the Orang Asli. Naturally much of this material is prejudicial towards GOM perspectives about the Orang Asli and serves as an excellent counterweight to the academic literature available in this area which tends to empathize with the Orang Asli.

Hence, the challenge is to join a small but increasingly active band of scholars mining a promising vein

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300 million indigenous people dispersed among more than 70 countries throughout the world. Within this category of peoples aborigines per se like the Orang Asli are a minority group within a minority population. For details see Nancy Seufert-Barr, "International Year for the Worlds Indigenous Peoples, 1993," UN Chronicle 30 no. 2 (June 1993): 40-45; and United Nations, General Assembly, A/C/3/48/L.54, November 29, 1993.

of Orang Asli studies in order to focus upon the neglected political component. There is an abundance of raw material waiting to be transformed into a new and additional wealth of knowledge concerning that which is political about the Orang Asli.

Much of this material narrates Orang Asli activities in past years and at present. This is not bad in and of itself because it does serve the dual purposes of providing information and publicizing the Orang Asli plight -- thereby providing motive and means to further study these people. The absence of methodological rigor simply demonstrates that without any systematic control of information flow any attempt to build upon existing knowledge must first be structured in such a way as to impose order upon this mass of data.

To this end, many researchers in the area of ethnic relations are fond of employing a dependency paradigm or Marxist approach around which to weave their own theories about minority interaction with superior ethnic groups.[5] By

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[5]For a well engineered argument advancing material dependence and structural interdependence among Melayu ethnic groups inclusive of the Orang Laut See Vivienne Wee, "Material Dependence and Symbolic Independence: Construction of Malayu Ethnicity in Island Riau, Indonesia," in A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogly, and Karl L. Hutterer eds., (Ann Arbor Michigan: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1988) Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia, 22.

the same token others employ more conventional analysis to examine development disparities between indigenous peoples and races which dominate various regions in the Far East.[6] And so, much original material about the Orang Asli and subsequent analysis about ethnicity which may be applied to the Orang Asli either is somewhat tainted by intrinsic political biases on the part of researchers, or it lacks systematic analysis.

To skirt these deficiencies and augment our understanding of Orang Asli political dynamics, I propose to employ a strategm which incorporates the classical case study approach in order to facilitate objective analysis of the Malaysian Orang Asli and their political development. The key words here are objectivity and substantiation. Hence, I have given my dissertation the following title: Orang Asli Amidst Ethnic Diversity: A Case Study in Aboriginal Political Development in West Malaysia.

I intend to make an intra-Orang Asli analysis of that which is "political" amongst Malaysian aborigines and to

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[6]Scott Bennett's study of Australian aborigines and their political and economic development exemplifies non Marxist analysis by attempting to ascertain how much aborigine influence there is over the Australian polity. Their main political objective, according to Bennett, is to secure the funding necessary for programs to correct social injustices which hinder their development aspirations. See Scott Bennett, Aborigines and Political Power (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) xii and 150.

juxtapose this analysis against an examination of inter-Orang Asli/Malay Government relationships. I wish to demonstrate that changes which have impacted Orang Asli society have been and are conducive to political development amongst the Orang Asli, and also in terms of their relations with the outside world. My central hypothesis is that recent Orang Asli experiences are conducive to an accelerated socio-cultural metamorphosis from a fragmented people into a politically coherent collectivity.

Preliminaries aside, I will, in the remainder of this introduction, develop my hypotheses and identify sub-problems which must be addressed to resolve my research question, formulate a conceptual scheme around which to collect the historical and contemporary data necessary to support my hypotheses, and lay out the organization of my research. Once these preliminary objectives have been met, I will begin to substantiate my hypotheses by initiating the main body of my research and working my way towards a compelling conclusion establishing that "yes" there is an evolving Orang Asli polity!

The Sub-Problems

The first sub-problem is to determine whether there is a discrete pattern of past and present political activities.

Although there is general agreement among scholars that the Orang Asli possess a rudimentary form of social organizational structure common to most primitive indigenous peoples, there has been scant acknowledgment of the political nature of these arrangements. No concerted effort to demonstrate an evolving Orang Asli polity has been made to date.[7]

The second sub-problem is to link a hypothesized evolution of political activity at the village and local level with a more dynamic form of Orang Asli participation in West Malaysia's broader political scene. The Orang Asli are increasingly confronted by a variety of external pressures upon their environment and are compelled to respond in some fashion to critical issues, such as their

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[7]This is precisely because the Orang Asli embody politics in a raw and unadulterated form quite different from contemporary Western perceptions of the concept. Everything the Orang Asli do is political in nature or politically motivated in as much as politics entails getting other people to do what they would not do otherwise. In the case of the Malaysian aborigines theirs is a politics of consensus designed to maintain social equilibrium in conformity with the dictates of their environment. Consequently, the fact that they are "political" is overlooked because we do not appreciate this aspect of their culture. Their customs are their law by Plato's definition and the supremacy of law in turn establishes the presence of government -- presumably good government. To address this deficiency in our knowledge about a fascinating people I wish to elucidate how externally induced social, economic, and political changes in the Orang Asli environment have provoked corresponding changes -- political ones in particular -- among members of this ethnic group.

land rights and legal or religious status under the Malaysian Constitution. The intention is to grapple with this hypothesized political evolution by identifying various provocations by the Malaysian government and analyzing Orang Asli mechanisms for adaption to and interaction with the larger political environment.

The third sub-problem is to chart these activities among the Orang Asli and between the Orang Asli and external political entities across three periods of time. The three periods are the pre-colonial era, the colonial period, and the post-independence era. My ultimate objective is to ascertain whether or not one may speak about a continuum in Orang Asli political development and external relations, with the hypothesized evolution occurring and subsequently accelerating during the colonial period and post-independence era.

The Hypotheses

My research objectives are multidimensional. Hence, I will attempt to substantiate two mutually supporting and empirically verifiable independent research hypotheses. I will systematically bring to bear evidence, distilled from a wealth of material presented by various disciplines to political science, to support the research hypotheses.

The first research hypothesis is that internal Orang Asli political activity evolves over time. The Orang Asli tribes have experienced change induced by long-term contact with the outside world and have reacted in rudimentary sociological ways to this change. This reaction from tribe to tribe is apparently cumulative as opposed to transitory; and it translates ultimately into a collective political metamorphosis amongst the Orang Asli as a distinct ethnic group.

By way of defining the term "political activity" Max Weber stipulates that politics involves "...striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state." Power itself involves "...the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action against the resistance of others who are participating in the action." [8] Thus, in this instance the terms "political" and "political activity" relate to individual tribal (Semang, Senoi, Jakun) and aggregate level Orang Asli activities which contest and or buttress the prerogatives of the Malaysian state and its colonial, and pre-colonial

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[8]For further definition of the terms power and political see, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trans., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York, Oxford University Press, 1958) 78 & 180.

predecessors.

In this respect, a protracted Orang Asli struggle with the Malays has had the effect of drawing these peoples together over the course of time. As a consequence they presently share common objectives and mutually recognizable leadership elements. Interest group formation and Orang Asli rights articulation (especially land rights and religious freedom) are the hall marks of this political evolution among the Orang Asli vis-avis their dealings with the Malays.

The second research hypothesis is that this situation is not and has not been void of political import beyond the tribal/regional level. I will endeavor to establish that the Orang Asli are not new to the larger Malaysian political process, and have of late begun a limited mobilization along ethnic lines in an attempt to advance an agenda at the national level.[9] Supporting this hypothesis is the

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[9]The substantiation of my research hypothesis involves a review of the predictions of the noted sociologist Joseph Rothschild. In his book, Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework, Professor Rothschild forecasts a dialectic relationship between peoples such as the Orang Asli and GOM should an Orang Asli polity evolve or be evolving. This is because such evolution must occur and subsequently harden along fault-lines of potential cleavage and be politicized with a militant edge. As a subordinate group the Orang Asli are expected to view the Malaysian state as a "gatekeeper" monopolizing access to Malaysia's new found prosperity. Thus participant power will become a "crucial" need and goal

proposition that this activity has indeed been felt and acknowledged by GOM.

The Orang Asli have taken advantage of Malaysia's relative openness and willingness to entertain Orang Asli aspirations and advance a declaration of Orang Asli rights. They have also begun to draw attention to themselves on the international scene with GOM acquiescence. This has had the effect of lending a sense of legitimacy to their endeavor by ordaining in a de facto sense that some sort of mutually palatable understanding must ultimately arise between Orang Asli and Malay.

For their part the Malays through GOM auspices have sought to capitalize upon their numerical and technological superiority over the Orang Asli to engage in a game of regime cooptation. GOM aspires to absorb rather than suppress the Orang Asli by allowing them to gradually work their way into the mainstream of Malaysian cultural and political life. It is simply the details of this arrangement or positioning which remain to be negotiated.

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for the Orang Asli and one expects that they may, given certain circumstances, pursue this goal with some vigor. Such information, given substantiation of my research hypothesis vis-a-vis an evolving Orang Asli polity, would be useful to confirm in the context of Malaysia and the Orang Asli.

In essence, the Orang Asli are subject to various exogenous forces such as Malaysian nationalism and economic development. Thus, I expect to arrive at an understanding of aboriginal political development in the Malaysian case as it is manifested across time as a product of various factors and circumstances. If these hypotheses are born out, it will be possible to speak in terms of an evolving Orang Asli polity imbued with a distinctive political consciousness.

Organization of the Dissertation

Having outlined my research objectives and discussed my hypotheses, it is now appropriate to turn to the organization of this dissertation. In so doing I wish to identify more precisely who will be studied, what about them is of interest, how/when they shall be examined, and why they are the subjects of such interest. However, as the "why" question has largely been answered (in that the purpose of this dissertation is to assess the Orang Asli factor for its political potential in Malaysia by substantiating several research hypotheses about them), I will confine myself here to elucidation of the first four questions.

I intend to analyze Orang Asli participation in the political process with the Malays across three extended

periods: the pre-colonial period, the colonial period, and in the post-independence era. To appreciate the use of this horlogistic framework it is important to understand early on that these three periods of time are fairly indistinct. Certain events do fade into one another, but this spatial blending along time period edges is simply a technical detail which does not detract from their utility.

Each section of this dissertation will develop topics documenting a political maturation amongst the Orang Asli across time. Specific political forces in the continuing Orang Asli/Malay relationship are the military and economic roles of the Orang Asli and the issues of land rights and religion as they variously manifest themselves in each of these eras.[10] I intend to analyze these roles and issues separately from era to era and probe them in depth in order to assess their implications for the hypothesis.

These distinctive threads run through the fabric of Orang Asli/Malay relations and are of primary interest to a

[10]These roles and issues are the critical variables which most impact the Orang Asli and thus best serve as predictors of their behavior across time. In terms of differentiating between these roles and issues land and religion have of late surpassed economic and military considerations as subjects of concern to both the Malay and the Orang Asli.

political scientist.[11] Gauging their strength will provide a better idea of the level and extent of participation and representation by the Orang Asli in Malay-dominated political processes. I am looking to establish that there was participation brought on by these forces, that this participation was consistent, and at times it had been of very significant nature.

The Malays

Malay political arrangements, both in terms of earlier times and at present, are comprised of a complex set of shifting relationships among a variety of entities. Theirs is such a complicated set of arrangements that one is neither advised to generalize about the situation in its entirety nor speculate about specifics.[12] The point being this subject is such that the Malays and their political intrigues are a topic unto themselves best focused upon independently and with great circumspection.

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[11]These forces have over time compelled certain cumulative outcomes which are detrimental to the Orang Asli. As a consequence of these forces and outcomes the Orang Asli are being pushed collectively towards the brink of cultural oblivion. The concomitant political activity which I am interested in identifying and analyzing is simply a discernable byproduct of these forces and outcomes.

[12]J.M. Gulick, Political Systems of Western Malaya (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), xviii.

Therein lies the quandary. It would be diversionary in terms of this dissertation's true interests and/or a fallacious over-simplification to either engage the Malay role in protracted analysis or to omit it entirely. Therefore, I fully acknowledge the Malay role but do not attempt to see inside of the elusive black box constituting their program regarding the Orang Asli. Instead it is expedient to construe their presence as a constant in the Orang Asli/Malay equation. Thus I engage in generic analysis of Malay intentions vis-a-vis the Orang Asli in the form of `high end' discussion as though we have multiplied a common denominator through the equation.

Tribal Categories

Much as the Malays are not homogenous, the Orang Asli are also a multi-ethnic people. There is no single Orang Asli genre which would lend itself to an accurate representation of the Orang Asli.[13] Theoretically, to

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[13]Speculation about Orang Asli origins ranges from that by early writers like H.D. Noone and R.J. Wilkinson (drawing upon Skeat & Blagden's seminal work published in 1906 -- Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula -- which was the first attempt at systematic coverage of the Orang Asli) to the effect that a prehistoric migratory wave type explanation is possible to A. Terry Rambo's more recent hypothesis, postulating Orang Asli evolution in place, ascribing any differences among them as essentially due to their incomplete adaptation to different modes of subsistence. See A. Terry Rambo, "Why are Semang? Ecology and Ethnogenesis of Aboriginal Groups in Peninsular Malaysia," in A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogly, and Karl L. Hutterer,

validate my hypothesis and identify substantive, albeit amorphic inter-Orang Asli/Malay political relations and intra-Orang Asli political evolution, it is necessary at a minimum, at least as far as the Orang Asli are concerned, to entertain the notion of various sub-groups among 18 identified tribes. The problem then becomes how to go about doing this in a manageable way. The solution lies somewhere in a compromise between assigning them black box status as was done with the Malays and involving all 18 tribes in my analysis.

One useful approach is to deal with them in terms of major categories as opposed to individual tribes. I will employ three categories denoting separate Orang Asli groups to acquire a higher degree of specificity about which Orang Asli are involved. This is the initial classification put forth by Scheseba involving the Semang, Senoi, and Jakun categories of Orang Asli. This scheme was subsequently perpetuated by Skeat and Blagden and eventually institutionalized by the primary established authority on contemporary Asli studies, Iskandar Carey.[14]

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eds., Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor Michigan: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), 22.

[14]A. Terry Rambo, "Why are Semang? in A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogy, and Karl L. Hutterer, eds., Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor Michigan: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), 19.

Only in this manner can independent examples supportive of what I am attempting to establish be generated in sufficient quantity to help insure validity. Otherwise one would, drawing upon an analogy, be dealing with a large sample set that contained many different samples but each of which was essentially the same thing!

Time Categories

I will break down a six hundred year period (i.e. between approximately 1400 A.D. and the present) into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence eras. Events concerning the Orang Asli happened in the context of these three eras but did not extend beyond or between more than one or two phases.

The Pre-Colonial Era

The pre-colonial era (early 1400's-1700's) is fairly distinctive because, among other things, it marks an Orang Asli day in the Malayan sun. The Malays did not monopolize power to the exclusion of all others during much of this era and in particular at the Malacca Sultanate's zenith in the early 1400's. They were involved in symbiotic relationships with certain Orang Asli groups -- best described as power-sharing arrangements. This was particularly true of the

Orang Laut as well as various other Jakun tribes until later in the era when the Orang Asli in general began to suffer from protracted civil wars among the Malays.

This era was clearly a pre-colonial situation in terms of foreign contacts and influences because the motivational force was initially trade and not physical occupation. During this time European and regional groups (other than Javanese Melayu, Sumatran Minangkabau, and Bugis peoples from Sulawesi) did not sponsor great population migrations or engage in periods of extended local residence on the peninsula. All that changed abruptly when Great Britain extended her rule in 1874 to the Western Malay states and literally moved into the peninsula to acquire and ostensibly to pacify the territory.[15]

The Colonial Period

The colonial period (early 1700's-1957), in turn, is marked by many distinct events involving Orang Asli/Malay political relations the knowledge of which, as we will see later, is also necessary to understand contemporary Orang Asli political activities. The colonial period is also unique and may be construed as such for a variety of reasons, but for our purposes let us consider this to be so

[15]Gulick, viii.

primarily because it brought the last of the Orang Asli into sustained contact with modernity and then abruptly drew to a close as did the pre-colonial era. This second closure which affords us a focal point was strikingly similar to the prolonged turmoil that racked the country at the end of the pre-colonial era (due to a vicious country wide Communist insurgency movement in which the Orang Asli participated as mercenaries).

The colonial period also imparted a British quality upon Malaya which continues to pervade this former colony in terms of government structures and judicial arrangements. The fateful moment ending the colonial period is commonly known as Merdeka or Independence and occurred in 1957. Much is made locally of this event and it marks a sweeping transfer of power from Great Britain to the new Government of Malaya.

The Post-Independence Era

In post-independence Malaysia (after 1957) the Orang Asli found themselves exposed once again to Malay prerogatives -- only this time all Orang Asli tribes were affected. Their power position was diminished by a decline in the Malayan Emergency's intensity, decreases in their own number relative to the expanding Malay, Chinese, and Tamil

Indian populations, and their inability to participate in the country's modernization.[16] Most importantly, they were stripped of the protection of their British allies.

Constitutional provisions Great Britain made to protect the Orang Asli were not effective and the character of Orang Asli/Malay relations was once again altered. During this period the original locus of Orang Asli power relative to the Malays changed by shifting from the Jakun to the Senoi, but not without taking a terrible toll on the Orang Asli generally. In sum, this era set the Orang Asli at a collective disadvantage during which numerical and technological differences became more telling vis the Malays but it also stimulated them to think about their sense of pan-Orang Asli identity.[17]

Thus, the Orang Asli time and tribal categories allow the research scholar to distinguish separate Orang Asli types at different time periods in the contexts of their relationships with one another, with Malays, and with

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[16]The great irony here is that everyone except the Orang Asli fully understood the degree to which their support was central to the war effort. This was due to a lack of communication and organization among themselves. Now that the Orang Asli are in closer contact with one another they are more aware of this point and are not without latent military potential.

[17]En bref, a difficult relationship with the Malays over time draws the Orang Asli together as a collective entity.

various external forces. Hence, during the course of this study I will track and interpret the vicissitudes of Orang Asli/Malay relations with regard to power relationships on the peninsula with the intention of working my way towards a conclusion which substantiates my research hypotheses. I hope to demonstrate that a political relationship among Orang Asli and Malays, whether it be antagonistic at a given moment or not, is always present although its form and substance do change.

PART I

THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

The objectives of this first segment of the dissertation are three-fold and are intended to lay the foundation upon which an argument for continuity in Orang Asli political evolution can be made. First, I wish to establish that the Orang Asli per se had an early political role based upon economic and military activities in peninsular affairs, that this role was indeed political, and that politics in turn marginalized their role over time. I will do this by demonstrating that an early change in the Orang Asli power position relative to the Malays occurred and that as a consequence of this reversal of fortune the balance of power among the Orang Asli subsequently shifted.

Second, I intend to analyze the redistribution of power among the Orang Asli relative to the Malays. The after-effects of an early alteration in the Orang Asli/Malay balance of power suggest a de facto redistribution of power among the Orang Asli themselves. I wish to inquire into where power among the Orang Asli came to rest towards conclusion of the pre-colonial era, because knowledge about this is relevant to our interpretation of their political capacities during subsequent stages in the Orang Asli/Malay relationship.

Finally, my third objective is to discuss the genesis of religious issues and land rights on the Malay peninsula.

These issues gradually assume significance in the colonial era and become central in that they tend to dominate Orang Asli/Malay relations during the post independence era. By this point in time Orang Asli political, military, and economic roles will have been eclipsed leaving them vulnerable to Malay impositions in spiritual and terrestrial matters.

Chapter 1

Orang Asli Origins, The Four Kingdoms and the Jakun

Orang Asli Origins

The task in this chapter is to convey details about Orang Asli origins and early roles. Their origin is a mystery, although it has been the subject of much speculation. Such uncertainty is paradoxical because they have been subjected to much scrutiny by scholars and are becoming one of the better researched indigenous populations in Southeast Asia. This is particularly so now that a new and younger generation of scholars has also begun to acquire an interest in these peoples.[1]

However, as a consequence of this cumulative research we do know certain things about their early existence and we have precise knowledge of when they came into existence as a distinct group. This was at about the same time Indonesian Melayu peoples entered the scene, and it is in no small part through their records that we know of the Orang Asli.[2]

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[1]Bibliographies authored by Vinson Sutlive in 1979 and Justin J. Corfield in 1990 illustrate this point well.

[2]There is a fascinating translation of the Sejarah Melayu by C.C. Brown in the February 1953 edition of the Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society which is without parallel in terms of contemporary scholarship regarding ancient Malaya.

Western sleuthing into the past in the form of archeological endeavor supplements the Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu and has also provided much insight into their early existence.

The Sejarah Melayu is a primary reference and an intriguing source of information because they are consistent with records of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) referring to Johore and early Malacca. However, unlike VOC files the Sejarah Melayu, which are dated 1612 and thought to be written by Tun Sri Lanang, supply us an intimate internal perspective.[3] Furthermore it is the non Bugis, as in Sulawesi Bugis, perspective on early events which the Tuhfat al-Nafis and other later works lack.[4]

Thus, thanks to a multiplicity of sources we know with reasonable certainty that for many millennia, at least several thousand years by most accounts, the trade function was extremely important to the region and that Orang Asli were deeply involved in the acquisition of jungle products central to this activity. The straits of Malacca played as critical a role as did the Ismuth of Kra in international

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[3]R.J. Wilkinson, ed., Papers on Malay Subjects (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 288.

[4]Anthony Reid and Lance Castles, eds., Pre-colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia: the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Bali-Lombok, South Celebes (Kuala Lumpur: Council of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1975), 2.

commerce. It meant that the Jakun, as early residents of southern regions in the Malay Peninsula, were at the right place at the right time. To control such an area and to monopolize trade between China and India meant having access to great wealth.

However, early inhabitants in many areas of the Malay Peninsula were given over to much savagery, and barbarism was the order of the day for the neolithic Proto Malay. Life was harsh, brutal, and unforgiving -- there was no pity for the weak! Ritual murder and cannibalism were hallmarks of this period and there is ample archeological evidence to support a macabre view of the Orang Asli's most base behavior.[5]

The Orang Asli did not originate in a placid garden of Eden only to be set upon and subsequently ravaged over the centuries by numerically and technologically superior peoples. There was much turmoil of indiscript origin preceding the first detailed accounts of Jakun involvement with the Malacca Sultanate. Yet, somehow early aborigines eventually became involved in the evolution of several tribal societies, who possessed some sophistication and built upon these blood-drenched foundations.

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[5]Paul Wheatley, Impressions of the Malay Peninsula in Ancient Times (Singapore: Eastern University Press LTD., 1964), 13&24.

The Four Kingdoms

This later segment of the pre-colonial era, towards 1450 A.D., represents the Sakai golden age and involved four aboriginal states -- Sungi, Ujong, Klang, and Jelebu -- in what is present-day Negri Sembilan.[6] Three distinct tribes -- the Biduana, Besisi, and Jakun -- are referred to as inhabiting this region in Malay records. They lived relatively free of external influences prior to the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate and are purported to have possessed "undang yang empat" or powerful chiefs who enforced laws in their respective states.[7]

Only gradually did these states or tribal confederations lose their autonomy over a 150-year period to the Malacca and Johore Sultanates. A most interesting point here is that, far from denying their existence, the Malay annals simply downplay the significance of these kingdoms. They refer to them as vassal states which eventually became appendages to the Bendaharas of Johore.[8]

This understatement is part of a long standing Malay pattern in which Malay oriented records demphasize Orang

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[6]Wilkinson, 287.

[7]Wilkinson, 284.

[8]Wilkinson, 283&284.

Asli activities on the peninsula. Thus, while attempting to neutralize its significance in the overall scheme of things the Sejarah Melayu support the view that there was a distinct Orang Asli presence embodying structure of some sort on the Malay Peninsula. This obsfucation is fine because, albeit inaccurate in terms of specific details and or in its spin, much knowledge handed down by tradition and subsequently incorporated into these stories is "....truthful in its drift."[9]

Thus, what we have is a composite of archeological and historical information about the Orang Asli sufficient to pique our interest. The picture is somewhat sketchy, but it conveys an image in which they are depicted as pre-dating the Malays and as having risen above the neolithic stage. Admittedly, this background information is rough, but it helps flush out the setting for our analysis by hinting at neglected Orang Asli potential.

Ultimately there was, to the extent we are concerned with earlier times, a regional disturbance created by Javanese and Siamese Kingdoms which destroyed several independent civilizations, presumably Buddhist, in the north of the Malay peninsula. This cataclysm occurred during the 14th and 15th centuries A.D. and the resulting vacuum

[9]Wilkenson, 26.

further south in the territories of Perak, Johore, Malacca, and Pahang, that abut Negri Sembilan, enabled a group of Sumatran Melayu, the Minangkabau, to colonize these regions. This migratory process had its actual beginnings sometime in the 1300's but intensified only after additional slaughter further south in the environs of Singapore Island which was presumably provoked by the trouble up north.[10]

Prior to this point in time external influences on the Malay Peninsula were largely transitory, and physical occupation other than in the extreme north was not involved. Other peoples were interested in conducting trade in this area but not in actually establishing residence or exploiting the resources themselves. So, a unique and extended sequence of events constitutes the point of origin for our Orang Asli analysis.

It marks an extended moment in time during which the Orang Asli became the subject of a more succinct academic focus that I have chosen to delineate as the pre-colonial era. At this point Minangkabau Malays founded the Malacca Sultanate and came into contact with the Orang Laut tribes and presumably the Orang Hulu tribe as well. These were peoples occupying what is commonly known as the "strand" or coastal strip of Southern Malaya and various riverine areas

[10]Wilkinson, 15.

in the hinterland of Malacca state.

The Orang Laut represent the first tier of our Orang Asli tripartite about whom we have sufficient information to proceed with an in-depth political analysis vis-a-vis Orang Asli/Malay relations.[11] It was with these peoples and at this point in time that began a political process which belies earlier notions of the Orang Asli as being apolitical.[12] At given moments each of these groups played a pivotal role during the early pre-colonial era, both during and after the Malacca Sultanates' 100 year reign.

I intend, after several perfunctory remarks, to discuss both the Orang Laut and the Orang Hulu tribes in greater depth once we understand a little something about the Malacca Sultanate, because it was under Malacca Sultanate, auspices that their political and military roles were played out.

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[11]We know from Favre's account that there were as many as ten different Jakun peoples. Their names refer to the geographic locations where they lived. See for example, P. Favre, "An Account of the Wild Tribes Inhabiting the Malayan Peninsula, Sumatra and A Few Neighboring Islands," The Journal of the Indian Archipelago 2 (May 1848): 242.

[12]By political process I mean the ongoing bid by Indonesian Malays to establish and maintain control over the Malay peninsula. The substance of these actions as well as the actions themselves are/were purely political and involve the acquisition and maintenance of power by Malay potentates. Various Orang Asli groups have been employed as instruments towards this end for Malay gain and at Orang Asli expense.

The Jakun

The Orang Laut were a sea people, living along the southern coastal areas of the Malay peninsula and in the archipelago. They comprised several proto Malay tribes belonging to a single culture.[13] At present however they have largely disappeared, and their numbers have dwindled to approximately 20,000 people, due to the dilution of their racial stock by extensive contacts with other ethnic groups.[14] The Mah Meri tribe on Carey Island is one of the last groups of these sea Jakun to resist assimilation and remain distinct from the Malays. Their Orang Hulu neighbors are a land Jakun who inhabit nearby inland areas in the vicinity of Johore. They are also referred to as Temuans, exist in similar numbers, and are distinct from the Orang Laut. However, each of these groups share many common features and speak variants of the Besisi dialect which served as an ethnic marker during earlier times.[15]

Besisi is a Southern Austroasiatic language, sharing common elements with other Orang Asli languages, which is

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[13]David Sopher, Sea Nomads: A Study Based on the Literature of the Maritime Boatpeople of Southeast Asia (Singapore: Government Printer, 1964), 47.

[14]Sopher, 1&47.

[15]Gerard Diffloth, "Les Langues Mon-Khmer De Malaisie, Classifications Historique et Innovations," ASEMI 6, (1975): 7.

distinct from Bahasa.[16] Conjecture about prehistoric migrations not withstanding, peoples speaking this language were not Indonesian Malays.[17] Furthermore, from the stand point of purely empirical evidence we know that many land Jakun were in the habit of filing their teeth as a part of certain ceremonies (a few continue to do so in a somewhat un Malay manner).[18] This characteristic lends further credence to those scholars who both distinguish them from Austronesian peoples and reject debate about prehistoric migrations.[19]

However, there were similarities among them and the Malays which could facilitate cooperation to their mutual benefit. Consequently, a fusion took place among sea Jakun and Minangkabau Malays. The results of their cooperative efforts are germane to the argument that Orang Asli are

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[16]Of late there has been sophisticated analysis of genetic markers in Orang Asli blood done by genetic researchers which further distinguishes the Orang Asli on a racial basis from the Malays. See N. Saha et als, "Population Genetic Study Among the Orang Asli (Semai Senoi) of Malaysia: Malayan Aborigines," Human Biology 67 no. 1 (February 1995): 37.

[17]Difflath, 7.

[18]Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley, eds., Malacca: The Transformation of a Malay Capital C. 1400-1980 (Oxford University press, 1983), 24.

[19]Marie-Andree Couillard, "Les Malais et les Sakai: quelques reflections sur les rapports sociaux dans la peninsule malaise," Anthropologie et Societes 7, no. 2 (1983): 105.

indeed political beings. It is this critical interim prior to Orang Asli decline which is of interest.

And so, I now turn to the Malacca Sultanate under whose auspices this early Orang Asli political participation occurred.

Chapter 2

The Malacca Sultanate, Origins, and Legacy

This meeting in the Malacca Sultanate of two similar (from a macro-racial perspective) but different peoples (in a micro- cultural sense) was the genesis of the Orang Asli/Malay political relationship. During the pre-colonial era the Sultanate went through several extreme dislocations but was nevertheless of an enduring quality which, with the passage of time, ranged up and down the Malay peninsula. Ultimately, though it resulted in the further decline of the Orang Asli, leaving us with many common misperceptions about them, as successive groups of Melayu from present day Indonesia continued to migrate into Malaya.

In this chapter I wish to briefly introduce the Malacca Sultanate, establish it as the premier political system on the Malay peninsula, and make the preparatory remarks necessary to subsequently analyze the Orang Laut tribes' role in its internal politics. Orang Asli involvement at a high political level and in a military capacity with this political system is important to understand both in a historical context and in terms of its present political significance. Not only does it mark the genesis of Orang Asli/Malay political relations but also Malay ideology or "rukunegara" postulating a pan-Melayu identity and as such

should not be relegated to passing remarks.

Origins of the Malacca Sultanate

In 1390 an audacious prince called Paramesvara failed in a rebellion against the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit and subsequently fled as a political refugee to Singapore Island. Here he and his followers murdered the local leader shortly after their arrival and assumed control. But this initial success was short lived -- approximately five years later his past caught up with him and he was again forced to flee.

Paramesvara then relocated further north in Malacca during 1400-1401 A.D. By 1411 he had consolidated his position, in large part because of the site's defensive advantages inherent in its strategic location, and had become the protégé of a Ming Dynasty Emperor. This tutelage was offered to small states like Malacca, from which Paramesvara made a pilgrimage to Peking as a means by which to offset the regional influences of larger states like Majapahit.

In 1411 Paramesvara allied himself with the Muslim state of Pasai -- the heir to Srivijaya and Majapahits' traditional enemy -- in northern Sumatra which was based on

the river port of Palembang. With this move he took a Muslim wife, adopted Islam, and changed his name to Iskandar Shah.[20] Indeed Paramesvara was a very capable individual who accomplished much, in a relatively short period of time, given conditions of the day.

He knew how to identify everything of value in his environment and manipulate these things to his advantage lest they be used against him by someone else. Thus, it stands to reason that he would coopt the majority Orang Asli-Orang Laut population in Malacca's environs and this is precisely what took place. Paramesvara bonded with the Orang Laut by introducing their leadership into his own political hierarchy (which gave them a role in court), and by pursuing a policy of matrimonial alliances that bound them to the royal family by blood.[21]

The initial compatibility between Orang Asli and Minangkabau Malays was marked by the fact that they both had established command structures with ranking systems which made an initial union possible.[22] As far as the Orang Asli were concerned -- an aboriginal hierarchy evolved out of a

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[20]J. Kennedy, A History of Malaya (Hong Kong: Continental Printing Co. LTD., 1970), 1-4.

[21]Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, A History of Malaysia (New York: St. Martins Press, 1982), 50.

[22]Andaya and Andaya, 49-50.

necessity for internal organization in order to deal more effectively with foreign traders in search of jungle products -- their ranks were stratified. The Orang Hulu or Temuans had and to some degree still have ranked, hereditary, and titled offices which indicate a high degree of social organization was present among various Jakun groups during earlier times.

Thus, it was much more than a simple political union and went well beyond the superficial strategic alliances one finds so common place in today's diplomacy. It was an economic, military, racial, and political symbiosis which conclusively invalidates the premise the Orang Asli were not refined beings capable of successfully operationalizing political qualities and establishing a significant role for themselves in a complex political system.

How could this be so? The argument is that the volume of trade which went through and around the Malayan peninsula was such that a semblance of order at strategic locations and a high degree of organization were necessary to insure that exchanges took place smoothly. Hence, the four kingdoms were not a simple anomaly. Consequently when the Melayu newcomers arrived, with an established social system and political structure of their own, there were Orang Asli groups in the Malacca region to whom such concepts were

familiar.[23]

This initial alignment of compatibility very quickly went from one of simple compatibility and expedience to symbiosis and dependence within the context of the Malacca Sultanate. By the time of Paramesvara's death in 1413/1414 the Orang Laut had a place in the greater scheme of things. This accomplishment on their part is documented fact and not conjecture and may be applied to support the hypothesis.

Legacy of the Malacca Sultanate

But our interest in this point extends well beyond the fact that it happened and provides temporal support for the hypothesis which we seek to validate. The Malacca Sultanate was not a transitory kingdom that lived for but a hundred years only to disappear into the sterile pages of history books. It endures until the present day in that it became the model upon which successive Sultanates were built and ultimately consolidated into the Malay state.[24]

When Malay royalty harks back to the good old days their nostalgia is for the Malacca Sultanate. It is the source of a distinguishable pattern of development that

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[23]Andaya and Andaya, 49.

[24]Gulick, 7.

marks what has become a sugeneris indigenous political system. In sum the Malacca tradition is the Malay version of Camelot.[25]

The only blemish on this otherwise regal tradition is the fact that the original Malacca Sultanate's founder is purported to have perpetrated a number of criminal acts in his quest for legitimacy. He stands accused of being a murderer and a pirate by Western historians and this somewhat detracts from the sanitized Malay version of events. Never mind that the Orang Asli are not the only ones with skeletons in their closets, our interest lies simply in knowing about Malacca's origins as a political entity and not in judging its founder.[26]

Thus, for better or worse Malacca's influence continues to be very much felt in the conduct of political activity and political organization. The Yang di Pertuan Agung no longer rules the Malay state in a de facto capacity but he continues to play an important role in domestic Malaysian affairs through de jure authority. Hence, the locus of power itself, other than that which has been expropriated by the state, remains essentially unchanged other than in its external manifestations while the same individuals sit under

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[25]Gulick, 7&134.

[26]Kennedy, 1.

the eagle as before.[27]

As we shall see not only was the Malacca Sultanate transferred to Johore when a Portuguese force took Malacca but it was also replicated elsewhere in the peninsula during the Period of Chiefs (between 1700 A.D. and the advent of colonialism). It was at this point that Temuan and other Orang Asli began to have significance in Malay affairs and the Orang Asli role in these later political systems can be traced back through their various replications and identified in modified form. It underwent a hybrid transmogrification from that of mentri to pengahulus, and finally resides in an Orang Asli representative in Parliament. However, even though this representative is appointed by an heir to the Malacca Sultanate he is a "creature" of the Agung and largely without influence.[28]

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[27]Here it is extremely important to note that one should not confuse Malay and Indonesian royalty. Present day Indonesian monarchs have been divested of their power and are a sad sight to behold as is evident by the ruin which has befallen many of their palaces. Conversely, Malay monarchy retains an unusual amount of influence over the people and government of Malaysia. This influence is very real and is invested in constitutional authority as well as very visible amid the usual pomp and circumstance of ritual based symbolism.

[28]Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes, eds., Tribal peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1990), 105. This edited volume is the result of a 1987 workshop organized by Lim Teck Ghee and supported by the United Nations University. It was held in Cameron Highlands, Malaysia -- the heart of traditional Senoi territory -- effectively highlighting present Orang Asli accessibility.

In fact many Jakun continue to hold the Johore ruler, as opposed to the Agung, who is simply the titular heir to power previously vested in the Johore Sultanate in terms of his present day authority over various other Sultans (although he himself may not necessarily be the Johore Sultan), in great reverence. They feel a spiritual bond with the Johore Sultan which predates Islam, full scale Melayusination of the peninsula, and the convoluted political scene which greets the viewer's eye today. Indeed, this sense of attachment among the Jakun is a special feeling which does not typify Orang Asli attitudes towards Malays in general.[29]

However, we have to exercise some caution in terms of analyzing the phenomenon of the Sultanates so as not to violate the sanctity of our black box. Nor do we want to move too far away from our intended focus -- GOM/Orang Asli relations -- because current Orang Asli requests for power sharing are to the state and not the Sultans. Lets simply say that Malay Sultans have always had relations with Orang Asli of a political nature and this provides support for my research hypothesis.

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[29]Andaya and Andaya, 50.

Chapter 3

The Index to Power and Jakun Roles in Early Political/Military Affairs: Orang Laut and Temuan in Particular

Most observers tend to think about the Orang Asli in contemporary terms and as a consequence accept that the Orang Asli played a key role in the Malayan Emergency. Unfortunately, their recognition of Orang Asli contributions to Malay power acquisition and maintenance on the Malay peninsula does not extend back to earlier points in time. This oversight is a superficial misperception which is quite common and has detracted greatly from their more distant roles in the past.

In reality disposition of the Orang Asli has been the key to maintaining sovereignty over this region or acquiring wealth in its environs ad infinitum. In this chapter I wish to establish that at no other time in Malaysia's history was this contention more true or more evident than during the 100 year period of Malacca Sultanate hegemony and the epoch of mini-Sultanates which followed. Establishment of this fact goes a long way towards validating my hypothesis (due to the nature of the role which the Orang Asli played).

The Index to Power

In those days the index to power for a sovereign was inverted in terms of its present composition, and control over men and not land was the critical factor.[30] Such a situation made mere existence of the Orang Laut important to the Malays -- the nature of their role not withstanding. This is because the geographic area which we are speaking about was very much underpopulated -- there being by some accounts less than a half million people on the peninsula -- and quite vast in its extent.

Today despite population augmentation programs fostered by GOM and accelerated commercial activities stimulated by the Fifth Malaysia Plan which consume many hectares for the purposes of logging, plantation development, and industrial expansion, a certain amount of virgin jungle remains. One has but to crest a ridge line in these places, of which there are a number in the central highlands, which typify many outlying areas away from the plains traditionally occupied by the Malay, to be met by the impressive view of vast Jungle expanses.[31] Thus, people were a valuable commodity in and of themselves and wealth was not perceived

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[30]Gullick, 98.

[31]Taman Negara national park is one of a number of places in Malaysia today which hark back to days past when most of the Peninsula looked this way.

to reside solely in the capital which they might be employed to acquire.

The distinction between "perquisite" and "object" cannot be overemphasized here. Consequently, manpower was at a premium which remains unsurpassed to this day, and it was not engaged in the superficial pursuit of Pharonic public works by Malacca's rulers. Prevalence of realism in the region made the acquisition and maintenance of power the object of government (individual strong men aside) through investment in retainers. Consequently, the basis of authority was in private armies, hence the emphasis on manpower was de rigueur, and wealth per se was simply derived through taxation of commerce to sustain these armies.[32]

Orang Asli were profoundly involved in both of these power components -- wealth and manpower because there was a need for their services to maintain the established order. Knowledge of their roles is indispensable to an understanding of how aboriginal influences permeated early Malay politics. I intend to discuss the Orang Laut role first because it was the most significant and preceded the Temuan role in time.

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[32]Gulick, 43&95.

The Orang Laut

There were four principal components in the Malacca dynasty power structure, which was based upon a rigid hierarchy. At its apex was the Sultan who was advised by a second tier of powerful ministers with portfolio. Both ministers and Sultan had to contend with the Orang Kaya -- a council of nobles representing miniature power centers assimilated within the governmental framework.

The Orang Kaya had the capacity to levy troops and lead them in battle. In the aggregate these fighting men were the power structure's fourth and perhaps most important component. Orang Asli were integrated into all of these functions but their most important role lay in dominating Malacca's maritime force which was ostensibly controlled by the Laksama or minister responsible for naval affairs.[33]

Be this as it may, as a maritime kingdom Malacca relied

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[33]They had names like Orang Suku Bentan, Orang Suku Mepar, Orang Suku Bulang, and Orang Suku Galang which represented the geographic locales from which they originated. This tendency to name sea Jakun after the places from which they hail is also true of non-maritime Jakun and the Orang Asli generally. Land Jakun were refered to by a variety of names like Orang Blandas or Orang Besisik and sometimes confused with other Orang Asli like Orang Utan and Orang Bukit. Orang Utan and Orang Bukit refer respectively to men of the forest and men from the hills and thus one must be careful when dealing with and/or interpreting Orang Asli tribal names. See Favre, 242.

upon sea power more so than other forms of material force and this made the Orang Laut role one of paramount importance. As such, it was multi task oriented and performed a variety of functions. The Orang Laut defended Malacca proper, protected sea lanes frequented by the Kingdoms' ships, and harassed enemy shipping. Dutch accounts estimate that as late as 1714 the Orang Laut represented half of Malacca's available fighting men. Even by conservative estimates they were attributed 1/4th of the Kingdoms military manpower.[34]

The Orang Laut continued to be a factor in Malay politics well after the Portuguese took Malacca in 1511. They believed the Sultan was divine and did not hesitate to follow him to Johore when he was displaced by the first wave of Europeans to invade the region. Then from this new base of operations they fought several "desultory" wars against the Portuguese at his behest; but to no avail, for one European power was simply replaced by another when the Dutch captured Malacca in 1641.[35]

Things being what they were political intrigue between the Laksama and other ministers was not new but at this juncture it reached a peak. There was a regicide in 1699

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[34]Reid and Castles, 6-8.

[35]Gulick, 8-9.

which involved much plotting at the ministerial level, provoked by the Sultanate's inability to contend effectively with Portuguese and Dutch incursions, which terminated the original Malacca line. Malay politics had never been for the faint of heart, but the regicide was something special. The Sultan's role would never be the same again and it deeply traumatized the Orang Laut.

The Sultan in question was just a boy and not long after the assassination, in which his Bandahara (chief minister) was also killed, turmoil engulfed the Orang Laut. A pretender to the throne, Raja Kecil, made his appearance on the scene and many of the Orang Laut rallied to him believing that he was a legitimate heir to the throne. Unlike other members of the power structure their loyalty was invested in the person of the Sultan and not in the Sultanate itself.[36]

This maneuvering effectively split the Orang Laut and they became further weakened by political intrigue making them vulnerable to displacement. So, when the Malays responsible for murdering the boy Sultan brought in Bugis

[36]To some extent the Malay also held the Sultan above all other living men but this changed subsequent to the regicide. After the killing the inverse became true. Hereditary rights to power lay in the Sultan's office but not necessarily in his person. The force of his personality had to command respect otherwise he would be assassinated or otherwise removed from the throne.

mercenaries from Sulawesi to resist counter claims by Raja Kecil, the Orang Laut were incapable of effectively responding to this new development. This marked the turning point in Orang Laut history and was to lead to profound changes among the Orang Asli themselves.[37]

Many of the Orang Laut were very brutal people but the Bugis had a predilection for violence in the extreme which was quite uncommon. They also had a well developed interest in warfare which the Orang Laut could not match. So, the Johore Sultanate was now propped up by foreign mercenaries, hailing from the furthest reaches of present day Indonesia, who became a power block and usurped Orang Laut prerogatives. Bugis nobility also supplanted the Orang Kaya but it is very clear from the records that the Orang Laut suffered the most.[38]

The Temuans

While the first phase in a change of the Orang Asli power position relative to the Malays was taking place with the relocation of the Malacca Sultanate to Johore a concurrent shift in Orang Asli identification with Malay ruling power was also occurring. The Temuans, or Orang Hulu

[37]Reid and Castles, 11.

[38]Reid and Castles, 10.

as they are sometimes referred to, were becoming more important because orientation of the Johore Sultanate was increasingly inward vis the peninsula. To initiate this process a younger sister of the Johore Sultan moved to the upper Madek River and married into the land Jakun.[39]

Malay rulers were forced to turn towards land for their economic base since control of the sea was taken from them by the Europeans -- first by the Portuguese and then by the Dutch and British.[40] At this point agriculture became much more important than in the past because the Malacca Sultanate had been in a position to import food but the Johore Sultanate was not free to emulate this practice. And of course jungle products were still in demand by the Malays themselves, so Temuans had their uses, and the Malays maintained working relations with them for some time.[41]

The extent of Temuan/Malay contact was sufficient that there are reports some land Jakun peoples had great influence over the election of Malay Chiefs in the Minangkabau states, on the peninsulas West coast, and that

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[39]Narifumi Maeda, Discussion Paper no. 24 "Authority and Leadership among the Orang Hulu," (Kyoto Japan: Kyoto University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1971) 14.

[40]King and Parnwell, 96.

[41]Well into the mid 1800's. See Andaya and Andaya, 133.

they took part in the installation of Rajas.[42] However, we know that by 1848 this influence had largely been lost.[43] I believe that in most cases involving land Jakun that this influence was modest when contrasted with the Orang Laut role.

Their relations with the Malays resulted in a legacy which entails the most evolved ranking system which exists today among the Orang Asli.[44] Depending upon the source and/or specific land Jakun tribe in question there were at one time as many as two ranks above and below the Batin or village Chief. This leadership hierarchy has since been flattened out according to some accounts but it is evidence that not just the sea Jakun were organized along a hierarchical political model.[45]

However, unlike the Orang Laut/Malay relationship the Temuan/Malay relationship was not a happy one and there are reports of their widespread discontent with Malay contact by the mid 1800's.[46] Consequently, the Temuans never acquired

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[42]Anthony Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia (New York St. Martins Press, 1983), 240.

[43]Favre, 270.

[44]Sandhu and Wheatley, 13.

[45]Maeda, 13.

[46]Favre, 272&280.

the significance of the Orang Laut among the Malays. They were also eventually subjected to so much depredation by Bugis mercenaries imported earlier -- as were the Orang Laut -- that today although much greater in number than the Orang Laut their political influence is scarcely felt.[47]

Consequently, their role as purveyors of agricultural products for the Malays was important only in the sense that it marked a period of transition towards more diversified relations between Orang Asli and Malays than had been the case during the Malacca and Johore Sultanates. This process started in Johore but spread later as food agriculture and mining became increasingly important to the newly emerging Malay states.

However, at this point the peninsula was also slipping into a period of anarchy reminiscent of the feudalism which had recently ended in Europe. Consequently, stability was to elude Orang Asli/Malay relations although they did continue to have extensive dealing with one another. These dealings were between Orang Asli chiefs and Malay potentates from Johore plus newly arrived Indonesian immigrants who had also taken up residence in the Western states of the Malay

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[47]Sandhu and Wheatley, 22.

peninsula.[48]

[48]An important point here is that this was not yet an Orang Asli vs. Malay situation. Many of the Malays already in Johore did not co-exist happily with newly arrived Malays because some of these groups were from Java and others, Sumatra. The new- comers also tended to be organized upon matrilocal as opposed to patrilocal lines and this made for friction between various groups.

Chapter 4

The Period of Chiefs: Fusion vs. Penetration and A Broadening of Orang Asli/Malay Relations

As the Johore Sultanate slowly "lapsed into impotence" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it replicated itself to the North and West of Malacca in form but not function.[49] A number of new Malay states -- Perak, Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, and Selangor -- sprang up in this area during the late 17th century which possessed similar organizational structures to the original Malacca Sultanate but which were not under its suzerainty. However, they retained the system of titles and ranks favored in Malacca but without the centralized authority which went with them.[50]

Symbolism remained the key to legitimacy embodied by the various Sultans but conditions were such that in these new states control did not flow from the center. Instead it was localized in the hands of district chiefs who monopolized the resource base upon which each state drew wealth. Geography played a part here, in that settlements tended to be clustered along river valleys, but more

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[49]Gulick, 17.

[50]Gulick, 17&134.

importantly tin mining guaranteed a dispersal of power.[51]

The fabulous riches derived from tin mining were of sufficient magnitude to give power to whomever controlled this activity.[52] Under the circumstances, the best that a Sultan could hope to do was tax the tin as it made its way down river and towards the sea. This meant that there was an absence of true government over much of the interior as authority holders were more concerned with preserving their power by acquiring wealth than in ruling territory.

Fusion vs. Penetration

Consequently, there was no single policy towards the Orang Asli during much of the later part of the pre-colonial period. But an interesting pattern of relations did emerge before they were thrust into relative obscurity by an eclipse in their role due to exigencies of the moment, and that is what I want to examine at this point. This pattern involved a much wider array of Orang Asli types, ranging from Semang to Senoi, than had previously been in contact with the Malays.

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[51]Gulick, 17.

[52]Again wealth was "...a buttress of political power rather than an object in itself." See Gulick, xix.

A fundamental difference between Orang Asli/Malay relations in this period and their rapport with one another during Malacca Sultanate days is quite discernable. The original Orang Asli/Malay relationship in Paramesvara's time involved a wholesale fusion of two peoples, but subsequent Orang Asli/Malay contacts during the period of chiefs entailed selective Malay penetration of a broader spectrum of Orang Asli society in which symbiosis was absent. Thus, the policy of matrimonial alliances begun by the Johore Sultanate continued but was selectively pursued by the Malays and supplemented in some instances by a physical acquisition of territory.

Three Broad Types of Relations

As during Malacca hegemony, Orang Asli were involved in activities which accrued power to the Malay ruler, whether this be a Sultan, his district Chiefs or individual strong-men. Some of this activity was military but the bulk was agricultural and economic -- although they tended not to mine tin except in the Ulu Plus area of Perak.[53] The situation at that period can best be described as fluid with no single set of circumstances embodying a rule![54]

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[53]Dodge, 7.

[54]Out of deference to David Dodge his article does make the fleetest reference to the fact that the nexus around these economic relations had a "quasi political"

Consequently, Orang Asli/Malay contact occurred along a variety of interfaces but three principal points of intersection are obvious. They supplied labor to the agricultural sector, continued to procure jungle products which remained great luxury items in Malaya proper, and were freebooters along the West coast. I intend to briefly examine each of these functions, assess their contribution to the political structure, and roughly establish the times at which they eclipsed one another.

The Semang and Agriculture

Initially, the Orang Asli power position from a macro perspective was, as during earlier times in Malacca and Johore, relatively strong since their services were much in demand. This was particularly true in the agricultural sector and among the nomadic Semang.[55] The overall manpower situation was such that many Malays required them to assist in the rice harvest, which was of paramount importance.

Even though the Semang were loath to settle down themselves they were desirous of rice and other commodities unavailable to them in the jungle. So, Semang bartered

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connotation. See Dodge, 4.

[55]Endicott, "Slave Raiding" in Anthony Reid ed., Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia (New York: St. Martins Press, 1983) 224-225.

their labor at various times during the year in return for certain considerations from the Malays. The system worked well enough that eventually many Semang tribes had relationships with wealthy Malays and various villages over a wide area in northern parts of Malaya. These contacts remained an integral part of the Malay economy and continued well into the later 1800's.

The Senoi and Trading

Then as we move further into the jungle beyond the malaria belt and beyond the alluvial plains Senoi people were engaged in the procurement of deep jungle goods. These were for the local luxury market and to some extent for export purposes, but less so now that China had broken off contact with the outside world. The Senoi were much better organized than the Semang and had an elaborate system of representation among the lowland Malays. District chiefs often appointed Penghulus or accepted Orang Asli recommendations for these intermediaries.

Thus, there was real power in the hands of Mikongs or Sakai-raja's who acted as intermediaries between Orang Asli and the outside world. These men were often of mixed Orang Asli/Malay ancestry and lived among the Malays. They coordinated the collection and sale of Orang Asli products

among the Malays and would receive and house the Orang Asli when they made trips outside of the Jungle.

They remind one of the function assumed by present day ambassadors now that many foreign services promote trade relations. This mechanism was also a form of selective penetration and insulation at the same time. It was sufficiently effective that the Senoi regarded themselves as a free people and as such not subject to domination by Malays. However, it also insured a steady flow of valuables from the depths of Malaya's jungles for several hundred years.

Consequently, the Senoi were able, through the Mikong system, to sustain their autonomy for quite a while.[56] During this time much selective intermarriage occurred as the Penghulu system evolved along various river valleys and headlands. Typically this involved a Malay taking an Orang Asli wife -- or the descendants of such a previous union engaging in some similar thing -- and establishing himself as a liaison between Orang Asli and Malays. Eventually, much of this wealth ended up in the hands of the various Sultans but the arrangement lacked focus and was not

[56]Dodge, 8.

integrated by any formal system of control.[57]

The Orang Laut & Piracy

Finally, Orang Laut remnants worked in the service of various Sultans in a series of hold-over alliances dating back to their naval role during the Malacca Sultanate. However, in these instances they did not perform a naval function guarding shipping. Instead, they worked as freebooters whose principal activity was piracy. Their arrangement with various Sultans was such they were given refuge in particular ports (which were typically capital cities of various new states) in return for a share of the loot, provided they spent the remainder of their ill gotten gains in ways which benefitted the local economy. These arrangements lasted until between 1825 and 1850 when Great Britain, as we know, conducted a vigorous anti-piracy campaign which stamped out much of this activity.[58]

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[57]However, there was a sense of formality about this practice as Orang Asli appointees were issued with letters of authority (Surats') by Malay Chiefs. See Noone, Notes, 66.

[58]The British were quite zealous about safeguarding their trading interests. See Andaya and Andaya, 131-132.

Common Features and Cumulative Effects of the Orang Asli Malay Relationship

The common feature of all of these agricultural, economic, and military arrangements between Malay and Orang Asli is that they did not possess central organization. They resulted from a perception by isolated parties that there was a mutual advantage meritorious of pursuit among them. Consequently, the Orang Asli both wielded influence over and derived a great deal of protection from the individual Malays or Malay entities which they dealt with and were thus safeguarded for a time.

The key difference here and earlier times is that Orang Asli were not involved with the Malays at high decision making levels and as such they were technically out of the loop -- they had become pawns as opposed to bishops. This was compounded by the fact that their participation was extremely decentralized. However, they did the best that they could given the circumstances and some of them possessed a limited but organized offensive capacity.[59]

Orang Asli Chiefs were in a position to exercise

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[59]The Senoi were also known to mount serious resistance to Malay incursions by fighting the Malay from earth breastworks with bows and arrows. More about this later. In the interim see Noone, Notes, 26-61.

influence over the selection of Malay Chiefs and did so on a variety of occasions. These later reports of Orang Asli influence upon the Malays in the Western states carry much more weight than those referring to the land Jakun influence over the Johore Sultanate but do not approximate the original Orang Laut influence with the Malacca Sultanate. The Senoi and Ple-Temair Senoi in particular were, in addition to possessing influence, well known as not being easily abused and so the Orang Asli were far from being helpless.[60]

Thus, if the Malay can be described as power maximizers then an apt description for the Orang Asli during this time period was as value maximizers. They were able to take what few resources were available to them and turn them into a new and sustainable role for several hundred years. It is this one character trait which best describes the Orang Asli -- the ability to endure under adverse circumstances which would have overwhelmed most others.[61]

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[60]Dodge, 4; Endicott, "Slave Raiding," 230; Noone, Notes 54-55.

[61]Contrary to the exotic notions which many people possess -- about Malaya and other tropical locales -- primary jungle is not a very hospitable environment. Between various diseases like malaria and elephantitis, threats from wild animals like elephants and tigers, and a scarcity of food, life is not easy for those who reside within its depths. If one can adapt to these conditions then this is indeed a sign of tenacity.

However, the situation eventually began to unravel because of several dynamic factors which militated against the largely unfocused Orang Asli activities.[62] Immigration from Indonesia began to accelerate as surplus population moved into Malaya, and the looming advent of colonialism was threatening to usher in a new set of economic priorities into the region which would compound this racial imbalance. There was something of a lag between effects of these two factors and the Orang Asli position may be seen as deteriorating somewhere between the two.

This lag represents the point of transition between the pre-colonial and colonial eras. It marks a span in time when religion and land were becoming important within the context of Orang Asli/Malay relations.[63] Previously neither issue had had much relevance because the Malays and Orang Asli ascribed to compatible religious systems and land was in such ample abundance that competition over it as a

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[62]A significant problem for the Orang Asli was that they could not make their own supply of iron. They had to trade for scrap iron and this adversely affected their supply of weapons. They had the capability to crudely forge arrow heads but they had insufficient raw materials with which to arm themselves properly. A blow gun does not qualify as "heavy weaponry" because it takes some time for the poison to kill and doses sufficient to quickly immobilize a man (as opposed to monkeys) were difficult to deliver. Consequently, when used at short range against the Malays they could not prevent a rush by large groups of men armed with spears and/or firearms.

[63]Couillard, "les Sakai," 102.

resource was not a factor. Islam had not been a state religion, and there was no formal priesthood or religious bureaucracy; but this was about to change.[64]

[64]Gulick, 139.

PART II

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The pre-colonial era was slipping into the colonial period and the old order of things on the Malay peninsula was fast changing. A different system of values involving Islam and territorial acquisition, as opposed to power relationships focused upon aristocratic prerogatives, was beginning to take shape. It would place premiums upon land and religion instead of manpower and patronage insuring that these issues eventually become paramount in terms of their significance for relations between the Malays and Orang Asli.

But the Orang Asli were also to be confronted by much more profound and immediate changes during the Malayan Emergency due to the introduction of political as opposed to religious ideology into their midst. Communism burst upon the Malayan scene and the Orang Asli would be exploited anew, during this defining moment of the colonial period, by non Malay combatants pursuing the most ruthless of agendas. War and strife will, in addition to ravaging the lowlands, have finally ripped through each of their major population groups by reaching into the furthest recesses of the mountain range running up and down the peninsula.[1]

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[1]Prior to the Emergency only the most intrepid of adventurers had penetrated into these regions. Many had never been surveyed and there were no maps of these regions.

Consequently, my objectives in this section of the dissertation are to continue developing the issues of religion and land, while focusing upon consequences of colonialism and the Emergency for Orang Asli/Malay relations and inter-Orang Asli developments. Thus, I will attempt to bracket the point of transition between the pre-colonial era and the colonial period by elaborating upon the issues of Islam and land, while analyzing colonialism in the Malayan context for its impact upon inter- Orang Asli/Malay and inter-Orang Asli relations. In so doing I hope to generate contemporaneous evidence in support of my hypotheses for it is at this point that we move away from retrospective analysis and into examination of more recent events.

Chapter 1

Colonial Dawn, Islam Takes Root, and the Orang Asli Balance of Power Changes

By the early 1800's a succession of European powers ranging from Portugal and Spain to the Netherlands had been active in the far regions of Southeast Asia. Great Britain also began to manifest an interest in Malaya. At first Great Britain followed the usual pattern of acquiring entrepot facilities and then gradually began to expand her influence into the Western Malay states. Ultimately the entire peninsula came under colonial control.

Great Britain undertook this course of action in expectation of acquiring a lion's share of the Far East's fabled wealth with relative ease. But local realities were such that the British found an environment in which the people and region had fallen under the sway of Islam and into a state of near anarchy.[2] The entire peninsula was unstable due to civil war and had to be pacified before they could consolidate their operations and begin to extract wealth in earnest.

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[2]As will become more evident there are differences between early 18th century and contemporary Islam as practiced in Malaysia.

Islam Takes Root in Malaya and Becomes Established

Several centuries prior to Great Britain's arrival on the scene Islam had succeeded in slowly working its way across the Far East. Hence, it had a grasp on the peninsula upon colonialism's advent and this presence is traceable back to a warm initial reception by Paramesvara. After his own conversion to Islam the Malacca Sultanate became a base of operations for Islamic missionaries and they took advantage of this secular support to be very active.

Consequently, when the Malacca Sultanate replicated itself into a handful of mini-Sultanates after the 1699 regicide a religious component was carried by the founders of each new state into various parts of the peninsula. But the spread of Islam did not stop after this initial activity, because once Great Britain had suppressed various Malay potentates opposed to her rule Islam became even more entrenched in Malay society. As the colonial process developed momentum Islam benefited from the accidental establishment by the British of a religious bureaucracy.

This came about as a side-effect of restructuring activities vis the power of various Malay Sultans undertaken by the British. Their objective had been to take power from these Sultans and consolidate it in a nascent Malay state

but there were complications. By usurping most Malay ruling class prerogatives, while leaving the religious function in their hands, Great Britain unwittingly started the foundation of an Islamic bureaucracy.[3]

Illustrative of this point is the fact that there were no Muslim judges or religious administrators prior to the era of British protection. Religion had been more of a means by which ambitious young men might circumvent a rigid class system and escape humble backgrounds by acquiring religious prestige.[4] But with colonialism Islam become better organized and this early pseudo bureaucracy was to develop and maintain a religious infrastructure capable of ushering in an Islamic revitalization subsequent to Merdeka.[5]

In its early Malayan phase Islam pitted a quasi-centralized ecclesiastical form of organization against a decentralized group of animists ascribing to a variation of Shamanism. The results were predictable because there is a culture embodied within Islamic principles that is interventionist in nature. Consequently, it was at this

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[3]Couillard, "les Sakai," 104.

[4]Gulick, 139.

[5]And so, the notion of civil control became more apparent in an Islamic context.

point that Islam's significance as a potential lynch pin in Orang Asli/Malay relations was becoming more evident.

One way to view the proliferation of Islam is to see it as a trigger for a cascade of events which would submerge the Orang Asli. It legitimized a new code of conduct for relations among Malay and Orang Asli which detracted from the earlier legitimacy which many Malay immigrants were inclined to bestow upon Orang Asli as initial inhabitants of the region. The rationale being -- yes its all right to kill or enslave someone because he does not worship Allah and is a heathen who does not share your values![6]

At the same time unremittent immigration from Indonesia meant manpower per se, as we will see in a moment, was becoming less important with respect to agriculture and the Semang were no longer needed as much to help with rice harvests. Jungle goods would also become gradually less important in terms of world trade. This meant the Semang and Jakun were slowly becoming less and less useful.

Consequently, the Orang Asli no longer represented a labor commodity to the Malays, nor were they capable of supplying goods with great value in terms of international

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[6]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage, and Dependance, 239.

commerce. Of course there were still exotic high grade goods in the Malayan jungles -- their markets had simply dried up. They and their role both became marginalized and, with the assistance of Islamic rationalization, Malay ideas about leaving them unmolested began to change.

A Period of Anarchy

This latest wave of Indonesian immigration coincided with an extended period of "chronic" civil war among the mini-Sultanates which sprang up in Malaya and many regions of the country were overrun by foreign combatants.[7] The wars were prompted by Malays against one another for a variety of reasons but primarily because of realism. Various potentates had either to maintain their power or face stagnation and collapse.[8] Collateral damage from the incessant warfare which ensued caused much destruction in rural areas.

There was great pillage among Malay and Orang Asli alike during this process, and abuse of non-Muslims became common place. For a time local adjustments were made and the Orang Asli derived residual protection from established relationships with various Malays but as animists they

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[7]Couillard, "les Sakai," 103.

[8]Gulick, 120&125.

became the targets of much persecution. Eventually, as time went by, the level of abuse was such that all but the Northern most Senoi suffered terribly.[9]

This abuse took the form of slave raiding -- which as we shall see was really quite extensive -- by Muslim Malays against various Orang Asli settlements. There was also a new found lack of regard for Orang Asli contributions towards society. Many of the Malay immigrants who had previously sought to derive legitimacy by virtue of their intermarriage with Orang Asli women now rejected this tie to their brethren in the jungles.[10] The Orang Asli came to be considered as inferior beings or kafirs and the term "sakai" having meant ally or friend, with linguistic roots in Sanskrit, now adopted negative connotations.[11]

Orang Asli Resistance

The Orang Asli were known to have offered armed resistance to this mistreatment on a number of occasions as did the Ple-Temair Senoi during several battles with the

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[9]But their time, too, was fast approaching. The Devil had simply set aside a special place in Hell for the Senoi.

[10]Political legitimacy was derived from marriage with Orang Asli women because the Indonesian Malays were matrilineal. See Gulick, 139.

[11]Couillard, "les Sakai," 103.

Malays in which sophisticated earthen fortifications were constructed.[12] But ultimately they were incapable of coming to terms with the Malays who had acquired numerical superiority by this point.[13] The Malays also benefited from tactical/technological superiority and were well versed in the arts of war and weapons making.[14] Consequently in many instances Orang Asli resistance would have been futile.[15]

There are several other reasons for this inability of the Orang Asli to maintain their position beyond their organizational arrangements, raw numbers, and lack of technology. Most importantly the critical issue was their inability to sustain operations in lowland areas in which concentrated Malay targets were to be found. The Orang Asli

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[12]Noone, Notes, 61.

[13]More so than by anything else the Orang Asli were overcome by the weight of numbers. See Kirk Endicott, "The Effects of Slave Raiding on the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula," in Anthony Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) 240.

[14]An interesting parallel may be drawn between the Malay/Orang Asli conflict and that engaged in by the British and Asante in present day Ghana. In this scenario a land locked people are overcome by better armed, but no less sophisticated opponents, because they had access to superior resources with which to carry the fight into the enemy heartland. The Asante were at a chronic disadvantage due to their inferior weaponry and dependency upon external trade for war material. See also Robert B. Edgerton, The Fall of the Asante Empire: the Hundred Year War for Africa's Gold Coast. New York: The Free Press, 1995.

[15]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage and Dependence, 239-240.

did not have unrestricted access to rice which is difficult to cultivate outside of lowland areas.

To elaborate upon the issue of resupply most Orang Asli would also have been incapable of sustaining themselves long enough in the field to do much damage to the Malays even if their disadvantages in technology and numbers had somehow been offset. Twenty pounds of tubers are bulky and do not have sufficient calories to last one man very long. Rice on the other hand is very compact and twenty pounds would sustain an individual for quite some time.[16] Thus for want of a non-perishable food supply they were unable to mass themselves in sufficient numbers to attack the Malays.[17]

This meant the only Malays in easy striking distance were those immediately down river from their settlements and they tended to have better relations, of long standing, with these people and to attack them would have been counter productive.[18] The end result is that the Orang Asli lacked everything except a motive for retaliating against the

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[16]Potable water is available in abundance from the myriad of rivers and streams which cris-cross the Malayan jungle.

[17]Later a similar supply problem was to plague Communist guerrillas during the Malayan Emergency. Their experiences are applicable retroactively to the Orang Asli situation during earlier times.

[18]Noone, Notes, 55; Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage, and Dependance, 227.

Malays. In the end, the strong did as they wished and the weak suffered terribly as they had no other choice.

Conversely, the Malays also had supply problems whilst fighting amongst themselves during this period. Consequently there tended to be much small unit activity and quick raiding as opposed to European type set piece battles.[19] Hence, with one or two exceptions most of their forays against the Orang Asli were also small scale.[20]

It was during this period that the word Sakai became ingrained in the Malay language as possessing negative connotations. Its linguistic roots may be traced back to Sanskrit and literally meant ally or companion. However, depredations by the Malays meant that the word adopted the meaning of slave or inferior being.[21]

Paradoxically, the final blow may well have been delivered by the British campaign to suppress piracy begun in the early 1800's. This offensive took place while Great Britain was still operating out of entrepot facilities in

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[19]Gulick, 121.

[20]Typically raiding parties consisted of no more than 15-20 men and intensification of the process occurred only rarely and for novel reasons. See Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage and Dependence, 222 and 240.

[21]Couillard, "les Sakai," 103.

Singapore, Malacca, and Penang but it finished off the Orang Laut as a viable force.[22] Effectively, the Orang Asli had to contend with both the Malays and Europeans in a facsimile of a two-front war as a multi-ethnic group allied with various camps in a wide ranging series of conflicts. Needless to say they were eventually used up by this process and forced to surrender their prerogatives or retreat into the jungles and mountains.[23]

However, the Orang Asli were -- in an odd sort of way and in limited respect -- better off than many of the Malays. This is because the Senoi element of the tripartite was largely inaccessible and operating autonomously in the highlands while the lowland Malays had no choice but to face turmoil generated by the various civil wars.[24] Just generally it was impossible for the Malays to venture into the Senoi area except in force because of the potential for telling ambushes. As we have seen this they could not often do because of logistical constraints.

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[22]Andaya and Andaya, 132.

[23]To clarify the distinction the Orang Laut were largely destroyed and the Semai retreated into the main range from the foot hills of the Western states. Change was also forced upon the Semang and they were obliged to break up into small groups in order to be less obtrusive targets. However, the Semang tended to remain in closer proximity to the Malays and did not retreat into the deep jungle.

[24]Dodge, 8.

In the last analysis -- Orang Laut aside -- British intervention generally had the effect of helping provide the Orang Asli with a breathing spell. British authorities succeeded after much difficulty in outlawing slavery, in all but the most remote areas, by about 1915; and this undoubtedly took a lot of pressure off of the Orang Asli.[25] Thus British intervention effectively stabilized the peninsula albeit for less than altruistic motives.

The Locus of Orang Asli Power Shifts

Thus, the locus of Orang Asli power shifted from those lowland Orang Asli who had been working most closely with the Malays to those residing in the highlands beyond the Malay sphere of influence. The result was culmination of a *de facto* shift in the inter-Orang Asli balance of power which had been taking place over a three hundred year period.[26] Clearly the Orang Laut and other lowland Orang Asli, who chose not to flee, were now in an inferior position to the Senoi relative to the Malays.

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[25]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency*, 236.

[26]For many years Orang Asli had been migrating out of low- land areas into the deep jungle to escape the Malay. This is because Malay slave raiding was in part designed to drive the Orang Asli off their land. So, by this point many Orang Asli were, of necessity, well established in the interior. See, Endicott, "Slave Raiding," 231&233.

But this time the Orang Asli had power not so much because Malays could use them but rather because Malays could not make direct use of them. This was to remain true well into later stages of the Emergency when the Senoi were finally recruited to the colonial side. The difference between their involvement during the Emergency and previous Malay wars was that in this case Orang Asli ultimately managed to end up on the winning side.

In the interim and particularly during the Second World War it became obvious that the Senoi, and the Ple-Temair Senoi in particular, were operating with a high degree of autonomy in the interior both before and after the Mikong/Penghulu system -- which was more a matter of convenience than anything else -- had broken down.[27] However, they had -- subsequent to dissolution of this arrangement -- been left with the vestiges of an externally imposed ranking system mimicking that of the Jakun which added a hierarchical element to their egalitarian based system.[28] This ranking system was a Malay invention that would be built on later in the post-independence era and re-extended as a political link to the outside world.[29]

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[27]Geoffrey Benjamin, "Headmanship and Leadership in Temair Society," Federated Museums Journal 13 (1968): 11.

[28]Benjamin, "Headmanship," 15.

[29]There is no data to support the contention that the Senoi may have been less advanced, from an organizational

Thus for the time being, whatever constructive influence the Malay had had with them was now largely gone. Relations between Malay and Orang Asli generally had reached an all time low point. Orang Asli population groups up and down the peninsula, and in the South in particular, loathed the Malays for their Islamic persecution and for blatantly cheating them during business transactions over the course of time![30] Needless to say, the Orang Asli also resented being driven from their lands!

The turmoil which this loathing characterized was the key reason Great Britain went beyond chasing pirates and extended her authority from Singapore by incorporating the Western Malay states into the British Empire. The British were looking to establish a "Pax Britannica" and prevent their trading interests from being de-stabilized by the unrest in neighboring areas.[31] This is when we saw a transition by Malaya into the colonial period which granted a brief reprieve to the Orang Asli. Not so much because it would protect them from the Malays but rather because

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standpoint, than the Jakun during ancient times. The Malay had also imposed a ranking system upon the Jakun involved with the Malacca Sultanate. Consequently, such a notion about the Senoi is erroneous and a "presumption" at best given that early Malay records do not cover the Senoi as thoroughly.

[30]J.R. Logan, "The Orang Binua of Johor" Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia 1 (1847): 287.

[31]Gulick, 1 and 20.

colonial policy eventually degenerated the Malay power position to a sufficient degree that the Malays became preoccupied by concerns more pressing than subjugating the Orang Asli.

Chapter 2

Economic Realignment and a Renewed Premium upon Land, Imperial Strategy, and the Colonial Reprieve

Colonialism was a mixed blessing for Malay's and the Orang Asli alike. Once in full swing it may well have helped to propel Malaysia into the 20th century by breaking a lethargic stalemate among feudal lords which gripped the peninsula. But it also created several fundamental structural weaknesses in the national identity which the Malaysian state was ultimately obliged to embody. Most importantly it made the Malays a minority in the multi ethnic country they were expected to rule after independence.

As we have observed, racial composition in West Malaysia has been altered through a long history with varied economic and political bases, which were not unusual in and of themselves, that began many millennia ago. However, it was as a consequence of Great Britain's imperial policy during the colonial period that the most enduring and unorthodox impact in demographics was made. It took the shape of a demographic imbalance and is largely attributable to the fact that the Malayan economy was diversified away from trade based activities towards production type endeavors.

Economic Realignment: A New Premium on Land

This happened because the British began looking for ways to reinvest their profits -- as the colonial era progressed -- in a more capital intensive manner compatible with industrial demands in Europe.[32] Eventually they chose to initiate plantation development type schemes new to the region and accelerate established mining activities. Abundant supplies of tin were readily available and rubber plants were introduced into Malaysia from South America for this purpose.

Such an economic realignment was a complicated undertaking and had several major impacts upon Orang Asli/Malay relations. First, it placed a further premium upon land which would ultimately be detrimental to Orang Asli interests. This is because it was necessary to bring vast areas of virgin jungle under cultivation in order to ensure production on an economy of scale which would make it profitable. Second, many Orang Asli would ultimately be disenfranchised by this process as its pace accelerated and forced them to retreat into more remote areas both before and after the Second World War.[33]

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[32]Andaya and Andaya, 135.

[33]Couillard, "les Sakai," 103-104.

This initial intrusion into and development of their more remote ancestral lands was innocent enough at the time because much raw land remained but it identifies the land issue early on as one which will ultimately take preeminence during the post- independence era. Plantation development required much more acreage than settlements built by Indonesian Malays who had made the only prior demands placed upon land during the pre-colonial era. Great Britain provoked this change because she was not terribly interested in the many naturally occurring jungle products from regions inhabited by the Orang Asli, which had been a traditional source of trade value in the Malay archipelago.

This is because many of the jungle products, with a few exceptions like guetta percha which was used to insulate underwater cables, lacked industrial significance and because those that were were too scarce to be of any systematic use.[34] The industrial revolution in Europe required products other than those prized earlier and in incredible quantities and so began the Malaysian plantation system. A means had to be found by which consistent supply could be guaranteed which would satisfy a rather large demand for new commodities.

Thirdly, the nature of Britain's economic interests

[34]Andaya and Andaya, 134.

required the importation of manpower in large quantities into Malaya. At first glance one would suppose that if there were once again a premium upon people that such an emphasis would work in favor of the Orang Asli. Unfortunately this was not the case. The Malays and Orang Asli were not well suited to plantation type work nor available in sufficient numbers to do the job. Manpower was required at such high levels that it became necessary to import a phenomenal number of foreign workers into the country.[35]

In sum, Great Britain's interest lay in the mass exploitation of select raw materials and agricultural products with industrial value back in Europe which could only be supplied consistently and in quantity by a small army of workers. Consequently, a substantial labor force was imported by colonial authorities into Malaya from Southwest China and Southern India between 1870 and 1930 to operate tin mines and work on rubber plantations. Great Britain eventually accelerated the migration of foreign population groups into Malaya, notably Hokien Chinese and Tamil Indians, in such quantities that the Malays became the

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[35]R. Benedict O'G. Anderson, "Introduction," Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities - Prospects for the Eighties and Beyond: Proceedings of a Conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Cultural Survival, Inc. and the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University (Cambridge: Cultural Survival Inc., 1987), 7.

newest minority group in multi-ethnic Malaysia.[36]

Imperial Strategy

These occurrences and the economic imperatives which provoked them were part of a larger pattern that replicated itself in areas under European domination throughout Southeast Asia. They served to create the pool of surplus labor upon which capitalism is dependent and enabled the colonial power to play coalition games amongst races initially inhabiting these regions. Naturally for strategic purposes the Europeans would, in a given country, place themselves at the center of a tactfully managed majority coalition in order to resist expulsion by the various local ethnic groups.[37]

Their intention was to facilitate primary resource extraction by engineering situations in which such activity could continue without interference from parties inimical towards their commercial operations. This type of divide, rule, and exploit strategy had a Machiavellian quality about it which successfully preoccupied all the parties involved to their mutual detriment -- except the Europeans. It was

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[36]Couillard, "les Sakai," 105.

[37]Anderson, 3-7.

effective until the Second World War after which time a variety of circumstances diminished its viability.

The Colonial Reprieve and Marginalization of the Malays

This demographic marginalization of the Malays stemming from an economic imperative perhaps more than anything else served to buy the Orang Asli time. It took the pressure off them by setting Islam in abeyance because the Malays were too preoccupied with new realities in the Malayan situation to engage in slave raiding and persecutive proselytizing. To their credit colonial authorities abolished slavery -- an institution which had evolved significantly and affected manpower availability throughout Southeast Asia -- and this had the effect of removing an incentive for Orang Asli abuse by the Malays who considered them as "chattel".[38]

The extent to which Great Britain's motives or actions reflected an intuitive understanding that there could be no tolerance for institutions which competed for manpower with capitalism to the exclusion of industrial demands in Europe is an open question. Surplus labor which is presumably entitled to commit itself towards the various endeavors comprising free enterprise is a perquisite of capitalism.

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[38]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage, and Dependance, 217.

Thus, there is a significant likelihood that Great Britain's actions were not guided by humanitarian considerations but by the underlying requirements of capitalism.[39]

In any event after outlawing slavery colonial authorities began, as we know, to consolidate their position by taking power away from the Sultans with a view towards investing it in the emerging state. Localized power in the hands of various chiefs and Sultans was being refocused and turned over to the state in an effort to solidify colonial control over the Malay leadership element.[40] These Developments literally came just in time to distract the Malays from various forms of Orang Asli persecution and indeed it was a welcome reprieve despite the religious complications which would ensue later.[41]

This is because with the passing of the Malacca Sultanate many Malay potentates had become a mixed blessing for the Orang Asli. Sultans and district chiefs alike

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[39]The rationale being a truism to the effect that empires don't have any friends, they don't even really have any policies -- they just have interests!

[40]Couillard, "les Sakai," 104.

[41]A parallel here may be drawn between Max Weber's discussion about destruction of the landed aristocracy in Europe as a requirement of change and industrial growth in the post renaissance era. See Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. H.H. Girth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 366-369.

patronized some Orang Asli and persecuted others. More often than not they had been sponsoring slave raids against one group while hiring or coercing another to engage in such work.[42]

It was a sordid business which left entire regions of the country depopulated and was extremely disruptive to the Orang Asli.[43] During the course of these raids captured men were executed and only the women and children were taken prisoner. This is because there was no market value for the men who were much more liable to escape back into the jungle once unattended and also because they were dangerous.[44]

Orang Asli did not actually engage in the killing but they did act as guides, thanks to their renowned tracking skills, while Malays perpetrated the atrocities. Consequently stoppage of this practice by the Malays towards the Orang Asli was greeted with considerable relief by the Orang Asli. However, colonial policy towards the Orang Asli per se was, until late in the colonial period, one of benign

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[42]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency 223&227.

[43]Much of the raiding may have been small scale but its effects were cumulative.

[44]Endicott, "Slave Raiding," in Reid, ed., Slavery, Bondage, and Dependance 221 and 222.

neglect.[45]

This was unfortunate because Orang Asli treatment at the hands of the Malay had been admittedly quite bad and it would truly have served as an excellent pretext for genuine humanitarian intervention. Unfortunately, they were simply used as an excuse, once the scope of Malay atrocities against the Orang Asli became more well known, to justify maintaining British intervention in Malaya.[46] Very little if anything on humanitarian grounds was done directly for them during much of the early colonial period apart from the establishment of several minor reserves at the urging of H.D. Noone.[47]

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[45]It was not really possible for Great Britain to have a "policy towards the Orang Asli because no consistent base of knowledge (which would have permitted such a thing) was built up until after the Second World War. See Noone, Notes, 4.

[46]Dodge, 1.

[47]H.D. "Pat" Noone was a young graduate of Cambridge University who became a legend in Malaya prior to being murdered in the Jungle during the Second World War. H.D. Noone was not in favor of their absolute isolation -- just their protection until they could become acculturated to the changes taking place in Malaya without experiencing further cultural trauma and detribalization. This destructive phenomena had been common among other indigenous peoples too abruptly confronted by modernity during the colonial period.

Chapter 3

Colonialism Winds Down, The Emergency/Orang Asli Roles and Effect Upon Malays

However, this reprieve was short lived because a genuine emergency -- "the Emergency" -- was looming large on the horizon. Its long-term effect was simply to drive certain problems the Orang Asli were facing into remission. Once mature, colonialism would usher in its own set of problems which surpassed, in terms of difficulties presented to the Orang Asli, the depredations wrought upon them by the Malays. Real trouble would not be long in catching up with the Orang Asli in the form of red Communism and it would reach well into the heart of their last redoubt -- the main range.

It was to be by far the more important -- albeit sanguine -- development for the Orang Asli and Malays alike during the colonial era. In this sense the Emergency was part of another pattern in the Far East which mirrored the early European tactic of divide, manipulate, and rule in reverse image. Communism emerged, like an opportunistic infection, in the wake of the Second World War and plagued the victorious European powers who were much weakened by their recent war experiences against Japan. In a case of turn about is fair play European powers became victims, in

many cases, of the ethnic coalitions which they had helped to engineer.[48]

Colonialism Winds Down

This is because very visible European impotence in the face of Japan, and a five-year hiatus imposed upon their control activities in the region sounded colonialism's death knell.[49] Coalition politics could not be relied upon to resuscitate the old order and reimpose European hegemony. Unfortunately, the various coalition components created by the Europeans were still in place and in many instances, having been nurtured by Japanese propaganda during the interim, became interested in an expanded role for themselves.

Various ethnic groups became infected with virulent forms of nationalism, spurred on by the propagation of ideology, which could not be suppressed: and the rest is history. In several instances colonialism died an ugly

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[48]Anderson, 3.

[49]The Japanese occupation of Malaya and Singapore had been very brutal but it left the Orang Asli relatively unscathed. The Japanese made only infrequent Jungle incursions in pursuit of the Malaysian Peoples Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA) the precursor to the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) which became the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The Orang Asli were clearly not a target of these raids.

death which was traumatic to all of the parties involved while in others it ebbed away. Malaysia was one of the more fortunate cases in which a gradual withdrawal was negotiated with constituted legal authority which has since managed to govern Malaysia in accordance with the rule of law and as an on/off again member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

The Emergency

However, Great Britain's disengagement from Malaya occurred subsequent to the quasi-suppression of an armed insurrection by a Communist movement (with a Maoist orientation dominated by ethnic Chinese) against their protege Malay government. For many years afterwards residual elements of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), which were not rooted out during the most intense years of the conflict, continued to operate in Malaysia's more remote regions. A diplomatically negotiated peace agreement was reached only in 1989 in Baling after a final GOM flurry of counter insurgency activities and a MCP bombing spree in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya.[50]

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[50]The author was resident in Malaysia in 1989, visited several sites where disturbances occurred, and interviewed the Editor-in-Chief of the Shin Git Po Chinese language newspaper who reported the second Baling conference at which the Peace Treaty between Ching Peng and GOM was signed.

This war and the smoldering conflict which ensued are referred to by old Malaysia hands as the Emergency. It was the precursor to the Vietnam war, although few in the United States know about it, whose lessons were misapplied in America's own Southeast Asian conflict.[51] But unlike Vietnam, Malaya was the richest of Britain's colonial possessions and the struggle for control over the peninsula was about great wealth, not to mention geo-political considerations.[52] As of 1948 more British money was invested in Malaya than any other colony and a choke hold on Asian commerce similar to that of the Suez canal lay in the straits of Malacca.[53] By contrast pickings from French leftovers for America in Vietnam were truly scant.[54]

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[51]But to be objective about this point Dennis Holman makes the observation in Elephants at Sundown that Great Britain herself also experienced some difficulty in transferring knowledge about jungle operations from Malaya to Kenya. Such information would have helped to suppress more efficiently the Mau Mau rebellion which took place at approximately the same time as the Emergency. Both conflicts required rather expensive and wasteful "big jungle" operations to end before the British realized that small campaigns were more effective and cheaper! See Dennis Holman, Elephants at Sundown: The Story of Bill Woodley (London: W.H. Allen 1978) 78-79.

[52]The Straits of Malacca are the preeminent choke point for sea lanes in the Pacific.

[53]Sandhu and Wheatley, Melaka, 393.

[54]Fabulous oil reserves off of Vung Tau were brought into production two short months prior to the collapse of South Vietnam. There are also great deposits of high grade coal in North Vietnam which still engender speculation about France's initial motives for occupying Indochina. But, other than these energy sources there was nothing comparable in Vietnam for the French and Americans to the wealth in

During the Emergency intense fighting took place across the country and few regions were spared by its ravages. Hence, the Orang Asli debut upon the modern political scene took place during the Emergency years in a baptism by fire. For the first time they were, despite a less than tranquil history, to be thoroughly blooded.

The Senoi Paraag

During the Emergency Orang Asli were exploited as mercenaries and informants by both sides once fighting moved, in 1952, out of lowland and urban areas into the deep jungle. Initially the Communists monopolized Orang Asli services and then later colonial forces recruited them away from the Communists once their utility as a force multiplier in jungle terrain became more fully realized. Orang Asli support had become the key to winning the war.

The Orang Asli did not have any interest in Communist ideology but were coerced through a combination of promises and threats into cooperating. Thus, the war in Malaya had begun a shift towards the pattern established by the Vietminh during the French phase of the Indochina conflict.

Malaysia for the British. See Frank Sneep, Decent Interval: an Insiders Account of Saigon's Indecent End/told by the CIA's Chief Strategy Analyst in Vietnam, Frank Seep (New York, Random House, 1977).

It corresponded to "phase one" of Mao's doctrine for guerilla war and the parallels between Chin Peng and his campaign against the British and those of Ho Chi Minh against the French are very obvious now.[55]

Consequently, no expense was spared by high ranking colonial authorities to win over the Orang Asli because they came to understand whomever controlled the aborigines owned the jungle and this amounted to well over three fourths of Malaya at that time.[56] As a result Orang Asli influence over the fighting was out of all proportion to their numbers making them a true force multiplier. Thus, they played a much greater and more sanguine role than many people, who did not actually witness their activities, would like to believe.[57]

Beginning in 1956 many Senoi were formally recruited as members of the Senoi Paraaq or "Fighting Senoi" and turned

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[55]Noone, Dream People, 150.

[56]Holman, Noone ix-xii.

[57]Orang Asli were much more involved with the "killing" than romantics like to admit. See John Leary, "The Importance of the Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960" in Working Paper 56: Proceedings of a Seminar at Monash University in Clayton Victoria April 1989, by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Australia: Monash University, 1989, 1.

against the Communists.[58] As there was a high level of secrecy imposed upon their activities there is much we are not privy to about their role. But what we do know from scattered interviews and memoirs of British officers involved with these men is that the Senoi were much more aggressive than their lowland Orang Asli counterparts.

There is a debate among social anthropologists about this point with one side claiming that reports of their blood drunkenness are exaggerated while the other maintains blood lust is quite common among the Senoi.[59] In terms of accessing their contribution to the war effort they are acknowledged as having had a more efficient record of eliminations than any other security forces unit.[60] Consequently, whether they are blood thirsty troglodytes or not, we do know for certain that the war could not have been won without their support.

The extent of Great Britain's promises to the Orang Asli in return for their services is not known. But we do know that a number of provisions protecting Orang Asli

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[58]There were sufficient numbers of Senoi Paraaq for them to have had regimental colors. See Holman, 226.

[59]Clayton A. Robarcheck & Robert K. Dentan, "Blood Drunkenness and the Bloodthirsty Semai: Unmaking Another Anthropological Myth," American Anthropologist 89 (1987): 356.

[60]Noone, Dream People, 201.

rights were written into the Malayan Constitution for them just prior to independence in 1957; and that these provisions appear not to have been strictly adhered to by GOM. My belief is that the Orang Asli were either secretly promised some sort of autonomy or had some such notion represented to them as were so many other tribal peoples during the desperate fight against Communism in Southeast Asia.[61]

I advance this argument because the Special Branch officer who initially established the Senoi Paraaq -- R.O.D. Noone -- oversaw the drafting of the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance of 1954. Technically this document was supposed to have been the foundation of subsequent Acts pertaining to the Orang Asli.[62] But unfortunately for the Orang Asli it did not work out that way and they ended up (by virtue of their cooperation) winning a decisive victory for the British but little more than an uneasy peace for themselves.

Somehow these promises were never fulfilled despite what may have been the good intentions by those who made

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[61]Here I allude to similar promises made by American officials to Vietnam's Monteignards. Typically last ditch efforts were made by European powers to mobilize hill peoples in Southeast Asia as an extension of the coalition building strategies, among mainstream population groups, which colonial powers pursued. They all failed except in the case of the Orang Asli.

[62]Means, "Changing Environment," 86.

them. Exigencies of the moment probably dictated otherwise, as more often than not the men who made the promises were no longer there to keep them -- having either been killed or repatriated. R.O.D. Noone was repatriated subsequent to Merdeka, and P.D.R. Williams Hunt who preceded him as the first director of the Department of Aborigines, also quite sympathetic to the Orang Asli, died in the Jungle.

Thus we know that the Senoi reserve system was promoted by key colonial figures during the Emergency as giving the Senoi rights to their land.[63] However, at present it is not considered as serving this function. The Act was revised several times by GOM subsequent to Merdeka and is at present ambiguous about certain political rights.[64]

We also know that every effort was exerted by the Malays upon the British to keep Senoi Paraaq numbers small and that after Merdeka some units were disbanded while control over others was transferred from Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (JHEOA) and the Interior Ministry into the Police

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[63]Noone, Dream People, 170.

[64]Chief among them are their land rights and religious status. There are contradictions regarding these matters, which have profound long term consequences for policy and administration vis the Orang Asli, of a highly technical nature which I will expand upon later. In the interim see M.B. Hooker, "Orang Asli and the Laws of Malaysia with Special Reference to Land," Illmu Masyarakat, 18 (January 1991), 57.

Field Force which is a part of the Royal Malaysian Police.[65] The reluctance with which the Malays allowed these men to be armed in the first place cannot be over emphasized.[66] Obviously there was a tremendous sense of resentment on the Malay part about the fact that Orang Asli had found new patrons who would dote on them as the English were known to do when playing favorites among local peoples.

Implications for the Orang Asli Military Role

This newest Orang Asli alliance symbolized the formalization of their role in a decidedly political conflict and marked a renaissance of their power position among the Malays. However, they did not reacquire the prestige or political autonomy enjoyed by many Orang Asli during the Malacca Sultanate and afterwards but British patronage and weapons made them politically important again among the Malay -- dictating they eventually be drawn into GOM's political fold.[67] The experience represented a form

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[65]The acronym JHEOA stands for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and is often further shortened to JOA. I prefer JOA because it has a neater ring to its' pronunciation. See Marie-Andree Couillard, Tradition in Tension: Carving in a Jah Hut Community (Penang, University of Malaya Press, 1980) 105.

[66]Holman, Noone, 207.

[67]Hood Salleh, "Orang Asli of Malaysia: An Overview of Recent Development Policy and Its' Impact," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malay, 1990),

of empowerment which gave them a taste of what it would be like to enjoy some autonomy over their affairs.

Consequently, power among the Orang Asli was firmly ensconced in the hands of the Senoi. The Emergency had affected all areas of Malaya but the Jakun and Semang had not been able to make the war work to their advantage. In the regions which they inhabit the Emergency was brought to a rapid conclusion.

Part of the reason for this was geography -- much of the Jakun territory consists of undulating hills and Communists fighters were quickly chased out of these areas. Their lack of gain from the war is also attributable to deficiencies in raw numbers and innate tribal characteristics. There were just too few Semang relative to the Senoi and other combatants for them to have become important and they are often cited as being the least aggressive among the Orang Asli.

Consequently, it is only with difficulty that one imagines them as being in the same category with regard to the proclivity for violence possessed by the Senoi. Power did not accrue to them because they could not and did not want to partake of the fighting. Nor were they asked to do

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so by colonial authorities who tended to recruit Semai & Temair.[68]

However, despite the fact that the Senoi partook of the fighting none of the Orang Asli would be in a position to actively exercise this power among the Malays. It was simply a fascimile of power which came into Senoi hands by virtue of the implications for their actions. They were never in a position to march down the mountains and occupy the plains. The best way to describe it is as a form of passive power derived from their role during the Emergency which implied they be dealt with gingerly by GOM.

But by the same token the Emergency would also provoke a great deal of intervention by the state in Orang Asli affairs. This is because it became manifestly apparent that the Orang Asli could not be left to their own devices and free to roam the interior of the country. Once in the possession of modern weaponry their latent threat to the nascent Malaysian state simply became too great.

Unfortunately for the Orang Asli the modern Malay approach towards dealing with them would not involve assimilating them into the ruling echelon as they were during the Malacca Sultanate. Nor could there be any

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[68]Holman, Noone, 206.

question of simply pinning them into the interior of the country, as was done during the period of Mini-Sultanates, and choking off their access to the outside world by monopolizing access to the country's major river systems. These tactics had been the most effective method to date for dealing with them but they left the Orang Asli with far too much autonomy.

No, attempts would now be made to do the exact opposite. Efforts would be made both to bring the Orang Asli out of the jungle and to convert them to Islam. It was necessary to get them out of the jungle with various resettlement schemes and then convert them to Islam for a very simple reason. This had to be done so that Malaysian law would apply to them and so that this law could be enforced through their physical accessibility. Otherwise they could never be effectively controlled and might be subject to further external manipulation.

Unfortunately the implication for the Orang Asli which stems from this approach is their assimilation into the modern Malay state as members of an impoverished agrarian class.[69] Clearly, they were not being invited to join the

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[69]Alberto G. Gomes, "Confrontation and Continuity: Simple Commodity Production among the Orang Asli," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes, eds., Tribal Peoples and Development in southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1990) 33.

leadership element of the country as during Paramesvara's day nor were they to be left with any type of autonomy as during the years of laissez-faire swiddening in the interior which preceded the colonial period. In comparison this was not a very good deal from the Orang Asli perspective.

Consequently, the Orang Asli would be going into the post- independence era with a built in incentive to resist efforts by GOM to restructure their society. I make this observation because by this point they had proved themselves to be quite capable of entertaining complex cost/value decision-making processes. And, because there was going to be nothing in this new deal for the Orang Asli which attracted them given the underlying propositions of such an arrangement.

It would be impudent to think the Orang Asli were blind to this reality.

Chapter 4

Legacies of the Emergency

The Emergency did more for the Orang Asli than just propel them into the age of modern warfare and revive the dynamic to Orang Asli/Malay relations. It disrupted established Orang Asli patterns of activity and induced a degree of interaction among them heretofore unknown. Eventually this stimulus would produce a pan-Orang Asli sense of cultural identity among the various tribes which comprise this once disparate people.[70]

In this respect the Emergency was different, both in terms of its direct effects upon and eventual consequences for the Orang Asli, from earlier conflicts. This is largely because the Emergency had dynamism and the violence which it spawned went cursing through the peninsula more thoroughly than it had on previous occasions. Earlier fighting that led to and through the period of anarchy that typified the pre-colonial era tended to be concentrated in lowland areas, desultory, and largely static.

Once the fighting settled into the mountainous interior it intensified to a sufficient degree that a variety of unusual things, with far reaching implications for a Pan Orang Asli identity, happened. First, while attempting to

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[70]Clammer, 137.

cope with their situation Orang Asli leadership elements began to reach out and engage in diplomacy with one another and extended linkages between leadership elements were formed. This is particularly true of those groups which shared an extended river valley.[71] In the past many Orang Asli were not comfortable traveling too far beyond the section of river valley which their particular group inhabited.[72] With the emergency this habit changed dramatically and particularly so among the hill people.

Second, once the Emergency became too much to bear, despite their attempts at diplomacy, many Orang Asli from the rank and file fled the fighting and met one another for the first time in refugee camps. There were literally tens of thousands of them under quasi-incarceration in these camps until they were dismantled by the British. This was done because by some accounts nearly 40 percent of the Orang Asli housed in these camps perished from disease and bad conditions.[73]

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[71]Thus began the foundation of modern supravillage structures. See Alberto G. Gomes, "The Semai: the Making of an Ethnic Group in Malaysia," in A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogly, and Karl Hutterer eds., Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1988), 108.

[72]P.D.R. Williams Hunt and others make remarks about how to recruit porters at each successive stage of a trip so they will not be taken out of their territory.

[73]Colin Nicholas, "In the Name of Semai: The State and Semai Society," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds.,

Third, once relocated the leadership element was brought together under colonial auspices for the purposes of encouraging them to join the war effort on the British side. Nothing like this had happened to them before and the impact was tremendous. In this chapter I intend to analyze these events for their importance vis Orang Asli political development.

Orang Asli Diplomacy

For a time outcome of the Emergency was in doubt, as was Great Britain's commitment to winning the war. The low point for colonial authorities came when Sir Henry Gurnsey the British High Commissioner was ambushed and killed while in route to Cameron Highlands in October 1951. This incident thrust the Malayan expatriate community into the type of mind set which one almost has to have physically experienced to appreciate the panic and paranoia that reigned![74]

Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asi (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1990) 69.

[74]Older British expatriots still talk about those days. If you happen to encounter one of them in the Coliseum Cafe and Hotel (the former planters meeting place in Kuala Lumpur and one of Sumerset Maughm's old haunts) he will be happy to regale you with stories about men, holed up during the dusk to dawn curfew, sitting and drinking at the bar with their machine guns on the counter while security forces and Communist terrorists battled each other throughout the night.

An American parallel in Vietnam would have been for the Viet-Cong to have succeeded in killing Ambassador Bunker during the Tet Offensive while he was on his way up to Dalat. Consequently it appeared to many as though the MCP had strong prospects for flying a red flag over Malaya. This continued to be the case even after the locus of the fighting shifted away from the cities and into the jungle. They were pursuing a proven strategy that worked well enough against the Japanese a few years earlier and there was doubt that they could be rooted out of the deep jungle.

At the time this looked like a smart move by the MCP because it had a network of old courier routes and deep jungle bases, employed during the struggle against the Japanese, in Orang Asli territory. They simply withdrew into these bases from the fringe areas in which they had been operating. Once there the Communists immediately went to work strengthening their relations with the Orang Asli and engaged in a good deal of anti-colonial propagandizing. Many Orang Asli began actively supporting the MCP in the mistaken belief, attributable to Communist propaganda, that they were winning the war.[75]

Consequently, in the absence of complete information about which side was really winning (and it was a toss up

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[75]Noone, Dream People, 155&167.

for a while) Orang Asli groups tended to side with "...the most active and seemingly superior armed force in their particular area".[76] This was an effective tactic in the near-term but needed to be refined in order to guarantee any further benefit. The draw-back was such that it could do no more than buy time for them.

Gradually as the Emergency went on their tactics did evolve to a point where Orang Asli leadership elements made a more coordinated effort to position themselves on the winning side. Orang Asli leadership elements sought to negotiate diplomatic accords among themselves which would insure, whichever power was victorious, that they had allies on the winning side. Consequently, the Orang Asli from up stream river valleys ended up siding with the Communists while their brethren down stream supported the colonial forces. Those trapped in the middle continued as before and acted as a buffer in which Orang Asli intentions were vague and difficult to pin down.[77]

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[76]John Leary, "The Importance of the Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960," in Working Paper 56: Proceedings of a Seminar at Monash University in Clayton victoria April 1989, by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (Australia: Monash University, 1989), 1.

[77]Dentan, 80 and 81.

Refugee Camps

However, new and more sophisticated forms of "jungle bashing" which means "search and destroy" in British vernacular were evolving and the war intensified to a sufficient degree during its second phase that none of their earlier positioning was much good to the majority of Orang Asli.[78] The main range began to hemorrhage refugees from the fighting as the Orang Asli civil population fled abuses, perpetrated against them by both sides, in droves. Yet even as the balance shifted back and forth while the British wrestled control over the Orang Asli away from the MCP between 1955 and 1957 the Orang Asli maintained "`nonaggression pacts'" that would ensure they had someone on the winning side. Their only true loyalties were to themselves.[79]

The significant point here is that a great many of these people ended up closely confined in refugee camps where members of different groups met each other for the

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[78]It was at this point that helicopters made their debut in jungle warfare and the prototype "search and destroy" mission was conceived. Hence, this was more of a French and British invention which was copied by the Americans. I say this because many Americans believe they have an original claim to Vietnam and the type of guerilla conflict which it has come to be synonymous with.

[79]Noone, Dream People, 176.

first time. This development represented a vast departure from their usual and more limited contacts with one another and reflects the Emergency's impact upon their knowledge of one another.[80] In the past when one Orang Asli group knew another it tended to be from further up or down the same river valley. Consequently, the scope of their acquaintances with one another was literally broadened across river valleys because of the fighting.

Compounding effects presented by this forced rendezvous upon their sense of national identity, is that once in the camps they became the targets of Orang Asli language radio broadcasts for propaganda purposes. This further heightened their awareness of the fact that they were related to one another, despite differences in dialects.[81] In reality many of these groups belonging to parallel river valleys were not so different from one another -- they were simply unaware of this fact prior to the Emergency.

Orang Asli Leadership Element Brought Together

If the effects of all of this were great upon the rank and file they were more so upon the Orang Asli leadership

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[80]Gomes, "The Semai," in Rambo, Gillogly, and Hutterer, Control of Natural Resources, 111.

[81]Gomes, "The Semai," in Rambo, Gillogly, and Hutterer, Control of Natural Resources, 109.

element. This is because the Orang Asli chiefs were given the full treatment during attempts to win the aborigines over to the government side! At various times colonial authorities brought large groups of Orang Asli leaders out of the jungle to Kuala Lumpur for the purposes of displaying their military might. This was done to demonstrate colonial superiority over the MCP and it worked very well.

But it was also responsible for instigating large meetings of the Orang Asli leadership element (up to 100 chiefs at one time) that would not otherwise have occurred.[82] It was not the intention of these displays of force to do this -- just a side effect. The overall consequences of bringing these Orang Asli together -- both leaders and followers -- was to have long lasting effects once the fighting was over.

The Emergency Winds Down and the Colonial Period Becomes History

As things were to turn out it became apparent later that the MCP shift in tactics demphasizing urban assaults had been a mistake because it cut off the MCP from its Chinese constituency and created severe food supply problems. Although entrenched in the jungle by 1953 the MCP

[82]Noone, Dream People, 167.

was never able to consolidate its position and recapture the momentum lost in urban areas as a result of the change in tactics. It would take another 20 years to resolve the war but this fatal decision doomed them to ultimate failure.

This was in large part because the MCP never had sufficient food supplies to mass enough men to conduct really effective attacks.[83] The Communists had mistakenly believed that they could not be "...shut off from all of the various squatter settlements all of the time."[84] And so we see a familiar problem for men undertaking military activities on the peninsula manifest itself yet again.

There is simply not as much food in the jungle as lay observers would like to believe.[85] Certainly there is not enough sustenance to feed a small army in any regular fashion and a large group of men will quickly deplete the food supplies in any one area.[86] Consequently, the colonial side was able to maintain concentrated forces and gradually

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[83]Noone, Dream People, 150.

[84]Holman, Noone, 147.

[85]For an interesting article outlining the pro's and con's of "green desert" theory See Robert Knox Dentan, "Potential Food Sources for Foragers in Malaysian Rainforest: Sago, Yams and Lots of Little Things," Journal of the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, 147 (1991), 420-444.

[86]The Orang Asli themselves face this problem. That is why they do not pursue a sedentary form of subsistence.

eliminate the MCP piece-meal.

Be that as it may, between this and other supply problems experienced by the MCP the Emergency would gradually fade out subsequent to a brief resurgence in the mid 1970's and early 80's. Consequently GOM was in a position to declare unilaterally the Emergency over by 1960 and this afforded Great Britain the luxury of subsequently looking back upon her withdrawal from Malaya as having been at an auspicious moment unlike the American one from Vietnam 15 years later. For all intents and purposes the Emergency was successfully contained in several truly remote areas near the Thai border which remained exclusive military zones until 1989.

At this time a peace accord between GOM and the MCP was finally reached in Baling twenty years after an earlier abortive attempt. The Orang Asli would finally be free of the dangers presented by this crisis to their tribes. To summarize its effects the Emergency burned the bridges to the Orang Asli past but in so doing it also shed light upon their future.

Irreversible damage was done by the Emergency to Orang Asli social systems and it had implications for the future. It was a shared experience that was both the source and the

vehicle by which much of their grass roots political activity would eventually take place. It served as a synthetic substitute for the magic social forces which otherwise would have had to occur prior to a sugeneris Orang Asli political evolution.

PART III

THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

When the colonial period drew to a close upon Merdeka it was not characterized by the neat ending of an era marking a fresh start for a fledgling nation state. The new beginning extolled at the time was an ideal type history book scenario at odds with certain realities inherent in friction among Malaysians of all ethnic backgrounds. In retrospect we see more clearly now that there were many flaws in Great Britain's legacy to Malaysia, not the least of which was an exacerbation of tensions between Orang Asli and Malays.

I have been gradually working my way towards a more comprehensive examination of two of these problem areas in terms of their implications for Orang Asli/Malay relations: land and Islam. As we have observed, Great Britain created a supply/demand imbalance with regard to land as a byproduct of her development policies and upon independence this becomes a central area of conflict between Malay and Orang Asli. She also inadvertently exasperated matters by cultivating that one aspect of Malay culture which had become so detrimental to the Orang Asli -- Islam!

The difference between then and now was that heretofore Islam and land had been separate and more muted issues which were just several among many explanations for Orang Asli politization. However, upon independence these issues were

formally linked and exacerbated by GOM development policies. Their impact became much more significant for Orang Asli/Malay relations than either had been in the past.

When taken together the issues of land and religion (i.e., Islam) are amplified to a sufficient degree that they evolve into the "why" aspect of this dissertation largely superseding other research concerns. Analysis of their joint import provides an answer to questions running through this dissertation about both why and how the Orang Asli are becoming established political entities. Consequently, in this final section of the dissertation I intend to link Islam and land to a modern ethnopolitical mobilization among the Orang Asli. Thus the final instalment rests upon evidence required for substantiation of my research hypothesis to the effect that the Orang Asli have always performed political functions.

Chapter 1

The Mood Upon Independence and Overall Racial, Religious, and Political Climate: Setting the Stage for Orang Asli Ethnopolitical Mobilization

We have reached the point in this study when the past becomes the present and history turns into current events. Its a moment of dread for some because a certain amount of pedestrian discussion becomes necessary to make the transition and bring us up to date. But for others it's a welcome relief because one moves much closer to the moment when it's finally possible to pursue pure analysis.

Consequently, in this chapter I want to supply the current events data which will finally free us to discuss Orang Asli political development more abstractly during the remainder of this third and final section of the dissertation. To convey best a sense of what the situation is like today there are three main topics which must be covered -- the racial, religious & political climates.

Racial Climate

Even though it had largely been suppressed upon Merdeka in 1957 the once omnipresent Emergency lingered on and imparted a lingering war mind set upon the Malaysian

population. GOM forces continued to battle the MCP guerrillas in the mountainous jungles of the Orang Asli homelands until 1989. And as late as 1984 large-scale operations in northern parts of the peninsula closed the East-West Highway across Perak for several weeks.[1]

During the late 1980's large areas of the country remained "black", or off limits, and it was not uncommon to see government armored columns in force on the national highways.[2] Thus even though the second Baling Peace Conference held in 1989 brought hostilities to a formal conclusion the drawn out conflict between GOM and insurgent Communist Chinese forces exacerbated racial tension among Malaysians.[3] This deeply rooted animosity can be expected to linger for quite some time to come.

Consequently, even though the various races presently

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[1]Voice of Malayan Democracy, June 29, 1984 as reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation, July 3, 1984 (Lexis/Nexis News Retrieval Service).

[2]All of the Urban and lowland areas controlled by GOM were safe. However, when venturing into the jungle it was a good idea to know who you were going to visit. Some areas were safe but others were not, depending upon how remote they were.

[3]It flared back up in late 1973 when a long series of Communist raids from Southern Thailand began. See Nicholas, "The State and Semai Society," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 69.

living in Malaysia manage to accommodate one another by smoothing over their differences underlying problems lurk just beneath the surface. To compound matters Malaysia is also permeated by latent ethnic hostilities which are not restricted to West Malaysia and a genuine sense of Pan-Malaysian identity among its various residents will be difficult to achieve.[4] Its simply too early to tell what is going to happen despite formal conclusion of the Emergency.

Naturally, the heightened state of tensions engendered by colonial legacy is, as mentioned, especially true of relations between the Malays and ethnic Chinese. Neither group has much social tolerance for the other and it is a truism, given earlier colonial favoritism towards the Malays and subsequent Chinese misfortunes in war, that the two camps enjoy a form of bipolar cohabitation with one another. The post-independence division of power is such that the Malays control politics and the Chinese monopolize the national economy, while each resents the other's prerogatives.

As a consequence of this de facto division of power the Orang Asli remain caught in a maelstrom between powerful

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[4]Here I refer to the fledgling secessionist movement on Borneo ascribed to by Dayaks and Ibans living in Sabah and Sarawak.

antagonists seeking to exploit the overall environment for their respective and mutually exclusive political and economic advantages. Their dispute over self-interests has gradually suborned the common memory of colonial bondage and is now about disagreement over the local distribution of capital resources, political power, and religious prerogatives.

Religious Climate

Paralleling Malaysia's ethnic divisions there are three main-stream religions in Malaysia -- Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam -- which also compete to some degree with one another. Hinduism, Buddhism, and orthodox Islam each have had a long history in Malaysia and are important in their own respects but Islam is what we are really interested in analyzing. It was introduced into Southeast Asia from India as early as the fourteenth century by traders and Islamic missionaries and into the Malayu country subsequent to the usurpation of Sumatran Sri Vijaya control of Langkasuka, Trengganu, Pahang, and Kelantan by the Javanese Empire of Majapahit after the sacking of Singapore in 1366 A.D.[5] Hence, Islam has had time to establish itself as the religious lingua franca of the Indonesian archipelago much as Bahasa is

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[5]Wilkinson, History of the Peninsular Malays, 11.

spoken in this area.

Beginning with the Malacca Sultanate Islam was monopolized by traditional aristocratic elites who -- once they were able to come to terms with the fact that a Sultan could no longer be semi-divine -- used it as a means by which to legitimize their hereditary power.[6] For successive Malay potentates to administrate the Islamic function in a particular region has meant to monopolize power over the populace of that area.[7] This hand in glove arrangement between Islam and royalty continued to be more or less true -- despite a few exceptions because practices varied from state to state -- during the colonial period when "princely families" allied with Great Britain ruled as British surrogates through an Islamic veil.[8]

Subsequent to independence an Islamic motif was, in a further and more modern effort at the manipulation of religious symbolism, formally incorporated into Malaysia's Westminster Parliamentary style of government. Official

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[6]Gulick, xiv.

[7]It is important to reiterate that while some royal prerogatives had been ceded to the state the Malay Sultans never really lost their grip upon the local populace.

[8]Gulick, xiv-xvi.

policy now calls for the infusion of "Islamic values" into GOM's administration implying that for all intents and purposes Malaysia has become an Islamic state.[9] Consequently, Malaysian political life continues to be dominated by Malay elites and it is business as usual as far as their religious prerogatives are concerned.

However, more recently a class based attempt to wrest the legitimacy derived by Islam away from traditional Malay power brokers by newly mobilized elements among Muslim peasants is evident in areas like Kelantan state -- a traditional bastion of Malayan Islam.[10] To this end Malaysia has a formidable legal religious opposition party (PAS), with extremist proclivities, which the GOM does not take lightly. PAS successfully competes in state elections on Malaysia's East coast with the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) which dominates the Barisan Nationalist Front--the coalition controlling Malaysian politics since 1957.[11]

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[9]Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Report on Human Rights For 1992: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1993), 612.

[10]Clive S. Kessler, Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1838-1969 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 35.

[11]PAS now controls the northern state of Kelantan. See Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian

Yet this Islamic reorientation goes further and the real problem is not so much with conventional Islamic parties tolerated by GOM as it is with political variations upon the Islamic theme. The latent animosities mentioned above have acted as an incubator for other social disorders, drawing nourishment from prolonged discord, which now complicate matters. Chief among them is the rise, over the past ten or fifteen years, of Islamic fundamentalism which feeds on discontent in many rural areas dominated by the Malays. An on going Islamic fundamentalist revival begun in the 1970's called the Dakwah movement permeates Malay society. Parts of the country have kind of a "medieval air" about them as a consequence of this phenomenon.

The Malays may well be familiar with Islam but it would be a mild understatement to say that Malaysia is experiencing something of a problem with Islamicism! In an oxymoronic twist Islamic fundamentalism looms as the new ersatz Communism and is just as genuine a threat to social stability in Malaysia as political strife between ethnic groups. It has made many many inroads into both Malaysian society and government despite discrete GOM efforts to halt its spread.

Affairs, Country Report on Human Rights for 1994: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1995), 641 and 635.

As a result of this unsettling development GOM cracked down on the preeminent Islamic sect Darul Arqam, which was making parts of downtown Kuala Lumpur resemble Quom, by imposing restrictions on its proselytizing activities in October 1991.[12] More Generally GOM is, in its effort to oppose deviant Islam, presently engaged in an attempt to neutralize Islamic fundamentalism by coopting elements of its support base. The regime does this by adopting more and more Islamic symbolism and rhetoric in an attempt to appear as the personification of that which is good about Islam.

GOM also supports the moderate Sunni religious establishment with government funds and this helps immeasurably to offset the influence of Iranian aid to the fundamentalists. To this end Malaysia boasts an extensive Federally sponsored Islamic construction program which builds mosques across the country at a prodigious rate.[13] As testimony to GOM's unique mosque building achievements Malaysia boasts the world's largest mosque which is located in a Kuala Lumpur suburb fittingly named Shah Alam (i.e.,

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[12]Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1992: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1993), 612.

[13]Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1993), 612.

the King's home). It is an awe inspiring blue and white religious edifice constructed of the finest materials that firmly puts Malaysia on the map in the contemporary Muslim world.

Constructed in close proximity to the Sultan of Selangor's palace and the Istana (i.e. the Selangor state administrative complex), this imposing architecture is truly an impressive sight. Indeed, the commitment to Islam by its Federal sponsors and Malaysia's sovereign rulers cannot be questioned by the masses. Nor does it leave any doubts about the resources at GOM's disposal vis its' campaign to neutralize Islamic fundamentalism.

The specific intent behind this pious largess is to dilute support for fundamentalist second tier organizations and activities. If the populist energies which manifest themselves through pseudo religious symbolism can be dissipated then the Islamic fundamentalist threat will be largely negated by having its energies syphoned off. Thus, official policy vis-a-vis religion is manifest in hardy attempts at religious coaptation by the Malaysian state.

By adroitly infusing Islamic values into the administration of Malaysia GOM kills two birds with one stone. It not only helps keep a lid on the fundamentalist

issue but also serves to promote a form of Bumi Putra nationalism which, to GOM's credit, has not been perverted in such a manner as to destabilize the country. Other nations troubled by Islamic fundamentalism have not been so fortunate.

The danger which all of this posturing for legitimacy poses to the animistic Orang Asli goes virtually without saying. Islam itself stems from an adverse reaction to various forms of paganism manifested by the idolatry once widely practiced in what is now Saudi Arabia. Thus, Orang Asli animism, Islam, and its derivative Islamic fundamentalism are essentially anathema to one another and the religious tolerance towards the Chinese and Indian peoples inhabiting West Malaysia is not extended to the Orang Asli. This situation will most likely continue in the foreseeable future.

Political Climate

Finally we see that in addition to bequeathing racial tensions and religious instability Great Britain also endowed Malaysia with an intrusive legal system engineered around the Emergency. Much of the legislation enacted at this time was imbued by security concerns and this is particularly true of laws pertaining to race relations.

Although based upon Common Law derived from the British model this constitutional legislation places power in the hands of the state, thereby concentrating it among the Malays.

Further, within the context of this arrangement the executive branch has been slowly usurping judicial prerogatives from the courts and forcing its own draconian interpretation of already strict laws. As an example of this tendency three Supreme Court members, including the Lord President, were dismissed in 1988 because of their reluctance to go along with GOM on politically sensitive issues.[14] So there are visible signs, as manifested by these actions, of regime aggression even towards its own recalcitrant members when regime integrity and/or security concerns are involved.

Consequently the activities of all Malaysians are regulated and scrutinized by GOM, and the Orang Asli suffer indirectly from this aspect of the political climate. As government policy towards the Orang Asli is also security oriented, GOM plays an unusually strong role in internal

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[14]Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1993 ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1994), 685.

Orang Asli affairs through its agent JOA.[15] Thus, the racial, religious, and political climates are tied together as far as the Orang Asli are concerned because a single department has and vigorously exercises a legal monopoly, driven by these very issues, over aboriginal affairs in Malaysia.[16]

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[15]In official parlance the cover word for security is often "development" as in economic development for the Orang Asli. Although JOA no longer preoccupies itself with military matters as during the Emergency, its officials are ever mindful of the strategic role the Orang Asli perform. In recent years JOA, headed by a bureaucratic functionary, has operated under the supervision of a cabinet minister, the Minister of National Unity and Social Development, who wields "near absolute power ... to protect, control, and otherwise decide issues concerning ... indigenous peoples." See Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994 ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1995), 643.

[16]This is in direct contrast with neighboring Thailand where many agencies are involved with the management of indigenous peoples. Interestingly enough, there has recently been some academic discussion about the merits of the Malaysian model among the Thai. Its implementation in Thailand is desired by some in order to eliminate waste and redundancy among programs for the Kingdom's indigenous peoples. See Tan Chee Beng, "Central Government and Tribal Minorities: Thailand and West Malaysia Compared," in Anthony R. Walker, ed., Farmers in the Hills: Ethnographic Notes on the Upland Peoples of North Thailand (Singapore: Double-Six Press, 1986), 200.

Chapter 2

Islamic Fundamentalism in Perspective

Prior to delving into specific problems posed by religion for the Orang Asli it is appropriate to elaborate upon Islamic fundamentalism. Given its tremendous significance in Malaysian affairs deviant Islam is presently the paramount issue which charges, unlike any other, the atmosphere in which all Malaysians must live. Understanding the nuances which underlie this phenomena is the key to grasping and appreciating how religion is gradually forcing the Orang Asli hand with regard to political development.

Origins of Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Route to Malaysia

In a more global context the danger from Islamic fundamentalism is especially great in those countries which have had dual exposure to Islam and the West. This is because, from a mechanical standpoint, embracing Islamic fundamentalism is part and parcel with a complete rejection of Western values. East meets West in areas which breed Islamic fundamentalism and Malaysia is the premier example of a Southeast Asian country in which such a nexus has occurred.[17]

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[17]Islamic fundamentalism also tends to plague places which have experienced sudden economic windfalls in which there is a pre-existing Islamic base. See V.S. Naipaul

Many young Malays received unprecedented Western exposure during the course of their education as students in the United States. During a ten year period beginning in the early 1980's there were, in any given year, upwards of 30,000 Malay students living and studying at American universities. Typically their contact with the West was in terms of follow on exposure to an early Islamic indoctrination at the village level.

The contrast between worlds which many of these students experienced upon arriving in the United States provoked a "profound" culture shock. It was a deeply disturbing experience which traumatized a generation of young Malays. The problem reached sufficient magnitude to justify complete re-engineering of GOM's educational objectives vis-a-vis four-year degrees in the United States.

Hastily constituted branch campuses of several American universities were established in Malaysia to provide the first two years of the B.S. degree locally. Successful students then completed their degrees at various universities in the United States. Subsequently student failure rates in the United States declined significantly and students brought home to Malaysia less emotional

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Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 227.

baggage.

The great irony here is that this change in educational policy was undertaken, at considerable expense to GOM, in response to discussions at the highest levels of government about how to protect young Malays from Islamic fundamentalist influences in the United States. It was decided that the students would be less vulnerable to Islamic extremists, operating out of the mosques which have sprung up around major American universities, if they were more mature before departure from home.[18]

Islamic fundamentalism spread among these young people because they were hit with a one, two, three combination which impaired their cognitive capabilities. First and foremost they were abruptly uprooted from the nurturing environment of their mostly rural villages, at a tender young age, and thrust into a cold foreign environment abroad. Second, the educational experience opened their eyes to opportunities which were not available to them either in the United States or in Malaysia. And, third when they finally returned to Malaysia it was not possible go

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[18]A 1989 Interview with the Indiana University Malaysia Cooperative Program Provost in which this information was conveyed by the then Education minister and present deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim.

back to the village life they once knew either.[19]

Under such circumstances one undergoes forced introspection that focuses upon perceived personal deficiencies in terms of skills and abilities. There is a great sense of alienation and frustration tinged with feelings of self-pity which must be soothed. Naturally, young victims of this plight turn increasingly towards Islamic fundamentalists knowing, from previous contacts with these people at religious services in the United States, that members of the brotherhood understand their problems and offer salvation.[20]

The warmth of the group beckons--offering a place in a pure world in which people live in small Islamic communities like the ancient Arabs during the days of the Prophet Mohammed.[21] Islamic fundamentalism offers hope and salvation to its subscribers under the auspices of a world movement that promises to triumph over materialistic Western

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[19]Naipaul, 227.

[20]It is important to emphasize that young Malays were aggressively recruited on American campuses by Iranian agents of influence. There were so many of them and they were such good candidates their targeting was virtually routinized.

[21]The word "Arab" is a contemporary term employed to broadly describe peoples of Middle East extraction. However, I mean it more in the sense of persons emanating from the Arabian peninsula.

excesses and establish an Islamic state.

Writing from a psychologistic perspective V.S. Naipaul described Islamic fundamentalism as akin to an idiosyncratic manifestation of mass psychosis. Its adherents are lost in a sea of discontent and Islamic fundamentalism is a life preserver which has been treacherously thrown to their false succors. The situation is such that problems among young Malays, regarding their disaffection with modernity, are known as the "Malaysian disease" by neighboring Indonesia and the presumption is that it's infectious.[22]

Potential for the Malaysian Situation vis Islamic Fundamentalism

GOM present efforts to contain extremism are but one variation of anti-fundamentalist drives being carried out by secular and/or moderate Sunni governments in several countries. In some instances these regimes (e.g. Syria, Egypt, Algeria) take a more heavy handed approach than GOM. In Southern Syria this involved the horrendous destruction of Hama at great loss of life some years ago while in Egypt and Algeria an equally ruthless but more selective suppression campaign is on-going.

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[22]Naipaul, 227-228.

Fortunately, these types of atrocity have not occurred in Malaysia because the Malays do not harbor the same deep and malevolent contempt for one another as do members of various Muslim groups in the Middle East. Thus, although Islamic fundamentalism appears to be temporarily in check externally, prospects for the Islamic fundamentalist movement locally in Malaysia remain in question.[23] There is a relationship amongst the various parts of the Islamic world ranging from Algeria to the Philippines and events in one are easily emulated in another.

There is also a network of Islamic fundamentalist cells conspiring with each other in a dark and murky world, largely impenetrable to the rational mind, the depths of which are difficult to fathom.[24] And so, the captivating specter of mass Islamic turmoil may burst forth in "beautiful horror" on an Iranian scale with little warning in any of these places.[25] Malaysia may be next, and should

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[23]The author has lived in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt and draws upon long Middle East experience to make the Islamic fundamentalist vulnerability inference between Malaysia and these places.

[24]This movement also operates on a very decentralized organizational footing and is virtually impenetrable.

[25]I took this phrase from a personalized account detailing Dutch suppression of a slave rebellion in Surinam. For details about one of the earliest colonial suppressions of an insurgency movement see John Gabriel Stedman, Stedman's Surinam: Life in an Eighteenth-Century Slave Society (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

this transpire one can expect GOM to employ measures which exceed the restraint which has been shown towards the Shiite minority to date![26]

[26]GOM's strategy prior to the crack down on Darul Arqam was passive in the sense that it kept Islamic groups under surveillance without attempting to interfere overtly in their affairs. For the time being one can expect to see more of this waiting game played. Its a psychological approach, more in line with the languid pace of life in the Far East, which GOM has the luxury of pursuing without having to generate results vis active suppression of the fundamentalists. This does not mean that GOM is inactive on this security front.

Chapter 3

Loss of Strategic Flexibility and Some Indirect and Direct Complications Resulting from the Intrusion of Islam

Islamic intercourse with mainstream religions had and, to some extent, still has provisions for a system of taxation implemented through special levies which non Muslims might pay to maintain their religious freedom. On the other hand the Orang Asli never received such favorable treatment. Just generally pure Islam has always been unforgiving towards the Orang Asli because it does not recognize animism as an alternative religion.

But remarkably the Orang Asli have from Merdeka to present mostly resisted attempts at conversion by the Malays. They managed through a combination of skirmishing and flight to avoid change to their life styles and religious beliefs upon which their culture is based. Thus the recent resurgence of the Islamic factor in their lives does not bode well for them; early encounters during pre-colonial and to some extent colonial days were simply a harbinger of things to come.

As we know, during the pre-colonial period the Malays raided certain Orang Asli communities for the purpose of taking slaves, imposing forced conversion to Islam upon them, and pillaging their settlements. Luckily many other

Orang Asli were, more often than not, in a position to capitalize upon the inhospitable nature of their environment and use the leverage they had over jungle resources possessing trade value. Non aboriginals did not know how to exploit the jungle and were not capable of functioning well in the Malaria belt or getting past it by making much inroad into the mountainous jungle areas.

Loss of Strategic Flexibility

However, the Orang Asli may no longer be so fortunate in the face of Malay incursions. Times have changed, and they are more accessible today to a general assault upon their lives and culture. In many instances they have either been forced to relocate out of the jungle or the jungle has been penetrated by road systems and destroyed by timber concessionaires.

Thus stripped to a degree of their natural jungle ally the Orang Asli have become vulnerable to the outside world as never before. Furthermore, fundamentalism per se is a relatively new and virulent form of Islamic phenomena which the Orang Asli are ill equipped to resist by virtue of their own changed circumstances.[27] Consequently Islam now

[27]Interestingly enough early Islamic practices on the Malay peninsula were not strict like the fundamentalist principles being promoted by extremists today. Malay

possesses, more so than before, an on-going threat to the Orang Asli. Regardless of whether or not it is by real Islamic fundamentalists, threatening the country as a whole, or at the behest of GOM representatives responding to specific tensions generated by a climate of extremism -- Islam is a danger to the Orang Asli.

Indirect Complications

Moving into the heart of the "why" question one of the key problems with mixing Islam and politics is that an Islamic saturation point is never reached: there is no end to how Islamic one side or the other can really be, given the presence of the fundamentalist issue. As a consequence, in the wake of fiscal excesses associated with the purchase of legitimacy by GOM which one presently observes, intolerance for that which may not be subsumed under Islamic rubric may well increase regardless of whether the fundamentalists take over or not. Despite the well meaning opposition by GOM to what it views as a perverted version of Islam, the situation could become exacerbated.

The risks are that elements of GOM might start to believe the dogmatic rhetoric couching their own policy

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absorption of Islam was selective and incomplete during its incipient phases. Its pervasive omnipresence was to be felt only much later. See Gulick, 20.

positions and or seek to make examples out of infidels to demonstrate regime support for Islam. As an example, government forces in support of moderate local clerics periodically raid Orang Laut cemeteries to disrupt pagan ritual activities along Southern coastal regions of the country.[28] By the same token JOA is also reputed to have stepped up its proselytizing activities which are ordinarily a more informal part of its stated policy towards the Semang and Senoi.[29]

If these types of repression occur with greater frequency or intensify then there is a distinct possibility that the Malaysian religious situation, as it pertains to the Orang Asli, might spiral out of control. Such a scenario would not in all likelihood be a planned sequence of events because GOM is known for its relatively even, albeit heavy handed approach to dealing with political dissent and religious minorities. The government's past conduct with regard to such matters simply does not support such a theory.

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[28]Islamic religious police have also burned the Churches of the few Christian Orang Asli. In Kota Baru they forbid Jah Het carvers to make and sell works of art depicting animist religious beliefs and practices.

[29]JOA incorporated Islam into the Orang Asli school curriculum much as prayer was held in American schools until recently. However, until present it has restrained (out of self interest) the more aggressive prostelizing attempts by various Islamic societies among the Orang Asli. See Means, "Aboriginal Policies in Malaysia," 647.

Rather, should something like this happen, it would in all probability be as an indirect consequence of heretofore unforeseen events related to the religious issue. There are very few extrajudicial killings or politically related disappearances transpiring now which would betray a wide-scale suppression campaign.[30] Nonetheless, the threat of religious persecution presents quite a predicament for non-Muslims, and animists in particular, as none of the Islamic groups demonstrate signs they are prepared to fade into celestial oblivion.

Direct Complications

To present we have been talking about subtleties and potential eventualities as opposed to concrete realities. More directly now, what are the immediate problems posed by Islam for the Orang Asli and why don't they just convert to Islam? There are two dimensions to this question -- one is psychological and the other material.

On the psychological side Muslim loathing of animists is not a one-way street as the Orang Asli have a reciprocal aversion to Islam. This aversion borders upon "violent

[30]Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1994: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1995), 636.

apathy" towards those things which are Malay and Islam meets this criteria.[31] Islam also violates the precepts upon which the main economic unit of many Orang Asli groups is based -- the extended family.[32]

Mohammedanisation per se involves substituting loyalties to this family group for those of the brotherhood of Islam. Conversion would effectively destabilize Orang Asli social organization which is centered around a mode of life and belief system which they do not share with the Malays. The issue of conversion is a complicated one involving "...food taboos, ritual cleanliness, a change in the status of women, proscribed code of dress, and daily manners."[33]

Conversion in turn threatens group cohesion and cooperation which are so important to survival in a jungle

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[31]H.D. Noone makes the studied observation that the Orang Asli would never be converted "en group" to Islam by peaceful means. Much the same is true today. See H.D. Noone, "Report on the Settlements and Welfare of the Ple-Temair Senoi of the Perak-Kelantan Watershed," Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums 19 (December 1936): 56.

[32]Only a few Orang Asli have converted to Islam, in return for GOM benefits, and they tend to be shunned by other Orang Asli. See Alberto G. Gomes, "Confrontation and Continuity: Simple Commodity Production Among the Orang Asli," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1990), 104.

[33]Noone, Notes, 56-57.

environment. To grasp this fact consider once again that many Orang Asli did not fare well during the Emergency when they were transplanted into resettlement camps because of their incompatibility with this new foreign environment. By the same token there is no reason to expect that they could do any better for themselves by substituting their own culture for another (i.e., Malay) while attempting to function in regions in to which they naturally evolved.

The Orang Asli face imperfect alternatives because they cannot easily convert to Islam and move into town en mass and start new lives in GOM sponsored housing. Even if they wanted to pursue such a course of action, old prejudices die hard and the Malays behave badly towards those who try such integration. Many Orang Asli have also discovered that economically this is not a profitable move either.

Thus quite a few Orang Asli who moved into Malay villages have moved back out again because of this hostility and because they found that they can make a better living by pursuing their traditional independent life-style involving barter for those jungle goods not otherwise available to the Malays.[34] Consequently, most Orang Asli have consistently

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[34]Kirk Endicott, "The Impact of Economic Modernization on the Orang Asli of Northern Peninsular Malaysia," in James C. Jackson and Martin Rudner, eds., Issues in Malaysian Development (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), 187.

refused to convert to Islam despite the cost in material terms for their refusal to do so.

Materially speaking the problem posed by Islam for the Orang Asli is also simple to grasp. Malaysia is a near Islamic state for Malays and to participate fully as a Malay citizen requires adherence to Islam. This is an important point because Orang Asli participation should mean enjoying the same benefits as the Malays. These rewards are substantial.[35]

The Orang Asli are supposed to have their own prerogatives but services which JOA provides the Orang Asli are inferior to those which other departments provide the Malays. JOA is widely acknowledged to have failed badly in terms of the development aspect of its mission. Furthermore it is not simply a question of having failed to achieve

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[35]Several prominent authors play down the Islamic factor as a barrier between Orang Asli and Malays. In this author's view this is a position taken by regime apologists who contend the problem is cultural and not religious. But in as much as Islam is ingrained into Malay culture this is really a moot point. Concurrently, these people also concede that Orang Asli assimilation in Malaysia is unlikely, because neither the Malay rank and file or the Orang Asli want such a thing to happen. Only GOM would like to see such a thing happen for political reasons and because those Orang Asli who assimilate would not be among the elite. See Carey, 335; Sallah Hood, "Orang Asli of Malaysia: an Overview of Recent Development Policy and its Impact," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malay, 1990), 144.

economic parity for the Orang Asli with the Malays -- there are fundamental shortcomings with the Department's mission which have not been overcome.

Very few Orang Asli have been educated beyond the primary level and failure of JOA's education division is acknowledged by the Malays themselves.[36] Furthermore, Orang Asli medical care has also suffered greatly because JOA does not deliver the same quality care that it did during the Emergency.[37] These circumstances are particularly difficult for the Orang Asli because many of them suffer from new problems brought about by more extended contact with the outside world with which traditional skills and remedies are ineffective.[38]

This means that between being excluded from regular Malay programs and being poorly served by JOA, which is

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[36]On the one hand Orang Asli children are not very happy in Malay run schools. On the other hand some of the Malay teachers employed to teach at these schools are poorly trained and not happy about their jobs among the Orang Asli. Consequently, very few young Orang Asli are adequately prepared to pursue advanced studies. See, Rasid and Hassan, "Education for Ethnic Minorities," 155.

[37]Means, "Changing Environment," 88.

[38]The introduction of clothing among the Orang Asli has resulted in a terrible increase in their susceptibility to skin disease because such diseases are already quite common in the jungle and Orang Asli tend to share their clothes with one another as communal possessions.

under funded and ineptly managed by Malays, the Orang Asli are experiencing a substantial decline in their standard of living. To make a long story short they have, because of their reluctance to embrace Islam, become the most deprived of Malaysia's minority groups. And, they are only too well aware of these facts, having surmised that JOA's supposed political clout extends only to itself now that the Emergency is over.[39]

Officially this deficiency can be traced to a combination of mismanagement by JOA and a decline in funding by GOM following the signing of the peace treaty with the MCP.[40] However, it is also obvious that from a bureaucratic proclivities standpoint there is a problem of logic to contend with vis JOA's mission. Should all Orang Asli temporal needs ever be met then any incentive for them to convert to Islam will have been removed!

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[39]Nicholas, "The State and Semai Society," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 80.

[40]Even in the early 1980's JOA funding levels had begun to decline. Funding levels dropped from 40.1 to 36 million Ringit in terms of the department's share of GOM monies for the 1980-1984 budget cycle. For purposes of comparison there are approximately three Malaysian Ringit to the U.S. Dollar. See Alberto G. Gomes, "Simple Commodity Production," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1990), 24&30.

Thus, Islamic imperatives manifest themselves in some very tangible ways vis the Orang Asli. But as we shall see, education and health are lesser examples of this problem. I have been saving the best for last as it makes for a smooth transition into the land issue.

Non-Malays (and by definition non-Muslims) are largely precluded (except in Pahang state) from participating in some 300 incredibly large scale agricultural development programs implemented by The Federal Land and Development Agency (FELDA) to accommodate rural Malays.[41] These programs have brought much of the peninsula under cultivation and displaced many Orang Asli from their ancestral home lands -- particularly East and South of the main range.[42] Only about 49 percent of the Orang Asli population are reported by GOM sources to continue their nomadic lifestyle.

The Orang Asli have a facsimile program available to them through JOA's resettlement division designed to wean them away from swiddening without removing them from the jungle. Unfortunately, like education and health it has also failed because at best many of these "pattern settlements" were virtually unlivable due to poor planning

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[41]Endicott, "Economic Modernization," 192-193.

[42]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rainforests, 65-66.

and bureaucratic oversights. At worst they are viewed as a ploy by GOM to release many of the Senoi from "...their dependence on a large subsistence base". This would, in addition to rounding up the Orang Asli, free up the land and make it more accessible to timber concessionaires and miners.[43]

The result is that the Orang Asli are caught in a vice between Islam and Land which is slowly squeezing them. They can not join the new developments (which are incompatible with their traditional religion and lifestyle) and at the same time their lands are being taken for these purposes. As a compromise many Senoi have retreated into what remains of the deep jungle in order to remove themselves from this situation, and they are at present largely inaccessible. But it is only a matter of time before development pressures overcome them as land is becoming more scarce.[44]

Thus, exclusion from Malay re-settlement programs and concomitant failure of their own JOA sponsored re-settlement programs presents a most precarious situation for the Orang Asli. At this point the issue of religion becomes

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[43]Nicholas, "State and Semai Society," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal peoples and Development , 76.

[44]Nicholas, "State and Semai Society," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 81.

inalterably intertwined with the land issue which is further examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

The Land Issue: Bureaucratic/Political Imperatives and Land Laws

Unlike the situation during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, land in Malaysia has become a finite resource. No longer do unlimited supplies of this commodity exist, and a simple mathematical calculation is sufficient to bear this observation out. The fore-mentioned FELDA schemes and various logging operations have consumed more than half of West Malaysia's jungle areas to date and this activity continues to claim each year approximately 1.2 percent of the peninsula's remaining jungle.[45]

Again the scale of these activities is difficult to exaggerate. The FELDA schemes aside, the pace of Malaysia's logging operations was such that Malaysia earned the dubious distinction of being the world's largest tropical timber exporter in 1993.[46] Consequently, the endless stretches of virgin jungle described by Pat Noone are virtually a thing of the past. But in all fairness it remains to be seen

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[45]This figure represents more than two times the mean rate reported for other tropical countries. See Robert Repetto, The Forest for the Trees? Government Policies and the Misuse of forest Resources (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1988), 52&58.

[46]Jonathan Kaplan, "Malaysia: Logging Curbs Bring Small Comfort," Observer, 5 September 1993, 56.

whether or not GOM brings this activity to its ultimate conclusion -- ecological suicide, a lightening rod for international criticism of GOM.

Yet in as much as substantial logging is occurring -- the effects are a one two punch -- the land is either degraded by logging operations to the point where it threatens the Orang Asli subsistence base or it is physically occupied by development. Either way its utility becomes marginal to the Orang Asli. If they are permitted to remain on the land once it has been cleared, destruction wrought upon various plant and animal species upon which they depend would render it useless to them.[47] Their economic base, which involves a complicated mix of activities, will have been destroyed by a process which is largely irreversible.

Furthermore, as the size of their traditional territories is forcibly decreased their own population base is increasing due to a declining child mortality rate brought about by marginally improved health care. Of necessity this land deficit and population surfeit shortens the swiddening cycle involved with the type of slash and burn agriculture which they pursue, by making for

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[47]This is in contrast to partial cuts or selective clear cutting which the jungle quickly regenerates. More about the effects of logging later.

insufficient fallow periods. So, eventually the remaining land which they have access to becomes depleted and is taken over forever by useless lalang grass.[48]

FELDA's approximately 300 mega projects tend to be concentrated in Southern portions of the peninsula. But GOM has divided up the available land in such a way that the highlands which have poorer soil tend to be turned over to logging concessionaires while land with better quality soil nearer the coast is earmarked for plantations.[49] Hence, all of Malaysia's land has immediate commercial value and the pressure to exploit it is immense.

So much so that in southern regions of the country areas inhabited by the Temuans and the few Orang Laut remnants have already been developed to such an extent that these people are now living in pockets which are isolated from one another by development.[50] Now, when members of

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[48]Rambo, "Orang Asli Adaptive Strategies," in Colin MacAndrews and Chia Lin Sien, eds., Too Rapid Rural Development, 281.

[49]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rain Forests, 72-73.

[50]There is an abundance of articles in the local press about this or that Orang Asli group being disturbed or displaced by development activity. One encounters them as a matter of routine when reading local papers and magazines. It is symptomatic of how quickly Malaysia is developing. More recently Orang Asli have been displaced to make way for Kuala Lumpur's new airport. Ironically, the news article reporting environmental impact issues, mentioned only in passing Orang Asli relocations, and said nothing about the

these Jakun groups wish to pursue social relations they can no longer travel between one another's settlements via jungle trails. They must take roads and pass around plantations, industrial parks, and various urban developments.[51]

The Semang and Senoi are also threatened with a similar situation but because of encroachment by loggers rather than plantation developers. Their areas had not been commercially viable for timber harvesting during the colonial period due to the terrain. But the situation began to change after the Second World War when surplus mechanized equipment which had been converted for civilian uses began to be employed in these difficult areas to bring logs out.[52]

Political and Bureaucratic Imperatives

So at present all Orang Asli are feeling pressure from development and this activity is unlikely to stop by itself

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loss of their land. See "Panel Wants Study of Bird-Strike Risk at New Airport," The Straits Times, 4 August 1993, 16.

[51]F.L. Dunn, Rain-Forest Collectors and Traders: A Study of Resource Utilization in Modern and Ancient Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1978), 65.

[52]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rain Forests, 69.

because it has taken on a life of its own. It is being driven by political necessity on the part of Malay elites and bureaucratic pathology on the part of FELDA. While the original commercial objectives of this development are still very important other factors have become the driving force behind perpetuation of this activity.

The Malay leadership is under great pressure to engage in rural development in order to placate the landless peasantry and has been doing so since FELDA's inception in 1956.[53] The problem is compounded now that this public enterprise bureaucracy has begun to experience goal displacement. In recent years the tendency has been for FELDA to divert surpluses towards growth and diversification as opposed to focusing purely upon poverty amelioration.[54]

Land Laws

As a result of all of this development Malaysia has become a relatively prosperous country, but not without paying an environmental price. The cost is pretty steep

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[53]What an excellent opportunity for the fundamentalists should there be unrest among poor Malays over the land issue. All of this while GOM has no choice but to expand its population base from an estimated 18 million people in order not to be dwarfed by more populous neighbors like Indonesia and Thailand.

[54]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rain Forests, 65-66.

when one considers that from an original area which was 98 per cent covered by primary forest, at the turn of the century, peninsular Malaysia is expected, should things continue the way they are, to become a net importer of logs from Borneo and Thailand by 2001.[55] Consequently for many reasons the Orang Asli are in an unenviable position, despite their prominent role and contributions made to Malaysian statehood during the Emergency.

Their unenviable position stems in part from the Orang Asli's diminished power. Now that the fighting is over they are again less useful to the Malays. But their situation also has a legal basis which may be attributed to Great Britain's reorientation of Malaya's economy and her impromptu and reluctant withdrawal.

In this respect Malay leaders did not want Great Britain to be stipulating impromptu post-Merdeka rules for them! Thus, Great Britain withdrew without making adequate constitutional provisions to regulate development activity and, or, to protect Malaysia's vast primary forest from extinction. And so, the stage was set in a de facto sense for historical legal precedent to play a role in contemporary matters regarding land.

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[55]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rain Forests, 72.

This is because when Great Britain initiated this development activity she did not supply the necessary guidelines to control its progression. Very early in the colonial process she introduced the Torrens system of land-tenure, which stands today, and consolidates all land in the hands of the Malay states. Consequently, since there is no one single coherent land use law in Malaysia at the Federal level "...the relationship between Federal and state authorities on land is quite complicated in constitutional terms."[56]

Great Britain also established Malay reserves designed to protect the customary land rights of the Malays who felt threatened by Chinese and Indian immigrants. But no such provisions were made for the Orang Asli because they were assumed to be dependents of the Malay rulers.[57] It was not until the Emergency that Orang Asli interests became a concern to British colonial authorities. By this point the system was in place and at best it could be superficially

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[56]M. B. Hooker, "Orang Asli and the Laws of Malaysia with Special Reference to Land," Ilmu Masyarakat 1 January 1991, 74.

[57]The Orang Asli require an unusually large amount of land to pursue their modes of subsistence. The Malays simply have trouble accepting and/or understanding this fact and do not acknowledge Orang Asli claims to tribal lands. Of course this is a problem because even though it may not, on the surface of things, appear as though the land is being used -- "...there is very little jungle not considered to be owned by someone." See Holman, Noone, 220.

tinkered with to accommodate Orang Asli interests.

This was, as we know, done in the 1954 Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance which has been revised twice since that time. A few areas were converted into aboriginal reserves, again primarily in the south of the country, but Orang Asli residing within them are simple "tenants at will" because the enabling legislation did not actually give them legal title to the land. Thus they were left under the protection of JOA which does control this land but without a guarantee of occupation.[58] JOA initially under British leadership vigorously pursued Orang Asli interests but gradually as it became Malayanized and routine overcame mission the agency became lax in exercising this responsibility.

Consequently, now in addition to grievances about being proselytized by JOA, the Orang Asli have complaints regarding the sale of timber rights on Orang Asli reserves to concessionaires. Ironically at the same time that Orang Asli forests are being depleted, other previously developed areas inhabited by Malays actually have under-utilized agricultural land.[59] This places needless pressure upon the remaining primary forests where landless peasants are

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[58]Hooker, "Orang Asli and the Laws," 64-65.

[59]Aiken and Leigh, Vanishing Rain Forests, 68.

encouraged to join FELDA projects.[60] So, in this catch 22 situation the Orang Asli don't have any land because they don't have clear land rights and they can't get land rights without becoming Muslims.

Land and Islam: Mutually Reinforcing Conflict Points Forcing Orang Asli Political Mobilization

Thus, for all practical purposes, from the Orang Asli perspective they have little legal recourse to prevent their land from being destroyed or monopolized by the Malays. Their refusal to embrace Islam has become a device to disenfranchise them from their land. Even if the judicial system had GOM backing to do so the Malaysian courts simply are not in a position to recognize ancestral claims to ownership because there are no provisions within the law which enable them to do so.

And so, when one looks at the land issue over time in a religious context, Islam need no longer be the excuse for ad hoc Malay raids into Orang Asli lands to capture them as

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[60]This results from a complicated legal situation in which non Malays are faced with land use restrictions. Ultimately this translates into wasted agricultural potential. See Robert L. Winzler, "Ethnic Groups and the Control of Natural Resources in Kelantan, Malaysia," in A. Terry Rambo, Kathleen Gillogly, and Karl L. Hutterer eds., Ethnic Diversity and the Control of Natural Resources in Southeast Asia (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 95.

slaves. Instead, Islam has become a systemic problem for the Orang Asli which they have difficulty avoiding because -- thanks to modern development imperatives rooted in past policies and laws -- space within which they can manoeuver has become limited. While at present forty-nine percent of the Orang Asli population continues to live in the interior it remains to be seen whether or not this option remains viable for much longer.[61]

In this respect as seen through the land issue Islam is far more dangerous to the Orang Asli now than it was in the past because of the exclusionary aspect of its effects upon the allocation of land. In the past Islam brought about the deaths and enslavement of individuals or small groups of Orang Asli but now it threatens them collectively by contributing to the demise of their culture and group identity -- without which they would be no better off than poor rural Malays. This is because the complex relationship between their culture, way of life, and land is such that the three go together.[62] Take away one and the others die, just as do the various clusters of species in their forests

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[61]See Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Country Report on Human Rights for 1994: Malaysia ([Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, 1995), 643.

[62]Gomes, "Confrontation and Continuity" in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 32-33.

where there is interdependence between plants and animals.

The Orang Asli instinctively understand the dire consequences of these mutually reinforcing issues -- Islam and the loss of their land -- and this motivates them to politicize more so than any other reason. The only other thing which can provoke them more is to pay undue attention to their women. Nothing aggravates them more.

Chapter 5

GOM's Current Situation and Policies Towards the Orang Asli

Next, we must place the plight of the Orang Asli into Malaysia's overall political context. Despite a gradual successful conclusion of the Emergency, acquisition of relative economic prosperity for the country as a whole, and the predominance of moderate religious elements, Malaysia's internal situation remains uncertain. Deep cleavages dividing Malaysia's major power centers -- the ruling Sunni Malays, Islamic fundamentalists, the prosperous ethnic Chinese -- distract GOM from dealing with the plight of the Orang Asli.

GOM's Current Predicament

The relative calm which Malaysia presently enjoys is misleading. Several components of the Federal system under which the Malaysian government operates are unstable. Malaysia has the unusual distinction of being divided by nearly five-hundred miles of Pacific Ocean. Thus, GOM control over two of its 13 states, which are located on the island of Borneo in East Malaysia, is tenuous at best. Sabah and Sarawak, which together comprise a land mass greater than West Malaysia, are described as the "wobbly"

part of the Malaysian Federation by many observers.[63]

GOM control over Sabah & Sarawak is wanting in effectiveness. Both states are dominated by Penans and Dayaks -- non aboriginal tribal peoples who bare little resemblance to the Orang Asli.[64] Although a secessionist movement was suppressed in Sabah several years ago unrest continues to smoulder.

A successful secessionist scenario involving either Sabah or Sarawak would most likely throw West Malaysia into a state of near anarchy. The country is hardly mature enough politically or socially to withstand such a shock. So, although the long standing macro-struggle for control within Malaysia -- initiated during the later stages of the colonial period -- is over, strife which gripped Malaysia

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[63]"The Struggle for Survival: Wobbling in Sabah," The Economist, 31 January 1987, 14 and 17.

[64]They are more numerous than the latter, much more aggressive, and make better killers. In fact during the Second World war the Japanese army occupying Malaya was not able to do much more than control coastal areas of Borneo because venturing inland was too dangerous. As evidence of this the author made several visits to Dayak homes not far from Kutching in Sarawak and observed large quantities of skulls, from Japanese soldiers who did make the mistake of venturing into the interior on ill fated expeditions, which are hung from baskets in their long houses. Many Ibans and Dayaks have also been converted to Christianity and this further sets them apart from the Malays. Thus, in some respects the gulf between tribal peoples on Borneo and the Malays is greater than that between the Orang Asli and the Malays.

during this time has simply metamorphosed into new forms of incipient danger.

This internal political struggle has de-aggregated from a nationalistic political struggle, with succinct focus and characterized by vicious armed conflict, into a less sanguine but equally intense smorgasbord of micro issues -- involving a volatile mix of religion and ethnicity -- each of which is a potential political flash point. Thus, when construed from a systemic perspective Malaysia's turbulent evolution involves, of necessity in the interest of providing stability, the practice of an aggressive form of state centrism. Thus GOM policies are designed to keep in check the various elements comprising Malaysian society.[65]

GOM Policy Designs Towards the Orang Asli

Consequently statism, whether benign or malevolent, is an inescapable intrusion into Orang Asli lives, impacting the very essence of Orang Asli existence. In this regard different officials make ambiguous sometimes conflicting

[65]Malaysia's Prime Minister often advances this argument for retaining a tight grip on the country. Admittedly Dr. Mahathir plays the role of a Malaysian "Strong Man" but in this case the concept is not without merit.

statements about GOM intentions towards the Orang Asli.[66] Depending upon who is being quoted, and when, GOM policy objectives range from their integration, as Orang Asli, into the broader Malaysian population to their outright assimilation into Malay society as Muslims.[67]

When GOM officials speak of Orang Asli "integration" into the broader Malaysian population they usually expect them to be treated like other non-Malay ethnic groups (i.e., Indians and Chinese) who live in Malaysia as "Malaysians". This option does not involve a drastic change among the Orang Asli because it would allow them to be incorporated into mainstream life as themselves. However, in the case of "assimilation" the Orang Asli would be expected to embrace Islam, become willing members of the Malay ethnic category, and essentially renounce their Orang Asli identity.

To clarify which of these policy designs more aptly represents true Malay intentions one has but to look at the mechanics of the present Malay relationship with the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli are, unlike other indigenous peoples

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[66]For GOM's official position towards the Orang Asli as stated at the United Nations See United Nations, General Assembly, A/47/PV.85, January 7, 1993.

[67]G.N. Appell, Modernization and the Emergence of a Landless Peasantry: Essays on the Integration of Peripheries to Socioeconomic Centers (Williamsburg, Virginia: College of William and Mary, 1985), 89.

in Malaysia, under control of the Ministry of the JOA.[68] From a bureaucratic standpoint this means that responsibility for the Orang Asli belongs to one particular administrative system which regulates their health, education and welfare independently from those of other Malaysians.

So long as the Orang Asli are under the control of a single, and separate, administrative agency, the JOA, they cannot easily integrate into the mainstream of the nation.[69] To illustrate this point consider that Orang Asli children cannot be indoctrinated into Islam during primary school and then be expected to mingle freely with Chinese or Indian ethnic groups. Such an arrangement smacks of apartheid in reverse.

But it does not necessarily preclude their eventual assimilation into the ranks of the Bumi Putra. To grasp this nuance one must bear in mind that the contemporary Orang Asli/Malay relationship is based upon security issues

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[68]Tan Chee Beng, "Central Government and Tribal Minorities: Thailand and West Malaysia Compared," in Anthony R. Walker, ed., Farmers in the Hills: Ethnographic Notes on the Upland Peoples of North Thailand (Singapore: Double-Six Press, 1986), 195.

[69]Tan Chee Beng, "Central Government and Tribal Minorities: Thailand and West Malaysia Compared," in Anthony R. Walker, ed., Farmers in the Hills: Ethnographic Notes on the Upland Peoples of North Thailand (Singapore: Double-Six Press, 1986), 200.

and this concern colors Malay thinking about the Orang Asli to the exclusion of all else. Thus, the Orang Asli are being singled out for special treatment by GOM, the intention of which is to safeguard against the Orang Asli being manipulated by an outside force.

Short of eliminating the Orang Asli there are only two or three approaches which GOM may take. The most obvious would be their relocation outside jungle areas, but this was tried unsuccessfully by the British.[70] As we know, nearly one third of the relocated Orang Asli died during the process and GOM is not likely to employ this strategy again.

The alternative more likely policy would be to destroy the jungle around them or at least modify it to sufficient degree that it cannot harbor guerrilla forces. This process is underway and it is the source of much concern for the Orang Asli, but it is not the optimal solution from the Malay perspective. One doubts pressing development needs will allow a sophisticated leadership element to rationalize the absolute destruction of the nation's ecological system.

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[70]Colin Nicholas, "In the Name of the Semai: The State and Semai Society" in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes, Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur:
University of Malay, 1990), 69.

By some estimates jungle goods -- both plant and animal -- continue to be extracted in significant amounts. Boar is brought out of the jungle in great quantities by hunters for sale in area markets.[71] And many agricultural products like rotan, which is much employed in the manufacture of furniture, and various food stuff like the fabled Malaysian durian fruit also continue to be harvested.[72]

Areas which have been subjected to an initial logging that stops short of a clear cut and/or the usual swiddening practiced by the Orang Asli develops into what is referred to as "belancur". This is a form of modified jungle which actually possesses a more significant variety of plant and animal species than pure virgin jungle.[73] Consequently, the

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[71]A. Terry Rambo, "Orang Asli Adaptive Strategies: Implications for Malaysian Natural Resource Development Planning in Colin MacAndrews and Chia Lin Sien, Too Rapid Rural Development: Perceptions and Perspectives from South East Asia (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982), 252-253.

[72]To put it mildly the Malays are quite fond of high grade durian. This fruit holds a narcotic like attraction for its connoisseurs and their fondness for it borders upon a national obsession. Grade A durian comes from the deep jungle occupied by the Orang Asli and they do much of the work during the harvest. Cheap substitutes grown on plantations are available from Thailand (and to a lesser extent from Malaysia proper) but the quality is quite inferior. Hence, it is difficult to imagine that the authorities would permit Malaysia's own source to be destroyed.

[73]Abandoned swiddens are actually a very good place to hunt wild game. A variety of animals, including wild pigs, moves into these areas to feed upon domesticated plants which have reverted back to nature.

Orang Asli would not be the only ones to suffer deprivation from the jungle's complete destruction.

Thus, the optimal solution for the Malays is to make the Orang Asli less compatible with the Chinese and more like themselves. This would also be in keeping with the tenets of Islam which stipulate that new converts be sought out. Islam is discriminatory towards animists who insist upon adhering to paganism but they are not unwelcome to convert. Hence, it stands to reason that GOM's policies towards the Orang Asli would encourage their assimilation among the Malays as opposed to their integration into broader Malaysian society.

The Malays are obsessed with claiming majority status and are trying to position themselves as such due to their latent paranoia about the Chinese. Hence, they would like to pull all of the non-Chinese (and Indians) together into one racial composite.[74] This would give them a clear majority if the social obstacle (i.e. religious incompatibility) among Malay, Dayak, Iban, and Orang Asli could be achieved.

Technically this has already been achieved in a statistical sense because the Orang Asli have been

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[74]Means, "Aboriginal Policies in Malaysia," 646.

arbitrarily reclassified as Bumi Putra.[75] They have been placed in this category since the 1980 Census though they do not consider themselves as such -- in fact far from it -- and independent figures are no longer available for them.[76] Despite this attempt at obfuscation by GOM it is believed that the size of their population has essentially quadrupled since independence. Hence, there are enough of them for GOM to be worried about.

In this respect, the Orang Asli have become proverbial pawns in a zero sum game with realist overtones as the Malaysian state attempts consolidation into a more homogenous political entity by seeking hegemony over its ethnic components. The Malay desire to assimilate the Orang Asli into their own ranks is a partial means towards accomplishing this end. It also serves to augment the racial balance in favor of the Malays and away from other ethnic groups.

And so, within this greater context of religious tension, ethnic dissention, and political polarity, GOM

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[75]Bumi Putra literally means "Sons of the Soil" and is both a bid at legitimacy and ethnosolidarity by the Malays vis selective ethnic groups (i.e., natives of Sabah & Sarawak, Orang Asli and Malays).

[76]S. Robert Aiken and Colin H. Leigh, Vanishing Rainforests: The Ecological Transition in Malaysia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 99.

strategy is to absorb the Orang Asli into a Bumi Putra racial composite. Consequently there has been a very slow but discernable shift away from early policies which entailed a degree of autonomy for the Orang Asli towards more restrictive ones entertaining the idea of their future conversion to Islam.[77] Unfortunately this course of action precludes holistic integration of the Orang Asli and their culture because of their animistic beliefs which are anathema to Islam.

The implication for this analysis is that for GOM's designs to succeed the Orang Asli must cease to exist as a people. Such a possibility recalls the macabre words uttered by H.D. Noone about Orang Asli prospects more than fifty years ago to the effect that peoples don't die but their cultures can become extinct! This was a remarkably astute observation given what has transpired since it was made and it may well turn out to be true.

As a result, under what might otherwise have been more benign circumstances, Orang Asli attempts to adjust to modernity and establish a place for themselves in contemporary Malaysia have become entangled with broader issues. Sadly, in the larger scheme of things Orang Asli concerns are a relatively minor ingredient in what is

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[77]Means "Changing Environment," 87-89.

otherwise a potent concoction of interests vested with enmity. The ensuing tensions are exacerbated by uncertainty about the future, on the part of all the players involved, in what can only be described as a relatively new pseudo nascent post-colonial nation state.

Chapter 6

The Orang Asli Reaction: Ethnopoliticization and Ethnogenesis

The Orang Asli have not been idle in the face of this threat to their way of life nor have they been confined to their customary habit of simply retreating into the jungle. They are reacting to this disruption of their traditional life style and their response challenges customary thinking about them. Thus, having analyzed why the Orang Asli must react I want to address the "how" question.

The premise that Orang Asli are not politically inclined has been a popular misconception among Malaysians and foreign observers, alike. Recently the presumption has been that because the Orang Asli do not vote they are of little political concern to GOM and thus by implication apolitical.[78] Or, that since Malaysia's electoral system employs single member territorial constituencies with "plurality voting" and as the Orang Asli are spatially dispersed, they can not pool their votes to thus form an effective political force to pursue their land rights.[79]

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[78]Endicott, "Impact of Economic Modernization," 193.

[79]S. Sothi Rachagan, "Constitutional and Statutory Provisions Governing the Orang Asli," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto Gomes eds., Tribal People and Development in Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1990), 105.

These simplistic conclusions perpetuate older stereo typical notions about the Orang Asli and overlook what the Orang Asli have been doing recently to ameliorate their situation. The presumptions underlying this fallacy have created a roadblock in Orang Asli studies involving the treatment of several basic themes which -- admittedly I too have covered in order to reach this point -- we must break through in order to overcome the impasse. Key among them is that the Orang Asli do not have political power because their tribal leadership system is deficient -- having been weakened by the Emergency and previous depredations. Or worse, political organization among them is simply absent altogether from day one because of their primitiveness.

However, the evidence shows that they were organized to various degrees along tribal lines both in the context of high politics during the Malacca Sultanate and at the village/river valley level in subsequent times. The Emergency did not destroy this capacity among the Orang Asli because power is like matter -- it cannot be destroyed -- just altered into other shapes. The extended Orang Asli linkages formed during the Emergency simply strengthened ties among them which existed previously.

What we have actually seen since the Emergency is a diffusion of their political power at the local level but

not its disappearance. After the old leadership system(s) broke down because of instability among the Malays prior to the colonial period the bulk of Mikong power ended up in the hands of individual chiefs and headmen. Then the Emergency came along to extend this transmogrification and diffuse power further into the local level.

Traditional chiefs were compromised by the events of the Emergency when Orang Asli men failed to follow them because of disillusionment with their leadership abilities brought about by Orang Asli weakness in face of modern warfare.[80] In another disruption of traditional Orang Asli patterns of interaction during the Emergency's later stages JOA also distributed medical supplies directly to Orang Asli shamen. Consequently, they became much more influential over the Orang Asli and this enhancement in their prestige was at the expense of traditional chiefs.[81]

Finally, after the Emergency ended JOA began to appoint

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[80]However, many of them did succeed in recouping some of their prestige because the Orang Asli did eventually manage to come out on the winning side. In one instance a traditional leadership element simply left the camp by himself and returned to the tribes traditional Saka (homeland) and his people followed him later. Unfortunately, the trauma brought about by the Emergency scared the Orang Asli psychologically and many never fully managed to regain their old sense of bien etre. See Noone, Dream People, 203.

[81]Carey, 334-335.

its own chiefs issuing to them the traditional "surat tauliah" (letter of authority) heretofore reserved for Mikongs and to pay governmental salaries.[82] The position of these newly appointed officials was also buttressed to some degree by the creation of an Orang Asli para military force -- the Malaysian Peoples Volunteer Corps or Ikatan Relawan Rakyat Malaysia.[83] This group (known by the acronym RELA) receives arms from GOM but operates independently of the Senoi Paraaq, established during the Emergency.[84]

Although the cumulative effect of these developments was to weaken hereditary leadership, it did not disrupt many traditional leadership functions, and the hereditary chiefs remained in place. These traditional chiefs have since managed to arrive at a modus vivendi with government appointed leaders by refocusing the locus of their concerns away from village control activities towards broader issues

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[82]The Mikongs were leaders of mixed Orang Asli/Malay blood which the Orang Asli themselves chose.

[83]The RELA was created in 1972 and is concentrated in the Tasik Bera region. See Hood, "Orang Asli of Malaysia: an Overview of Recent Development Policy" in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 143.

[84]Of late there has been concern expressed by non RELA members about this unit which prior to the Emergency's conclusion had constituted the number three line of defence after the military and police against Communism. Now that the Emergency is over does the armed portion of this cadre which numbers approximately 17,000 men need to retain possession of its weapons? See The Straits Times (Singapore), 19 March 20, 1995.

like Orang Asli land concerns and the preservation of traditional customs.

The appointed leaders are viewed by the Orang Asli as creatures of JOA who essentially conduct a liaison function with this department. They are not to be confused with the hereditary chiefs who often exhibit charismatic traits and have a compelling influence over Orang Asli behavior. As independent agents free of JOA control they do not hesitate to speak out for Orang Asli land rights.

This preoccupation with land rights is, as we know, the greatest source of unrest among the Orang Asli today and as such it is the concern which merits most the attention of hereditary leaders.[85] So, what one really sees amidst these "on going" developments is an Orang Asli ethnopolitization and an ethnogenesis extending beyond the diffusion of power at the local level among the Orang Asli. Orang Asli power dissipated but did not disappear once it was defused -- it simply refocused and reshaped itself.

This metamorphosis is really quite significant when one considers that its roots may be traced to specific events during the Emergency. As we saw earlier hereditary chiefs,

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[85]Joceline Tan, "Voice of a Minority: Ba Tony Holds the Well Being of a Minority Close at Heart," Malaysian Business, 16 September 1993, 36.

sometimes powerful enough to control as many as 5000 people, met each other in large numbers during government sponsored propaganda tours to Kuala Lumpur. Now they have begun to rekindle their earlier colonial period meetings with one another by "rendezvousing" of their own accord.

These gatherings are small and somewhat informal in order to get around Malaysia's tough Internal Security Act which prohibits "political meetings". In conjunction with this activity the Orang Asli have also formed several regional "associations" dedicated to protecting their land interests. In 1977 they formed with GOM approval the Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM) which advises various state authorities responsible for development activity on Orang Asli land. From an initial membership of 300 POASM now boasts 11,000 members and holds annual "association meetings" which draw Orang Asli rank and file by the "bus load" from all over Malaysia.[86]

The Senoi tend to monopolize these organizations because "culturally" they have the most left to lose among the Orang Asli as assimilation among them is less advanced and because geographically more of their traditional areas remain intact than those belonging to other Orang Asli tribes. They also have the capacity to play this political

[86]Tan, "Voice of a Minority," 35.

role because among Orang Asli groups -- Jakun, Semang, and Senoi -- the Senoi presently command the most respect due to their latent military potential. So we presently see a lot of activity among members of this third echelon of the Orang Asli tripartite.

Initially POAS leadership positions were not coveted. But infighting and competition intensified once these positions were recognized as power bases for Orang Asli political development. Hence, displaced leaders now develop their own factions. Again, this is further evidence of political activity among the Orang Asli.[87]

State tolerance of this Orang Asli political activity suggests that Malaysia slowly but surely is entering into alignment with recommended world practices regarding participation of indigenous peoples in national political affairs. Indeed, this is a timely move on Malaysia's part given recent United Nations attention towards the situation of indigenous peoples generally. It places Malaysia on the cutting edge of nations which practice various inclusive development strategies for aboriginal peoples.

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[87]The Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), a documentation center for Orang Asli related matters, was established in the early 1990's. It also sponsors various projects to enhance Orang Asli welfare. Founded by a former POASM leader, COAC is a mainstream organization working within the established Malaysian political system. See Tan, "Voice of a Minority," 36.

Following upon the humble beginnings of POAS the Orang Asli have gradually broadened the scope of their concerns to include the issues of religious freedom and political rights. The critical event marking their political ethnogenesis was the 1982 Port Dickson conference of Hereditary Chiefs representing Jakun, Semang, and Senoi from Perak, Kelantan, Selangor, and Pahang. The Chiefs negotiated an Orang Asli manifesto articulating pan-aboriginal concerns, subsequently released it to the public, and sent a copy to each member of the Malaysian Parliament.[88]

This document proposes a tentative bill of rights for the Orang Asli people, and it is a landmark in Malaysian aboriginal political development. It has helped to capture GOM's attention by elucidating the extent of Orang Asli grievances with JOA practices and has initiated Orang Asli/GOM dialogue at the ministerial level. By this discussion the Orang Asli succeeded in bypassing an acronystic JOA and extracting some concessions directly from GOM.

The leader of UMNO's powerful youth movement, Anwar Ibrahim (who has since become the Deputy PM and Minister of Finance, i.e., Dr. Mahathir's apparent heir) agreed to meet

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[88]Means, "Aboriginal Policies in Malaysia," 650.

the Orang Asli chiefs later in 1982 to hear their grievances against the JOA.[89] Subsequent to this meeting Orang Asli leaders were told informally in 1984 that GOM would disband the JOA following the completion of the 1990 five year plan.[90]

In the aggregate these events are evidence of political behavior and ethnic mobilization among the Orang Asli at the grass roots level. The traditional Orang Asli leadership has essentially succeeded in forming the equivalent of an American interest group to pursue their agenda. It has also gone well beyond the land issue by broaching a number of other issues which indicate that the Orang Asli are maturing in terms of their perceptions of present political realities.

Press coverage of Orang Asli activities (given the careful scrutiny which the Malaysian press receives) is sufficient to indicate indirectly that GOM is not unwilling

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[89]Anwar Ibrahim himself was, prior to joining UMNO, recruited away from an Islamic youth movement with fundamentalist leanings and presently is the "personification" of regime coaptation in Malaysia.

[90]An interesting aside about this bid by traditional leadership elements is that it would deal a mortal blow to the new chiefs who hold JOA tenure in many Orang Asli villages. This would remove their immediate competitors from the political scene entirely, and contribute towards reestablishing the internal Orang Asli status quo, through external political dealings with the Malays.

to entertain Orang Asli concerns or negotiate with them. Illustrative of this point GOM's Primary Industries Minister recently went on record to denounce over-logging (much of which is controlled at the state level) and to threaten "an all out war" on this practice.[91] Thus, despite confusion in the constitution about Orang Asli land rights the Federal government has the power and the political will necessary to curb these state activities given the proper motivation.[92]

Indeed, GOM is a black box, inside of which we cannot see, but certain elements within it are undoubtedly more receptive to the Orang Asli than others and such sympathy has begun to manifest itself at a high level. During a November 1992 public address, Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammed invited the Orang Asli to join the ranks of the United Malay National Front (UMNO).[93] They were not invited to join as members of another party within the National Front coalition but as individual members of UMNO.

This was a substantial offer given the way in which

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[91]Jonathan Kaplan, "Malaysia: Science and Technology -- Logging Curb Brings Small Comfort," Observer, 5 September 1993, 56.

[92]S. Sothi Rachagan, "Statutory Provisions Governing the Orang Asli," in Lim Teck Ghee and Alberto G. Gomes eds., Tribal Peoples and Development, 103-104.

[93]Dr. Mathir was very calculating in the subtle manner in which he extended the invitation. See, The Straits Times (Singapore), 12 February 21, 1993.

UMNO has jealously guarded it's membership in the past. With this offer GOM diffuses tensions and buys time over the Orang Asli issue while trying to draw them into the Bumi Putra fold.[94] UMNO knows that, even in an open political situation in which the Orang Asli had their own political voice, the weight of numbers will work against them and that they must toe the UMNO line regarding party objectives.

Thus, the Orang Asli continue to try and value maximize while the Malay remain power maximizers by giving up as little as they can while maintaining their dominant position.[95] So what we see occurring now is a form of coaptation between regime and client group and its impossible to be coopted without engaging in politics.

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[94]The issue of Orang Asli participation in UMNO tends to obscure the dissolution of JOA in press reports about Orang Asli affairs. The message could be "forget about your Agung appointed representative in Parliament (because even though the representative may be ineffective Dr. Mahathir has his own problems, of a long standing nature, with the Agong) and calm down about JOA (which still has very close ties to the Ministry of the Interior) and come seek your representation through UMNO -- the party which Anwar and I dominate! Admittedly this supposition is speculative but its plausibility advances my hypothesis. If GOM is sending this type of message between the lines then GOM's belief is that there are some among the Orang Asli capable of understanding GOM's position. Hence, how could such persons not be political thinkers?

[95]For an interesting article about how UMNO and the Barisan National Front have taken to dispensing development dollars in order to woo the Orang Asli vote See Valerie Lee, "Malaysia Front Woos Voters with Development Dollar," Reuters World Service, April 22, 1945, BC Cycle.

The most recent evidence available supporting this contention is GOM's aggressive response to recent United Nations interest in indigenous peoples. Subsequent to the United Nation's proclamation of an "international year" in support of indigenous people GOM immediately sponsored its own international conference for indigenous people during November 1993 in Kuala Lumpur and sent Anwar Ibrahim to be the key note speaker. During his address Mr. Ibrahim borrowing a phrase from American politics promised the Orang Asli and other minorities that the Malaysian state would provide them "the instrument of affirmative action" so that they might participate more fully in Malaysian life.[96]

But he also covered his position by reiterating the often stated point that romantic notions about the Orang Asli being better off isolated and in a primal state were no longer feasible. He then added that GOM wanted to accelerate their integration into "global society" (as opposed to "Malay society") so there is some waffling between new promises to the Orang Asli and old ambitions vis their assimilation.[97] But the interesting point is that even though Anwar Ibrahim is taking a tough stance over the

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[96]This conference was quite large and had a diverse group of scholars and researchers in attendance. See, Bahaman K'Zaman, "Malaysia: Better for Indigenous People to Join Society," Business Times (Malaysia), 30 November 1993, 2.

[97]K'zaman, "Better for Indigenous People," 2.

issue of their remaining isolated -- on what one presumes is a sufficient amount of land for them to do so -- the mere fact he attended this conference, and in such a prominent capacity, is rife with implications.[98]

In sum, Orang Asli agitation about land rights by their grass roots organizations, which are restrained by GOM anti-sedition laws, is synonymous with pent up political demand. We know from previous political science research that when there is demand on a political level it will eventually be supplied. If and when the Orang Asli wholeheartedly join UMNO en mass they will have effectively taken the plunge into a political arena in which dialogue and not bullets are the medium of exchange.[99]

In short while the Orang Asli generally have not joined

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[98]This signal was also picked up by the French press which interprets Ibrahim's activities as signaling a new phase in Malay/Orang Asli relations. See Patrice de Beer, "Malaisie Kuala-Lumpur reflechit sur le sort des des peuples indigenes," Le Monde, 9 December 1993.

[99]In a development since Dr. Mahathir's November 1992 offer to the Orang Asli Malaysian opposition parties have also begun to actively woo the Orang Asli. Again the incentive extended to the Orang Asli is a promise to help them with the issue of their land rights. There is a real understanding among Malaysian politicians that the Orang Asli are numerous enough to influence the outcome of voting in certain areas and that they can be motivated by land concerns. This is a tacit admission that there are enough Orang Asli to make a difference. See, Jahabar Sadiq, "Malaysian Politicians Court Aboriginals for Polls," Reuters World Service BC Cycle April 21, 1995.

UMNO, they are beginning to evolve modern political associations and to position themselves to perform effectively in the Malaysian political system, just as they did during the Malacca Sultanate. Then one tribe functioned more or less independently of the others. Today these tribes constitute a single collective force in a highly polarized multi-ethnic political system.

Operating in turbulent political waters so to speak, the Orang Asli must contend with two powerful centripetal forces which seek to engulf them and to destroy their livelihood and cultural heritage -- land development and Islamization.

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate my findings and conclude this dissertation several fundamental observations must be reiterated. In so doing I intend to present an analytic review of the data acquired during the course of this research, establish that it supports my thesis and effectively substantiates my research hypothesis. This will validate my theorem postulating that the Orang Asli are evolving in a discernable way as a political entity.

I will also review briefly the implications of my research findings for policy makers. This is appropriate because their interest in Malaysia is not new. It goes virtually without saying that the Malay peninsula has long been a key spot in the South East Asian geo-political environment.

Analytic Review

First and most importantly the Orang Asli polity has developed gradually over time. We have observed great flux in their distribution and activities throughout the Malay peninsula over the past four or five hundred years to present. In a rough geographic sense my findings establish that the locus of their presence, as manifested in a political sense, gradually moved from Malacca and Johore along the West coast and into the central and northern

highlands.

Here it is extremely important to note that there are Orang Asli remnants everywhere in Malaysia. In this specific instance I refer to the physical byproducts of a path etched by a discernable political phenomenon across the Malay peninsula. Hence, much as the three time periods and three tribal groups (compartmentalizing the events in question and the various Orang Asli peoples involved) blend into one another -- map lines, designating Orang Asli concentrations across time, also blur from state to state.

Consequently, it is not appropriate to speak with too high a degree of specificity about any of these matters. This terminology simply represents a consensus among scholars about certain parameters within which they discuss the Orang Asli and issues relevant to this ethnic group.

But despite the many caveats, knowledge of this series of dislocations permits us to dismiss the notion that the Orang Asli have not experienced political change over time. We have seen quite a bit of political evolution or to phrase it more aptly a "cross" between political evolution and political devolution among various branches of this ethnic group. Orang Asli fortunes in war dictate that this is the case.

Thus, the Orang Asli are conclusively linked, in an ongoing relationship, to the earliest Malay presence on the peninsula. Interaction between these two broad ethnic groups was initially symbiotic and continued, over time, in one form or another despite periodic regional shocks. The operative words here are "type" and "degree" of relationship.

Rather than terminate or suffer a prolonged hiatus, subsequent to one disruption or another, the Malay/Orang Asli linkage simply metamorphosed into new relationships involving various types of labor mixes comprising military, economic, and agricultural services. Typically the Malays procured Orang Asli services one way or another, and there were many need-based arrangements among various members of these two ethnic groups. These exchanges always entailed a great deal of shrewd calculating and bargaining.

This observation in turn establishes the premise upon which the notion that the Orang Asli were ever simplistic may be dismissed. There are many references in the literature about how they made the best deals possible under the existing circumstances. Unfortunately for them the Malays were simply in a better position to extract concessions from the Orang Asli because they monopolized control over exits from the jungle interior.

Today Malay chiefs can no longer emulate German robber barons on the Rhine, but a built-in disadvantage continues to hamstring the Orang Asli. This is because the big money is in plantations and mining rather than the highly perishable products which the Orang Asli gather and trade. In any type of barter situation it is extremely difficult to extract concessions when one has goods on hand which require quick disposal.

Such is the case with the vast majority of jungle products which the Orang Asli sell or trade to middle men with perhaps the exception of rotan and various medicinal herbs. And so, now that jungle goods are less highly prized than during earlier times the Orang Asli economic position is weaker still. Thus, as in the colonial period economic demand has essentially bypassed the Orang Asli in favor of new interests.

The data also indicate that this initial linkage between Orang Asli and Malay was -- in addition to being economically and militarily based -- more often than not engineered around political considerations. The Orang Asli were an integral part of various Malay attempts to maintain their respective power positions. Thus their role never really changed -- only its significance and locus varied.

The inference is that the various parties engaged in political relationships are by necessity possessed of a political nature themselves. I make this inference because the Orang Asli were ever the victims in these relationships but they did try to compete across a spectrum of activities and pursue their self-interest when dealing with the Malays. They served as mercenaries and retainers to both Sultans and petty chiefs alike -- initially as vaunted allies and then later as expendable subjects.

Hence, the Orang Asli are a minority group and may indeed be fragmented, but they are far from resembling the simplistic neophytes incapable of political comprehension and/or expression described by some scholars. In fact exactly the opposite may be said to be true about the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli have proven themselves to be a shrewd and calculating people who are best not underestimated.

They have been fighting a tenacious rear-guard action against the Malays in four areas critical to Orang Asli survival and political development. Most recently the issues of land rights and religious prerogatives have superseded the more traditional locus of Orang Asli-Malay relations -- Orang Asli trade in jungle products and performance of auxiliary military functions. It cannot be over emphasized that by this point they are, of necessity,

savvy operators. Otherwise they would have ceased to exist as an autonomous ethnic group either due to assimilation or extinction.

I offer this Darwinian observation in an effort to answer the question which is obvious by this point -- why are the Orang Asli portrayed as such pitiful creatures? What accounts for this patronizing attitude among Orang Asli scholars and why do so many of them dote on the Orang Asli? Undeniably, the bulk of the literature available about them is much more critical of the Malays as opposed to the Orang Asli.

When one stops to think about it, the answer is equally obvious -- there is a natural tendency to sympathize with underdogs. The Orang Asli have indeed been playing against a stacked deck since the earliest days of the Malacca Sultanate. With every new losing hand they did manage to form novel alliances but just kept losing and losing to the point where they appear to be like the simplistic primitives which many people are so fond of describing.

However, despite the mounting evidence in support of my hypothesis the proof which permits us to advance the argument that the Orang Asli are indeed politically inclined comes later. The most striking evidence of their political

capacity manifests itself only during the post independence era. This is in part because they have been able to develop articulate spokesmen capable of using the national media to advance the Orang Asli agenda but also because of the type of game which they are playing at present.

The great irony here is that both GOM and Orang Asli are presently engaged in a classic game of regime cooptation. In the West we are familiar with this practice which was formally operationalized by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The term "cooptation" itself was popularized by Philip Selznick and has since experienced commonplace usage to the English language.

Presently it is a standard tactic in the repertoire of many public entities which reduces resistance to change by people, affected by public programs, in a trade off between governmental direction and civilian control. A key principle underlying the tactic of cooptation is to have faith in what one is doing -- that the other side will see reason -- because it is hard to stop once it starts and partial loss of control is part of the process. Islam is strong enough to do this and GOM is gambling upon being able to absorb Orang Asli resistance to change! The old days of conversion by the sword are over but Islam is no less potent now that Allah's strength lies in the force of persuasion

inherent in its ideology.

As utilized by GOM this strategy bears an uncanny resemblance on a more limited scale to that employed by Parmesvara in his early dealings with the Orang Asli. The decrease in scale is due to a gradual decline in Orang Asli numbers relative to the Malays. But in modified form continued use of the tactic is justified because even though the Orang Asli population has decreased relative to that of the Malays their strategic significance has experienced a sharp increase of late.

The Emergency could not have been brought to a successful conclusion by GOM without their help. As we shall see, should another external entity seek to introduce arms into Malaysia there would be many new problems confronting the Malays because of the Orang Asli presence in the deep jungle. Modern weaponry and improvements in the science of guerilla warfare mean that a relatively small population group can, with a modicum of external support, resist and or harass superior forces much more effectively than in the past.

Thus under the right set of environmental, material, and political circumstances minority indigenous groups like the Orang Asli present an ideal opportunity for agents

provocateurs. GOM fear of weapons circulating in the country outside of government control is such that possessing a single unauthorized bullet is a serious offence! Consequently in view of the high stakes involved both GOM and the Orang Asli have vested interests in playing a coaptation game with one another.

The Malays are motivated by the fact that they have been unable to completely absorb the Orang Asli and their elimination is not an option. Despite a certain amount of jockeying for position by elites and cynical manipulation of religious symbols most Malays take Islam very seriously. Mainstream Islam simply does not allow for the practice of genocide and even if, in the most unusual of circumstances, certain elements within GOM were to decide to try to implement some sort of sinister final solution to the Orang Asli problem others would surely oppose it.

From the Orang Asli perspective, engaging the Malays would be an exercise in futility with sufficient historical precedent to guarantee an unfavorable outcome. Although they are being squeezed between Islam and the land issue the pressure is not sufficient to provoke them into militant opposition. Consequently, they are looking for a less extreme course to pursue which demphasizes the volatile aspects of their relationship with the Malays.

Fortunately, one is available through the device of regime co-optation. In response the Orang Asli have begun a limited program of information dissemination and political mobilization with the intent of plugging into the established political system. For its part GOM has registered this activity and acknowledges it with very high profile signals regarding matters concerning the Orang Asli.

Consequently, the Orang Asli are advancing an agenda at the national level, and in this respect their political development has been substantial. Now its no longer a matter of many separate dealings with the Malays at local tribal levels but broader common concerns about land and Islam which are being collectively advanced at the Federal level. In essence, the Orang Asli have gained cohesion because they must now advance an Orang Asli `party' line focused upon reversing the long term processes threatening to disfranchise their remaining lands and religious prerogatives.

Thus they are evolving politically both in an inter Orang Asli/Malay sense and in an intra Orang Asli sense because pan-Orang Asli leadership elements are forming, demonstrating a capacity to lead their peoples, and collectively representing the Orang Asli to the outside

world. Watershed events during the post independence era include dissimilation of an Orang Asli manifesto of rights and formation of grass roots based organizations to lobby GOM. Once the Orang Asli were mercenaries now they have become lobbyists!

In this respect their various individual tribal relationships with the Malays have always been about the pursuit of self-interest and power, but now the elements in these relationships have been consolidated. Yes, undoubtedly they see GOM as a gate-keeper but they are trying to negotiate their way into the mainstream of Malaysian political life. This is where my findings diverge from research by sociologists like Rothschild who predict a hardening of fault lines among ethnic groups.

The Orang Asli/GOM relationship may have some militant aspects and be dialectic but "fault lines" are not hardening, as Rothschild predicted. Instead they are simply becoming more discernable now that the Orang Asli have become a politically coherent collectivity (in the sense that they all perceive land and Islam as problems). Land and Islam are motivational forces compelling change among the Orang Asli themselves, not to mention their broader relationship with GOM.

Concern about these issues has stimulated their ethnogenesis and this process capitalizes upon various things that happened leading up to and through the Emergency. Most important were the initial meetings of Orang Asli leadership elements under colonial auspices. Although, they remain fragmented by geography and spatially dispersed, they no longer suffer from the "tyranny of distance" in spirit.

But in addition to ethnogenesis there has also been a great deal of intermarrying between Orang Asli and Malay -- both physically and culturally. The Jakun in particular have, over the centuries, moved sufficiently towards the Malay -- albeit without adopting Islam -- to be referred to now as "Proto Malay" peoples. Hence, this is a critical time because the Orang Asli are wavering between joining the Malays and establishing their own pan-tribal ethnic consciousness. The fact that the Orang Asli balance of power shifted in favor of the more independent Senoi from the Jakun is what makes the issues of further studying their political development such a fascinating prospect.

Malaya and Malaysia have experienced many rounds of "fight and negotiate" between the Orang Asli and the Malay. Sometimes the Orang Asli fought against one group of Malays only to negotiate with or fight for another somewhere else

on the peninsula. Most recently this sequence of activity between Orang Asli and Malay has settled into more of a dialogue between regime and client group as both entities appear either unable or unwilling to pursue "diplomacy by other means" in light of the human cost incurred to date.

Thus we see in the final analysis that GOM policies have helped the Orang Asli adopt a collective "Orang Asli" identity surpassing their various tribal personalities. For a time they were thought of as slaves by the Malays and then as simple aborigines by the British but now the term Orang Asli, which was introduced by GOM subsequent to Merdeka, fosters growth of "Orang Aslism" and an Orang Asli identity. Thus they have come full circle and regained some of the identity which they lost after the disintegration of the Malacca Sultanate.

Applied Policy Implications

So far, I have been largely concerned with academic issues. But from a more pragmatic and policy oriented perspective, why study the Orang Asli as opposed to other ethnic groups which comprise Malaysia's population? How can knowledge about their political life benefit governments with interests in the region?

Outside a small group of scholars and adventurers the Orang Asli are a little known component of the racial mosaic which comprises modern day Malaysia. And so, to place them in context -- in terms of their greater ethnic environment and the political relations which envelop them -- the Orang Asli reside within a much broader collage of numerically and technologically superior Malays, Indians and Chinese. This panoply of races, along with a smattering of Thais and Indonesians, coexists in a strained modus vivendi. Each of these groups (except for the Orang Asli) enjoys leverage over the others by virtue of its respective size and, or proximity to brethren residing in neighboring countries.

To maintain a place for themselves in Malaysia -- a country which at times has repressed their existence -- the Orang Asli over the years have had to be a cunning people. In some cases they did so by undertaking a superficial assimilation into Malay society and in others by temporarily joining various political camps. Most recently their participation on both sides (i.e., as allies to Great Britain and to the Communist Chinese) during the Emergency is a major illustration of this tendency towards cleverness and expediency.[1]

They have demonstrated that their loyalties are only to

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[1]Dennis Holman, Noone 195.

themselves and no one else.[2] This means -- precisely because the Orang Asli have shown themselves to be fickle allies in the past -- that they are an unknown political quantity. A good way to describe them is as indigenous free agents!

External

If the Orang Asli should tire of their present modus vivendi with the Malays who could offer them a better deal today? Given the correct set of circumstances a variety of motivated sponsors could be induced to use the Orang Asli to achieve their objectives. Thailand and Indonesia both have experienced conflicts with Malaysia in the past and may do so again in the future over as yet unknown issues. Many Semang peoples live in southern Thailand and it is not inconceivable that the Thai government might seek to subvert members of this group residing on the Malaysian side of the border.

More immediately, though, the Malays are not on the best of terms with the Chinese-dominated government of Singapore. It is conceivable that if there were some form of Singaporian intervention on behalf of Malaysia's Chinese

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[2]R.O.D. Noone, In Search of the Dream People, (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972), 176.

(much racial tension exists in Malaysia between the Malays and ethnic Chinese), the Orang Asli could be immediately recruited to this cause. Chinese and Orang Asli have worked together in the past, and under certain circumstances it would not be unreasonable for them to do so again in the future.

The Malaysian Army is probably not capable of stopping a Singaporian thrust into the densely populated border state of Johore should hostilities commence. Orang Asli support, or at least their neutralization in the conflict, would be critical to GOM efforts to defend itself in such a scenario. Whether or not GOM could secure either of these conditions is a provocative question that merits an in depth analysis of Orang Asli political development and thinking.

In a non-conventional endeavor the Orang Asli could be surreptitiously supplied with money and arms, regardless of whoever is sponsoring them, as a means to exert pressure on GOM. A well funded Orang Asli independence movement is the type of scenario that GOM policy planners dread in that the Orang Asli maintain a ubiquitous presence throughout Malaysia despite GOM resettlement attempts. This is particularly true now that the Orang Asli tribes have begun to acquire a more distinct sense of collective identity which was absent in the past.

Complicating matters for GOM control of the Orang Asli is the fact that Malaysian aborigines remain dispersed in about 1000 villages and small nomadic enclaves of approximately 100 to 500 people each.[3] That they are so dispersed and in proximity to jungle areas to which they might retire makes it problematic for the GOM to say "yes ... we have them under control" in response to inquiries about GOM grasp of the situation in Malaysia's interior. It's true they are not doing anything detrimental to the regime at the moment but this could easily change.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to emphasize that, albeit small, the Orang Asli population and rate of growth are believed to be substantially larger than GOM figures indicate. Reliable figures about them available as early as 1952 were already higher than more recent numbers published by GOM.[4] In 1952 P.D.R. Williams Hunt the first colonial protector of aborigines, listed them as numbering 81,000 and possibly up to 100,000 individuals.[5]

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[3]Nor Hayati Abd Rasid and Faridah Abu Hassan, Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, no. 30, Bangkok, 1990: 148.

[4]Recent numbers published by GOM place the aggregate Orang Asli population at anywhere from 63,295 to 68,935 people. See Rasid and Hassan, 150; King and Parnwell, 78.

[5]Thus it is obvious GOM has tried several tactics to minimize the size and significance of the Orang Asli population for political reasons. However, such acts are not really an
adequate substitute for effective control nor do they

Nonetheless, over the years GOM has been in the habit of understating their numbers in census reports, and recently it has become more creative in the use of statistical subterfuge. Now, all of the Orang Asli have been reclassified as Bumi Putra or "composite Malay," and detailed figures are no longer available for their specific numbers.[6] Nor do publications issued by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs cite population figures any longer for the Orang Asli.

However, when one reads the field research of anthropologists, one may reconstruct population figures. It immediately becomes obvious that the Orang Asli population is much larger than information provided by GOM would suggest. Indeed, they have experienced fluctuations in reproduction levels because of the Emergency, but generally their numbers are rising due to medical care supplied by colonial authorities and later by GOM.

Yet, in some cases the population of sub-tribes has

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successfully hide the extent of the Orang Asli presence on the peninsula. Hunt's book was written shortly before his death due to a jungle accident for British Security forces and is presumed to be accurate. See, P.D.R. Williams-Hunt, An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1952), 13.

[6]Just as the pseudo Malay Jakun, were reported as Bumi Putra some years ago.

been under-reported by approximately 1,000 individuals. This was the case of the Jah Het. Their figures, as stated by Hood in 1982, surpassed official estimates for both 1974 and 1988 posted at the Orang Asli Museum in Gombak.[7]

Such discrepancies imply that the Orang Asli population -- the Jakun aside -- was under-reported by between 30 and 50 percent of its true level. Undoubtedly, there are other such instances and the conclusion one may draw is that there are many Orang Asli, particularly in the interior. This supposition is empirically verifiable because the Orang Asli presence immediately becomes apparent when one travels through isolated areas.

Internal

Although the Orang Asli are a small minority in Malaysia, they exist in sufficient numbers, given some sort of external stimulus, to create great instability in Johore state bordering Singapore where so many Jakun peoples live. Thus, when one attempts to impose an assessment of Malaysian ethnic realities upon the situation matters become more

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[7]Hood Salleh, "Roads are for Development? Some Aspects of Jah Het Social Change" in Development Forum 14 (January 1989):
21; Victor T. King and Michael J.G. Parnwell, eds., Margins and Minorities: The Peripheral Areas and People of Malaysia (Hull: Hull University Press), 78.

complicated. Creative thinking is required to understand what is taking place.

Many quasi-assimilated Orang Asli are much closer, in terms of their economic, cultural, and genetic identity, to the Malays than political distinctions presently allow.[8] Consequently, an Orang Asli/Malay confrontation might easily deteriorate into a Malaysian civil war. In this respect Malaysia is potentially as fragile as Lebanon due to the mixed loyalties of Malaysian citizens. Only Malaysia's wealth and the willingness of rich Chinese and Malays to collaborate and spread this wealth prevents trouble from erupting.

Malays generally loath Orang Asli, but for strategic reasons they are not resisting GOM attempts to assimilate them into their own race. While this transmutation occurs there is the distinct possibility that among those for whom this process is incomplete Orang Asli unrest might spark a problem among the greater Malay population. Malay ethnic harmony is fragile as they themselves are an unstable ethnic group with the issue being which group of Malays --

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[8]Geoffrey Benjamin, "In the Long Term: Three Themes in Malayan Cultural Ecology," in Cultural Values and Human Ecologyin Southeast Asia Conference, Conference Held in Honolulu June 1983, eds. Karl L. Hutterer, A Terry Rambo, and George Lovelace (Ann Arbor: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 234.

Minangakabu (Sumatran) Malays, Mandeling (Javanese) Malays, or those of Bugis extraction -- will ultimately dominate the peninsula.

Despite a common ancestry friction among these Malay peoples dates back to various migratory periods. Consequently, stability among them is maintained from above by the Malaysian state. It does not necessarily flow from below.[9]

And in as much as there are thousands of Jakun people in Johore state, many of whom pass as Malays but have not converted to Islam, the potential for civil strife is substantial.[10] If the less-assimilated Orang Asli were to prevail upon these "pseudo Malays" to join in an uprising, this could in turn provoke a conflict internal to the Malay. One missing ingredient could induce this development. Hence, another guerilla war in the Malaysian jungles is not inconceivable and such an occurrence would effectively

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[9]Again, it is important to emphasize the long history of conflict among various Malay potentates over the centuries. In this respect internal stability on the Malay peninsula is a relatively recent phenomena. Thus, the fore mentioned external threats are but one facet of this tremendously complex situation.

[10]As a responsible faculty member at the University of Singapore Dr. Benjamin does not overstate this point, but the implications of his remarks are clear. See Benjamin, 226.

destablize a key ASEAN member nation.[11]

Speculation about broad implications aside, the Orang Asli did not initially possess a sense of collective identity. They operated autonomously, much as independent nations states do today and in relative ignorance of one another's external relations and internal affairs. But if we can successfully make the argument that most of them were previously political, albeit in an isolated way, and that one group as opposed to another inherited a greater share of their former power, then the situation becomes much more complex. The notion that they have the potential to become politicized collectively and subject to consolidated leadership by a dominant group then becomes plausible.

This is the occurrence that realist strategic thinkers in the region could try to capitalize upon in an attempt to play the Orang Asli card in Malaysia. It remains to be seen whether or not the Orang Asli will be effectively homogenized and thereby neutralized by the Malays given their respective religious and cultural differences. Consequently, GOM may yet be haunted by repercussions from

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[11]Are such apocalyptic ideas far-fetched? When one considers the extensive foreign investment in Malaysia many of the potential implications of this research are deeply disturbing. Given the size of American and Japanese investment in Malaysia it would be disasterous for many business and political communities should Malaysia and her productive capacities become incapacitated.

its Orang Asli policies from this or other as of yet unidentified sources. The fact that the Orang Asli are subjects of such forced attention on GOM's part, because of this incompatibility, is what makes the prospect of studying their political evolution so interesting to Malaysia watchers.

For the present the Orang Asli have no choice but to bide their time and adjust in some fashion to their new circumstances. The question is are they attempting to maintain their social integrity and acquiring a collective political consciousness as a response to these external pressures? Left to their own devices the Orang Asli are relatively benign, but will they be impotent in the face of forces that threaten to assimilate them into Malay society?

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

New Bibliographical tools and expanding computer networks and information retrieval systems are literally "opening the stacks" of the libraries of Asia and the Pacific to scholars working in the United States.

I. Library Resources, Information Networks, and Bibliographies.

The most important bibliographic resource for my research, which can be accessed at the Indiana University Library is BISA (Bibliographic Information on Southeast Asia) at Sydney University, an ongoing cataloging and storage of literature in Southeast Asia available through conventional microfilm and microfiche and a computer link-up service to the Australian Information Network. With regard to Malaysia in general and the Orang Asli in particular, BISA also provides the catalog of the Singapore\Malaysian Collection at the University of Singapore Library and makes it practical to utilize the 1000 page listing of R.S. Kavini, Bibliography of Malaysia and Singapore, 1980.

Lexis/Nexis provides the full text of Malaysian newspapers, journals, and a wealth of legal and regulatory information. Carl Uncover provides access to other services such as the British Library Document and Supply Center (Article Delivery). Other computerized indexes used include the Social Science Citation Index, Books in Print, Dissertation Abstracts, and the Catalog of the British Library.

These sources provide access to many materials including Justin J. Corfield's A comprehensive Bibliography of Literature Relating to the Orang Asli of West Malaysia, published in 1990 and containing 1188 items. They also dip into the catalogs having the most important Southeast Asian collections, especially Harvard University, The University of Michigan, the East-West Center in Honolulu, Cambridge University, Cornell University, The University of Hull in the United Kingdom, Sydney University, and Singapore University.

II. The Ethnological and Anthropological Literature.

The ethnological and anthropological literature on the Orang Asli of West Malaysia is abundant. When combined with political, social, and economic histories this material is the best resource available for the study of Orang Asli political evolution over time. It reflects two very different research approaches: an early descriptive anthropological literature, sometimes romantic other times apologistic, undertaken from the turn of this century to World War II; and a more recent "modern" American anthropological approach, dating from the 1960's Peace Corps Days.

This is powerful evidence in support of my hypothesis. It elucidates an early Orang Asli tendency to be political in nature and hints at the requisite consistency of Orang Asli\Malay relationships over time for my hypothesis to be fully born out. A relationship must of necessity be established as consistent before it can be demonstrated to be exponential.

Most of the early studies give some attention to political organization and behavior and usually contain chapters on race, subsistence practices, religion, languages music and art (eg. Skeat and Blagden, Schebesta, Evans, and Sopher). Political structures, norms and behavior patterns can be extrapolated from this abundant data. Some examples are the following:

* Paul Schebesta in Among the Forest Dwarfs identifies "contact" as an endemic component of Negrito sociology, institutionalized with the form of a political relationship between the Negritos in a particular area and Malays who claim suzerainty over them.[1] The Negritos have long served as a buffer between more remote Orang Asli groups like the Semai and the outside world. They are, in effect, the first practitioners of Orang Asli diplomacy with external forces.

* Ivor Hugh Norman Evan's discussion of the curer (medicine man) in The Negritos of Malaya identifies a political role that continues until today. In fact it is being greatly strengthened (a boomerang political effect) as a result of recent GOM decisions to use the curer as a

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[1]Pages 32-32 and 41 are particularly relevant here and illustrate well how materials generated much earlier may be fashioned into contemporary understanding of an Orang Asli predisposition towards politics.

vehicle for distribution of modern medicines. Thus we see a shift in the balance of power at the village level which follows the social destabilization brought about by the Emergency at the expense of traditional tribal chiefs.

* David E. Sopher's study The Sea Nomads (Memoirs of the National Museum, Singapore) suggests the interior Orang Asli and the Orang Laut (the Sea Nomads) were partners in an extensive trading network across the South Pacific. This relationship was the economic basis of a further political/economic relationship between the Orang Asli and the Malacca Sultanates prior to Bugis involvement in Malay politics just prior to the Colonial era. The Orang Laut were also the original pirates of Penzance which belies the contemporary academic view of the Orang Asli as typically non-violent in terms of their nature.

* Geoffrey Benjamin, is a major authority on the early history of Malaya and further substantiates my hypothesis. In his article "In Long Term: Three Themes in Malaysian Cultural Ecology" Benjamin finds that the Orang Asli were an integral part of a larger ethnogeographic mosaic of the Malay Peninsula which evolved from broad organizational themes of cultures, "politically" inspired and propagated, and related to several basic organizational aspects of the relationship of people to each other and the lands in which they live. This tribal mosaic did not result from a series of discrete migratory waves, the conventional explanation offered by many other scholars.[2]

* Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya take Orang Asli provenance one step further than Benjamin stating that in old Malacca the Orang Asli and the Orang Laut were indeed in the majority. They were incorporated into the Melayu system of governance and imparted their own qualities into this society A History of Malaysia NY., 1982).[3]

* Robert Knox Dentan's study of the Semai tribes in 1968--The Semai: A Nonviolent People of Malaysia-- marks the beginning of modern social science research on the Orang Asli. A major theme in Dentan's work is that the Semai are free of interpersonal violence. His research also reveals

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[2]Pages 219-279 in Karl Hutterer, A. Terry Rambo, and George Lovelace eds., Cultural Values and Human Ecology in Southeast Asia (1985) are particularly relevant here.

[3]See pages 46-50.

an interest in "Kinship", "Authority", "Leadership", and "Territory" as factors affecting group identity. Of particular importance to my own research objectives he discusses Orang Asli strategy for playing the GOM off against the Malaysian Communist jungle fighters. This helps confirm that the Orang Asli are not new to the concept of diplomacy. They were going to have a representative on whichever side won the conflict and indeed for some time the conflict's outcome was in doubt.

Other contemporary work among the Orang Asli tribes has also been carried out by Clayton A. Robarchek, Alan G. Fix, and Paul Heelas.

III. The Administrator\Scholar Literature

A number of colonial administrators responsible for Orang Asli affairs were scholars in their own right. Their work provides useful insight over time into internal tribal political systems as well as colonial and GOM relations with the various Orang Asli tribes. They include:

* R.J. Wilkinson, Papers on Malay Subjects: The Aboriginal Tribes (1910). Wilkinson spent most of his life in Malaya starting as a cadet with the Colonial Army in 1889 and later rising to the position of Colonial Secretary in the Straights Settlements.

* H.D. Noone's Report on the Settlements and Welfare of the Ple-Temiar Senoi of the Perak Kelantan Watershed (1936), a rare and priceless work, the original of which I consulted, is the first extensive report on the Senoi people by a trained anthropologist. In addition to studying their composition and characteristics, he was able to develop many insights into their psyche. He decried the lack of a coherent policy on the Orang Asli tribes and proposed a policy of "Controlled Reservations".[4] His work formed the basis for the psychological warfare techniques employed later by CT's and Colonialists to recruit the Orang Asli. H.D. Noone held the position of Protector of the Aborigines, Perak. Tragically he was murdered shortly after the publication of this research.

* Richard Noone (with Dennis Holman), In Search of the Dream People (1972). Younger brother of H.D. Noone, Richard Noone was the Appointed Adviser on Aborigines in the New

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[4]See page 71.

Federal Department of Aborigines in 1953. He prepared the propaganda and welfare campaign to win over the Orang Asli tribes from the Malaysian Communists. He is also the person responsible for incorporation of armed Orang Asli components into the Royal Malaysian Army.

* Peter Darrell Rider Williams Hunt, An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines (1952) is a handbook for members of the British security forces posted in jungle areas issued shortly before his untimely death in the jungle. It is a particularly informative account of the Semai peoples and includes an extensive bibliography of Orang Asli materials then available in British, Australian, and Malayan libraries (Singapore University and its branch campus in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia -- now the University of Malaya).

* John Slimming, Temiar Jungle: A Malayan Journey (1958) is an account of his experiences while making a study of Temiar Senoi food production and their supply of Malayan Communist insurgents. He literally flew all over the country in a light plane for the purpose of collecting this information. The author was Assistant Protector of the Aborigines.

* Iskandar Yusof Carey's Ph.D. Thesis at Oxford University, Orang Asli: The Aboriginal Tribes of Peninsula Malaysia (1972), is the usual reference point for the classification and description of Orang Asli groups and governmental policies and projects for their development. Carey converted to Islam and served 14 years as GOM Commissioner for Orang Asli Affairs beginning in 1960. Later he became an Associate Professor in the Department of Malaya Studies at the University of Malaya.

Germane to the antithesis of this dissertation -- Carey holds the conventional view that among certain Orang Asli types the tribe is not a political concept.[5] His otherwise remarkable work and profound insight into the Orang Asli has helped to cement flawed external perspectives about the political nature of the Orang Asli. There are also historical antecedents to this perspective as it suited early colonialists to ignore the Orang Asli and otherwise adopt a paternalistic attitude towards them. Such a course of action did not include recognizing them as an ethnic group with a polity.

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[5]See pages 37, 136, 141, 161.

This paternalistic attitude continues to be useful and has, as mentioned, been carried over by GOM from Colonial times. At present it is one facet among many of GOM's campaign to assimilate the Orang Asli into Malaysian society.

IV. Primary Documents

A number of primary documents set the legal rules and policies that provide the formal political framework for Malaysian aboriginal evolution and development. These include most importantly the Constitution of Malaysia which defines the constitutional position of the Orang Asli and distinguishes them from the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia); the Aboriginal People Act, 1954 (Revised 1974), Laws of Malaysia, National Printing Department, 1977; the Ministry of Interior's "Blue Book", Statement of Policy Regarding the Administration of the Aboriginal Peoples of Malaysia, 1961; and the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning, Orang Asli Regroupment Scheme (1979). Together these items furnish comprehensive evidence of state power over the Orang Asli.

The Malaysian national bureaucracy is also a source of documentation about the Orang Asli. The agency charged with the general implementation of governmental policies and programs related to the Orang Asli, the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JOA) issues periodic reports. A number of standard GOM annual reports sometimes provide data on the Orang Asli, especially the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Planning (Five year plans) and the Department of Statistics.

On the negative side official census reports stopped reporting Orang Asli population data in the 1980's. Publications dealing with the Malaysian Constitution generally do not focus on Orang Asli issues in as much as topics pertinent to the Emergency and national security are extremely sensitive. F.A. Trindadee and H.P. Lee's, The Constitution of Malaysia (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1986) devotes only one brief paragraph to the constitutional position of the Orang Asli!

On the human rights dimension of Orang Asli relations with the GOM there are a limited number of United Nations and U.S. Department of State materials:

* United Nations Documents. Of particular importance are the reports and documents of the UN and UNESCO which

relate to the proclamation of the 1993 International year for the World's Indigenous People, the proclamation of international standards for protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, and the announcement of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples commencing December 10, 1994.

* U.S. Department of State Documents, The Bureau of Human Rights, issues Country Reports on Human Rights for East Asia and the Pacific. Malaysia (both East and West) in general rates very well in terms of GOM dealings with internal political matters involving ethnicity. At present there are few extrajudicial killings of any kind recorded in the country.

V. Orang Asli Political Mobilization

The GOM is not "overtly repressive" but it is "systematically restrictive" of political activities that relate to race relations in general and to the Orang Asli in particular. For example, the Department of Interior may detain persons suspected of political/racial crimes without court review and the Orang Asli are not immune to this sort of pressure. In light of these restrictions I have identified a number of documents and materials on Orang Asli political mobilization processes conforming to GOM standards of political correctness:

* Papers and articles issued by the Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (Orang Asli Student Association) founded in 1977.

* Papers and articles issued by the Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), Kuala Lumpur. The Center is headed by Anthony Williams-Hunt (Orang Asli son of the late Peter Darrell Rider Williams-Hunt of the British Security Forces mentioned above).

* Political journals of opposition groups, The Progressive and Aliran Monthly.

* Documents from the First Conference of Orang Asli Headmen, Port Dickson, 1982, including the "Memorandum 1982" signed by twenty-two headmen and setting forth twelve political goals and objectives. The goals and objectives provide a useful yardstick to assess Orang Asli political evolution in post-independence Malaysia. Taken together the goals constitute a modern Bill of Rights for Malaysia's Orang Asli, stressing above all land rights, security in

their villages, religious freedom and self-government in their territory coupled with representation in Parliament.

VI. Conference Proceedings

A number of recent conferences focusing upon Southeast Asian tribal groups and ethnic minorities include some research papers on Malaysian Orang Asli tribes. These conferences deal with contemporary ecological and social anthropological problems laden with nascent political context and relevance:

* Proceedings of the Conference on Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities: Prospects for the Eighties and Beyond, Harvard University, 1987. This is an example of the very best social anthropological work that is relevant to political science. Benedict & Anderson trace the development of ethnicity as the dominant factor in Malaysian politics & how it affects the Orang Asli. Kirk Endicott studies the effects of contemporary government policies and programs on the Orang Asli. The Orang Asli are not alone in their plight. Similar problems face other ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia and this volume links the Malaysian situation to the broader dynamics of the region.

* Papers of the Conference on Ethnic Diversity and the Control of National Resources in Southeast Asia, University of Michigan, 1986. Papers on the Orang Asli by Terry Rambo, Robert L. Wirzeler, and Alberto Gomes focus on the mise en jeu which marks the Orang Asli for exploitation. Again, the Orang Asli appear to be part of a broader process in the region.

* Papers of the Symposia on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism, XIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Vancouver, Canada, August 19-23, 1983. Includes papers on legal conceptualization and indigenous populations by Douglas Sanders. A growing awareness exists among scholars about the contemporary existence of legal plurality as it pertains to legal pluralism and folk law. This conference helps shed light upon Orang Asli status vis state law/international law in as much as they are one of many indigenous peoples confronted by these issues. This work further ensconces the Orang Asli issue into an international as well as regional context.

* Papers of the Conference on Cultural Values and Tropical Ecology, East West Center, University of Hawaii,

1983. Papers on Malaysian Orang Asli by A. Terry Rambo, Geoffrey Benjamin, et al.

* Papers of the 14th Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Southeast Asian Studies, Acadia University, 1984. Papers on Malaysian Orang Asli by Gordon Means, et al.

* Papers of the UNESCO Regional Workshop on Ethnic Minorities in Southeast Asia, Pinang, Malaysia, 1982. Papers on Malaysian Orang Asli by Hood Salleh, et al.

* Papers of the workshop on Tribal Peoples and Development in Southeast Asia, Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, 1987. Papers on Malaysian Orang Asli by Lim Teck Ghee et al.

VII. Assessment of General GOM Policies Regarding the Orang Asli (including the over-arching issue of land and territorial rights)

Aside from the organized conference papers and GOM publications there are numerous general assessments of GOM policies and evaluations in particular functional areas.

Land policies, territorial issues, and resettlement programs have attracted many scholars writing from several different academic perspectives (Kirk Endicott, Terry Rambo, Robert S. Aiken, Malcolm Gillis, C. MacAndrew, and M.B. Hooker, Barbara Nowak, etc.). Similarly, Abdul Halin Hamid and Nor Hayati Abd Rasid, have made assessments of health, social, and educational progress. Finally, Kirk Endiciott, Hood Salleh, Gordon Means, Sue McLellan, and Alan Jones have made general assessments of policies and programs.

VIII. Malaysian Contemporary Political History

There is an abundant literature on Malaysian contemporary political, economic, and social history from the 1940's to the present. These studies generally devote little or no attention to the Orang Asli. However, they are essential material in terms of the context and background provided.

* Cynthia Enloe, H. Ethnic Conflict and Political Development. Boston: Little & Brown Co., 1973.

* Barbara Nowak. "The Formation of Aboriginal Reserves: The Effects of Land Loss and Development on the Bitsi of Peninsular Malaysia." In Modernization

and the Emergence of a Landless Peasantry: Essays on the Integration of Peripheries to the Socio-Economic Centers, ed. George Appell, 85-110. Williamsburg Va: Dept. of Anthropology. College of William and Mary, 1985.

IX. Orang Asli Leadership

The historical and anthropological literature includes some observations about Orang Asli leadership and political organization at the tribal level. This is because limited reference to political structure was a popular academic technique when much of this material was written and continues to be employed by scholars with a European formation. Although it lacks consistency and depth this information may be consolidated from fragmentary references into a base of knowledge about present Orang Asli political potential:

* Signe Howell, Society and Cosmos: Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) includes a recent assessment of the Chewong economy, political organization and leadership styles.

* Narifumi Maeda, Authority and Leadership Among the Orang Hulu (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1971) studies leadership styles among the Orang Hulu.

X. Religion and Ethnicity

Orang Asli animist religion is a theme throughout their history and they want freedom to practice it today without interference from Muslim and Christian missionaries. Islam in particular is a persuasive force in the region and is the "official" religion of Malaysia. Very briefly, major authorities on this continuing theme of Orang Asli culture are as follows:

* Geoffrey Benjamin, "Indigenous Religious Systems of the Malay Peninsula", (1979), and Kirk M. Endicott, Batek Negrito Religion (1979). Marie Cuillard has studied contemporary Jah Het animist beliefs as reflected in wood carvings, Tradition in Tension, (1980). The author visited Jah Het workshops near Kota Baru, where carvers described by Cuillard hid their art works from Sharia religious police.

XI. Village Security and Armed Aggression

Orang Asli jungle habitants have experienced security

problems from the Japanese occupation in World War II and continuing through the insurgency years (1948-60) and until today. There is a growing literature describing the effects upon Orang Asli life and village structure due to this armed external pressure. Some examples:

* Spencer F. Chapman, The Jungle is Neutral (1949) describes life in the jungle during the Japanese occupation; A. Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1969 (1975) is based upon previously classified documents; and The Importance of the Orang Asli in the Malayan Emergency 1948-60 (1989) is an account by a former security officer, John Leary. Finally, The author obtained a copy of 539 News Clippings from The Straits Times and Malay Mail privately collected by the late P.D.R. Williams Hunt.

XII. Field Research

The author lived and worked in Malaysia from June 1989 to September 1990. He visited Orang Asli tribes in Kelantan, Selangor, Perak, and Johore. These visits were facilitated by Mr. Anthony Ratos, long time Deputy Director, Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JOA) and a leading authority on Orang Asli culture and social development. An abandoned child and orphan of the Japanese occupation Mr. Ratos was adopted and raised by Jah Het tribesmen in Perak.

The author had two meetings each with Jah Het tribal Chieftain, Mentri Bani and Mah Meri Chieftain, Mentri Pion. In the same time period for purposes of providing comparative insight about other aborigines and indigenous peoples in neighboring regions the author also visited aboriginal settlements near Albany and Darwin in Australia; and Dayak tribal settlements in Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo.

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