

# LIVING ON THE PERIPHERY; Development and Islamization among the Orang Asli in Malaysia

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## Chapter 2

# *Orang Asli History and Policy*

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

### **Invention of Orang Asli and Malay**

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

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

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

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

### **Land Rights**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Japanese Military Occupation and the Emergency**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

was expanded<sup>18</sup> and R. O. D. Noone (the brother of H. D. Noone, the Perak Museum director who died during the Japanese occupation) was appointed to head the organization. In the following year, the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance was enacted (Jones 1968: 296; Carey 1976: 293; Mohd. Tap 1990: 213). The implementation of the Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance was intended to steer the Orang Asli away from the Communist guerrilla influence, as evidenced by the Ordinance's ban on non-Orang Asli entering Orang Asli territory and distributing printed materials in such territory (Nicholas 2000: 82-83). The origin of today's Orang Asli policies can be seen in such military strategy during the Emergency period.<sup>19</sup>

### **Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance**

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

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

#### Section 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Orang Asli Policy**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

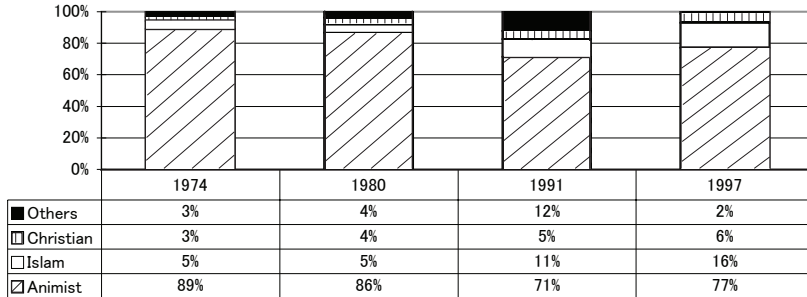
Ultimately, in this report, the Orang Asli community is positioned on the same level as the Malay community under the Bumiputra community. Judging from discussions about this report, some JHEOA members obviously resisted the assimilation of the Orang Asli with the Malays. Here, “assimilation” means the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

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

### **Islamization Policy**

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 5  
Current religious distribution among the Orang Asli population

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

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

Table 6  
**Muslim population among the Orang Asli**

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

Source: Figures are taken from the 1997 JHEOA statistics.

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

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

Source: Figures are taken from the 1997 JHEOA statistics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

### Discussion

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

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

### *Domestication*

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Integration and Assimilation*<sup>35</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Notes

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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