

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

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Chapter 10

Conversion and Resistance

As I have mentioned often in this book, Islamization has been progressively forced upon the Orang Asli since the 1980s. In this chapter I present a grassroots account of the actual situation in Kampung Durian Tawar and discuss Orang Asli responses to Islamization.

Islam is the national religion of Malaysia and is protected by a number of government policies on religion. In the 1980s the international wave of Islamic resurgence reached the country, prompting the Malaysian government to introduce a range of Islamization policies. As a part of this resurgence movement, as noted in Chapter 1, the government set out to “Islamize” the non-Muslim Orang Asli and from the 1980s implemented the policy.

In the face of Islamization, tensions between Islamic converts and those who refuse to convert have been on the rise in Orang Asli society. As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, I encountered a number of such disputes during my fieldwork. Although Islamic converts are in the minority in the predominantly non-Muslim Orang Asli villages, the slightest incident between convert and non-convert can turn into a confrontation between the government (which supports the converts in its Islamization campaign) and the Orang Asli, who are primarily non-Muslim. This makes it difficult for the non-Muslim Orang Asli to address the situation.

As I also mentioned earlier, previous studies have devoted little discussion to how the non-Muslim Orang Asli are responding to the Islamization policy.

Problems of Islamization

Refusal to Convert

The Orang Asli showed different reactions to the Islamization policy. Some people converted to Islam, while others refused to be converted to Islam. In the census of religious population among the Orang Asli, the numbers of Muslim Orang Asli have been increasing since the 1980s.¹

Conversion to Islam has had a great impact on socioeconomic and political order at the village level. For instance, in cases in villages where Batins and their kin converted to Islam, they monopolized interests of socioeconomic development projects. In cases where politically marginalized people in villages converted to Islam, socioeconomic and political order in the village changed drastically. Likewise, in several villages people were divided into three religious groups, such as Muslims, Christians and animists, and therefore dwell separately. In any case, the Islamic converts were still in a minority and most Orang Asli refused to be converted to Islam.

The Orang Asli can get political and economic benefits if they convert to Islam. However, in spite of the benefits offered, most refuse to be converted to Islam. Why do they reject the conversion? Dentan et al. mention several reasons for rejecting conversion: (1) fear of circumcision,² (2) food restrictions, (3) prevalence of traditional belief, (4) dislike of Islamic missionaries and (5) refusal to “become the Malays” (Dentan et al. 1997: 148-49).³ The details are as follows.

- (1) The Orang Asli are afraid of the Islamic circumcision, because they have no custom of circumcision except for the Semelai, the Jakun and the Jah Hut (Dentan et al. 1997: 148).
- (2) The Orang Asli themselves often mention food restrictions as a reason for rejecting conversion (Dentan et al. 1997: 148). They usually eat foods such as wild game, which is strictly forbidden according to Islamic food taboos.
- (3) The Orang Asli refuse to be converted to Islam because they hold firmly to their traditional beliefs. Likewise, their beliefs, prohibitions and rituals are intricately woven into their everyday lives (Dentan et al. 1997: 149).
- (4) Dislike of Islamic missionaries occurs because Islamic missionaries do not sufficiently understand the Orang Asli’s lifestyle and culture. Many Islamic missionaries show little

respect for the Orang Asli and, unlike Christian missionaries, they seldom venture into the back-country where most of the Orang Asli live; also, they never actually live with those who they hope to convert, instead preferring to make brief visits to them (Dentan et al. 1997: 149). Converting the Orang Asli is of marginal concern to missionaries in terms of the government's budget and human resource allocations (Hood 1991: 141-45).

- (5) The Orang Asli might refuse not only to become the Malays but also to “stop being the Orang Asli”. Most of the Orang Asli prefer to live among their own people, and they derive a sense of security from being part of their community and kinship network (Dentan et al. 1997: 149). The Malay society's lack of acceptance of those who have converted and become Malay has also been cited as a contributing factor in the Orang Asli's refusal to convert (Mohd. Tap 1990: 226, 453).

Converts among the Elite

Although the Islamization policy was not officially announced until the 1990s, the existence of the positive discrimination policy was fully recognized by the Orang Asli themselves.

For instance, it was widely known that school education pursued its goal of persuading the Orang Asli to convert to Islam. In a 1989 meeting, a JHEOA official said that Orang Asli school teachers should be oriented so that, in addition to teaching Orang Asli children, they should also conduct Islamization activities among the Orang Asli communities (Dentan et al. 1997: 145-46). In fact, this statement was contrary to the Aboriginal Peoples Act, which prohibits giving religious education to any Orang Asli child without a parent or guardian's prior consent (Dentan et al. 1997: 146). However, the actual situation was different: “education” was used as a means to achieve assimilation or integration (Nicholas 2000: 128).

In my fieldwork I encountered cases where parents refused to send their children to school for fear that they might convert to Islam. In other cases, parents often allowed their children to miss school. In the primary and middle schools where Orang Asli children are taught together with Malay, Chinese and Indian students, discrimination and bullying against the Orang Asli were found. Although it is not clear whether these were contributing factors, there remained a high rate of dropouts among the Orang Asli students. It has also been reported that Malay teachers discriminate and are biased against Orang Asli children. For example,



Plate 72: PTA meeting at the Kampung Baning primary school. Pupils study in this special primary school for the Orang Asli. Most of them stay at the dormitory. They come from Kampung Akai, Kampung Baning, Kampung Air, Kampung Durian Tawar, Kampung Dalam and some Temuan Kampung in Pahang. Batin Janggut and Batin Awang are seated on the front right first two seats. [NT-1997]

many teachers regard the minority children as intellectually less capable (Nowak 1984: 11). In some cases reported in the Mah Meri, Orang Asli children converted after they were made to feel ashamed of being “without religion” while mixing with Malay children (Mathur 1986: 177-78).

The Bumiputra policy gives priority to the Bumiputra in the field of education. The JHEOA provides support to the Orang Asli up to the high school level. However, the JHEOA offers little to help them advance to university. In university education, the positive discrimination policy that favors Islamic converts is applied in the scholarship selection process. Under this system, a non-Muslim Orang Asli student cannot obtain a government scholarship and, due to economical constraints, often gives up higher education, even if the university sets aside student places in the Bumiputra quota. Without converting to Islam, it is impossible for students to win a scholarship, which leaves them little chance of attaining a higher education.

Orang Asli public servants in the JHEOA and in Senoi Pra’aq form the elite of the Orang Asli community. They are under pressure to convert, which has a direct bearing on working conditions and prospects for promotion. Those who resist have no choice but to give up a promotion or to leave their jobs. Because of the positive discrimination policy in

education and among public servants, an increasing number of the Orang Asli elite are converting to Islam. It can be imagined that this will continue through the next generation. The elite Orang Asli families tend to live in cities or towns, quite separate from the predominantly non-Muslim Orang Asli villages. Although they may be of Orang Asli background, for many their world is the urban-based Malay society.

These Islamic converts provide the government's best model in relation to its Islamization policy. They could be seen as the modern version of the Malayization phenomenon, which has continued in various forms since the pre- and early colonial days. Given this Islamization accompanied with Malayization, the converts leave the Orang Asli community, where non-Muslims form the social core, and move their social life to the Malay community. In doing so, the elite converts have little direct impact on the social order of Orang Asli villages.

Converts in Villages

Islamization of the elite Orang Asli detaches the converts from the predominantly non-Muslim society: at the village level, however, conversion effects a penetration of Islamic converts within the society. In the latter case, the converts stay in the Orang Asli villages, where facets of the positive discrimination policy manifest directly in the face of the non-Muslim Orang Asli.

In the positive discrimination policy, Islamic converts receive disproportionately large funds for development projects. In Kampung Durian Tawar, for example, converts are the first to receive the housing subsidy for the poorest. A male villager openly admitted to me that he received assistance immediately after telling an officer of the JHEOA that he was willing to convert to Islam. Converts were also the favored recipients of the project that offered a subsidy to build chicken coops.⁴

Projects like these are in theory open to all Orang Asli, including non-Muslims, but when it comes to the actual granting of the aid, Islamic converts are given priority in most cases.

Based on my household survey of Islamic converts in Kampung Durian Tawar, each adult convert receives 150 ringgit per month. This amount is enough to live on in the village. In another village, Islamic converts apparently each received a television because it was deemed necessary for their worshipping practices (to view the prayer programs). It is also reported that Islamic converts living in the state of Terengganu were given motorbikes to enable them to go to their mosques (Dentan et al. 1997: 144-45).

The Orang Asli who form the lowest stratum of Malaysian society live in extreme destitution. Since the 1980s the government has neglected the development of the non-Muslim Orang Asli, while promoting the positive discrimination policy. As a result there are increasingly serious problems such as alcoholism, refusals to attend school and avoidance of development projects (having, as they do, hidden agendas of converting participants to Islam), especially among the poorest of the poor. Children have died due to malnutrition. Many of the Orang Asli villagers in this category converted to Islam in the 1990s.

In most cases, both husband and wife convert to Islam. Often poverty makes the wife convert first and then the husband follows. A new convert needs to apply to the Department of Islamic Affairs for registration. The documents require the applicant's signature or thumbprint. I heard that some men had to sign or seal with the thumbprint of their wives or relatives who had already converted. After the application to the state department office, the convert receives a document carrying his or her Islamic name, which is effectively an identity card. For example, Sieu bin Dodek in this process becomes Mohd. Idris bin Abdullah. New converts abandon their old name and receive a new one, regardless of their wishes.

When they die, Islamic converts are buried in a nearby Malay cemetery, not in the cemetery of Kampung Durian Tawar.

Many of the Islamic converts in Kampung Durian Tawar hold marginal political, economical and social positions. At the time of my survey (1996-98), the village population was approximately 400, out of which thirty or so were Islamic converts. Most of them were lower people who had lived in the forest and rejected the government's economic development and school education.

However, development and logging had reduced forest resources and caused changes in their forest environment, such that living in the forest was no longer possible. Unable to adjust to these changes, they became trapped in poverty. Converting to Islam was one of the few options they could take for their own survival.

However, most villagers resist conversion in the face of the positive discrimination policy and seek to adjust to the new environment by changing their livelihoods. These are the upper people. In the eyes of these people, the behavior of the poor who use conversion to Islam to receive benefits is treacherous and worthy of condemnation. Consequently, the converts are severed from the social network of non-Muslim Orang Asli.

Village Situation

Villagers convert to Islam for a number of reasons. As suggested above, the reason in many cases is not purely religious. This is evident in their post-conversion lifestyles, which are often very different from those that the government and the Department of Islamic Affairs officials expect good Muslims to follow. Although they are supposed to live a Muslim life, the village converts do not devote much attention to being Muslim.

The converts' behaviors are somewhat unorthodox in comparison to the common practice of Islam in Malaysia, where religious resurgence is quite marked. Village converts eat taboo food such as pork and neglect fasting and prayers. To the concern of the Department of Islamic Affairs, some converts claim that they are not Muslim once they have moved interstate. Some buy alcohol with alms given to support them. Of those who received chickens in the above-mentioned chicken coop building project, some sold the birds when Chinese buyers made an offer. Their chicken coops became storage sheds within a few months. Others even say they want to "quit Islam" when aid money ceases or when the religious discipline becomes too burdensome.

Non-Muslim Orang Asli and Malays alike often criticize these converts as being "Muslims in name only" (Dentan et al. 1997: 147). Nonetheless, government authorities, including the JHEOA, are not interested in improving the situation. Their primary goal is to see constant increases in the number of Islamic converts. They tend to focus only on boasting about the Islamic missionary activities they have carried out for the Orang Asli. There is even speculation that the JHEOA alters census results and exaggerates the numbers of Muslim Orang Asli (Dentan et al. 1997: 147).

A Divorce Case

I have so far presented a primarily macro view of Islamization among the Orang Asli. Here I discuss Islamization in Kampung Durian Tawar by examining a divorce case in the village. The divorce process began when the wife converted to Islam. The state became involved through "the Muslim missionary",⁵ the JHEOA and the police. In response, the non-Muslim *adat* leadership tried a number of actions. This case grew into a confrontation between the minority Muslim Orang Asli and the majority non-Muslim Orang Asli under challenge by the state-led Islamization policy. Behind this confrontation were the history of the Orang Asli-Malay relationship and the issue of the status of Islamic converts in Orang Asli society.

The couple started a quarrel, which would eventually lead to their divorce, after a seminar in December 1996 organized by the Negeri Sembilan and Melaka offices of the JHEOA. Batins were invited to attend the seminar, in which a lecture was given to help them understand Islam and where the Orang Asli were encouraged to convert. In other words, the Batins were urged to cooperate with the missionary activities held by the Department of Islamic Affairs and PERKIM. Biru, who would later divorce her husband, had already decided to convert.

Biru's Conversion

One can surmise that Biru converted to Islam for economic reasons. Her husband Bangkong had no farming business ability. Having suffered business failures in rubber and sugar cane farming, Bangkong's family was rumored to be in debt. According to the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar, Bangkong is an heir to the Batin and other titles. The villagers say, however, that he lacked leadership. Bangkong's risky farming business caused him to lose the land inherited from his parents, as well as the land he had cleared himself, most of which was kinship-related inherited assets. His debts rose because of this, and yet he continued to purchase expensive items including a television and a car, putting the family further into debt.

Bangkong's brother Adunan is believed to be the leader of the Islamic converts. He and his wife, who had already converted, encouraged Biru to convert as well. The Muslim missionary also urged her to convert. A rumor circulated among the villagers that the officers from the JHEOA persuaded her to convert by saying that this would make it easier to receive benefits such as a development project subsidies.

The Changed Adat

Following the abovementioned seminar, Batin Janggut convened a village meeting to explain what he had learned and what course the village would have to take. Complying with the JHEOA's request, Batin Janggut declared to the villagers that he would allow religious conversion, whether to Islam or Christianity. Having always disapproved of conversion to any religion, Batin Janggut's decision was evidently a compromise. On declaring the permission to convert, Batin Janggut announced how he would treat converts. After establishing a consensus that all weddings, funerals and other ceremonies in Kampung Durian Tawar would be held in compliance with the *adat*, the Batin told the villagers that there would be a change in divorce procedures.

He explained that if religion, especially Islam, is the reason for a divorce, the wife would be able to file a case. This, according to the *adat*, was not allowed. The *adat* was in large part amended to deal with Islamic law, which forbids a marriage with a non-Muslim partner. In Islamic law, when a wife or a husband converts to Islam, the marriage is illegal unless his or her partner also converts. The Batin addressed the conflict with this Islamic principle by changing the *adat* to open the way for a wife to initiate a case and make divorce easier. Batin Janggut's announcement might have been a compromise to the Islamization being pressed forward by the government, but in practice his aim was to stop more villagers from converting.

Appropriation of the Adat

As repeatedly mentioned, the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar can be considered to have been influenced by the Minangkabau-descent Malay *adat* known to be matrilineal. In the village, inheritance, succession of the leadership titles and marriage rules are practiced according to matrilineal principles. To the villagers, however, whether or not these came from Minangkabau-descent Malays has little bearing. Their *adat* may or may not have been “borrowed” from the Malays in the surrounding area; whatever the case, they actively appropriated the borrowed *adat* and put it into use in their own way. Citing the dilemma of having both patrilineal Islamic elements and matrilineal principles in the *adat* of the Minangkabau-descent Malays living in Negeri Sembilan,⁶ the Kampung Durian Tawar villagers boast of their own *adat* as a true *adat* (*adat benar*), free from Islamic elements.

It is worth noting that the *adat* “borrowed” from the Malays is being used against Islamization. The only counter discourse the villagers have against Islamization is their *adat*. Having given up their forest life in the face of government policies and other forces, and having lost a wide range of their customs, culture and tradition, the villagers increasingly see the *adat* as the source of their identity.

The identity of Kampung Durian Tawar villagers is at risk every day. They buy daily essentials at shops run by Chinese people. When they dress formally, they tend to wear Malay clothes. Orang Asli brides and grooms often wear Malay wedding costumes, because they hire costumes from Malay rental shops. Funerals, too, are no exception. They buy the tools required to set up a gravestone from Chinese or Malay shops and, as such, end up copying both the Chinese custom of burning paper money and Islamic burial practices. There is not a single Orang Asli restaurant.

They eat and drink at establishments run by Malays, Chinese and Indians. During Ramadan, they cannot eat out⁷ for fear of being mistaken for Malays and being arrested while eating at a restaurant. Even the names shown on their identity cards render them unsafe. Orang Asli names are altered in the Malay style (or the Islamic style with a *bin/binti*) when they are copied on the forms at hospitals or at the JHEOA offices on behalf of those who are non-literate.⁸

In these circumstances the Orang Asli meet the tightening of state-led Islamization by proportionally strengthening their *adat*. Against the Islamization, the villagers focus on the un-Islam-ness of their *adat* without paying much attention to its content. In fact, aspects of many of the rituals laid down by the *adat* carry Islamic influences. Detailed examination of the *adat* also reveals in its procedures (for example, for divorce and remarriage) Islamic elements not unlike those in the Malay *adat*, which the Orang Asli are believed to have borrowed (cf. Tomine 1975: 28-51, Tsubouchi 1996: 136-37). Because of this, some Malays assume that the implementation of Islamization in the Orang Asli villages is easy. The villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar, however, are not much concerned about whether or not their rituals contain shades of Islam. What matters to them is who performs the rituals. For them, in other words, it is important that they themselves execute the *adat*, which represents “their own way”.

If a ritual is performed in the Malay way, the *imam* officiating at the worship and other proceedings inevitably intervenes and takes the right to perform the ritual out of the villagers’ hands. When Muslim Orang Asli attend a ritual, they rarely stay for the reception to eat the food prepared by non-Muslims. When a Malay official or parliamentarian has a meal in the village, Malay cooks are called in to prepare the food using the tableware and utensils they bring with them.⁹ Malay and Muslim interventions in ritual leadership and proceedings diminish the villagers’ autonomy and self-determination.

In this situation, the village *adat* becomes an identity issue. In their appropriation of the *adat* borrowed from the Malays, non-Muslim villagers of Kampung Durian Tawar focus on the un-Islam-ness of the *adat* and use it to counteract Islamization and maintain their own identity.

Relationship with the State Laws

The villagers have some discretion over how they apply their *adat* because, as discussed in Chapter 8, they have special legal status as Orang Asli. I will not repeat that discussion here, except insofar as to consider how the law treats Islamic converts.

The lack of a marriage registration custom prevents state law from intervening in the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. Although the government's registration office handles marriage applications, only the JHEOA has any knowledge of Orang Asli marriages. Few Orang Asli couples register their marriages, even though marriage registration has been encouraged, as was the case at the JHEOA seminar mentioned earlier. The villagers' non-involvement with marriage registration has in effect protected them against the interventions of state and Islamic laws.

However, waves of Islamization are encroaching on the autonomy of the Orang Asli *adat*. This is most evident in the treatment of Islamic converts (Hooker 1991: 53, 55-57, 61, 70-71). In Malaysia, the Malays, who are Muslims, must in principle comply with Islamic law in matters of marriage and divorce. In such cases, controversies often arise over a contradiction between the unwritten *adat* and the written Islamic law (Pelez 1998: 303-19). As far as the Orang Asli are concerned, marriage and divorce procedures are matters of their own discretion. As they do not register marriages, any marital laws other than their *adat* do not apply.

Conversions to Islam among the Orang Asli were the beginning of legally complex problems. Islamic converts are Muslims, and Muslims are obliged to follow Islamic law. The reality of this principle is not so simple, as I have described in the previous two chapters. In Negeri Sembilan, the JHEOA issued a statement that the Muslim Orang Asli need not follow their Orang Asli *adat*. Nonetheless, the Aboriginal Peoples Act allows the Orang Asli to retain their ethnicity after conversion to Islam or any other religion. It is therefore not clear which law applies to the Islamic converts. In practice, many of the converts defy the village *adat* but they also do not necessarily comply with Islamic law.

Kinship and Power Relations

Here I consider the context of kinship relations as it applies to the divorce under discussion. The husband, Bangkong, is a member of a matrilineal descent group that holds leadership titles. The wife, Biru, is from another descent group holding leadership titles. The two descent groups together hold the political power of the village. Adunan, who converted to Islam, was also a member of Bangkong's group. After conversion, Adunan lost the right to succeed to a title and to the usufruct of the common assets (such as the durian orchards) owned by the group.

Although some are related to the upper people by blood or by marriage, the lower people of Kampung Durian Tawar are primarily those outside the two matrilineal descent groups. In other words, they have only marginal

status in the village power structure. To the upper people at the center of the power, the conversion to Islam by a portion of the lower people is not a serious threat. Biru or Adunan, however, are a different story. They belong to the upper people (although, incidentally, Adunan's wife belongs to the lower people). Their conversion is seen as the penetration of Islam into the core of their village society, such that the upper people can no longer consider Islam as someone else's problem.

In addition, there is confrontation among the upper people over the village leadership, which has some bearing in the dispute over Islam. Here I describe an incident in which the JHEOA summoned the *adat* leaders. Adunan's betrayal to the JHEOA directly prompted the authority's action, but apparently Batin Janggut's son Tikak was scheming behind the scenes. Tikak is non-Muslim. The friction between Batin Janggut and Tikak has ramified into confrontations over development projects and the village leadership. Tikak, once an officer of the JHEOA and now the branch president of UMNO,¹⁰ has strong connections with the Malay community and with the JHEOA and the state government. In accordance with the matrilineal *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar, Batin Janggut states that Tikak cannot become the successor of an *adat* leadership title. Tikak's late mother was from another village. Batin Janggut suspects that Tikak was scheming for Adunan's conversion. His suspicion is that Tikak aimed to cause a rift between Batin Janggut and Adunan, who was eligible for a leadership title, and to seize power with the backing of the government. Batin Janggut further said that Tikak also encouraged Bangkong, the husband in the divorce dispute, to convert.

In the meeting with the *adat* leaders, the JHEOA officials only raised questions relating to their land. However, it was later revealed that a letter, allegedly forged by Adunan, Tikak and other opponents of Batin Janggut, had been sent to the government. The letter, bearing the forged signature of the Batin, stated that Islamic converts would be punished (including the death penalty) according to the *adat*. This forged document, with its anti-Islamic message, prompted the officers from the police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to visit Batin Janggut for questioning. It also started a rumor that the government was moving to arrest Batin Janggut on charges related to the Internal Security Act. This incident marked the beginning of the second bout with Islam in Kampung Durian Tawar, which I discuss in the following chapter (the Islam-related incidents are chronicled in Table 23).

As described above, the Islam issue involves not only the conflict between the Orang Asli community and the state, but also that within

the community. The conflict within Kampung Durian Tawar is twofold. It revolves around the antagonism between the upper and lower people, which in turn is compounded by the power struggle for the leadership among the upper people. Those living in the marginal world suffer from troubles within, even when they are trying to resist the power of the state. This is indeed a direct result of how the state at the center of the power structure deliberately divides the marginal world and prevents its members from uniting.

Incidents Relating to Divorce

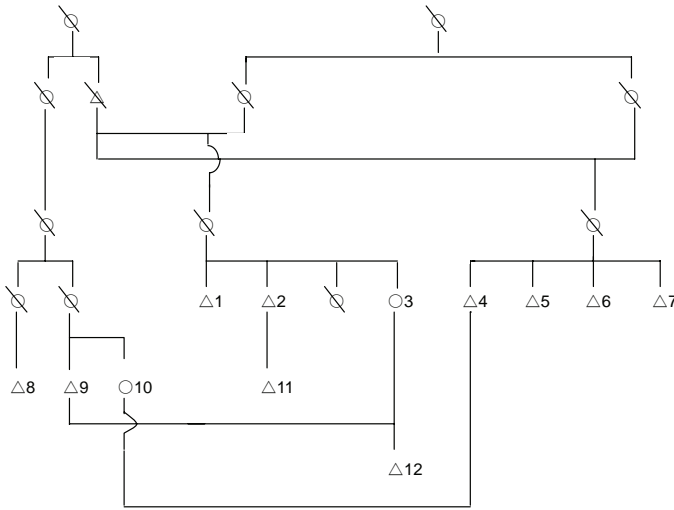
Divorce Consultation

The rumor of the possible divorce of the convert Biru and her husband Bangkok began circulating in March 1997. Since Biru had decided to convert in December 1996, the family constantly fought over the issue. One evening, a meeting to discuss their divorce was held at the village *adat* hall. The husband and wife, their families and relatives, and the *adat* leaders attended the meeting. Batin Janggut sat in the front, as did the other *adat* leaders. Biru and her children (including those married) took seats in the center opposite the Batin. The families and relatives kept a distance away, surrounding Biru and the children. The husband, Bangkok, sat beside the leaders. Tikak was present, but not Adunan (see Figure 19 for the people involved in the dispute).

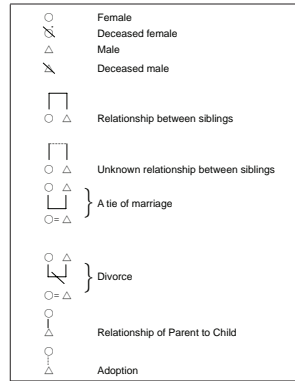
Batin Janggut began by asking Biru and each of the children if they had converted to Islam or, if not, were intending to.¹¹ All the children stated that neither case applied to them. When one of the sons answered in a very quiet voice, his *ibubapa* (mother's older brother) Ukal said to him, "We can't hear you. Speak up". Batin Janggut turned to Biru and said, "I hear you've converted to Islam. Is that true?" Biru answered, "I am a Muslim (*Aku Islam*)". Batin Janggut then asked if she could prove that she was a Muslim, adding, "I'm not a Muslim but I can cite Islamic prayers" and went on to do so.¹² Having not learned the prayers, novice convert Biru was silent. The Batin went on, "If you have converted to Islam, you must give up the *adat*. Did you convert knowing that?" Biru could not answer. Batin Janggut then turned to her family and relatives and asked, "She has been converted; what are you going to do?" They all shouted at her, the message being, "Now that you are a convert, we can no longer get along with you like before. We are no longer relatives".

Batin Janggut turned to Bangkok and said, "The situation has become this bad; is divorce not your only option?" Bangkok replied,

Figure 19
Kinship of the concerned parties in the dispute and leadership titleholders



- 1. Jenang Misai: Batin Janggut's elder brother
- 2. Batin Janggut: Married to seven wives with 33 children.
- 3. Manyo: Batin Janggut's younger sister
- 4. Bangkong: Husband in the divorce case
- 5. Menteri Gumuk: Bangkong's younger brother
- 6. Adunan: Leader of the Islam converts
- 7. Jekerah Asang: Tikak's ally
- 8. Mangku Hasim
- 9. Ukal: Biru's half brother, one of the *ibubapas* in the descent group holding the Mangku title
- 10. Biru: Wife in the divorce case, an Islamic convert
- 11. Tikak: Batin Janggut's estranged son, the branch president of UMNO
- 12. Genreh: Holder of Panglima Tuha title, a primary school teacher



“We’ve been constantly fighting over my wife’s conversion to Islam. I’m tired of it. I still love (*sayang*) my wife and don’t want to divorce. But I would have to stop eating pork and to use separate dishes. We could no longer live in the same house. I have no choice but to divorce”. Overcome by emotion, Bangkong began to sob. The sight of a grandfather crying drew tears from those present. Suddenly, Bangkong fell backward and lost consciousness.

The atmosphere changed from quietness to shock and despair. The children began to cry as they saw their father collapse and the scene became quite chaotic. Manyo, Batin Janggut's sister and leader of the women of the descent group, shouted, "Be quiet!" The people calmed down. Batin Janggut suddenly stood up. He cleared his way through those who were trying to give some water to Bangkong and picked him up. When the Batin hit Bangkong twice strongly on the chest, he recovered consciousness, sipped some water and settled down.¹³ Meanwhile, Biru had disappeared, probably because she was upset. Some people said that she might kill herself by taking an agricultural chemical, and began to look for her.¹⁴

Gemuk, who was then the Jekerah, acted on behalf of Bangkong's family and relatives. He paid 10 sen to Batin Janggut as the evidence (*tanda*) of the divorce. This was considered to complete the *talak tiga*¹⁵ procedure to make the divorce disallowing remarriage official. Biru was later found bemused at a fishpond and was said to have agreed to the divorce. Having witnessed the execution of the *talak tiga*, the people left for home in small groups.

A Beating Incident

The divorce was officially executed according to the *adat* and the dispute was considered to be settled. However, in practice this was not the case. To make the outcome of the procedure doubly certain, Batin Janggut went to the Kementerian Dalam Negeri (the Ministry of Home Affairs) with my research assistant, Asat, to explain the divorce but the dispute did not end there. A few days after the divorce was settled, Bangkong beat the Muslim missionary with the handle of a machete. The missionary had heard of the divorce by the village *adat* and visited Bangkong. He allegedly said to Bangkong, "You did not have to divorce. You should have converted to Islam". Biru had already left the family home and was living in a hut in a rubber garden.

As Islam does not approve of marriage between a Muslim and a pagan, the only options were a divorce or Bangkong's conversion. The village leaders solved the dispute by carrying out divorce proceedings according to the *adat*. The Muslim missionary, on the other hand, suggested that Bangkong should convert. Having hardly recovered from the divorce, Bangkong responded impulsively to the missionary's suggestion by beating him. Bangkong had been upset that the missionary had made Biru convert. He stopped short of attacking the officer with the blade because, as he later put it, he did not want to ruin the upcoming ceremonies of Batin



Plates 73-75: Preparing for the inauguration ceremony. In preparing food for a ceremony, men and women work separately. For example, in the case of making lemang (a glutinous rice cake wrapped in bamboo leaves), women's work is to put in glutinous rice and coconut milk into the bamboos. Men then grill the bamboos. [NT-1997]

Janggut's thirtieth anniversary in office and the promotion of one of his siblings to an office in the leadership.

The incident was reported to the police. Both parties, as well as Batin Janggut, Bangkong's younger brothers Asang and Adunan, and another village convert were called to the police for interviews. There was a violent exchange of arguments between the Batin Janggut and Adunan parties. According to Batin Janggut, nevertheless, the police blamed



Plates 76-78: Inauguration ceremony. The author is at left in Plate 76, followed by Batin Janggut, Menteri Gemuk, Jenang Misai. In Plate 77, with their backs to the wall are, from the left, Genreh (Panglima Tuha), Mangku Hasim, and Batin Janggut. In plate 78 (bottom) are the members of the traditional dance troupe with the *adat* leaders. This picture is still displayed at Balai Adat in Kampung Durian Tawar. [NT-1997]

the Muslim missionary's action and banned him from the village for two months. After this incident, Bangkong threatened Islamic converts, warning them, "You'll have to take more than a machete next time". As a member of Ikatan Relawan Rakyat (Peoples Voluntary Corps), Bangkong was licensed to keep a shotgun; as such his words could be interpreted to mean, "I will shoot you dead". The alarmed Islamic converts reported this to the police. After that, the police frequently patrolled the village.¹⁶

Inauguration Ceremony

At the end of March 1997 a ceremony was held to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Batin Janggut's office. The celebration coincided with other rituals, including bestowing the title of Menteri, the office of which had been vacant since the passing of the previous bearer (Menteri Lewat) in November 1996. The newly appointed Menteri was Gemuk, who had been the Jekerah. In another appointment, Asang was promoted to the title of Jekerah. The new Panglimas were also appointed in the joint celebration.

The beating incident was the topic of the day. Batin Janggut revealed to those present that he had turned down an offer from the JHEOA to hold a feast (*kenduri*) to express the JHEOA's gratitude for the villagers' "understanding" for Islamic missionary activities and to promote the exchange between Islamic converts and the villagers. Batin Janggut had worked for the JHEOA as its officer, an experience that certainly taught him how to deal with the government. He did report to the police when the divorce took place, which shows that he was aware of possible ramifications of not accepting the JHEOA's offer. Nonetheless he did turn it down, in consideration of the divorce being caused by Islam and of the friction between the villagers and the converts. The Batin chose the village circumstances before its relationship with the government. His action, although a passive one, could be interpreted as an objection to the government and to Islam. Batin Janggut's decision later complicated Islam-related disputes in Kampung Durian Tawar, for Islam was the very cause of such disputes.

A Muslim Divorce

There was a wedding in April the same year. Lunas married a Chinese widower in a simple wedding, no more than a feast attended only by their families and relatives. Before the wedding, a rumor started among the villagers as the big day approached. People were saying that Edy, the Indonesian (Javanese) husband of Lunas's younger sister Bangli, would oppose the match and work black magic on the couple.¹⁷ The rumor was based on further rumors that Edy and Bangli were not getting along and that he was scheming to marry her sister Lunas.

The wedding went smoothly, and no-one was poisoned at the reception. Prior to the feast, Batin Janggut soothed the people's anxiety by performing a ritual to seek help from the ancestors (*minta moyang*); he often "makes a request to the ancestors (*seru*)" using the *keris* (sword), which is an ancestral property or *pusaka*. A few days after the wedding,



Plate 79: Making a request to the ancestors. Batin Janggut is making a request to the ancestors with *keris*. The *keris* has been covered by a bamboo, which contains rice, medical herbs, oranges that have to steal in the neighboring garden. When making a request, Batin Janggut always burn *kemian* (special resin for magical use). [NT-1997]

the Batin performed a ritual to thank the ancestors (*bayar niat*) for the lack of any incident.

A few days later, Edy and Bangli decided to divorce. Although the *adat* does not allow the wife to initiate a divorce, the village meeting had (in January 1997) approved the exception for Muslims. After a fight, Edy left their home. His suspicious wife reported to the police that he was trying to steal a bike. As a result, the case blew out of control and the dispute (*hal*) was brought before Batin Janggut.

When marrying Bangli, Edy chose to wed according to the *adat* of Kampung Durian Tawar. As a Muslim, he was expected to register his marriage according to Islamic law, but neglected to do so. The marriage between Bangli and Edy was therefore outside the state legal system of both the civil and religious laws that cover matrimony. They therefore did not follow Islamic law when they divorced. Instead Batin Janggut, the executor of the *adat*, conducted the procedure.

The police was eventually brought into the dispute after Edy sought a portion of the acquired property (*harta dapatan*: property acquired by the work done by the husband during the marriage). Edy claimed that his acquired property comprised crops in the rubber and banana gardens and the fish in the farming ponds where he had worked, and argued that he was eligible for his portion, worth 1,200 ringgit. He had already received 700

ringgit from Lunas after making the same claim. Edy's action outraged Bangli, who reported this to Batin Janggut.

Although Batin Janggut and other leaders expressed their anger at Edy's demands, they decided to accept them pending a letter of agreement stating that this would be the last of his claims. Meanwhile, rumors about Edy were circulating among the villagers. One claimed that he was attempting to sell his wife and daughter; another that he had been selling the electric appliances that belonged to his wife. While the veracity of the rumors was not clear, it was at least obvious that the village was filled with anger and distrust against Edy. The distrust was further fueled by the fact that Edy was a Muslim and yet habitually drank liquor and beer, gambled and ate pork.

The night he was supposed to talk with Batin Janggut, Edy was too scared to step into the village. He instead reported to the police, and the Batin was called in. The agreement was exchanged in the presence of the police. Edy was made to promise never to visit his wife's house again. In any case, people were saying that they would not hesitate to shoot him with a blowpipe if they caught sight of him in the village. One Muslim was in effect evicted from the village.¹⁸

JHEOA Summons

At the end of April 1997 Batin Janggut received a letter from the JHEOA to summon the village *adat* leaders to a hall in Kuala Pilah on May 3. It did not state the reason.

On the night of May 2, the leaders held a meeting to discuss their response to the summons. Given the beating incident and the canceled feast, Batin Janggut was certain that Islam was on the agenda. At the meeting, it was decided that I (the author) would not attend the talks with the JHEOA. At the time, rumors about the Islam-related problems in Kampung Durian Tawar were heard even among the officials in the state government. I once visited the District Office (*Pejabat Daerah*) to obtain government documents for my research, when an official told me that Kampung Durian Tawar was "in trouble with Islam-related problems". The *adat* leaders and I were concerned that my research could be terminated if I was involved in the meeting with the JHEOA. Below I reconstruct the talk with the JHEOA, based on what I later heard from the leaders.

The village was represented by a thirteen-member delegation including five *adat* leaders and some junior leaders, together with Batin Awang from Kampung Baniang. Those representing the government included not only officers from the JHEOA in Negeri Sembilan and Melaka, but also

the director of the Division of Research and Planning (Pengarah Bahagian Penyelidikan dan Perancangan)¹⁹ from its Kuala Lumpur headquarters, as well as officers from the Department of Islamic Affairs and PERKIM. The talks were taped on video and cassette recorders brought by the government representatives, in the hope of finding fault with the *adat* and being able to use it as evidence.

The JHEOA representative began by questioning Batin Janggut about the village *adat*. Their exchange rambled on. Hearing the talks going nowhere, a Malay officer from Negeri Sembilan said to the villagers that the director did not understand the *adat*. Irritated, the director said, “What you are saying makes no sense, Batin”. Batin Janggut’s response was hardly short of abuse: “In the *adat*, you’re as *kaki empat* (four-legged, hence meaning an animal) as the chair over there!” The *adat* is an accumulation of different sayings. Its interpretation is extremely difficult. Batin Janggut attempted to explain it using the logic of the *adat*, while the director tried to understand it using government logic.

The Batin was puzzled over why he had been asked about the *adat* at all. As the questioning continued, he became increasingly impatient. When the Batin’s patience was about to run out, one of the young leaders, Genreh, asked the director to explain why he was asking about the *adat*. Genreh, a primary school teacher and former officer of the JHEOA, had recently been promoted to the position of Panglima. The director revealed that the JHEOA had received a complaint from a village convert, fearing that, in light of his conversion, the *adat* might dispossess him of the land inherited from his father. Batin Janggut later told me that the director should not have wasted everyone’s time and should have come to the point sooner.

Batin Janggut told the director that the issue was subject to the father’s will and the method of succession, and that the *adat* could not dispossess the man of his land simply because he had converted to Islam. As he began explaining the *adat* rules on inheritance of land, the video and cassette recordings were stopped and the talks came to an abrupt end without any definite conclusion.

Cohabitation of the Divorced Couple

In June 1997 people began talking about the divorced Biru and Bangkong. As mentioned above, Biru lived in a hut in a rubber garden, where she worked with Bangkong and shared tea breaks with him. Her life remained largely unchanged, except that she apparently stayed out of the house where Bangkong lived. A rumor claimed that Biru had been at the house

living with Bangkong again. Against the condition of their divorce, which did not allow remarriage, they had resumed their life together. Bangkong was in breach of the *adat* and Biru was in breach of Islamic law. Their living arrangement was, so to speak, cohabitation without remarriage.

Although it is unclear how aware they were of the implications of their actions in the eyes of the *adat* or the Islamic law, Bangkong and Biru were indeed living together without remarrying. The upper people as the core members of the Kampung Durian Tawar community could not allow their behavior to continue. Given the earlier discussion by their relatives over the divorce settlement, Bangkong and Biru presented a challenge to the authority of the upper people.

Jenang Misai, one of the *adat* leaders, suggested that they remarry by *cinabuta*. This is a method in the *adat* that allows remarriage of a couple who have been divorced and prohibited to remarry each other. The *cinabuta* method is also found in Islamic law (Tomine 1976: 28-51; Tsubouchi 1996: 136-37), although the villagers are not aware of this.

The *cinabuta* method works as follows. The wife (or the husband) first finds a new partner, who is also called a *cinabuta*. They marry and live as husband and wife for the next three days and nights (*tiga malam*). They may share a bed in some cases. They then divorce before the original couple can remarry.

The suggestion was eventually turned down, mainly because Biru was an Islamic convert. Another reason was that Biru's relatives had not forgiven her behavior and therefore publicly refused to perform the *cinabuta*-related rituals for her. The *ibubapa*, or head of the matrilineal descent group acting on behalf of the person concerned, performs many of the rituals in the village.

From the outset, Batin Janggut was against the remarriage of Bangkong and Biru. They had brought their dispute involving conversion to Islam before the *adat* leadership, resulting in divorce under the authority of the *adat*. The Batin condemned Bangkong for being ignorant of the significance of the *adat* decision. He was also critical of Bangkong's siblings, Menteri Gemuk and Jekerah Asang. They were responsible for Bangkong.

Islamic converts in the village began to frequent Bangkong's house. Bangkong stopped attending village rituals and meetings, and people said that he would eventually convert to Islam. The couple continued living together without remarrying in breach of both the *adat* and Islamic laws.

Aspects of Islamization

In the case of Kampung Durian Tawar, Islamization among the Orang Asli can be explained in light of the relationship between the upper and lower people. It is evident in that a portion of the lower people who have antipathy towards the upper people turn to Islam. Some among the upper people also convert as a part of their strategies to attain actual village leadership. It therefore seems appropriate to interpret the phenomenon of Islamization among the Orang Asli in the context of the village power structure.

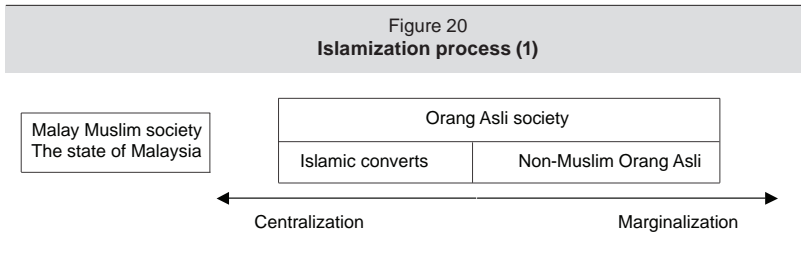
It must be remembered that power relations in Kampung Durian Tawar have in large part been formed through the interventions of state power. The government's development policy since the 1970s and Islamization policy since the 1980s have contributed to the upper/lower class division and to the frictions within the upper people. This is the very reason why people in the peripheral world are unable to forge a unified response to Islamization. As mentioned in earlier cases, Adunan (the leader of the village converts) and Tikak (Batin Janggut's estranged son) are involved in such state interventions, including those by the police, the JHEOA and the Department of Islamic Affairs. Backed by the state and by Islam, they are challenging Batin Janggut and his leadership. The situation illustrates yet another aspect of Islamization among the Orang Asli; this being state and religious intervention in village leadership struggles.

The phenomenon of Islamization among the Orang Asli cannot be fully understood without considering relations between the state and Kampung Durian Tawar. For this very reason, I dedicated Part I to a historical account of Islamization and ethnicity as well as the Islamization policies, while the current and following chapters focus on the Orang Asli responses towards Islamization, in particular through relevant incidents that occurred in the village.

Islamization among the Orang Asli has various intertwined aspects, and the complexity of these aspects makes it impossible to understand the whole phenomenon. For the present, therefore, I attempt to summarize the phenomenon in the frameworks of center and periphery, conversion and resistance, and tactic for resistance.

Center and Periphery

Where are Islamic converts placed in the Orang Asli community? In the context of the relation between the Orang Asli and Malay Muslim communities, Islamic converts in Orang Asli society are being assimilated or centralized to the Malay Muslim society. At the same

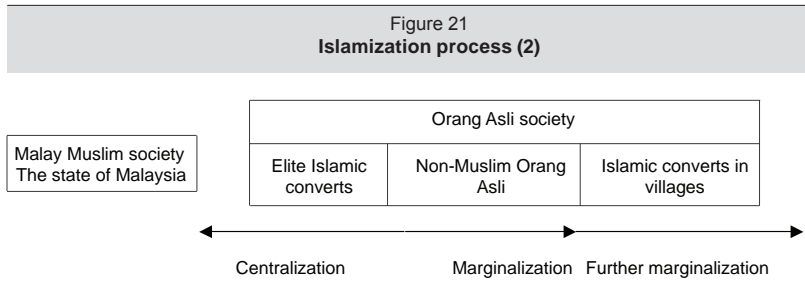


time, marginalization of the non-Muslim Orang Asli is also underway, as is evident in their refusal to convert to Islam (Figure 20). This picture resembles that of the “re-Islamization” occurring within Malay communities in Malaysia (the Javanese Malay community for one), as pointed out by Miyazaki (1998). Scrutiny of the Islamization phenomenon reveals that the centripetal force towards Islam also exists in the Malay communities.

What is unprecedented about the Orang Asli community is that this picture alone is not enough to explain its uniqueness. In this chapter I have described the situations of the Islamic converts according to the categories of the elite and the villagers (Figure 21). The elite converts are strongly inclined to assimilate to the Malay society in everyday life. As they disconnect from the Orang Asli society centered on non-Muslims, they become assimilated (or centralized) to the Malay Muslim society. This ideal scenario of Malayization has some historical continuity, and is precisely what the government has in mind in its Islamization policy.

Village converts, particularly those who have converted in name only, remain in their Orang Asli community. Their beliefs are not Islamized, yet their conversion to Islam excludes them from Orang Asli society, of which non-Muslims form the core. If they were to leave the Orang Asli community, they could not survive in Malay Muslim society.

In Kampung Durian Tawar development funds invested in the Islamic converts (the lower people) produce only temporary results because they are not equipped for development. This kind of allocation of development funds to converts draws criticism from the upper people. Having been living on the margin of the class order of the village, the lower people convert to Islam, which consequently pushes them even further into the margins of Orang Asli society (or at least that in Kampung Durian Tawar). However, unlike their counterparts among the elite, this does



not assimilate (centralize) them to the Malay Muslim society. Orang Asli society has a marginal position in the wider Malay Muslim society. The village converts are a new category of marginal people within the marginal world under state-led Islamization. Further marginalization best describes this situation.

The structures shown in Figures 20 and 21 are not separate from each other; rather, they comprise a mechanism to illustrate the process of Islamization. In the present situation the village converts do not assimilate (centralize) to the Malay Muslim society. Certainly, this situation can change; no one can deny the possibility that village converts will assimilate (centralize) with the mainstream society. However, here I stress that Islamization, explained by the structure shown in Figure 20, must be more accurately considered as a transition containing the structure shown in Figure 21.

Conversion and Resistance

In responding to state-led Islamization, the Orang Asli's two major options are conversion and resistance. Some choose to convert in order to survive in the education and employment system or to benefit from the government's development projects. At the village level, people convert for sheer survival, but as a result are excluded from the Orang Asli community. Taunted as "Muslims in name only", they nonetheless choose to convert in order to better sustain their day-to-day existence.

Deviations from Islam in the behavior of the "in name only" converts can be interpreted as the feeble resistance to state-led Islamization exercised by the weak in the Orang Asli community (cf. Scott 1985). In Kampung Durian Tawar some villagers may convert because they regard Islam as a useful political tool, and thereby simply use state authority and Islam in their struggles over village leadership. Although their behavior

is a kind of resistance, it is essentially different from those who refuse to convert.

Among the Orang Asli resisting Islamization pressures, some convert to Christianity or Baha'í²⁰ in order to avoid conversion to Islam (Nicholas 1990: 75; Mohd. Tap 1990: 457). Although the government tries to keep non-Muslim missionaries away, at least 1,500 Orang Asli had become Christians by 1984 (Dentan et al. 1997: 150).

Some Orang Asli parents refuse school education mainly because of the fear that it might convince their children to convert. The Islamization policy has caused great resentment towards the government and the JHEOA in particular. The Orang Asli resist joining regroupment schemes in part because doing so exposes them to relentless pressure to convert to Islam. They also resist taking government employment, such as joining the JHEOA and the Senoi Pra'aq (Dentan et al. 1997: 150). Although the efforts to propagate Islam do little to increase interaction and integration of the Orang Asli and the Malays, the Islamic missionary activities have contributed to the increase in tensions between the two communities (Mohd. Tap 1990: 455).

Orang Asli resistance to Islamization leads to their objection to the state. However, this is rarely publicly declared, and can be seen as "resistance without victory". Neither cunning nor flexible, the Orang Asli resistance derives from a sense of rejection so acute as to be inexpressible with words.

In state-led Islamization the state welcomes an increase of Islamic converts. The national authority is expected to respond to obstacles that hinder the increase, such as anti-Islamic speech and behavior, by resorting to the Internal Security Act. The explicit refusal of an Islamic missionary activity (as in the example of Batin Janggut declining the feast offered by the JHEOA) and the hostilities against the Muslim missionary would be labeled as anti-Islamic. These circumstances restrain the upper people led by Batin Janggut from taking direct action against the converts among the lower people and the Batin's opponents backed by the state and Islam, even if they are affronted by their behavior.

Tactic for Resistance

Through divorce, the *adat* leaders resolved the trouble caused by Biru's conversion to Islam. One of the purposes of the *adat* resolution was to prevent Bangkong from converting, as encouraged by the Muslim missionary. The divorce would sever the convert from the Orang Asli community. The alternative solution suggested by the Muslim missionary

amounted to an encroachment of Islamic converts into the Orang Asli community. The *adat* leaders chose to resolve the case with a divorce by the *adat*, which was the only “resistance tactic” available to them in the circumstances. However, this resistance tactic apparently failed, as it consequently created the situation of the couple’s cohabitation without remarriage. A resolution by the *adat* is extremely tenuous, as its binding power depends on whether the parties concerned follow the *adat*. Islamic converts, in other words, are rendering the village *adat* dysfunctional.

The current state-led Islamization policy toward the Orang Asli has produced Muslim Orang Asli, which was unheard of in previous Islamization and Malayization movements. As discussed in Part I, the emergence of Muslim Orang Asli reflects the change from the principle of integration in the British colonial government’s “divide and rule” policy to assimilation in the state-led Islamization policy since the 1980s. It is also a result of the discrepancy between the cultural and legal perspectives in the Orang Asli policy.

To this point in this chapter, I have described the Orang Asli’s responses to state-led Islamization, based on the cases found in Kampung Durian Tawar. My task in this chapter is to illustrate how the non-Muslim Orang Asli are coping with the circumstances in which the national authority backs the minority Islamic converts. The state and Islam are too powerful for the non-Muslim Orang Asli to form an effective counter-strategy. They can only respond to the nemeses with a temporizing “deal” or tactic.

In Kampung Durian Tawar the conversion of some lower people has caused changes in the village social order and in the allocation system of development funds. At the same time, opponents of Batin Janggut have been challenging his leadership, often with the backing of the state and Islam. In these circumstances, the upper people, who are the core members of the village, choose not to convert and persist in their resistance against Islamization, which is also seen as resistance to the state.

This makes one wonder where their resistance arises from. The easy answer to this question is that they resist the converts among the lower people and the anti-Batin Janggut group out of self-respect as the holders of traditional authority and wealth. Their instinctive rejection of the state-led Islamization exemplified by the positive discrimination policy maintains their resistance against the state and Islam. In short, their resistance derives from their pride as Orang Asli and their anger against the state. They resort to the *adat* as the ideological base of their resistance. Although the Malays understand that the Orang Asli borrowed aspects of their *adat* from them, the upper people use it against Islamization by

focusing on its un-Islam-ness. In this context, the *adat* ideology signifies the identity of those who put up the resistance.

As mentioned in Part II, the upper people's close economic ties with the Chinese make them confident of their economic survival independent of state-funded development projects. One report claims that the Orang Asli are strengthening their relations with the Chinese and Indians to cope with the hasty enforcement of Islamization (Mohd. Tap 1990: 447, 452-53). The Orang Asli also have "a world of their own" made up of magic and other things particular to them. This world could provide force for their resistance. Batin Janggut once explained to me that he would not convert because, given his magical powers, he did not have to depend on a religion.

In this chapter I noted a tactic for resistance involving use of the *adat*. Considering that this resulted in Bangkong and Biru's cohabitation without remarriage, the tactic seems to be unsuccessful. However, one thing is certain. The fact that the *adat* is discussed in a dispute over conversion to Islam proves that it is invoked as a counter-ideology to Islamic domination. The fact that the Orang Asli community discusses its own identity and the significance of its *adat* reflects the awareness of Islamization and other social realities surrounding them.

Notes

1. Nowak (1984: 11) argues that conversion to Islam includes changes in diet and eating customs, renunciation of traditional religious belief, and acceptance of Islamic values including, especially among the women, the belief in male superiority.
2. A document from the early twentieth century records circumcision and diet as the reason the Orang Asli (or the Sakai as they were called) do not convert to Islam (Machado 1902: 31). It also cites dislike against Malays (Machado 1902: 30).
3. Maeda noted the Orang Asli's dislike against Malays (Maeda 1969: 84). I also noted this dislike on various occasions during my fieldwork. On the other hand, Malays have a deep-rooted discriminatory view of the Orang Asli. This is especially strong in respect to religion, in which they regard the Orang Asli as *kafir* or pagan and therefore unworthy of belonging to their Muslim community (*ummah*) (Mohd. Tap 1990: 59, 101, 224).

4. Jointly supported by PERKIM and JHEOA, this development project was designed to encourage Islamic converts to eat chicken instead of pork.
5. His official title is Penggerak Masyarakat, and he was sent by JAKIM under the Prime Minister's Office (Jabatan Perdana Menteri). The true role of this officer is to convert Orang Asli to Islam (Nicholas 2000: 220). Since he came to the village in 1991, the number of Islamic converts has increased. The authorities involved in the Islamization policy towards the Orang Asli include JHEOA, a special unit called Cawangan Dakwah Orang Asli within the Islam Center (Pusat Islam), and the state governments' Departments of Islamic Affairs (called the Jabatan Hal Ehwal Agama Islam).
6. As reported by Kato (1980), there is flexibility that enables combined use of matrilineal *adat* and patrilineal Islam in Minangkabau. The Orang Asli see the *adat* and Islam as two incompatible choices. They believe an Islamic convert must give up *adat*.
7. This has also been reported by Baharon (1972: 6) and Mohd. Tap (1990: 137).
8. It has been pointed out that carrying a Malay name is the first stepping stone to Islamization (Mohd. Tap 1990: 229).
9. Baharon (1973: 37-40) discusses Muslim and non-Muslim diets, based on his own experience. Islamic taboos include meats of hunted wild animals (as well as pork), meals cooked by non-Muslims, and use of dining utensils that have touched taboo food. At the *adat* hall, pork is banned and other measures are taken in consideration of Malay visitors being Muslim. The villagers often said to me with a smile, "Rantau (the author) eats like us" (*macam orang kita*), by which they meant that they were happy about my lack of dietary barriers.
10. Non-Muslims are admitted into the ruling UMNO for a couple of possible reasons. For one, they are considered to be Malays, with their personal name carrying the Islamic *bin/binti*. For another, they have little political influence, unlike the non-Muslims in the state of Sabah. It was after the New UMNO was formed that they joined the party.
11. Because of the notice issued by JHEOA, it is important in arbitration to clarify whether the parties concerned are Islamic converts.
12. The office and residence of the Muslim missionary is next to the hall. Everyone was concerned that the officer might hear Batin Janggut reciting the prayers, which is an insult to Islam.

13. Batin Janggut is a medicine man. Called a *bomboh*, *poYang* or *dukun*, he is especially well known to possess the *ilmu* (magic, including sorcery), not only among the villagers but also in the neighboring regions including the Malay community and throughout the Orang Asli community. People are afraid of his magical power.
14. In Kampung Durian Tawar there had been two incidents in which a villager committed suicide by taking an agricultural chemical. At the time, a girl who had converted to Islam in another village also committed suicide in this way.
15. *Talak tiga* means divorce made irrevocable by uttering *talak* (divorce) three times.
16. One of the police officers was rumored to be persistently urging villagers to convert to Islam. He was believed to be giving advice to the Islamic converts.
17. In Malaysia, Indonesians are believed to be able to use *ilmu* or black magic. This belief indicates the mixed emotions of fear and discrimination that the Malaysians hold towards Indonesian migrant workers.
18. Bangli and Edy's daughter died of dengue fever in August 2002. Edy had since married a Malay woman and lived in a nearby village. He was seen weeping bitterly at his daughter's funeral.
19. This division of JHEOA is responsible for Islamic affairs.
20. According to the Islamic Encyclopedia in Japanese, Baha'i is a new religion founded by Baha' Ullah in the nineteenth century and with an influence of Bab (Kuroyanagi 1982: 304). In Iran the religion is considered heretical and is banned. Based in the Palestinian city of Haifa, Baha'i continues its missionary activities, which reach Europe and North America.