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

Chapter 1

Forest, Development and Islamization

Who are the Orang Asli?

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

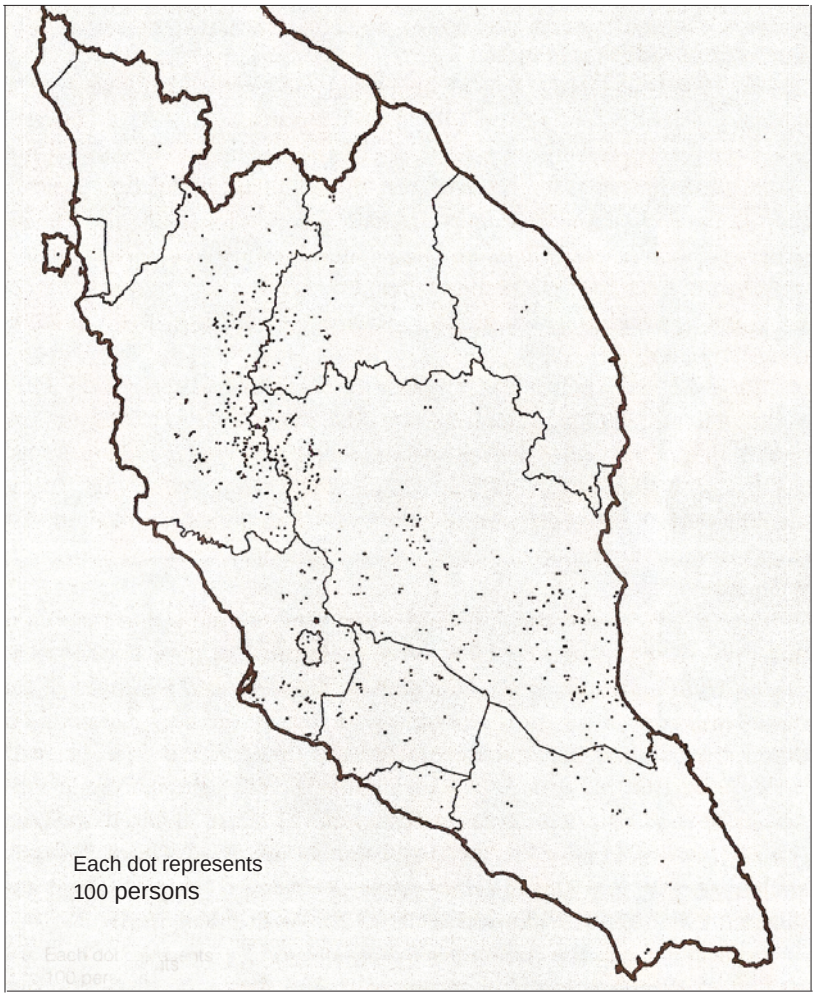
As Nicholas (2000: 6) has pointed out, the Orang Asli did not exist as an ethnic entity before 1960 (i.e. before Malaysian independence) or, to be more precise, the various indigenous peoples of the Malay Peninsula did not see themselves as a homogeneous group.[4] The Malaysian government began officially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

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

Figure 1
Subgroups of the Orang Asli

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

Figure 2
Distribution of Orang Asli villages



Source: Nicholas 2000: 50

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

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

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

Compiled from Nobuta 1999b:189

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

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

Compiled from Nobuta 1996b:189
* 1 The listed numbers for the Temoq are given where available, as they were counted as Jakun (then known as Orang Hulu), along with Orang Hulu. As a result, there may be a discrepancy in the total.

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

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

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

Temuan: A Group under Study

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

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

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

Source: The 1996 population census, JHEOA

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

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

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

Orang Asli Identity as Forest People

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

Different Worlds

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

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

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

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

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

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

Image

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A "not Muslim" Identity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

2. Senoi, meaning "people" in the local language of the Semai, includes the Semai, Temiar, Che Wong, Jah Hut, Semaq Beri and Mah Meri. However, Senoi is only an administrative ethnic grouping, as these people do not share a sense of belonging to one ethnic group. The Senoi population, as recorded in 1996, was 49,440. Their language, unlike Malay, which belongs to the Austronesian family, belongs to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic family. In a recent classification, it belongs to the Asli language branch. Most of them live in the Main Range (in other words, the forests) of the central part of the Malay Peninsula, but the Mah Meri live on the coast along the Strait of Malacca. Their livelihood has changed drastically. While

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

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

4. Other peoples in the Malay Peninsula identified them in association with their particular local geographical features, such as "people in the upstream area" (Orang Hulu), "people in the remote area" (Orang Darat) and "people on the coast" (Orang Laut). There were also some disparaging identifications, such as "wild people" (Orang Liar), "fresh tree eaters" (Pangan), "apelike people" (Orang Mawas) and

"domesticated or enslaved people" (Orang Jinak) (Maxwell 1880: 47; Skeat and Blagden 1906: 19-24; Wilkinson 1971: 15-20).

5. The word "aborigines", like "abo" and "abos", had derogatory connotations (Jimin 1983: 3).

6. It is believed that some 60-70% of the Orang Asli area is not legally recognized (Mohd. Tap 1990: 71). Private ownership is not recognized because not recognizing ownership is conceived to be better for them. According to this understanding, the Orang Asli are so poor that they would not be able to pay the land tax, and they would be forced to sell their land to the Chinese and others (Nicholas 2000: 119). Recently the government seems to have become more willing to recognize the private ownership of the land by the Orang Asli people, but its approach is replete with problems. For example, it does not respect the traditional custom of "communal ownership" of land (Nicholas 2000: 121-22). Some scholars argue against the government approach, claiming that it is possible to give the Orang Asli land rights by providing them with decent protection measures as applied to the Malay reserves where private ownership of the land is granted (e.g. Hooker 1976, 1996; Liow 1980; Rachagan 1990).

7. In response, they have set up a non-government organization of their own to promote self-help activities and political lobbying. This is the Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM, Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association). POASM was set up in 1976 by Orang Asli staff of JHEOA (Jimin 1983: 145-46). It now has a wide membership among the Orang Asli. Apart from POASM, the activities of the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, established in 1989, should be noted. For POASM and the Center for Orang Asli Concerns, see Dentan et al. (1997: 153-55). Though unsuccessful, POASM and the Center for Orang Asli Concerns played a central role in campaigning in 1999 for the first Orang Asli candidate in a general election (Nicholas 2000: 162-70).

8. The Portuguese began Christian missionary activities in Melaka following colonization in 1511. Their activities, however, were limited to the Portuguese residential area and the area around Melaka (Hassan 1994: 147). Full-scale Christian missionary activities aimed at the residents of the Malay Peninsula, especially the non-Muslim Orang Asli, began only in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the British colonial era. Father Borie conducted the first missionary

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

9. Apart from Baharon's work (1973), ethnographic reports on the Temuan people include those of Dunn (1975, 1977), Gomes (1982) and Ali (1980). There are also occasional monographs dealing with the traditional religions, such as that by Azizah Kassim (1979).

10. This was the original place of the current Temuan residential communities. An increase in demand for forest products has also brought about changes. In Selangor forest products had already become cash commodities, no longer simply items for bartering, even before the Japanese military invasion. The rubber tapping business began in the 1930s (Dunn 1977: 86).

11. It is obvious that the forest no longer exists in isolation, in terms of its development and protection. It is said that the so-called environmental issue has become more obvious in two respects, notably resource depletion and environmental pollution (Ichikawa 1997: 135).

12. The Orang Asli point of view is that the Malays belong to the village, the Chinese to the town and "we" to the jungle (Carey 1976: 37; Roseman 1984: 2). The awe those settled villagers (especially the Malays) feel towards the forest derives from the fact that the forest is outside their territory.

13. The forest on the outer periphery as the frontier has gone through various changes in the context of economic development in Southeast Asia (Otome 1995: 82).

14. Many scholars discuss the image of the Orang Asli as forest people in articles and books (e.g. Hood 1993; Roseman 1998; Winzeler (ed.) 1997; Benjamin and Chou (eds.) 2002; Lye 2004).

15. Fukushima (1991: 97) states that in Indonesia, "those people without religious faith" are put under the same pressure as those who are labeled as the remaining members of the Indonesian Communist Party. The situation is very similar in Malaysia, where "non-believers" are also subjected to discrimination and persecution.