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

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Chapter 3

Landscape

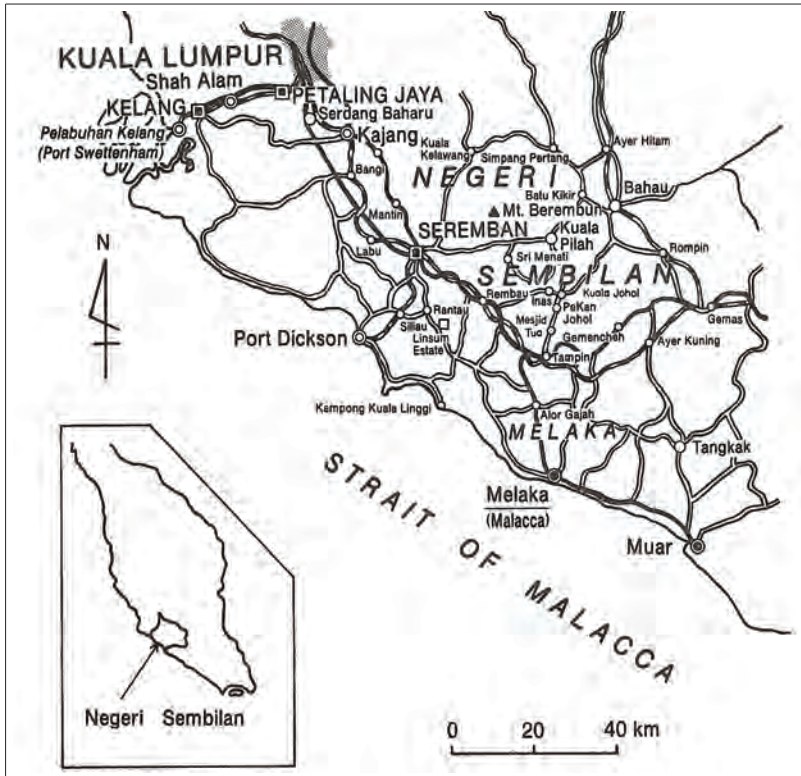
Surrounding Region

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

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

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

Figure 3
Negeri Sembilan and surrounding area



Source: Kato (1991:110)

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

Jelebu and Pertang

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

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

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

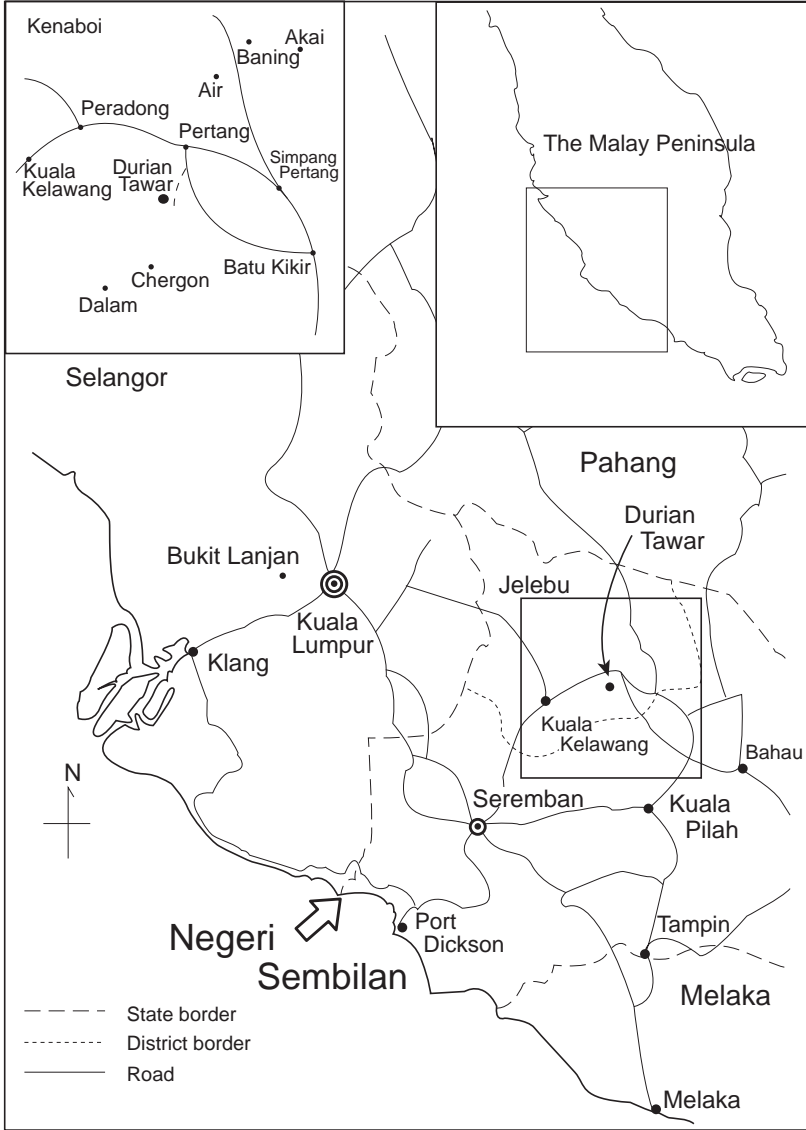
Source: Date compiled from Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (1995a; 1995b)

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

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

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

Figure 4
The Fieldwork Area



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From Pertang to Kampung Durian Tawar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Village Landscape

Malay Village and Orang Asli Village

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

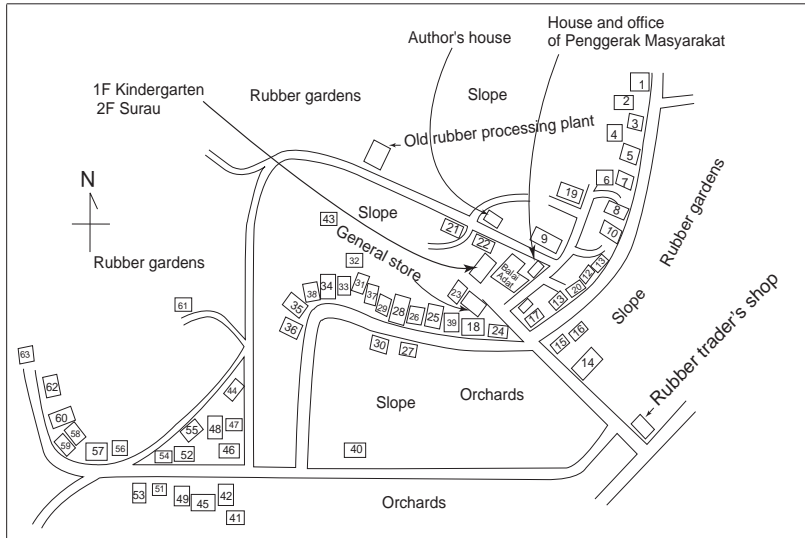
While Kampung Durian Tawar appears denuded in comparison to the surrounding Malay villages, it appears less denuded than other Orang Asli villages where housing construction projects have been undertaken more recently. In part this is because the housing construction project in Kampung Durian Tawar was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

Inside the Village

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

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

Figure 5
The residential area of Kampung Durian Tawar



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Cultivated Area and Forest

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



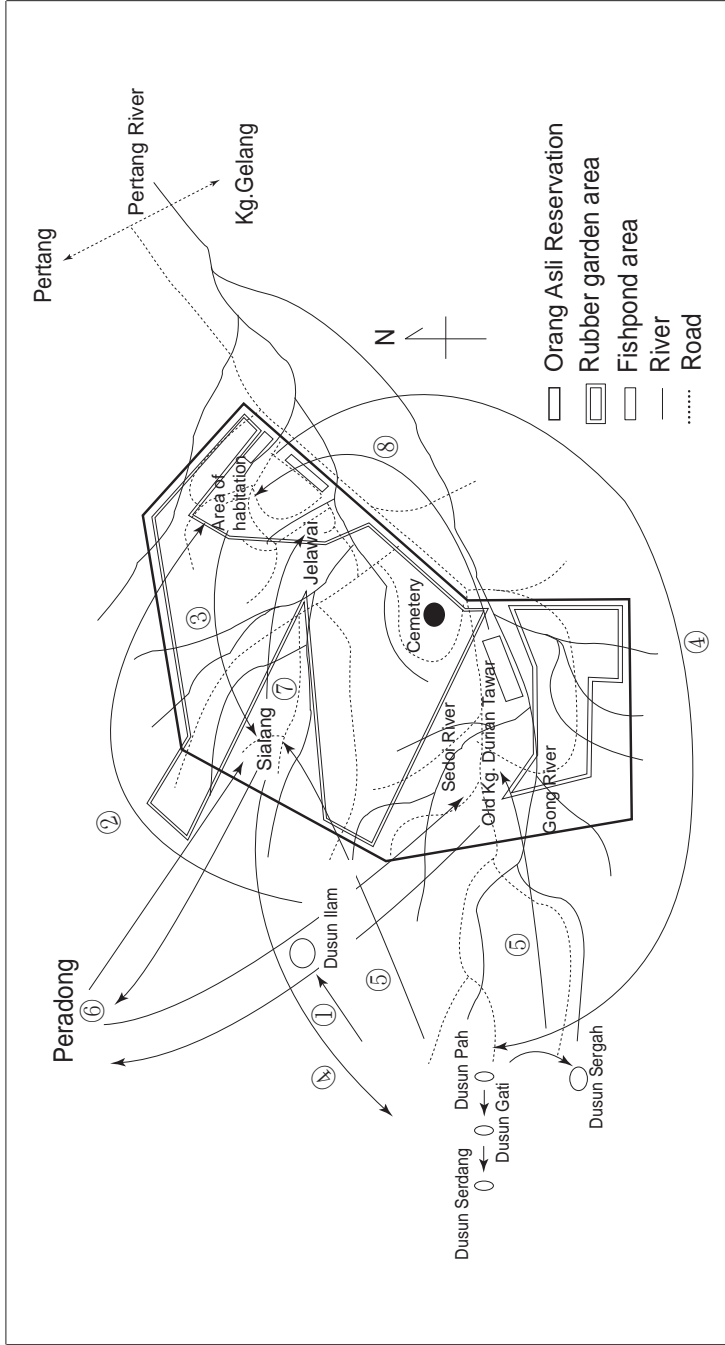
Plate 14: The Sialang area. In the past, the lower people lived in the Sialang area and planted durian trees. Later, however, Batin Janggut purchased some durian orchards from the lower people so the Sialang area now has some durian orchards belonging to Batin Janggut and his relatives. [NT-2004]

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

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

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

Figure 6
Kampung Durian Tawar



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

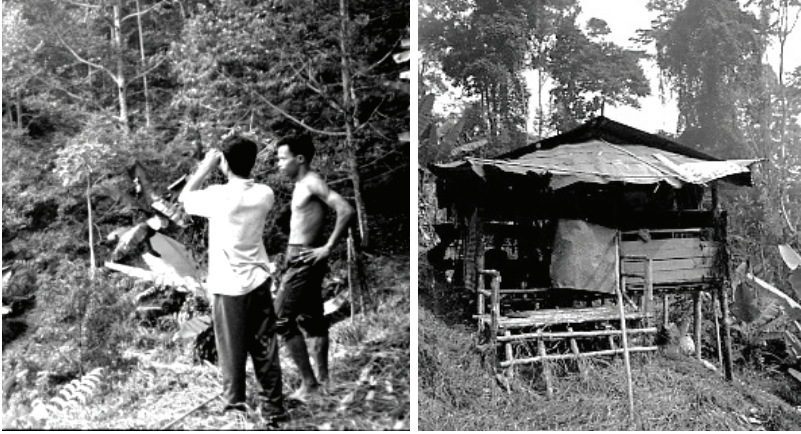


Plate 18: Dusun Serdang (left) and Plate 19: Mangku Hasim's hut (right). During the durian harvesting season, Mangku Hasim and his family lived in this hut. However as the price of durian fell, they spent less time there. [NT-1997]

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

