Edited by
Kirk Endicott

Malaysia's Original People

Past, Present and Future of the Orang Asli

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Introduction

Kirk Endicott

THE ORANG ASLI

The Orang Asli are, with minor exceptions, descendants of the earliest human inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula. The term "Orang Asli", which means "original people" in Malay, was adopted by the Malaysian government in the 1960s to replace the English term "Aborigines" and the Malay term "Sakai", which have derogatory connotations. The Orang Asli consist of at least 19 culturally and linguistically distinct subgroups. Until about 1960, most Orang Asli lived in small camps and villages in interior forests and isolated rural areas and were seldom seen by other Malaysian citizens. Orang Asli communities were self-governing and mostly self-sufficient, living by varying combinations of hunting, gathering, fishing, swidden (shifting) horticulture and trading forest products. Recently, however, economic development of interior regions has replaced the rain forests with rubber and oil palm plantations, and government programmes aimed at bringing the Orang Asli into the "mainstream" of society have forced most Orang Asli to move into "regroupment" villages, where they are expected to support themselves by tending rubber trees or oil palms and growing fruit for sale.

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Groups

For official administrative purposes the Malaysian government distinguishes 18 culturally distinct Orang Asli groups in three categories: Negritos, Senoi and Aboriginal Malays (*Melayu Asli*) (see Table 0.1 and Map 0.1). Orang Asli ethnic groups range in size from a few hundred (Kensiu, Kintaq, Mendriq, Lanoh and Orang Kanak) to more than 49,000 (Semai). Their total population of 178,000 in 2010 comprised only about 0.76 per cent of the Peninsular Malaysian population of 23.5 million, which was—and is—dominated by Malays, Chinese and Indians.

Table 0.1 Orang Asli groups

Group Name	Pre-1950 Economy	Location (State)	2010 Population	Aslian Language Branch	Official Category
Kintaq	Foraging, trading	Perak	234	Northern	Negrito (Semang)
Kensiu	Foraging, trading	Kedah	280	Northern	Negrito (Semang)
Jahai	Foraging, trading	Perak, Kelantan	2,326	Northern	Negrito (Semang)
Mendriq	Swiddening, foraging	Kelantan	253	Northern	Negrito (Semang)
Batek	Foraging, trading	Kelantan, Pahang	1,359	Northern	Negrito (Semang)
Lanoh	Foraging, trading, swiddening	Perak	390	Central	Negrito (Semang)
Chewong	Foraging, swiddening	Pahang	818	Northern	Senoi
Temiar	Swiddening, trading	Perak, Kelantan	30,118	Central	Senoi

Table 0.1 (*cont'd*)

Group Name	Pre-1950 Economy	Location (State)	2010 Population	Aslian Language Branch	Official Category
Semai	Swiddening, trading	Perak, Pahang, Selangor	49,697	Central	Senoi
Jah Hut	Swiddening, trading	Pahang	4,191	Central	Senoi
Semaq Beri	Swiddening, foraging	Terengganu, Pahang	3,413	Southern	Senoi
Btsisi' (Mah Meri)	Swiddening, fishing, foraging	Selangor	2,120	Southern	Senoi
Temoq	Swiddening, trading, foraging	Pahang	Included in Semelai population	Southern	Aboriginal Malay
Semelai	Swiddening, trading	Pahang, N. Sembilan	9,228	Southern	Aboriginal Malay
Jakun (Orang Hulu)	Horticulture, trading	Pahang, Johor	31,577	(Malay)	Aboriginal Malay
Temuan	Horticulture, trading	Pahang, Selangor, N. Sembilan, Malacca	19,343	(Malay)	Aboriginal Malay
Orang Kanak	Horticulture, trading	Johor	238	(Malay)	Aboriginal Malay
Orang Seletar	Fishing, foraging	Johor	1,042	(Malay)	Aboriginal Malay
Orang Kuala	Fishing, wage labour	Johor	3,761	(Malay)	Aboriginal Malay

Population source: 2010 Population and Housing Census (unpublished data). This includes the Temoq as a separate group, although the Department of Orang Asli Development now regards them as part of the Semelai group.

Map 0.1 Ethnic group divisions of the Malay Peninsula (approximate distribution)

The areas shown on Map 0.1 are the maximal areas in which each group lived in the early 20th century. Today some Orang Asli live in urban areas mixed with members of other ethnic groups.

The divisions and names of Orang Asli groups are somewhat arbitrary and artificial (see Lye 2001: 207–22 for a discussion of all

the group names that have been used in the literature). Before coming under the administrative purview of a government department (now called the Department of Orang Asli Development, Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli or JAKOA), most Orang Asli identified only with their local groups. If they called themselves anything, it was usually their term for people of a particular river valley. They did not concern themselves with larger categories of similar peoples, much less with the constructed category, Orang Asli, which encompasses all the indigenous minorities of the peninsula. For example, the lowland-dwelling west Semai in Perak told Dentan that the upland-dwelling east Semai in Pahang were not Semai at all, claiming that they were Temiar, while the east Semai called the west Semai Malays (2011: 92). The people grouped under the category Batek include at least three distinct language groups—Batek De', Batek Tanum and Batek Nong—who just happen to use the term Batek for humans of their type. One small group, the Temoq, officially ceased to exist as a separate group in the 1980s when the predecessor department to the JAKOA folded them into the larger Semelai group for administrative purposes (Laird, this volume).

The names of the different groups have wildly varied origins. Most terms were originally applied to the people by outsiders. For example, the name Semaq Beri was given to one group by a British colonial administrator, Howard Biles, who asked group members for their term for "forest people". The name Chewong is a corruption of the name of a pre-World War II Malay employee of the Game Department, Siwang bin Ahmat, which was misunderstood by the British game warden as the name of the group (Howell 1984: 10–4).

The tripartite division of Orang Asli groups into Negritos (Spanish for "little blacks"), Senoi and Aboriginal Malays developed from early 20th century European racial concepts, with the Negritos (short, dark-skinned, curly-haired people) being seen as the most primitive race, the Senoi (taller, lighter-skinned, wavy-haired people) being more advanced and the Aboriginal Malays (tall, light-skinned, straight-haired people) being seen as almost the equals of the Muslim Malays (Manickam, Fix, this volume). The idea that races, in Malaysia and in general, are discrete and can be ranked from inferior to superior has now been discredited and discarded in scientific discourse, though it lingers on in

popular beliefs in many cultures. Recent studies show that the features said to differentiate the Orang Asli races in fact vary in continua across the groups, and the groups are not genetically distinct (see chapters in P. Endicott 2013). Most cultural anthropologists now prefer the term Semang, from an Aslian term for "human being", to the racial term Negrito.

The general correlation of Semang with hunting and gathering, Senoi with swidden horticulture, and Aboriginal Malays with farming and trade is not clear-cut either. For example, many Semaq Beri are settled farmers and are classified as Senoi by the JAKOA, but others are hunter-gatherers, while the Mendriq, classified as Negritos (Semang), are swidden farmers.

Languages

Although the southernmost Orang Asli groups (Jakun, Temuan, Orang Kanaq, Orang Seletar and Orang Kuala) now speak dialects of Malay, an Austronesian language that is the official national language, most Orang Asli groups speak languages in the Mon-Khmer subgroup of the Austroasiatic language family, which is centred in mainland Southeast Asia but also includes the Munda languages of South Asia. Nowadays most Aslian speakers also speak colloquial or standard Malay. The Orang Asli language divisions—Northern Aslian, Central Aslian, Southern Aslian, Jah Hut and Malay—do not neatly correlate with the three official categories of Orang Asli (Negrito [Semang], Senoi and Aboriginal Malay), although most Semang have Northern Aslian languages, and most Senoi have Central Aslian languages.

Economies

Until about 1950 most Orang Asli groups had subsistence economies supplemented by trade or sale of forest products. Some groups (Kensiu, Kintaq, Jahai, Batek and some Semaq Beri) specialized in mobile hunting and gathering (foraging). Others (Temiar, Semai, Mendriq, Lanoh, Semelai, Temoq, Betise', Jah Hut and Chewong) practised swidden ("shifting" or "slash-and-burn") cultivation supplemented by hunting and gathering. Some southerly groups (Temuan, Jakun and

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Orang Kanak [Kanaq]) practised wet and dry rice farming, market gardening, and trading of forest products. The tiny Orang Kanak group are descendants of people who were brought "from Sekanak Island in Riau [Indonesia] by a member of the Johor royal family in the nineteenth century" (Benjamin 2002: 46). Two tiny groups living on the Johor coast (Orang Seletar and Orang Kuala [Duano]) were coastal foragers and fishermen. The Orang Kuala are an offshoot of a larger group living in Jambi in Sumatra. Since about 1980 most groups have been disrupted by logging, development projects (for example, oil palm plantations) and government-sponsored regroupment schemes, and they now live predominantly by producing commodities for the market (for example, rubber and fruit) and wage labour.

Social Organization and Practices

Most Orang Asli communities are united by kinship and ties to specific land areas. They trace kinship ties cognatically, through both mothers and fathers. Conjugal families, consisting of a married couple and their children, form the core units in most communities. Among the mobile foragers, such as the Jahai and Batek De', families come together in temporary camps but then split apart and form new camp groups, depending on changing opportunities and preferences. Some farming groups, such as the Temiar, organize themselves around extended families and shallow cognatic descent groups, tracing their descent from a common ancestor through a combination of male and female links. Orang Asli generally regard the land in their traditional territories as free to all members of the local group, although in some groups families have exclusive rights to the crops in the fields that they clear and plant. But the land itself reverts back to the residential group as a whole once the fields are left to become forest again.

Rules governing marriage, sexual access and post-marital residence vary from people to people. Benjamin distinguishes three basic patterns, which he calls "societal traditions": Semang, Senoi and Malayic (Aboriginal Malay and Malay) (1985, 2013, 2014b; Fix, this volume), although a few groups—the Batek, Chewong, Jah Hut and Semaq Beri—have mixed traditions. The Semang tradition is associated with the mobile hunting and gathering economy. People are forbidden

to marry any consanguineal (blood) relative or affinal (connected by marriage) relative or to have sex with anyone but the spouse. They must also avoid physical contact with opposite-sex in-laws. These rules require people to find their spouses among distant groups, thus creating a wide-ranging network of social ties. The Senoi tradition is associated with swidden horticulture, in which new fields are opened every year but the villages move only after all the suitable land in one area has been used and left to regenerate. In these groups marriage is forbidden with consanguineal kin but is preferred with affinal kin, and extramarital sex is allowed between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. The result is that kin ties are concentrated within specific river valleys. The Malayic tradition is associated with sedentary villages supported by agriculture and trade of forest products with the outside world. Malays and Aboriginal Malays prefer to marry within the village or local area, even with first cousins. Benjamin argues that these kinship practices reinforce people's commitment to their particular economic systems and also lessen any temptation they might have to adopt the way of life of followers of the other traditions. He believes that these differences in practices and worldviews became "locked in" perhaps 1,000–1,500 years ago to help maintain the complementary ways of life of foragers, swiddeners and farmer-traders, who otherwise might converge on a single pattern and thus come into conflict (2011: 177, 2014b).

The Semang and Senoi ethnic groups are politically and socially egalitarian, but some of the southern groups—Semelai, Temuan and Jakun—had hereditary leaders (*batin*) and other ranked political positions. The mobile hunting and gathering peoples, including some Semaq Beri, strongly emphasize personal autonomy, and social relations are egalitarian between males and females (see, for example, Endicott and Endicott 2008). Charismatic individuals may have some influence over others, but no real authority. Senoi too emphasize the autonomy of individuals. They respect elders and may even call some of them headmen, but those leaders have no power. Collective decisions are made by consensus after open discussions by entire communities (Benjamin 1968; Dentan 1968: 65–8; Robarchek 1990).

One remarkable feature of Orang Asli societies is that they prohibit all interpersonal violence, both within their own groups and with outsiders (see, for example, Dentan 1968, 2008; Robarchek 1989;

Endicott 2013; Endicott and Endicott 2014; Hickson and Jennings, this volume; but cf. Leary 1995 for a contrary view). This may in part be a result of their having been victims of Malay slave raiders in the 18th and 19th centuries (see below). Their survival strategy was to flee from contacts with most outsiders and to teach their children to abstain from all forms of violence.

Religions

Studies of Orang Asli beliefs and rituals have revealed elaborate religious systems that make sense of the world and give meaning to people's lives. They also provide moral codes that specify how people should behave (see, for example, Schebesta 1928; Evans 1937; Endicott 1979a, 1979b; Karim 1981; Howell 1984; Roseman 1991; Lye 2004; Benjamin 2014a).

Most Orang Asli think of the cosmos as consisting of a celestial upper-world, sometimes pictured as an island or several solid layers; an earthly middle-world consisting of a disc of solid matter surrounded by sea; and an under-world containing a vast underground sea. Creation myths typically describe culture heroes, such as turtles or water-birds, creating the middle-world by bringing bits of earth to the surface from underneath the primordial sea. The separation of the earth from the underground sea is fragile and can be undermined by humans breaking certain prohibitions (see below).

These worlds are inhabited by various categories of superhuman beings—including spirits, ghosts and deities—some of which are helpful to humans (for example, spirit guides of shamans) and some harmful (for example, agents of disease). The superhuman beings are invisible to humans except during dreams and states of trance. Some superhumans are individualized, named and associated with particular natural phenomena, such as thunderstorms, floods and the production of fruit. For example, most Orang Asli believe in a thunder god, who punishes people for breaking certain prohibitions by sending a violent thunderstorm over the offender's camp or settlement, and an under-world deity, often pictured as a giant snake who causes an upwelling flood from the underground sea to dissolve the earth beneath the offender's settlement, a localized reversal of the world's creation. The

offender must make a small offering of blood from his or her leg or burn some hair to persuade the deities to stop the storm.

Orang Asli explain most misfortunes—including accidents, diseases, floods, thunderstorms and attacks by wild animals—as punishments by superhuman beings for people violating prohibitions against behaviours that threaten the natural order (for example, cooking different species of animals over a single fire) or the social order (for example, sexual relations between close relatives) or that show disrespect for the superhuman beings (for example, making loud noises that sound like thunder) or for other people (for example, saying the personal name of an elder). They see their way of life as following a plan laid down by the superhuman beings.

Orang Asli rituals are intended to maintain harmonious relations between themselves and the superhuman beings that control their fortunes. The more elaborate rituals are directed by shamans, many of whom have spirit guides, sometimes conceptualized as the shamans' spouses. Most shamans practise "soul-travel" shamanism, in which the shaman, while in trance, sends his or her soul to other parts of the cosmos to retrieve the missing soul of a sick person or to ask superhuman beings for help, knowledge or magical substances (Gianno, Laird, this volume). Many people know spells that are thought to cure diseases or ensure success at some activity, usually through the help of superhuman beings. The foraging peoples perform communal rituals such as singing and dancing sessions to ask the superhuman beings for abundant crops of wild fruit. Farming groups make offerings and recite spells to ask the earth spirits for permission to plant their crops.

THIS BOOK

Part One: Studying Orang Asli

Despite their small numbers and relative obscurity, Orang Asli have long attracted the interest of European explorers, travellers, traders, museum collectors, missionaries and colonial administrators, and this has led to a large body of literature (Baer 2012). In her comprehensive annotated bibliography on the Orang Asli (2001), Lye Tuck-Po has recorded 1,715 publications and other documents relating to Orang

Asli produced between 1824 and 2001. (This invaluable work contains annotated entries for most of the 1,715 works as well as indices by topics, author's names, ethnic and language groups and place names. Most of the modern publications on Aslian linguistics appeared after the 2001 publication of Lye's bibliography, but they are discussed in Benjamin 2012 and on his *Academia* website.) The quality of the information in the pre-1900 works is highly variable, much of it based on brief encounters with Orang Asli and some even on hearsay reports from Malays. W.W. Skeat and C.O. Blagden provide a useful, though dated, summary of the outside world's knowledge of the Orang Asli at the end of the 19th century in their monumental two-volume book *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906).

During the first 60 years of the 20th century, a number of professionally trained scholars and gifted amateurs, especially colonial administrators, recorded their observations of various Orang Asli groups, mostly based on short-term contacts. For example, the valuable publications of I.H.N. Evans, the long-time curator of the Taiping Museum in Perak, were based on short visits to numerous groups (see, for example, 1937). However, two notable scholars carried out more extended fieldwork with Orang Asli. First was Father Paul Schebesta, a Jesuit scholar from Vienna, who spent a year living with Semang groups, especially the Jahai, in 1924–25 (see, for example, 1928, 1952–57). Also H.D. Noone, the field ethnographer of the Taiping Museum in the late 1930s, carried out extended research with the Temiar and even married a Temiar woman. His "Report on the Settlements and Welfare of the Ple-Temiar Senoi of the Perak-Kelantan Watershed" (1936) was the first general ethnography of a single Orang Asli people. His appendix on the "Proposed Aboriginal Policy" became the basis for the colonial government's Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance (1954, amended in 1967 and 1974) (Malaysian Government 1994).

The modern era of anthropological fieldwork began with Dentan's research on the Semai and Benjamin's studies of the Temiar in the 1960s (Holaday, this volume). They used sociocultural anthropology's now-standard method of ethnographic research—living for extended periods with the people, learning their languages and participating in their everyday lives. This enabled them to produce rich descriptions of

these peoples and their cultures and to explain some of the beliefs and practices that make Orang Asli cultures so remarkable.

Dentan and Benjamin's research was followed by a proliferation of studies of various Orang Asli groups by trained anthropologists from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Germany, Poland and Finland. This research has focused on such topics as language, religion, social organization and practices, biology and demography, economy and environmental adaptation, prehistory, history, art, music, social change and problems. (See Lye 2011 for a comprehensive review of research and publications on Orang Asli up to 2011.)

Until recently most of the anthropological research with Orang Asli was done by foreign scholars. Malaysian granting agencies and universities—except for Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya and possibly Universiti Putera and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris—have not encouraged faculty research on Orang Asli, and the Department of Orang Asli Development no longer has trained anthropologists on its staff. Nevertheless, Malaysian scholars —including Wazir Jahan Karim, Juli Edo, Alberto Gomes, Kamal Solhaimi Fadzil, Mohd Razha Rashid, Rusaslina Idrus, Yogeswaran Subramaniam, Shanthi Thambiah, Anthony Williams-Hunt and Zanisah Man (this volume) as well as Hood Salleh, Lye Tuck-Po, Colin Nicholas, Hasan Mat Nor, Lim Chang Ing, Alice Nah and Ramle Abdullah continue to make important contributions to Orang Asli studies. Only a few of those scholars (Juli Edo, Zanisah Man and Anthony Williams-Hunt) are Orang Asli, however. The number of Orang Asli obtaining advanced degrees in social sciences is still very low, and those who do receive them often have career goals outside academia. But we expect that as more Orang Asli succeed in higher education, more will use their skills to document the histories and cultures of their people as well as to help them adjust to their rapidly changing world.

In this volume, Holaday discusses the intellectual and political climate in which Dentan and Benjamin carried out their research in the early and mid-1960s. Howell writes about her long-term research with the Chewong during a period of rapid change in their circumstances. Manickam examines the racial classification of Orang Asli that was developed by European scholars and discusses how studies of Orang

Asli blood types and genes reinforced the conventional racial divisions current in the 1950s.

Part Two: Orang Asli Origins and History

Prehistory

The climate and geography of Southeast Asia at the time the first modern humans arrived were very different from today. During the late Pleistocene epoch, which ended about 10,000 years ago, a series of ice ages locked up a large amount of the world's water in vast ice sheets that covered the northern areas of Eurasia and North America, causing the sea level to drop 100 metres or more below present levels. The seabed beneath the shallow seas now found on both sides of the Malay Peninsula was then dry land. The Asian mainland extended east to Borneo, Java and Bali, north to Palawan in the Philippines, and west to Sumatra, forming a broad continental shelf now known as Sundaland (Vons 2000; Baer 2013, this volume). The Thai-Malay Peninsula formed a range of mountains and hills above the plains. The climate was cooler than now, and the vegetation consisted of a mosaic of open woodlands and savannah, interspersed with swamp and heath forests and with gallery forests along the rivers in the lowlands.

Recent studies of the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) of Orang Asli show that some of their ancestors were among the first modern humans to arrive in Southeast Asia during the late Pleistocene exodus from Africa, while other ancestors apparently arrived from other parts of Asia at later times (Hill et al. 2006; Bulbeck 2011; Oppenheimer 2011; Fix, Bulbeck, this volume). "These studies have identified mtDNA lineages that branched from the ancestral African root very early, perhaps 44 to 63 thousand years ago" (Fix, this volume). "The descendants of these *H. sapiens* colonists are well represented in the female gene pool of all Orang Asli groups, especially the Semang" (Bulbeck 2011: 236, see also 230). Other mtDNA haplogroups found among Orang Asli date from the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene (recent) epoch, suggesting the arrival of migrants from more northerly areas of Southeast Asia who mixed with the previous occupants of the Thai-Malay Peninsula (Bulbeck 2011: 230; Oppenheimer 2011; Fix, this

volume) (see below). This does not mean that modern Orang Asli physically resemble those ancient settlers, as there has been gene flow into the Orang Asli population and local evolution over the last 10,000 years. For example, skeletal evidence shows that modern-day Orang Asli are about 10 per cent shorter than the early Holocene inhabitants of the peninsula (Bulbeck 2011: 216–24).

The earliest dated occupation of the Thai-Malay Peninsula by modern humans was about 75,000 years ago at Kota Tampan in northern Malaya (Zuraina 1990; Bulbeck 2011: 213). Kota Tampan was an open-air site on an ancient lakeshore. Other early archaeological sites were in rock shelters in limestone outcroppings. The tool kit at Kota Tampan and later Pleistocene sites featured large river cobbles knapped on one or both sides and numerous flake tools. The people apparently were mobile broad-spectrum hunter-gatherers. Animal bones found at Lang Rongrien, a cave near the west coast of southern Thailand, dating from 43,000 years ago, include bones of large game, such as deer and elephants, and smaller animals, including tortoises (Anderson 1980, 2005; Mudar and Anderson 2007; Baer, this volume). Another site in southern Thailand, Moh Khiew, dating from about 25,000 years ago, contained bones of wild water buffalo, wild pig, tapir, sun bear, primates, otters and squirrels (Pookajorn 1996; Baer, this volume). Plant remains are seldom preserved, but plant residues on stone tools at Niah cave in Sarawak show that aroids (for example, taro), yam and sago-palm pith were part of the diet possibly as early as 40,000 years ago (Barton 2005).

After the last glacial maximum (LGM) about 20,000 years ago, the world's climate gradually warmed, stabilizing about 6,000 years ago. The great ice sheets melted by the beginning of the Holocene epoch, about 10,000 years ago, and the sea level rose, flooding the low-lying plains of Sundaland and creating the separate islands, such as Borneo, found on maps today (Baer, this volume). The climate of the Thai-Malay Peninsula became hot and humid, and seasonal monsoon rains developed. The vegetation in the interior gradually changed to swamp forest and tropical rain forest, and broad mangrove forests developed along the coasts.

The human inhabitants of the peninsula adapted to the changing environment. In the early Holocene they continued to hunt and gather the game and plants in the interior forest and expanded their utilization

of marine and seashore resources, as shown by large middens of seashells at various points along the west coast. They also continued to produce stone tools made predominantly of river cobbles flaked on one side to produce sharp edges. They participated in a tool complex or industry called the "Hoabinhian", which was found across Southeast Asia from modern-day Vietnam to north-eastern Sumatra (see, for example, White 2011). The characteristic Hoabinhian tools are elongated unifacial cobble tools, termed "sumatraliths", but flakes, hammerstones and bifacials are also found in the Hoabinhian tool assemblage. There is good reason to believe that the stone tools were used to make a wide range of other tools, especially of wood and bamboo, as well as to chop down trees (see, for example, Higham 2013: 24; White 2011: 27–32; Baer, this volume).

Early Holocene foragers probably harvested the full range of plant and animal foods utilized by Semang hunter-gatherers in historical times. These include wild yams and other tubers, fruits, nuts, fern shoots, palm cabbage, *petai* beans, bamboo shoots, sago palm starch, honey and insect larvae (Dentan 1989). Protein would have come from game, turtles, fish, shellfish, and eggs from birds and turtles (Baer 2013). "The Gua Cha rockshelter in interior Kelantan, dating from 10,000 to 3,000 years ago, contained bones of monkeys, gibbons, pigs, deer, sun bear, cattle, squirrel, fruit bats, rats and even rhinoceros" (Adi Taha 1985, 1991, 2007; Baer, this volume).

During the middle Holocene period, 7,000 to 3,000 years ago, the ancestral Orang Asli populations and cultures underwent major changes in their biological makeup, material culture, economic practices and languages, stimulated in part by immigrants into the peninsula from more northerly parts of mainland Southeast Asia who became absorbed into the existing population (Fix, Bulbeck, this volume). Genetic studies show the arrival of mitochondrial DNA lineages that originated in modern-day Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam (Oppenheimer 2011). These are most marked in the Senoi groups in the northern and central areas of the peninsula, suggesting that immigrant women as well as men married into the existing populations.

During this period the material artefacts characteristic of "Neolithic" ("new stone") technology—including ground and polished stone tools and pottery—begin to appear in archaeological sites in the peninsula

(Bellwood 1997; Bulbeck 2011, 2014, this volume). Presumably the knowledge and skills needed to make such objects were brought by the immigrants, although some products, such as ornaments deposited in graves, may have arrived by trade. Neolithic technology did not replace chipped and flaked stone tools. The Hoabinhian material culture "continued long after the incorporation of Neolithic material elements, before giving way to metal tools" (Bulbeck 2014: 114).

Swidden ("shifting" or "slash-and-burn") horticulture also arose in the peninsula between 7,000 and 3,000 years ago (Bulbeck 2014, this volume), although there is some evidence of forest burning and other environmental management techniques as early as 10,000 years ago (Maloney 1998; Baer 2013). Probably some of the crops grown, such as rice, were brought by the immigrants, but others, such as betel nut palms, were indigenous to the area. Stone choppers could have been used to cut down or ring-bark and kill trees to open up fields. Swidden farming is associated with semi-sedentary residence and larger and more enduring social groups than hunting and gathering. But mobile hunting and gathering continued alongside swidden farming right into the 20th century. Benjamin argues that the Semang foragers and Senoi horticulturalists in the northern area deliberately "locked in" their complementary ways of life around 1,000–1,500 years ago and traded forest produce for agricultural products (2011, 2014b; cf. Lye 2013).

The immigrants also brought the proto-Aslian language, an offshoot of the Austroasiatic language family that is centred in mainland Southeast Asia, to the Malay Peninsula (Burenhult, Kruspe and Dunn 2011; Benjamin 2012; Dunn, Kruspe and Burenhult 2013; Bulbeck, Burenhult and Kruspe, this volume). This language was adopted in stages by early Orang Asli populations, first in the centre of the peninsula and then spreading south and north. After spreading to various groups, the proto language diverged into the different Aslian languages and dialects found today. We have no direct evidence about the languages spoken by the earlier inhabitants of the peninsula or the reasons why they gave up their original languages for Aslian ones. Possibly proto-Aslian became a lingua franca used in trade and other interactions between the earlier populations and the later arrivals, and then it gradually replaced the earlier languages. Something similar seems to have happened in the Philippines, where the Negritos, the

original inhabitants of the islands, adopted Austronesian languages from immigrants who spread into insular Southeast Asia by sea from a homeland in Taiwan (Blust 2013; Reid 2013).

Some Austronesian speakers (but not yet Malayic speakers) began to arrive in the Thai-Malay Peninsula, probably from Borneo and Sumatra, in the first millennium BC. They settled mainly on the coast because the interior was already populated by ancestral Orang Asli (Andaya 2002: 27, 35; Benjamin 2002; Bulbeck, this volume). Some of the early Austronesian-speaking immigrants were probably among the ancestors of the Aboriginal Malays now living in the southern Malay Peninsula.

Early History

After about 500 BC small coastal settlements sprang up, especially at river mouths on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula and on both sides of the Isthmus of Kra in present-day southern Thailand. The settlements became centres of trade, first with other communities up and down the coast and later with traders from as far away as China, India, the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Some of these grew into major trading ports with permanent populations of foreign traders (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi 1991; Andaya and Andaya 2001; Bulbeck 2004). Orang Asli became suppliers of forest products—such as aromatic woods, resins, rhinoceros horns and elephant tusks—and gold and tin ore, the last being especially sought after by Indian traders for making bronze. In return the Orang Asli received such goods as cloth, iron tools, beads and foods, such as rice. "In this role as collectors of primary forest produce, and as labourers and guides in the transhipment of goods across their lands, the Orang Asli became indispensable to the coastal trading kingdoms" (Andaya 2002: 31, 2008: 218–22).

The Malay culture as it is known today—including the Malay language, social hierarchy and Indian-influenced political systems—developed in eastern Sumatra between the 7th and 14th centuries AD, when the kingdoms of Srivijaya and Melayu "dominated both sides of the Strait of Melaka and the interior of Sumatra" (Andaya 2002: 28). In the late 14th century Malay-speaking nobles from Sumatra established trading settlements, including Melaka, at river mouths

around the coast (Andaya 2002: 28). In the early 15th century the third ruler of Melaka adopted Islam, probably under the influence of Muslim Indian cloth merchants (Andaya and Andaya 2001: 55–6). Gradually Malay language and culture spread, due to the assimilation of Orang Asli and immigration of Malays and other Austronesian language speakers from present-day Indonesia. At first Minangkabau immigrants, who were matrilineal, took wives from the Orang Asli living inland from Melaka in order to establish claims to the land. As the Malay population increased, the political and economic importance of Orang Asli declined, and "the Orang Asli lifestyle, their way of dress, and even their physical bodies became objects of ridicule by the Melayu [Malays]" (Andaya 2002: 38). The Orang Asli population dwindled down to the minority that rejected assimilation.

As Malay immigrants slowly spread up rivers into the interior of the peninsula, most Orang Asli retreated into the foothills and mountains. By the 18th and 19th centuries Orang Asli had become targets of slave raiders (Dodge 1981; Endicott 1983; Dentan et al. 1997: 55–9; Dentan 2008). The slave raiders were mostly Malays from outside the peninsula (for example, Rawa, Mandailing and Minangkabau Malays from Sumatra) or from coastal and downriver settlements, who had no interest in maintaining an enduring cooperation with the Orang Asli (Dentan et al. 1997: 55–6; Endicott 1983: 227, 233). Slave raiders targeted Orang Asli because they were non-Muslim, so capturing them did not violate the Islamic prohibition on enslaving other Muslims (Gullick 1958: 104; Endicott 1983: 217–8). Debt-slaves and captured slaves (Malay *abdi*) formed the main labour force in towns and in the households of chiefs and sultans (Gullick 1958: 97–8; Endicott 1983: 216–7; Reid 1983: 29). Other captured slaves were sold in slave markets to traders who transported them to places such as Java, where labour was in demand (Reid 1983: 27–33). The raiding was violent. Usually well-armed parties would attack a village or camp at night, killing the adult men and women and capturing the children (Endicott 1983: 221–2; Dentan et al. 1997: 56–7; Dentan 2008). Sometimes Malays tempted or coerced Orang Asli into kidnapping other Orang Asli for them in order to "preserve their own women-folk from captivity" (Clifford 1897:178; see also Maxwell 1880: 47; Noone 1936: 54–5; Benjamin 1966: 8; Robarchek 1979: 565; Endicott 1983: 223). Slave

raiding was stopped by the British colonial government in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Recent History

Between about 1920, when slave raiding ceased, and the Japanese invasion in 1941, the Orang Asli remained outside developed areas, and the authorities treated them with benign neglect (Carey 1976: 288–90). During the Japanese occupation (1941–45), most Orang Asli hid in the forest, while the Japanese exploited Malay farmers for food and labour (Dentan et al. 1997: 60–1; Endicott 1997: 39). Orang Asli and Malays shared the forest with the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army of the Malayan Communist Party, consisting mostly of Chinese residents, which provided the main internal source of resistance to the Japanese occupation (Dentan et al. 1997: 60–1; Kratoska 1997). After the war ended in 1945, the Malayan Communist Party tried unsuccessfully to gain influence in the post-war government (Dentan et al. 1997: 61). In 1948 members of the Party "returned to the jungle to launch an armed insurrection" (Kratoska 1997: 315). The British colonial government declared this an "Emergency", which lasted from 1948 to 1960 (Dentan et al. 1997: 61–6). During the Emergency "Communist terrorists" (CTs) controlled Orang Asli by persuasion mixed with the threat of violence (Dentan 1968: 3, 80–1; 1995; Jones 1968; Carey 1976: 290–5, 305–20; Leary 1995; Dentan et al. 1997: 61–6). By 1953 most Orang Asli in the central highlands were under effective Communist control (Jones 1968: 297; Carey 1976: 305, 311).

The British security forces treated the Orang Asli as suspected CT collaborators. They tried removing Orang Asli to concentration camps outside the forest, with disastrous results; many Orang Asli died, and others fled back to their home areas (Polunin 1953; Carey 1976: 307–8). Later the British established "jungle forts" in Orang Asli areas and attempted to win the cooperation of Orang Asli by providing them with medical aid and trade goods, with slightly more success (Carey 1976: 312–4; Dentan et al. 1997: 63–4). In 1954 the colonial government expanded the nascent Department of Aborigines, which carried on the campaign to win over the Orang Asli (Jones 1968: 299–300; Carey 1976: 312–4), and it enacted the "Aboriginal Peoples Act, 1954", which

gave the federal government total control over all Orang Asli, down to what media people could bring into their settlements. The Orang Asli feared offending either the CTs or the government forces. More remote upstream Semai pretended to support the CTs, less remote downstream Semai pretended to support the government forces, and those in between just played dumb (Dentan 1968: 80–1).

In 1960 the newly independent Federation of Malaya government declared the Emergency ended, but for security reasons interior forest areas, where many Orang Asli continued to follow their traditional ways of life, remained off limits to development and outsider settlement until the late 1970s. The government retained the Department of Aborigines, renamed the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli or JHEOA), as the agency responsible for administering the Orang Asli and for providing them with medical care, education and economic development. The Aboriginal Peoples Act remained in force, giving the JHEOA extensive control over the Orang Asli.

Over the next two decades, the government's goals regarding the Orang Asli slowly changed. In 1961 the government published a "Statement of Policy Regarding the Administration of the Aborigine Peoples of the Federation of Malaya", stating that the government's goal was the "ultimate integration [of Orang Asli] with the Malay section of the community" and that it should be "natural integration as opposed to artificial assimilation" (Ministry of the Interior 1961: 3, 5). The Statement added that "special measures should be adopted for the protection of the institutions, customs, mode of life, persons, property and labour of the aborigine people" (Ministry of the Interior 1961: 5), which suggested that the Orang Asli should enter into a close relationship with the Malays but remain culturally distinct from them (Mohd Tap 1990: 112–9). However, some officials in the government, which was—and still is—dominated by Malays, resented the idea that a category of Malaysians existed that was arguably more indigenous than the Malays. The Malaysian Federal Constitution provided many special privileges to Malays (and natives of Sarawak and Sabah), such as preferential access to higher education and government jobs, based on the rationale that Malays, unlike Chinese and Indians, are indigenous to Malaysia (Malaysian Government 1982 Article 153). Therefore, they argued that the government should assimilate the Orang Asli into the

Malay ethnic group, thus causing them to cease to exist as a separate category of citizens. The Malaysian Federal Constitution defines a Malay as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language [and] conforms to Malay custom" (Malaysian Government 1982 Article 160). Since many Orang Asli already could speak Malay, and Malay customs were highly variable, the major task was to get the Orang Asli to adopt Islam. By the late 1970s, despite guarantees of religious freedom in the Constitution and the Aboriginal Peoples Act, the JHEOA was working with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and various religious organizations to induce the Orang Asli to adopt Islam and become Malays (JHEOA 1983; Mohd Tap 1990: 228; Dentan et al. 1997: 79–83; Nicholas 2000: 98–102; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 29–30; Nobuta 2009; Benjamin 2014a). The agencies' efforts included building community halls containing Muslim prayer halls (*surau*) in Orang Asli villages, posting "community development officers" trained by the Department of Religious Affairs in Orang Asli communities, and instituting numerous "positive discrimination" measures favouring converts to Islam, such as paying their school fees, restricting university scholarships to converts, and requiring Orang Asli public servants to convert to get promotion (Nicholas 2000: 98–102; Nobuta 2009: 253–7). The JHEOA published a new policy statement in 1983 describing its goal as "the Islamization of the whole Orang Asli community and the integration/assimilation of the Orang Asli with the Malays" (JHEOA 1983: 2).

The JAKOA (which succeeded the JHEOA in 2011) continues the efforts to assimilate the Orang Asli into the Malay ethnic group. JAKOA no longer builds prayer halls or posts community development officers, but the Islamization programme is still active, and government officials threaten to arrest, under the Internal Security Act, anyone who interferes with it (Nobuta 2009: 276). It is unclear how successful the Islamization programme has been. Many Orang Asli have nominally accepted Islam but have made no effort to change their beliefs or behaviour.

Until 2012 the JAKOA also ran a medical service, which was based at the Gombak Hospital just outside Kuala Lumpur (Nicholas 2000: 128–30; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 36; Bedford 2008, 2009, 2013). This service was established during the Emergency with the goal of providing medical care to remote, isolated Orang Asli communities.

It employed a network of simple medical posts in villages, attended by trained Orang Asli medical orderlies and visited periodically by doctors from Gombak. Orang Asli closer to towns could also use ordinary government clinics for free. The medical service was somewhat successful, although the Orang Asli standard of health lags well behind that of the general population (Baer 1999, 2010; Nicholas 2000: 27–30; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 36; Bedford 2013: 193–4). The Gombak Hospital "is under-resourced in terms of funding, facilities, and staff, and the standard of health care offered often falls below that practiced in mainstream government hospitals" (Bedford 2013: 194). In 2012—after complaints from Orang Asli, adverse reports in the media and pressure from nongovernmental organizations, including the Malaysian Bar Council—the Ministry of Health took over Orang Asli health care.

The Department of Aborigines education service also began during the Emergency and was continued after independence (Carey 1976: 300–1). Students were expected to start their studies in special primary schools in Orang Asli villages and then switch to ordinary government secondary schools, where they would be housed in hostels. The teachers were poorly educated Department of Aborigines employees in grade 1–3 schools and Ministry of Education teachers in the higher grades. Unfortunately, a large proportion of Orang Asli children dropped out after only one or two years of schooling. Government officials blamed the Orang Asli parents and children, but numerous cultural problems, including Orang Asli's lack of facility in the Malay language and their aversion to corporal punishment, and practical problems, such as school fees, as well as the poor quality of the teachers exacerbated the problem. Orang Asli children in government schools also suffered from abuse by other students and teachers (see, for example, Lim 1984; Tan 1992: 9; Nicholas 2006; Thambiah, Zanisah Man and Ruslina Idrus, this volume). In 1995 the government turned over the responsibility for Orang Asli education to the Ministry of Education (Nicholas 2000: 24–7, 127–8; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 36–9). Since then rates of Orang Asli school enrolment at all levels have improved, but still lag well behind national averages (Nicholas 2006).

The main responsibility of the JAKOA today is economic development of the Orang Asli. The goal is to "modernize" their economies, by which is meant getting them to replace their subsistence

activities with activities directed toward market exchange, selling commodities or labour, and buying food and other necessities (Mohd Tap 1990: 239; Nicholas 2000: 46–52, 96–8; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 40–4). At first this was based on *in situ* improvements. Officials encouraged residents of existing Orang Asli settlements to grow cash crops, including rubber trees, oil palms, coconut trees and fruit trees. The department provided tools, seedlings, herbicides and fertilizers. Newly settled foraging groups were also given rations to tide them over until the trees began to produce income.

In the late 1970s the federal government lifted the security restrictions on most of the interior of the peninsula. State governments then sold lucrative logging concessions to logging companies and allocated the cleared land to companies and government organizations for conversion into rubber and oil palm plantations. No accommodation was made for the Orang Asli living in those areas (see below). The JHEOA then instituted a more radical form of development based on resettling Orang Asli in artificial villages, usually located in selectively logged parts of their traditional territories. These "regroupment schemes" (*Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula* or RPS) have become the standard method for "modernizing" Orang Asli economies. In theory, each RPS contains an administrative centre, school, clinic, shop and multipurpose hall. It also has electricity and piped water and access roads to the outside world. Each family gets up to ten acres of land for oil palm, rubber and fruit trees and two acres for a house and subsistence crops (Jimin et al. 1983: 96). As before, the department provides the equipment, seedlings and fertilizer, and the residents provide the labour.

The regroupment schemes have not succeeded in lifting residents out of poverty (Nicholas 2000: 30–2; Endicott and Dentan 2004: 43–4; Nicholas, Jenita Engi and Teh 2010: 45):

> Statistics provided in the Government's 10th Malaysia Plan (2011–2015) … reveal that 50 percent of the 29,990 Orang Asli households in existence live below the poverty line. Of these, about 5,700 households (19 percent) are considered to be hardcore poor. In contrast, the national poverty rate is a commendable 3.8 percent, with only 0.7 percent being hardcore poor. (Nicholas, Jenita Engi and Teh 2010: 45)

There are several reasons for the failure of these schemes. Sometimes the promised facilities do not materialize, due to inadequate funding and poor planning and execution. No alternative means of earning a living are provided during the time the cash crops are maturing. The land is often of poor quality, and the amounts of land and resources provided are inadequate to support the residents. Also, dependence on selling commodities such as rubber exposes producers to market fluctuations and exploitation by middlemen. The result is that residents of the regroupment schemes often become dependent upon government agencies for financial support.

The biggest problem facing the Orang Asli today is their lack of land rights. According to Nicholas, "The dismal record of securing Orang Asli land tenure—coupled with increased intrusion into, and appropriation of, Orang Asli traditional lands by a variety of interests representing individuals, corporations and the state itself—remains the single element that is of grave concern to the Orang Asli today" (2000: 38; see also Dentan et al. 1997: 73–6 and Subramaniam 2013). Under Malaysian land law, based on the British colonial "Torrens" system of land title, the individual states own all land that is not held by title deeds. During the colonial period states designated some of the areas where Orang Asli lived as "Orang Asli reserves" or "Orang Asli areas", where Orang Asli had exclusive rights to live and use the resources. However, state and federal governments do not recognize any Orang Asli ownership rights to the land on which they and their ancestors have lived for centuries. According to statute law, though not common law, the Orang Asli are squatters on state land, and state governments can reclaim the land in aboriginal reserves without payment or the consent of the residents. The amount of land actually gazetted (officially proclaimed) as Orang Asli reserves was never more than a small portion of the traditional land claimed and utilized (Nicholas 2000: 31–2; Nicholas, Jenita Engi and Teh 2010: 49–53). The JAKOA claims that it, being a federal government agency, has no way to obtain land for the Orang Asli. However, Article 83 of the Constitution gives the federal government ample power to acquire land from the states for purposes it considers important, which should include promoting the welfare of the Orang Asli (Subramaniam 2013 and this volume). When Orang

Asli have gone to court to claim compensation for loss of land under principles of common law and international indigenous rights, they have been opposed by all concerned government agencies, including the JAKOA, and all branches of the government except for the judiciary (Dentan et al. 1997: 76–9; Nicholas 2000: 110; Nicholas, Jenita Engi and Teh 2010: 99; Subramaniam 2013 and this volume). As Benjamin says of tribal societies in the Malay world in general, "All too often … the requirement that the tribespeople settle down permanently … has not been met with a parallel guarantee of land rights. The authorities who urge them not to move around are usually the same authorities who move them away when more prominent citizens desire the land they occupy" (2002: 47).

In recent decades Orang Asli—especially those who are educated and have experience outside their villages—have become aware of the common interests and problems they share with members of other Orang Asli ethnic groups (Heikkilä and Williams-Hunt, this volume). One reflection of this broader Orang Asli identity is the development of the Association of Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia (Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia or POASM). It began as a small group of Orang Asli employees of the JHEOA, but had expanded to about 10,000 members by 2011 (Dentan et al. 1997: 153–4; Nicholas 2000: 152–6, 179n10; Khoo 2011). POASM is no longer very active, but recently the Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia, an informal Orang Asli network advocating indigenous rights, has been trying to represent the interests of Orang Asli to the government and the general public.

Part Three: Aslian Languages

As mentioned above, most Orang Asli groups speak Aslian languages, a subdivision of the Austroasiatic language family. The study of Aslian languages goes back to the beginning of the 20th century with the work of W. Schmidt (1901) and C.O. Blagden (Skeat and Blagden 1906, Vol. 2: 507–775), but research by professionally trained linguists languished until the 1960s, and it has expanded dramatically in recent years. (See Benjamin 2012 for a comprehensive summary and discussion of Aslian linguistic studies and references to the literature.)

The Aslian languages have been found to contain a number of linguistically interesting features, such as extensive vocabularies for smells. In their chapter, Burenhult and Kruspe discuss the elaboration of terms for eating and drinking in the Aslian languages and show how those terms relate to their classifications of plants and animals and their modes of subsistence.

Part Four: Orang Asli Religions

As discussed above, traditional Orang Asli religions attribute most illnesses to attacks by invisible superhuman beings, sometimes as punishment for the victim breaking a prohibition. People treat many illnesses by means of herbal medicine and magical spells, but the most serious and lingering diseases require the help of shamans, religious experts thought to have the power to send their souls to the land of the superhuman beings, while in trance, to meet with them to obtain powerful medicine or spells or to retrieve the souls of victims of soul loss. The chapters by Gianno and Laird describe in vivid detail the distant reaches of the cosmos where gods, spirits and ghosts dwell as well as the methods shamans, in their spiritual forms, use to accomplish their perilous tasks. These elaborate curing rituals reinforce the Semelai and Temoq understanding of the cosmos and the connections between its human and non-human inhabitants.

With increasing exposure to outsiders, Orang Asli have been confronted by competing religious worldviews. In their chapter, Juli Edo and Kamal Solhaimi give a vivid account of the religious competition for the souls of the Western Semai of Perak, where almost half of the population subscribed to a world religion in 2011. Juli and Kamal's research reveals that Semai individuals adopt or reject religions for personal and social reasons, including concerns that adopting a world religion would undermine their Semai identity. This detailed history also shows how colonial and Malaysian government policies affected people at the grassroots level.

Part Five: Significance of Orang Asli Cultures

Orang Asli developed their ways of life over many centuries in response to the practical problems and opportunities they faced in their particular

natural and social environments. However, some of their practices, which they take for granted, seem remarkable to Western scholars. Among other things, Orang Asli societies show how social life can be coordinated without a hierarchical political system (see chapters in Gibson and Sillander 2011), how cooperation and personal autonomy can both be maximized (Endicott 2011), and how societies can maintain gender equality (Endicott and Endicott 2008).

Hickson and Jennings (Chapter 11) and Gomes (Chapter 12) take the further step of suggesting that Western societies can benefit by adopting certain Orang Asli practices. One of the most striking characteristics of Orang Asli social life is the near absence of physical violence. Andy Hickson and his mother, Sue Jennings, who spent over a year living with the Temiar, describe how they have applied what they learned from the Temiar about peaceful conflict resolution to their professional practices as an educational consultant and a drama therapist respectively. Hickson works to counteract bullying in schools by having students act out dramas based on Temiar ways of interacting, and Jennings applies aspects of Temiar ritual practices to her group therapy sessions.

Another interesting feature of Orang Asli cultures is their merging of religious beliefs and economic practices. According to Gomes, Western religions represent nature as something to be exploited and dominated by humans, unlike traditional Semai religion, which regards plants, animals and the earth itself as animated by superhuman beings that must be treated with respect and restraint. Gomes argues that Semai attitudes toward nature are worthy of emulation if humans are to utilize nature in an ecologically sound and sustainable manner.

Part Six: Challenges, Changes and Resistance

Since about 1980, widespread logging and replacement of forests with plantations has seriously disrupted the lives of most Orang Asli. Without forests the former hunter-gatherers have no wild foods and game, and without adequate land the former horticulturalists can no longer support themselves on their crops. The chapters in this section document some of the problems they face, some of the changes they have made in response, and some of the ways they resist the destruction of their ways of life.

Karim and Razha (Chapter 13) and Nowak (Chapter 14) deal in part with the Ma' Betise' or Hma' Btsisi' (also called Mah Meri), a Central Aslian-speaking people living on Carey Island and adjacent parts of the mainland in coastal Selangor. Before the spread of plantations, some Ma' Betise' lived in and around the coastal mangrove forests—supporting themselves by fishing, foraging and swiddening—while those living on the mainland concentrated more on swidden horticulture. These chapters show how their cultures and social organization changed in response to their loss of land and resources and how some people are making a successful transition to life in the market economy. However, they are afraid to live in urban areas, and their attachment to their rural villages is still strong.

The news is not so promising for the former foragers—the Kintak Bong in northern Perak (Karim and Razha, this volume), the Jahai in northwestern Kelantan (Riboli, this volume), the Batek Tanum in northwest Pahang (Tacey, this volume), and the Lanoh of northern Perak (Dallos, this volume)—who are now living in regroupment villages surrounded by secondary forest and plantations and villages populated by non-Orang Asli. The Kintak Bong have adopted subsistence farming and continue to sell minor forest products, but they are so poor that even food-sharing has broken down. The health of the Jahai at Rual has seriously deteriorated due to pollution and communicable diseases, which they attribute to evil spirits, ghosts and the black magic of outsiders.

The Batek Tanum and the Lanoh, also former hunter-gatherers, face similar problems of land loss, environmental degradation and pressures from outsiders, but they have fought back in ingenious ways. The Batek Tanum—who now learn about world events from TV, radio, videos and newspapers—are attempting to form alliances with powerful outsiders, including nongovernmental organizations and foreign governments, by means of shamanic visits to other countries and letters to potential supporters. The Lanoh keep Malays at arm's length by employing a tactic—which probably goes back hundreds of years—of maintaining a monopoly on the supply of minor forest products to established trading partners. This removes the need for the trading partners to seek the products themselves, and it protects the autonomy of the Lanoh by keeping the Malays out of the forest.

Recently some Orang Asli have been successful in establishing their customary land rights in court. With the support of volunteer lawyers, they have demanded compensation, under principles of common law and international indigenous rights, for land seized by government agencies and private enterprises (Subramaniam 2013 and this volume). Although the legislative and executive branches of the government strongly oppose Orang Asli land claims, due to the government's desire to exploit the land and resources, the judicial branch has maintained its impartiality, at least in these cases. But Orang Asli have had to fight each case from scratch, with the government refusing to accept previous decisions as precedents, apparently with the aim of bankrupting the Orang Asli plaintiffs. Nevertheless, this avenue appears to be the most promising route to compensation for land seizures.

Part Seven: The Future

The goal of most Orang Asli is to become prosperous Malaysian citizens while also maintaining their distinctive identities and cultures. In spite of their numerous handicaps, some Orang Asli have succeeded in obtaining higher education, which has enabled them to obtain employment in the professions and skilled jobs. Shanthi Thambiah, Zanisah Man and Rusaslina Idrus (Chapter 19) describe some of the challenges facing Orang Asli women in the Malaysian educational system, including the need to be competitive, which is contrary to traditional Orang Asli sociality. Many educated Orang Asli are now computer literate and use the Internet to gather information, network with other indigenous people in Malaysia and abroad, and provide information about Orang Asli perspectives to each other and to the wider public through blogs (Heikkilä and Williams-Hunt, this volume). Some blogs educate Orang Asli and promote discourse on matters of mutual concern, such as the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the Malaysian government has endorsed but has not implemented in its dealings with the Orang Asli (Nicholas, Jenita Engi and Teh 2010; Subramaniam 2012).

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