

2

THE ORANG ASLI IN THE MALAYSIAN NATION STATE

THE POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A
MARGINAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

COLIN NICHOLAS

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research,
University of Malaya,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dimikrofiskan pada..... 28.04.2000
No. Mikrofis..... 14591
Jumlah Mikrofis..... 4

1999

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya



A509134109

HAMSI AH BT. MOHAMAD ZAHARI

UPR

UNIT REPROGRAFI
PERPUSTAKAAN UTAMA
UNIVERSITI MALAYA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	vi
Abstrak	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations and Glossary	x
List of Tables	xiii
List of Maps	xiv
List of Plates	xv
 CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE AND THE STUDY	1
Numbers and Origins	1
The Orang Asli as a People	7
Social History	10
Orang Asli Development: The Socio-Economic Indicators	13
<i>Population</i>	13
<i>Age Indicators</i>	22
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	24
<i>Health</i>	28
<i>Poverty and Wealth</i>	33
<i>Ownership of Land</i>	37
 Objective of the Study	 46
Research Questions	47
Research Design and Data Collection	48

CHAPTER 2	
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	51
Development, Politics and Indigenous Cultures	51
Orang Asli and Modernisation	56
Orang Asli Politics and Development	61
Conceptual Framework	70
<i>History and Political-Economy</i>	71
<i>Development and the Contest for Resources</i>	73
<i>The Creation of Identity and the Role of Ethnicity</i>	77
<i>Identity, Representation and Orang Asli Development</i>	80
 CHAPTER 3	
ORANG ASLI IN HISTORY AND EARLY POLITICS	82
Early Perceptions of the Orang Asli	82
Autonomy and Political Dominance	88
Orang Asli as Subjects	92
The British Road to Paternalism	95
The Emergency	98
The Aboriginal Peoples Act	101
The Contest for Resources	103
The UMNO Factor	106
Summary	109
 CHAPTER 4	
POLICIES FOR A PEOPLE	111
Protection	112
Integration	112
Sedentism/Regroupment	113
Modernisation/Multi-Agency Approach	114
Islamisation and Assimilation	120
Piecing the Policies Together	124

CHAPTER 5	
CONTROLLING A PEOPLE, CONTROLLING RESOURCES	126
JHEOA: Governing a People	127
The Act of the State	132
Integration and Assimilation: Giving Unto Others	134
Regroupment Schemes for Recouping Resources	137
Land Policies – For National and Orang Asli Safety	142
Land Titles: Going It Alone	148
Privatization: State versus Orang Asli Interests	150
Social Development Programmes and Control	154
<i>Educating for Integration</i>	154
<i>Controlling Health</i>	156
Individuals in Control	159
No Policies for Empowerment?	164
Summary	168
 CHAPTER 6	
THE CONTEST FOR RESOURCES:	
ORANG ASLI IDENTITY AND EMPOWERMENT	169
Encroachments and Contests	171
POASM: Bringing Orang Asli Together	176
Pawns in the Political Game	183
<i>The 1990 General Elections</i>	184
<i>The 1995 General Elections</i>	189
Augmenting Orang Asli Indigeneness	192
Response of the State	197
Orang Asli Political Activism	203
Summary	209

CHAPTER 7	
ORANG ASLI REPRESENTIVITY: A RESOURCE FOR THE STATE	211
The State and Orang Asli Representatives	213
The President and the Senator	216
Profile of a Representative	220
Differing Views	228
The Contest for Resources, Again	233
<i>Koperasi Daya Asli Johor</i>	233
<i>Koperasi Kijang Mas</i>	236
Summary	240
CHAPTER 8	
A CONCLUSION AND A BEGINNING	241
The Nation State and the Orang Asli	242
Undermining Autonomy	244
Indigenouness and the New Orang Asli polity	245
Orang Asli Organisations and Representivity	247
The 'New' Development	249
Achieving the New Development	252
<i>Negotiate from a Position of Strength</i>	252
<i>Arrest Erosion of Orang Asli Autonomy</i>	253
<i>Procure Favourable State Policies</i>	253
<i>Develop an Orang Asli Ideology of Struggle</i>	254
<i>Reclaim Representivity</i>	255
Plates	257
Bibliography	264

ABSTRACT

THE ORANG ASLI IN THE MALAYSIAN NATION STATE: THE POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A MARGINAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The Orang Asli have been transformed from an independent, autonomous people, to one where others today are determining much of their lives. Whether the motive for organising Orang Asli society has been for reasons of national security or for national integration, it is contended that development policies and programs imposed on them have had a single underlying objective: to enable the control of the Orang Asli, and to control their traditional territories.

This resulted in a contest for Orang Asli traditional territories and resources. As a consequence, Orang Asli began to experience increased social stress, which together with better communication between the communities, provided a powerful means of mobilising them beyond the local-level. A new Orang Asli ethnic label soon developed – largely as a political tool for more effective negotiation.

However, expectations and aspirations vary among the Orang Asli themselves, giving rise to problems of representivity that the state can, and does, exploit. More importantly, this can result in new sources of social stress for the community – from within the community itself.

ABSTRAK

ORANG ASLI DALAM KONTEKS NASIONAL: POLITIK DAN PEMBANGUNAN KOMUNITI PRIBUMI DI PESISIRAN

Orang Asli telah mengalami perubahan sebagai rakyat yang bebas dan berautonomi kepada penduduk yang mana sebahagian besar kehidupan mereka kini ditentukan oleh pihak-pihak lain. Apapun tujuan untuk menyusun masyarakat Orang Asli, samada untuk keselamatan negara atau untuk integrasi nasional, sesungguhnya di sebalik dasar-dasar pembangunan dan program-program yang dikenakan ke atas mereka mempunyai satu tujuan asas, iaitu untuk membolehkan pengawalan Orang Asli dan kawasan-kawasan tradisi mereka.

Justeru itu, wujud persaingan untuk memperolehi sumber-sumber tradisi Orang Asli. Akibatnya, Orang Asli mengalami peningkatan tekanan sosial, dan bersamaan dengan komunikasi yang lebih baik antara komuniti-komuniti, telah menyediakan saluran yang berkesan untuk mempergerakkan mereka melebihi peringkat mikro. Label etnik Orang Asli yang baru seterusnya terbentuk – sebahagian besarnya adalah sebagai alat politik untuk membuat perundingan yang lebih berkesan.

Walaupun demikian, ekspektasi dan aspirasi di kalangan Orang Asli sendiri berbeda dan ini telah membangkitkan masalah-masalah perwakilan, di mana ia boleh dan sedang dieksploitasikan, oleh pemerintah. Lebih penting lagi masalah ini boleh menghasilkan sumber-sumber tekanan sosial baru untuk masyarakat Orang Asli – iaitu dari dalam masyarakat itu sendiri.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As anyone who has written a dissertation will know, these things just cannot be done alone. The list of persons whom I must, at the very least, thank is continually increasing and in having to put some names down, I fear I may omit some. If so, it is certainly not intentional.

My Orang Asli friends, contacts, and travel companions have been the impetus for the study, and I only hope it does them some justice. They include Amani Williams-Hunt, Mahat, Bah Sian, Achom, Juli, Bah Akeh, Bek Aman, Bek Ahoi, Bek Minggu, Bek Terus, Itam Wali, Majid, Arif, Ilam, Sambut, Suki, Romeli, Rashid, Elan, Serani, Jang Lee, Atan, Ani, Ayob, Kening Ruan, Tiah, Tijah, Wa' Nuri, and several more. I am aware, nevertheless, that not all of them will agree with what I have written and as such one should not assume that this work is also their word.

In the academic circle, many of the people I have had the good fortune to know may not realise the impact they have had on me. They include Hood Salleh, Dee Baer (who will surely admonish me for the utter lack of 'women issues' discussed here), Robert Dentan, Peter Laird, Barbara Nowak, Gordon Means, Tan Chee Beng, Mohd Razha, Alberto Gomes, Syed Husin Ali, Kirk Endicott, Shamsul A.B., Wan Zawawi, Rosemary Gianno, Signe Howell, Geoffrey Benjamin, Tim Harper, Kua Kia Soong, Hasan Mat Nor, Khor Geok Lin, Shuichi Nagata, Wazir Jahan-Karim, Shanti, Tuck Po, Halib and Ikmal.

Jomo, my supervisor, has been supportive right from the beginning. His extensive academic, and general, knowledge provided critical feedback on this work from time to time, and this is really appreciated.

The interaction with lawyers involved in Orang Asli cases helped hone my understanding of the working of the law. They include K. Chandra, Raja Aziz, Kumaraendran, Weng Kwai, Heng Seng, Ramdas, Cyrus Das and especially Koo

Patrick (who was also a regular travelling companion with Francis to Orang Asli areas).

Mary Tan, Joyce Loh and my mother kept a look out for items on the Orang Asli in the newspapers that I tended to miss. Rajimah and Zubaidah were ever helpful with university matters. Yii Tan allowed me use of his office resources since the early days. Felix and Tian sorted out my Malay abstract. Rajah helped out with some tables, while Henry, in his moment of ill health, tried to help and managed one map. Joceline put up with me all this while and, hopefully, will continue to do so.

However, my greatest gratitude for an intensive level of desperate support must go to Carol Yong and Chong Chiew Hweok, who camped out in my house for (most of) three days and (all of) three nights, helping to remove the many blemishes in the thesis, as I was rushing to meet the deadline in April 1998. Without them, I would have surely had to sign on another year.

The current revision of the thesis benefitted greatly from the comments of my examiners, Kirk Endicott, Hood Salleh, Mohd. Halib, as well as from my supervisor, Jomo, and the Dean of IPSP, Prof. Ansary Ahmed, who chaired the viva committee.

Nevertheless, the blame for whatever shortcomings or errors that remain must rest with me.

Finally, I should add that while writing this dissertation had been purely for academic reasons, and for fulfilling the conditions of a fellowship award from the University of Malaya, that I gratefully acknowledge here, I am nevertheless hopeful that perhaps, but only perhaps, some use will come out of it.

Colin Nicholas

10 June 1999

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

4MP	Fourth Malaysia Plan 1981-1985
5MP	Fifth Malaysia Plan 1986-1990
adat	Custom, tradition
adat perpatch	Local custom of Negeri Sembilan based on Minangkabau tradition and matrilineal social organisation
akar bahar	a black branching coral
Barisan Nasional	National Front, the present ruling coalition party
ceramah	talk or lecture
COAC	Center for Orang Asli Concerns
dakwah	Muslim missionary activity
DAP	Democratic Action Party
Dato/Datuk	honorary title
DOA	Department of Aborigines
DPOASM	Dewan Peniaga Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia
dusun	fruit garden/orchard
DWNP	Department of Wildlife and National Parks
EIA	environmental impact assessment
Emergency	Malaya's civil war with the communist insurgents, 1948-1960
Felcra	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
Felda	Federal Land Development Authority
gaharu	<i>Aguillar spp.</i> The diseased part of the inner core is an important ingredient in the manufacture of some perfumes
gob	outsider, but frequently used to mean Malay in Semai, Temiar, Batek and most Orang Asli languages

Gombak	a district in Selangor state where the JHEOA has its hospital and museum complex
IKD	Institut Kajian Dasar (Institute for Policy Research)
hari moyang	feast day for the ancestral spirits
JAIJ	Jabatan Agama Islam Johor (Johor Islamic Religious Department)
JHEOA	Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (Department of Orang Asli Affairs)
JKHEOA	Jawatanjausa Hal Ehwal Orang Asli (Committee for Orang Asli Affairs)
JOAS	Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (Indigenous Peoples Network of Malaysia)
kafir	a Malay term for infidel, unbeliever
KDAJ	Koperasi Daya Asli Johor
kebun	Farm
Keadilan	Parti Keadilan Nasional (National Justice Party)
KEMAS	Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (Department of Community Development)
ketua penggerak masyarakat	chief community development officer
kongsi	Workers' quarters for a logging operation
KSU	<i>Ketua Setiausaha</i> , Secretary-General of a ministry
Lelah Maharajah Setia Rajah	title conferred by an Orang Asli chief, in particular from the Jakun and Temuan (formerly called Biduanda) sub-groups
MAIS	Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (Selangor Islamic Religious Council)
Majlis Adat	Customary Council
Menteri Besar	Chief Minister
Mengkuang	Specie of <i>pandanus</i>
nenggirik	Semai for “country” or traditional territory
Orang Asal	Original, or First Peoples

Parti Melayu Semangat 46	Malay Spirit of 1946 Party
PAS	Parti Islam SeMalaysia (formerly Partai Aislam Sa-Malaya or Pan-Malayan Islamic Party)
Paslim	Peniaga Asli Malaysia
Pemaju masyarakat	community development officer
Penghulu	village head
Perkim	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association of Malaysia)
Petai	<i>Parkia speciosa</i> . A type of bean which is harvested and sold as an important source of Orang Asli income
POASM	Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association)
PPRT	Program Pembasmian Rakyat Termiskin (Programme for the Eradication of Hardcore Poverty)
Risda	Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority
RM	Ringgit Malaysia (Malaysian unit of currency, formerly Malaysian Dollar)
RPS	Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula (Regroupment Scheme)
RTM	Radio Television Malaysia, a government-controlled broadcasting station
Sakai	slave, debt-bondsman. Derogatory term used to refer to the Orang Asli
SAS	Special Air Services
SEDC	State Economic Development Corporation
Senoi Praaq	Orang Asli paramilitary force organised under the Police Field Force (now called the General Operations Force)
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)
SRP	Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (Lower Certificate of Education)
Suku-kaum	ethnic sub-groups
Surau	Muslim prayer-hall or chapel
Tanah kosong	vacant lot
Titian Mas	'golden bridge' or foster family programmes

Tok Batin	an Orang Asli village head or chief
Tripang	sea slug, used as an ingredient in Chinese soups and medicinal preparation
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia)
UM	Universiti Malaya (University of Malaya)
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNWGIP	United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Waris	Heir

LIST OF TABLES

	Page No.
1 Population distribution of the Orang Asli by detailed sub-groups and state, 1991	2
2 Orang Asli sub-groups, location and estimated Orang Asli population, 1993	3
3 Number and growth rate of the Orang Asli population, 1947-1991	14
4 Percentage distribution of the Orang Asli by stratum, 1980, 1990 and 1991	14
5 Occupational distribution of the Orang Asli by selected occupations, 1991.	17
6 Number and percentage distribution of major Orang Asli ethnic Groups as enumerated by the 1991 Census and JHEOA, 1992.	18
7 Percentage distribution of the employed Orang Asli aged 10 years and over by occupation, sex and broad age group, 1991.	19
8 Distribution of the Orang Asli population by state, 1947 - 1991.	20
9 Age distribution of the Orang Asli, 1980 and 1991.	21
10 Age indicators of the Orang Asli population and total population, Peninsular Malaysia, 1980 and 1991.	23
11 Dropout rate from Primary 1 to Secondary 5, 1971-1995	25
12 Percentage distribution of Orang Asli population aged six years and over by educational attainment and sex, 1980 and 1991.	26
13 Percentage distribution of Orang Asli population aged six years and over by educational attainment and stratum, 1991.	26
14 Crude death rates and infant mortality rates for Orang Asli and general population in Peninsular Malaysia, 1984-1987.	30
15 Number of malaria and tuberculosis cases among the Orang Asli, 1981-1995	30
16 Comparison of studies on growth retardation among Orang Asli children, 1986, 1992.	31
17a Percentage distribution of Orang Asli housing units by type of supply of drinking water, 1991.	34
17b Percentage distribution of Orang Asli housing units by type of toilet facility, 1991	34
17c Percentage distribution of Orang Asli housing units by type of lighting, 1991	34
18 Percentage of Orang Asli households with household items by stratum, Peninsular Malaysia, 1991.	35
19 Status of Gazetting of Orang Asli land, 1990, 1994, 1996	39

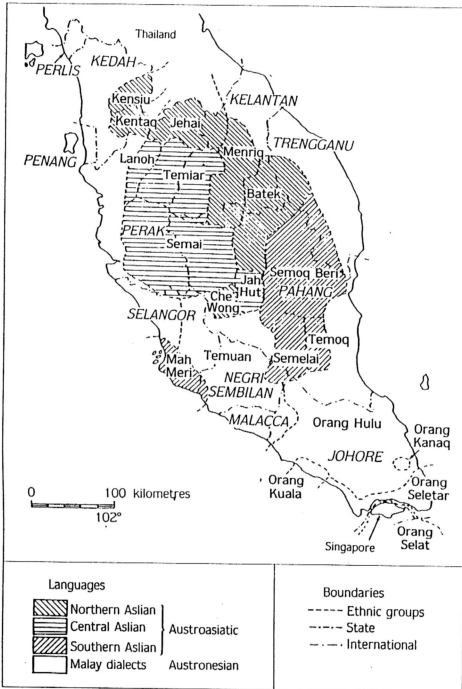
20	Orang Asli Land Status by State, 1996	40
21	Gazetted Orang Asli Reserves and Orang Asli population by state, 1996	41
22	Orang Asli ownership of land	42
23	Status of Orang Asli Land, 1996 (hectares)	43
24	Data Sheet on Regroupment Schemes (RPS), 1996.	138

LIST OF MAPS

		Page No.
1	Distribution of Orang Asli Ethnic Sub-Groups in Peninsular Malaysia	xvii
2	Distribution of the Orang Asli Population in Peninsular Malaysia, 1991	xviii
3	Sites of Orang Asli Regroupment Schemes, Peninsular Malaysia, 1997	117

Map 1

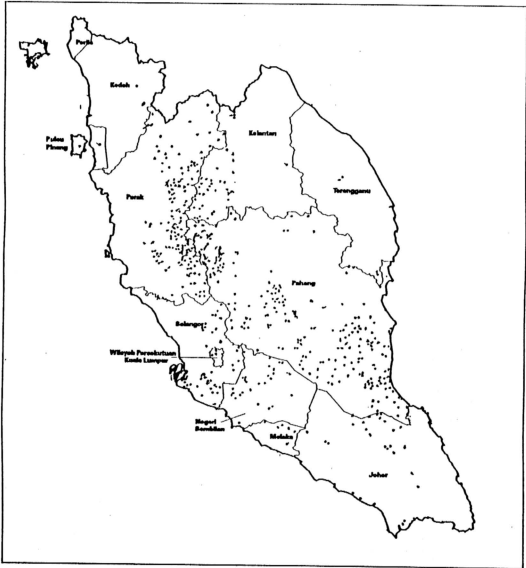
DISTRIBUTION OF ORANG ASLI SUB-GROUPS



Source: Geoffrey Benjamin

Map 2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ORANG ASLI POPULATION, 1991



Each dot represents 100 persons

Source: Department of Statistics (1997), *Profile of the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia*, p. 7.